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# Haunting moments in technocontexts: a framework for understanding the emergence of power, identities, and emotions

Lindsay Nicole Laurich  
*University of Iowa*

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HAUNTING MOMENTS IN TECHNOCONTEXTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR  
UNDERSTANDING THE EMERGENCE OF POWER, IDENTITIES, AND  
EMOTIONS

by

Lindsay Nicole Laurich

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Doctor of  
Philosophy degree in Teaching and Learning  
(Language, Literacy, and Culture)  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

July 2012

Thesis Supervisors: Professor Kathryn F. Whitmore  
Associate Professor Renita R. Schmidt

## ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses a series of disconcerting moments that emerged during a research study with seven fourth and fifth grade students who participated in an after-school Technology Think Tank and their classroom teachers at a Midwestern elementary school. These moments were marked by heightened power, identity performances, and emotions and were disturbing not only as they occurred, but remained bothersome upon reflection in the days and weeks afterwards. In this research I call them 'haunting moments.'

The primary data sources for this research were audio and video files that I initially analyzed for volume. This process verified my premise that the haunting moments were linked to an increase in speaking volume that differentiated them from other discourse. Then I employed a two-fold coding approach including interpretive phenomenological analysis which generated a comprehensive list of codes including textual and social functions of technologies.

My analysis led to a pursuit for a framework for understanding the haunting moments in the Think Tank and classrooms. I contextualized them within a theoretical matrix which included the dialectical relationship of standardization and resistance and the inextricable role of power, identities, and emotions with that dialectic. Standardization was accomplished through mechanisms of control that I identified as discursive positioning and surveillance. These mechanisms were resisted by mechanisms of agency. I also described the important role of technology-- which mediated the mechanisms of control and agency that were used in the service of standardization and resistance.

Theorizing and framing haunting moments leads to a more complex understanding of literacy learning. This research describes how standardization and resistance, along with the emergence of moves of power, identities, and emotions are an inevitable outcome of participation in discourse communities, however this inescapability does not signify inevitability or preclude agency through improvisation or authorship.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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To Chad, always

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CHAPTER 1  
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

*Introduction*

I'd rather be anywhere than school. I hate school.

Matt, Age 10

I met Matt after he agreed to participate in an after-school Technology Think Tank with six other fourth and fifth grade students. The Technology Think Tank was created out of my interest in intermediate students who were highly engaged and proficient with a wide variety of technologies. I designed this project in order to create a weekly after-school space where these students could gather together to share their technological expertise and to consider how their 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) could inform classroom learning. I was intrigued not only by the technology knowledge and skills that the students possessed, but also how the students perceived their technological expertise, how they used technology to accomplish specific social purposes, and how their 'technological identities' were enhanced or constrained at school. I particularly wondered about students who were successful with technology yet were unsuccessful in their classroom communities. Matt was one of those students.

During the course of this research, Matt told me that he “hated school” eighteen times, often offering staggering descriptions about the depth of his feelings. “You know the worst thing you can think of? School is like that,” he said in one interview. “I hate school, *hate* it!” he said with emphasis another time. Matt described himself as a “real smart kid,” but noted that he was having trouble getting things accomplished in his classroom. He told me that he believed his teacher thought he was “dumb,” and it was clear that this bothered him. In contrast, Matt was eager to participate in the Technology Think Tank and enthusiastic about exploring new and familiar technology. But at our sixth meeting Matt started to use the same descriptors he used for his classroom for the Think Tank. He complained that he was bored. He said he wanted to go home. He said it “was torture” to have to stay.

Although Matt’s narrative is uniquely his own, he is representative in many ways of students who often perplex and frustrate their classroom teachers and parents and who have become the subject of countless professional development seminars, research projects, and academic texts. Students like Matt challenge and disturb us. Sociologist Avery Gordon calls this “haunting,” which she theorizes as:

The domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be



put away, when something else, something different than before, seems like it must be done (Gordon, 2008, xvi).

Matt, and the other six Technology Think Tank students and their teachers that participated in this research have certainly “haunted” me over the last years and compel me to question, reflect, and now, to write. Their stories are especially intriguing in light of the changing nature of new technologies on literacy learning. Students, teachers, administrators, and researchers are grappling with continuously changing technologies, and an overarching mandate to prepare students to participate in a globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century. For some, these are exciting, promising times, but for others there is ambiguity, threat, or uncertainty.

In my title I use the term “technocontexts” to denote spaces where technology is part of the everyday discourse. Of course, this includes the Technology Think Tank, where our objective was the use and analysis of technology. But technocontexts also included the classrooms where the Think Tank participants spent their school days; some of these were spaces that encouraged technology and others where technology was highly discouraged or discounted by some participants. It is my intention to reframe these contexts outside of the naturalized binary of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ technology and hierarchized power relations, to consider the role of negotiated power, the performance of identities, and the interplay of emotions in complex literacy learning spaces.

Gordon (2008) wonders whether “analyzing hauntings might lead to a more complex understanding of the generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations in a way that avoids the twin pitfalls of subjectivism and positivism” (p. 19). This qualitative research is undertaken so the invisible will be made visible, something absent will become present through the descriptions that are forthcoming, and a vision of “something different” that can be done will emerge (Gordon, 2008, p. xvi).

### *Theoretical Tools*

Engaging in literacy research and analysis that seeks to understand complex haunting moments requires the use of theories that speak to the emergence and importance of emotions, power, and identities in social contexts. It demands insights from such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and psychology. In the following sections I outline the primary theories that undergird this work—sociocultural and poststructural—as well as emerging theories about emotions from the disciplines named above.

### *Sociocultural Theories*

Qualitative literacy research has made enormous strides in understanding how every learning moment is encapsulated by social and cultural contexts. In particular, sociocultural theories have facilitated understandings of how identities, agency, and power are not only present in literacy learning, but

determine who can participate and what can be learned in any given situation (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). In her study of intermediate grade literature discussion, Lewis (1997) documents how the classroom teacher's decision to diminish her role as the instructional authority during literature circle time led to interesting shifts in power during interactions among students, including powerful students in the classroom "taking up the slack" (p. 27) left by the teacher. Lewis uses her research to advocate for a "multivocal classroom" where students can "take up multiple positions and feel comfortable with overlapping identities" (p. 26). Luttrell & Parker (2001) describe how the devaluation of outside of school literacy practices by teachers led to the formation of identities and dispositions that could become "limiting" (p. 245) in future educational endeavors, and argue for an expanded view of literacy beyond 'traditional' school texts. These two studies illustrate a shift in thinking beyond a content-focused view of literacy learning towards one that considers the effects of the sociocultural context. Moreover, they illustrate a general trend in some domains of literacy research where social and cultural factors are not only considered, but are viewed as inseparable from the learning experience. The social and cultural contexts are not only 'interesting' and 'loosely relevant' in these studies, but they are an essential essence of the learning experience itself. In his book *Learning Identity: The Joint Emergence of Social Identification and Academic Learning*, Stanton

Wortham (2006) describes his observations in a high school classroom as learning and social identities emerged, sedimented, and changed across the school year.

Wortham writes that academic learning and social identities are “better conceptualized as part of larger processes that involve subject matter, argument, evidence, and academic learning as well as social identification, power relations and interpersonal struggles” (p. 282).

Describing the social and cultural workings of a learning moment is a complex endeavor—one that requires systematic analysis of language and the work that it does to reveal power structures, as well as the histories that come before them. It is precisely this complexity that draws me to engage at this critical nexus. Chasing the complexity of literacy learning—and capturing it textually—is our greatest challenge as qualitative, sociocultural literacy scholars. As far as we have come, there remains a crisis of representation. Bodies that live, breathe, and feel are often made subject to theoretical analyses until they are two-dimensional. Grumet (1988) writes, “Absent is the ground from which these figures are drawn, negation and aspiration. Absent is the laugh that rises from the belly, the whimper, and the song” (p. xiii). Grumet’s “absent ground” is an invitation to reconsider how complexity is represented in theory and research by theorizing from sociocultural stances and beyond, and by reaching across disciplinary boundaries in search of alternative ways of knowing.

Although sociocultural theory is generally understood as an umbrella term for a variety of specific forms (ie. activity theory, situated cognition, communities of practice), it shares in all cases a “view of human action as mediated by language and other symbol systems within particular cultural contexts” (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p. 5). Literacy learning, from a sociocultural standpoint, is inextricable from the cultural and social histories of the participants. Content or curricula is also culturally and socially constructed. Sociocultural theorists understand that there is no neutrality in a learning experience, and that meaning is shaped and further transformed by lived experiences.

One of the most interesting illustrations of this theory in action occurred when I observed the Technology Think Tank participants in April as they completed a standardized reading assessment required by the school district. The students read a series of passages aloud to a reading specialist who took a running record of their miscues and timed their reading as a measure of fluency. At the end of the reading they were asked a series of comprehension questions. If they passed the benchmark for that particular passage they would proceed to the next passage which was considered more difficult. One of the moderately difficult passages was a fictional account of a family with eight children who lived in a small apartment. The text insinuated that the family was being evicted

from the apartment and that they were working with “housing people” to find a new home. Based on school records and previous performance on this text in October, it was expected that Carson, Matt and Marcus (several of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Think Tank students) would not pass this text. However, Matt and Marcus passed easily, each answering all ten of the comprehension questions. Matt and Marcus lived near the school in an apartment building. Carson, who did not pass, lived in a modest home. Meanwhile, Alyssa, who was known as an accomplished reader in her classroom, did not pass. She also lived in a single-family home, and was unable to comprehend the nuances of this text. (Based on the results of this assessment, this particular text was removed from the assessment for the following year and replaced with another that would be “more familiar” to the students.)

I use this example to illustrate the entanglement of the cultural and social on literacy learning. Without the benefit of sociocultural theory, these reading assessment results are incomprehensible. Yet, when taken in light of lived experiences they complicate. It is possible now to think differently about Matt, Marcus and Alyssa. In light of this experience, what does it mean to be a successful or struggling reader in this classroom? How is reading measured and who benefits from these measurements?

One of the strengths of sociocultural theory as it emerges in our field of literacy research is its emphasis on identity, agency, and power. I specifically address identity and power in the sections below.

### **Identities Matter**

As opposed to traditional notions of identity as fixed and stable, sociocultural theorists have redefined identity as a “fluid, socially and linguistically mediated construct” (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007, p.4). This definition allows for a more nuanced and productive view that attends to the critical role of language, acknowledges the performative nature of identities, and takes into account the sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts that surround the “performer” (Goffman, 1959; Lewis et al, 2007; Tusting 2005). Gee’s (2008) notion of big “D” discourses offers a useful heuristic for understanding how identities are performed in different contexts. Big “D” discourses are how people “get their acts together” to get recognized as a given kind of person at a specific time and place. Gee writes that this requires, “a particular sort of ‘dance’ with words, deeds, values, feelings, other people, objects, tools, technologies, places and times” (p. 155). As participants engage in the ‘Discourses’ of the various communities in which they participate, identities are taken up and performed.

It is the challenge of sociocultural research to illustrate the complex nature of performing Discourses. First, we belong to many different communities that

are often diverse in nature. Therefore entrance into a specific community requires the adoption of new and unique social practices that must be maintained and expanded in order to remain and participate in the community in increasingly significant ways. These social practices may be dramatically different from those valued in other communities. In addition to the variety of Discourses that we engage in across contexts, Discourses within communities are rarely static. For instance, the Discourses required for participating in a fifth grade group of technology users changes as new members are added to the community, as existing members mediate one another's identities through language and social practices (adopted from other communities, popular culture influences, etc.), as institutional Discourses become influential, and so on. Gergen (2009) writes, "most conversations are akin to playing a multi-dimensional game in which any move on the part of any participant can be treated as a move in several other games" (p. 43). Identities within and across communities are continually in motion as we mediate others' identities simultaneously through Discourses. We enact various identities as we move across contexts, time, and space as participants within various communities. Our identities are mediated within these communities as we in turn mediate others' identities.



### *Mechanisms of Identities: Discursive Positioning*

One mechanism in the creation and maintenance of identities is positioning within discourse. Davies and Harre (2007) write:

Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practices in which they are positioned (p. 46).

The concept of positioning helps to take the understanding of identities beyond the identification of the self to a consideration of what happens in the social milieu. Discursive positioning is how the speakers and hearers are constituted "in certain ways and yet at the same time is a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (Davies & Harre, 2007, p. 62).

I will return to the notion of discursive positioning in Chapter 4 to illustrate its role in power, identities, and emotions.

### **The Production of Power**

In addition to complicating notions of how identities are constantly in flux within and across communities, sociocultural theories consider dynamics of power. Rather than subscribe to notions of power as inevitable, oppressive, and hierarchized, I use a poststructuralist lens and the work of Michel Foucault through which to conceptualize power. Foucault (1977) writes:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it

'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to the production (p. 194).

Foucault's conception of power not only makes power productive, but it becomes interpersonal as well. Noting that we "belong to this production," Foucault describes how power "produces reality." Lewis et al. (2007) define power as a "field of relations that circulate in social networks" and as "produced in and through individuals as they are constituted in larger systems of power and as they participate in and reproduce those systems" (p. 4). Power as embedded within social relations suggests that rather than fixed and unitary, power is locally negotiated and distributed within social contexts and networks. Kamberelis' (2001) discussion of power in his study of discourse practices in two classrooms supports this perspective and he notes that "power is strictly relational" and "emerges everywhere out of the fabric of concrete, local transactions" (p. 95). Describing her work with fifth and sixth grade students, Lewis (1997) describes how the intentional efforts of the teacher to create a culture of shared power in her classroom resulted in a new context where students, particularly powerful students, were able to "take up the slack" (p. 27).

However, Lewis also notes how "existing power relations and limiting discourses" (1997, p. 29) constrain how power is enacted in this classroom as the teacher and students are subject to existing hierarchical and discursive

frameworks. These studies illuminate Foucault's assertion that "language is an instrument of power, and people have power in a society in direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that shape society" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 37-38). Closer examinations of Discourses makes possible new understandings of the ways that individuals are engaged in networks of power within and across sociocultural contexts, and "explicates the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this action occurs, on the other" (Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, p. 11). In one of the best descriptions of the scope of power I have read to date, Gordon (2008) writes:

Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires. It can feel like remote control, it can exhilarate like liberation, it can travel through time, and it can drown you in the present. It is dense and superficial, it can cause bodily injury, and it can harm you without seeming ever to touch you. It causes dreams to live and die (p. 3).

### *Mechanisms of Power: Surveillance*

Contrary to understandings of surveillance as necessary to ensure compliance with the 'good' objectives of the learning environment, Foucault (1977) points to surveillance as a mechanism of power:

A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.

Hierarchized, continuous, and functional surveillance may not be one of the great technical 'inventions' of the eighteenth century, but its insidious extension owed its importance to the mechanisms of power that it brought with it. By means of such surveillance, disciplinary power became an 'integrated' system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanism in which it was practiced (p. 176).

Foucault highlights how surveillance increases the 'efficiency' of teaching, but he points to the "insidious extension" of "disciplinary power" that comes alongside (1997, p. 176). Surveillance, Foucault says, leads to discipline.

Surveillance functions as a mechanism of power and discipline by 'playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank: and makes "it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities, and to render the differences useful" (p. 184).

One important distinction that Foucault makes about power is that we all participate in it through ongoing surveillance. We are not only under surveillance, but we survey and monitor what goes on around us. We are disciplined by codes of normalization, but also discipline others. This discipline is accomplished in a variety of ways but particularly through circulating discourses that lead to accepted social constructions of what counts as 'normal.'

### *The Panopticon*

One way that surveillance is accomplished is through the "Panopticon" in which power and discipline are achieved through specific mechanisms of surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Based on an eighteenth century prison model,

Foucault details the Panopticon's design whereby he writes of the subject of surveillance:

He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated by cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order. If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, bad reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen, there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren, there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time (p. 200-201).

In the Panopticon, the surveyed are aware of their surveillance but remain locked in uncertainty. The principle of surveillance is:

That power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; he must be sure that he may always be so (p. 201).

The Panopticon is much more than the effective design of a prison, Foucault says. Ongoing surveillance is a powerful tool in social discipline.

Describing it as "polyvalent in its applications" it:

Serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct school children, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, or disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. (1977, p. 205)

I will return to Foucault's Panopticon in Chapter 5 to explicate how

power was accomplished at Norwood Elementary School through surveillance.

### *Beyond Sociocultural Theories*

Sociocultural theories have transformed many elements of literacy research, particularly in regards to thinking about how identities and power are entangled in each learning situation. However there are valuable perspectives across disciplines that also provide theoretical direction for this research. The following sections illuminate considerations of the importance of relationships and the role of emotions.

### **Social Selves**

New understandings of the importance of relationships are pushing the boundaries of social psychological understandings. With regard to the interrelated nature of relationship and learning, Wells (2000) writes:

In treating knowledge as a thing that people possess, it loses sight of the relationship between knowing and acting and of the essentially collaborative nature of these processes. Knowledge is created and re-created between people as they bring their personal experience and information derived from other sources to bear on solving some particular problem (p. 67).

Yet even Wells does not go far enough, according to social psychologist and researcher Kenneth Gergen. In his book *Relational Being* (2009) he calls into question naturalized understandings of the self as a 'bounded' entity. In the Wells passage above, for example, we imagine two individuals each bringing their personal knowledge and experiences to the site of collaboration. Instead,

Gergen proposes that each participant is constructed wholly from the multitude of relationships they have been privy to up until this new moment. He defies the notion of a separate 'inner man or woman' and writes that the consequences of conceptualizing ourselves as bounded beings apart from others and the belief that our mind is "forever elusive and opaque" has the potential to lead to a "condition of fundamental distrust" (p. 14). Although many philosophers and researchers have described the socially situated nature of selfhood and its influence on learning (see Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1971; MacMurray, 1961; Merleau-Ponty, 1968), such accounts resemble the act of billiard balls striking against one another to create an effect (Gergen, 2009, p. 54). Although the interaction is influential, each ball remains intact and individual. Instead Gergen proposes the "relational self" which is possible because we are "participants in a confluence of relationships" (p. 56). "Thinking, experience, memory, and creativity are actions in relationship" (p. 63), and even solitary activities occur within considerations of social frameworks. Gergen (2009) writes:

My hope is to demonstrate that virtually all intelligible action is born, sustained, and/or extinguished within the ongoing process of relationship. From this standpoint there is no isolated self or fully private experience. Rather, we exist in a world of co-constitution (p. xv).

### **Social Heteroglossia**

In keeping with the notion of social selves is Bakhtin's social heteroglossia which conceptualizes language as layered and inseparable from social discourses

(Bahktin, 1981). "Each word," writes Bakhtin, is "a little arena for the clash and criss-crossing of differently oriented social accents" and is the "product of the living interaction of social forces" (p. 58). To exemplify this point, Gergen (2009) writes, "I have as many sound thoughts as there are communities in which I participate" (p. 78). In my analysis of data, I have identified multiple instances of utterances 'traveling' from one research participant to the next. Although some were seemingly insignificant, others persisted and were imbued with emotion. These instances point to the inextricability of relationships from our lives. The socio-psychological theoretical perspective of social selves and relational being means that the development of one's self is dependent on the influence of others. Parents, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, peers, and others are not just influential, but are part and parcel of who we are.

### **Emotions as a Category of Analysis**

Emotion has historically not been viewed as a valid category for academic analysis. Most commonly held as a contrast to the more superior quality of reason, emotion falls on the wrong side of naturalized dualistic divisions such as the biological versus the social, positivism versus constructionism, and controlling versus accounting for emotions (Zembylas, 2005) (see, e.g. Lupton, 1998; Williams, 2001). Micciche (2007) describes the tendency in academia to "collapse emotion with all things feminine" (p. 3) which signals a tendency to be



“weak, shallow, petty, vain, and narcissistic” (p. 3). She continues that emotion is positioned as “outside efforts to reason, communicate, and act meaningfully” (p. 4). Ahmed (2004) writes, “emotions are associated with women, who are represented as ‘closer’ to nature, ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgment” (p. 3). She describes the “everyday language” of emotions which are “based on the presumption of interiority” (p. 9). In other words, emotions are seen as emanating from within the (feminine) self. These feelings move in an outward direction. Ahmed describes how this view of emotions allows them to be subject to the discipline of psychology and to subsequent categorization which privileges some ‘good’ emotions over others.

Current expectations for academic research and publication contribute to the exclusion of emotions as a valid category of analysis. Expectations by Institutional Review Boards, for instance, demand adherence to protocols that serve as valuable protection for research participants, but hinder the possibilities for novel approaches to qualitative research projects. Additionally, stated and unstated guidelines for the publication of research hinder creative ways of analyzing and expressing research findings. Although there are some venues for experimental and/or artistic publications, most scholars seeking an audience (and tenure) are bound to the genre of standard academic writing including commonly accepted methodologies and analyses of their data. I assert that the

naturalized views of feminized emotion that circulate mostly prohibit its entrance into this well-defined, reason-oriented arena. Although the feminization of emotion is troubling, its subsequent dismissal is paradoxically understandable given the analytic constraints of academic research and the overarching discourses about our role as researchers that guide our practices. Understanding the role of emotion in this research means raising questions about these discourses. It also means careful analysis practices and thoughtful use of theory. Yet I assert that emotion is not only a highly productive heuristic, its absence in our theorizing limits how we can understand the complexity of learning.

In the midst of this climate, it is remarkable that thinking about emotion has begun to emerge in our field as well as other disciplines. In the following paragraphs I chronologically trace the work of four researchers with specific attention to how their findings layer over one another and point the way for this dissertation research.

Megan Boler's (1999) book *Feeling Power*, traces the historical and cultural suppression of emotion in education. She draws attention to the ways that emotion is understood differently and notes that the "determination of the normalcy and deviance of emotions can be generalized to some extent according to social class, gender, race, and culture, but are also highly determined by particular social contexts and power dynamics between given subjects in a

situation" (p. 2). Using a poststructuralist frame, Boler asserts that emotions are a "mediating space" (p. 21). She continues, "Emotions are a medium, a space in which differences and ethics are communicated, negotiated, and shaped" (p. 21). Boler's assertion that emotions occur outside of the individual is an important step away from the view that emotions occur from the inside and travel on a trajectory outward. She also steps away from the model of cognitive psychology that has dominated the research on emotions and uses poststructural theory in her analysis.

Boler points the way toward Ahmed's (2004) notion of 'stickiness' and the ways that emotions "attach to" objects, bodies, and signs to create meaning.

Ahmed describes her model of emotions in the following way:

I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others (p. 10).

The notion of emotions creating surfaces or boundaries is an important step in recognizing the interplay of meaning-making and the emergence of emotional response. If, as Ahmed proposes, emotions allow us to distinguish an "inside and an outside" (p. 10), then it stands to reason that this process is crucial to defining what we take up in terms of learning and what is left behind.

Although Ahmed identifies herself in the field of Cultural Studies, she draws

important connections to literacy research in terms of comprehension.

Specifically, how is relationship comprehended? As an event? A text? In my Methods of Reading classes I teach prospective teachers about comprehension strategies such as visualizing, making connections, and asking questions (Miller, 2002). It stands to reason that emotional attachments are another comprehension 'strategy' that I may be overlooking.

Micciche (2007) is next to build on Boler's assertion that emotions occur outside of the individual noting that "emotion is dynamic and relational, taking form through collisions of contact between people as well as between people and the objects, narratives, beliefs, and so forth that we encounter in the world" (p. 28). Her text not only explores theories of emotion, but offers classroom techniques and exercises for rhetoric and composition teachers. In one chapter, Micciche writes of emotion "at the convergence of performativity and embodiment" and as a way to intervene in "closed views of writing and rhetoric that have predetermined the place of emotion before grappling with it in any sustained fashion" (p. 54). The purpose of the exercises she proposes are to help students "forget the signifier of emotion for a moment in order to remember, or comprehend for the first time, the process that led to the adherence of emotion to a signifier" (p. 55). Micciche's contributions to theoretical understandings of emotion in literacy learning lie precisely in exposing the outside processes and

discourses that naturalize certain emotions while making others pathological, for certain people, in specific times and places.

Lastly Zembylas (2005) asserts that emotions are strategies grounded in histories of participation and that emotional capital can be circulated and exchanged. He describes how “power relations are inherent in ‘emotion talk’ and shape the expression of emotions by permitting us to feel some emotions while prohibiting others” (p. 26). He also suggests that we may use emotions to “create sites of social and political resistances” (p. 26). Returning to Foucault’s (1997) conception of power, he points to the potential of emotions to participate in the production of reality.

Sociocultural theory has an important place in my analysis of the haunting moments that occurred in the Think Tank. Particularly, it is valuable in thinking about issues of identities and power. However, straying outside of the bounds of sociocultural theories to consider poststructural theories, as well as current theories of emotions across a variety of disciplines, offers new ways to think about literacy learning in dynamic technocontexts.

### **Research Problem**

Emotions, power relationships, and identity performances emerge and circulate in learning environments such as schools and classrooms. They are particularly illuminated in social spaces where change is afoot. One of the most

prominent agents of change in literacy classrooms over the last decade has been the influx of new technologies. For instance the recent headline in the El Paso Times: 'It feels pretty awesome:' Students get Ipads for school (Ballinger, 2011). Many schools now provide students with laptops, Kindles, or other hardware for their personal use throughout the year. Technology is now naturalized as an academically necessary and 'good' part of learning.

However issues of technology in and outside of the classroom are not so clear-cut and are layered with ideologies about its purpose and meaning. Descriptions and expectations of the learning that happens in technocontexts often overlook the sociocultural and sociopsychological aspects that frame and ultimately determine every learning experience. Technology must collide with context, emotional responses, power relations and identity performances. When this happens, there are often unexpected responses. Moreover, these unexpected responses are often perplexing to teachers, researchers and students. They haunt us. Matt's enthusiastic descriptions of his "hate" for school are one such example.

In this study my analysis leads to a new framework for understanding the haunting moments of my time with seven intermediate students and their teachers at Norwood Elementary School and the after-school Technology Think Tank. Briefly, the haunting moments I analyze in this work are:

1. The uses of discursive positioning in a series of related contentious interactions:

- Between school principal Mr. Wallace and fifth grade teacher Mrs. Thompson regarding Mr. Wallace's new school policy of locking supplies in the closet and requiring teacher permission to access them
- Between Mrs. Thompson and Carson regarding Mrs. Thompson's classroom rule of sharpening pencils and the expectation of completing classroom work
- Between Carson and Matt regarding Carson's expectations for authority and Matt's resistance to these expectations

2. The uses of surveillance via various technologies:

- By Mr. Wallace and other administration over classroom teachers
- By teachers over students
- And by students in relation to each other

These were certainly not the only times when I wondered about what I was seeing and hearing. However, the instances of discursive positioning and surveillance I observed were marked by heightened emotions such as frustration,

anger, and grief experienced by the students, teachers, and me that made them distinct and drew me to them for closer analysis. Frankly, I was bothered in these moments and I felt that others involved were bothered, too. Ahmed (2004) calls this “stickiness” and notes that times such as these are “saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension” (p. 11). These were haunting moments. It is my intention to use emotion, power, and identities as categories of analysis to “understand and (re)constitute the self...knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being” (Flax, 1990, p. 39). This approach has the potential to understand more deeply the complexity of the Technology Think Tank participants and teachers who participated in this research.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) How does power emerge and circulate in haunting moments?
- 2) How do the haunting moments at Norwood Elementary School lead to identity performances?
- 3) What is the role of emotions in these moments?
- 4) How are haunting moments theorized in response to mechanisms of control and agency?



In the next chapter I turn to the methodological tactics I used to answer these questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

The methods I used to collect and analyze data are founded in a hybrid approach that used familiar qualitative methods but are buttressed by less commonly known methodologies including phenomenological techniques. In this chapter I first describe the setting of Norwood Elementary School and the Technology Think Tank and introduce the study participants. This is followed by my rationale for the design of this study, including explanations of data sources, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

#### *Research Setting: Norwood Elementary School*

Norwood Elementary School was one of twenty-three elementary schools situated in a Midwestern, primarily suburban school district. It looked like a traditional school building on the exterior: a single-story faded red brick structure with a circular drive in front and a flag pole just outside the main entrance doors. Two playgrounds stood towards the back of the building surrounded by a chain link fence. Signs at the front of the building directed visitors to the main office. Student art lined the hallways, and classroom doors were often opened to reveal straight lines of desks and rows of textbooks along built-in bookshelves. Yet Norwood Elementary was just one of a few schools that

were located in the more 'urban' part of the city. Just several streets away from the school were busy on and off ramps to the freeway that ran through the center of town.

Although the district as a whole was not known to be racially diverse, Norwood Elementary had a modest diversity among its students including a 15% African American population and a 4% Hispanic population. The school was proximally located near the city's industrial center, and many of the students' parents worked in the nearby factories and shops. The neighborhood that surrounded the school was filled with workers who headed off each day to jobs that their fathers and mothers, and grandfathers and grandmothers had once held. It was not uncommon for extended families to live very near one another or to share households. Parent-teacher conferences at Norwood often included grandparents, or other extended family members, and school assemblies attracted not only immediate family members, but extended family such as aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and so on.

Students and their families were not the only ones tied to the manufacturing base of the city. Many of the teachers who taught at Norwood School had spouses, partners, or other family who worked in these industries. These teachers were often the first in their families to attend college and work outside of the manufacturing industry, yet as one teacher said they were

steadfastly loyal to the “good, honest work” that happened just outside of the school doors. They were also loyal to Norwood Elementary School. Several had children or grandchildren at Norwood who were currently enrolled or had attended in the past.

Norwood Elementary School was particularly appealing as a research site because it was known throughout the district as different from many of its school counterparts. Its urban location, as well as a modicum of diversity—racially and socioeconomically—made it a better choice to think critically about the emergence of literacy technocontexts, emotions, power, and identities from varied perspectives. I was also drawn to the loyalty of teachers to this neighborhood school. I wondered how the industrial heritage of the school’s inhabitants might influence thinking about the changing nature of literacy learning in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world. As I would discover, all of these elements, as well as other unexpected ones, would contribute to a richly complex research setting.

### *The Technology Think Tank*

The Technology Think Tank was held at Norwood Elementary School each Thursday afternoon during the spring of 2008. A group of seven fourth and fifth grade students joined me in the computer lab, which had formerly been an

art classroom (due to budget constraints the art teacher was only part time in the building and traveled to each classroom with a cart of supplies).

The computer lab was neat, but not necessarily a stimulating space. Long tables lined three of the four walls with computers set evenly on top. Another long table down the middle of the room held more computers. Orange and green plastic chairs were pushed up to each station. There was a teacher's desk with one more computer linked to a projector that displayed the teacher's monitor for the class to view on a large screen. Besides this screen there was a white board with markers and a medium-sized poster on the wall that showed the correct placement of hands on the computer's keyboard. Otherwise the walls were completely bare.

During our hour-long meetings we were often visited by other students and teachers who would peer in the doorway to see what was going on. Sometimes visitors would stay to chat. Some of the most exciting times were when the classroom teachers of the Think Tank participants would stop. The student participants would line up to show them their work and wait anxiously for their feedback.

At the start of each meeting we gathered chairs together in a circle for a quick meeting. This was a time when students could share things they had been working on, talk about technology issues, or ask questions. We would also

discuss our objectives for the day. I would give an introduction to the topic, and then invite students to take over teaching the group if they had expertise. Once directions were given and questions answered, students were free to work together. Seats were not assigned and students were encouraged to work collaboratively so they would often sit together at one computer station and take turns typing on the keyboard. Besides the tapping of keys there was ongoing chatter back and forth between students punctuated with peals of laughter. Occasionally there were disagreements as well. All in all the Think Tank was a lively space.

### *Research Participants*

At the beginning of this project, I visited five fourth and fifth grade classrooms to inform students about the opportunity to participate in the Technology Think Tank. Although initial interest was high, only eight students returned the paperwork required to proceed. Of the eight, seven became regular attenders of the group. (The eighth student discovered a sports conflict that kept him from attending.)

There were no pre-qualifications for participation in the Think Tank. Although our focus would be working and playing with technology, experience in this domain was not a requirement. Not surprisingly, however, I quickly discovered that all seven participants were very knowledgeable with many

aspects of technology. They were Internet savvy, some had blogs or websites, and one student was selling items online (and doing quite well).

The participants in the Think Tank are listed in Table 1:

Table 1. Think Tank Student Participants

Student Name	Grade	Classroom Teacher
Carson	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Thompson
Kassandra	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Thompson
Matt	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Thompson
Alyssa	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Ms. Ash
Marcus	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Stone
Jasmyn	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Pendle
Daniel	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Mrs. Pendle

In addition to the seven student participants, my data includes one interview with each of the four classroom teachers who had students in the Think Tank, as well as classroom observations during literacy learning activities and informal conversations. Table 2 details my scheduled interactions with the teachers.

Table 2. Scheduled Encounters with Classroom Teachers

Teacher Name	Scheduled Interview	Classroom Observations	Think Tank Student Participants
Mrs. Thompson	3/3/2008	3/10/2008 3/26/2008 4/2/2008	Carson Kassandra Matt
Ms. Ash	3/4/2008	3/3/2008 4/2/2008 4/16/2008	Alyssa
Mrs. Stone	2/26/2008	2/12/2008 2/22/2008 4/2/2008	Marcus
Mrs. Pendle	1/30/2008	2/12/2008 3/10/2008 5/2/2008	Jasmyn Daniel

### *Data Collection*

At our first Think Tank meeting I asked the students to give me a tour of the school building and classrooms and take a survey of technology uses. Shortly thereafter I interviewed each participant individually about their thoughts about their technology uses. These interviews were added to my increasing archive of field notes, video recordings, and audio recordings taken at the weekly Think Tank meetings that captured the technological knowledge of the student participants and as well as their ongoing perceptions about their identities as technology users and students in their elementary school. I also held regular ‘sit-down conferences’ with students during the actual Think Tank meetings that



were structured as informal interviews. It became apparent through this phase of data collection that all seven participants viewed their everyday technology use as part of their 'normal' lives ("It's just what I do!"), with some distinguishing it from the school-based reading and writing which they "had" to do to avoid consequences. This view is similar to what Lewis & Fabos (2005) describe in their study of students who used Instant Messaging on a regular basis. They describe the 'normal' uses of technology as "a producer of social subjects that find it unremarkable—so unremarkable that it seems everybody does it" (p. 470).

In addition to the interviews and weekly meetings with the Think Tank participants, I interviewed all four classroom teachers to gain a broader viewpoint of the day-to-day lives of the participants as well as to explore the perspectives towards technology of those who surrounded the children on a regular basis. I asked the classroom teachers for permission to observe the Think Tank students during their literacy time and all of the classroom teachers agreed. Therefore I made three scheduled visits to each classroom.

As is the case with qualitative research capturing 'everything' is impossible when using video and audio devices. In the Technology Think Tank and classroom settings I made strategic choices about what to observe more closely, which necessarily meant that other spaces were left unobserved. For example I repositioned myself to see what a learner was doing at his or her desk,

or moved closer to hear the conversations between small groups of students with the understanding that I would momentarily lose the whole group perspective. These were the times when students revealed who they were (identity) and how they were positioned and positioned themselves (power) within the classroom (Lee, 2006; McCarthy & Moje, 2002). During this study these choices were based on my intentional privileging of student language as a means towards understanding identity and power issues. I believe that attention to the “official” and “unofficial” talk of teachers and students was critical to understanding how learning happened (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López & Alvarez, 2001).

The multiple data sources I collected in varied forms captured the workings of the Think Tank and the social context of the school and its classrooms (Glesne, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Table 3 summarizes these data sources.

Table 3. Data Sources

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Participant Observation</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Field Notes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Researcher's Journal</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Audio Recordings (Think Tank and Meetings)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Video Recordings (Think Tank)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Interviews</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Semi-structured</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Informal</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Survey of Technology Uses</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Think Tank Artifacts</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Online creations (Blogs, wikis, etc.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Artwork</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Writing (Online and Offline)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Assignments and directions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Projects</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Other Artifacts</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Think Tank participants' academic records</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School and District Mission Statements</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Curriculum Guides- Grade 4 &amp; 5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Professional Development Materials</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School and District Newsletters</p>

### *Data Management*

After each meeting of the Technology Think Tank or visit to classrooms to observe literacy learning I was left with pages of field notes, lengthy audio and video files, copies of student work, and various other paper and digital items. Creating a system to manage this data was an essential step before data analysis could occur. In the following sections I describe the techniques I used to manage this research data.

### *Individualized Portfolios*

Because I needed a way to individualize student data as well as synthesize across the group, I created a portfolio of paper transcripts and documents relating to each individual child. These portfolios included transcripts of their individual interviews, as well as interviews with their teachers, and field notes that were specific to individuals. Each file also contained documents created by students during the course of the Think Tank, photographs, artwork, and other related documents. When data sources involved multiple Think Tank participants, I photocopied documents and placed them in several portfolios.

### *Transcription*

The consistent use of defined conventions for transcribing talk was essential in the overall management of data. I used conventions I adapted from

Dyson (1997) in transcribing audio and video files. Appendix B outlines the transcript conventions that I followed.

### *Managing Video Data*

My video data was particularly cumbersome. I initially attempted a management strategy whereby I sub-divided footage into 5-minute clips in order to 'link' it to specific participants. When that proved too complex, I attempted 3-minute clips. In my experimentation I discovered it was best to sub-divide audio and video segments by content. To do this I listened and/or watched each file one time without any note-taking or coding. Then, I returned again, this time following the 'flow' of the activities and breaking the audio and video files into segments based on what I perceived as a change in momentum or purpose. Sometimes these changes occurred as I changed the camera view from one area of the Think Tank to another. At this time I was not doing any specific coding or excluding any data. This was simply an organizational approach to managing large amounts of digital video data.

The organization of my data was an important process as it helped me to 'see' moments that I didn't see in 'real time.' These steps paved the way for data analysis. Here is a small sample of the chart I created that illustrates how I captured the nuances of my video data by naming the action or context, noting turns and time of talk, and summarizing the activities.

Table 4. Video Data Organizational Chart

Think Tank Video Data- 4/3/2008			
Name of Action/ Context	Turns Talking	Duration of Talk (Min:Sec)	Action/ Context
"Sweet kicks" shoes	Marcus	00:25	At the Think Tank meeting Marcus is showing Carson and Matt his new athletic shoes. He describes them as "sweet kicks." The boys gather around a computer to look up the shoes online.
	Carson	00:04	
	Marcus	00:32	
	Carson	00:11	
	Marcus	00:16	
	Matt	00:18	
	Marcus	00:20	
Purchasing Power	Marcus	00:05	Jasmyn enters the frame and says something to the boys (unintelligible on video). She points animatedly to the screen. She says, "But you can't afford that," to the group of boys.  *Matt is present but does not talk during this exchange
	Jasmyn	00:03	
	Marcus	00:22	
	Jasmyn	00:28	
	Carson	00:02	
	Jasmyn	00:15	
	Marcus	00:07	
Doing "nothing"	Lindsay	00:02	I shift the video camera away from the group to Kassandra. As I walk the camera towards her you hear my voice ask "What are you doing?" She closes her Internet window and says, "Nothing." Then she looks up at the camera.
	Kassandra	00:01	

### *Identification of Haunting Moments*

During the course of this research there were moments that were particularly surprising and disturbing. Matt's numerous descriptions of how he "hated school" as I described in the opening chapter, is an example. In this moment I felt uncomfortable, agitated, and at a loss for words. These conversations with Matt were not the only times when I felt this way. There were numerous other times when I was a participant or a participant observer to difficult circumstances and contentious interactions.

As my time at Norwood Elementary School and with the Technology Think Tank unfolded, I took note of these haunting moments (or perhaps they took note of me) as they occurred. One of my practices in taking field notes was coding each section briefly with a handful of simple codes. A star, for example, indicated a moment where a student participant did something I considered noteworthy. Two exclamation points with a question mark in the middle (!?! ) indicated something intense happened that raised ongoing questions. Although I did not anticipate it at the time, this code became my marker for what became the haunting moments that populate these chapters.

In addition to noticing and recording the haunting moments as they occurred I also found that they commanded my thoughts in the days following. While the majority of my data was not particularly intense, these haunting

moments stood out. I found that I mulled over them again and again in my mind. I wondered about what had happened. I thought about how I could have participated differently. I even dreamed about them at night.

As I concluded data collection and directed my attention towards other endeavors the haunting moments eventually faded behind other more pressing concerns. However, when I returned to analyze this data the haunting moments emerged again as if they had just happened. As I listened and watched audio and video files I was impressed by the intensity of these specific interactions. I also realized that these moments shared something in common: a noticeable change in volume.

### *Haunting Moments and Volume*

The idea to link emotions to voice volume arose from my recognition that the moments that I identified as haunting became much easier to decipher during transcription. In moments of less intensity, I found myself returning again and again to the audio files in order to hear what had been said. Yet in the places I had marked for high intensity (!?!), the voices on the files were much more distinct. This pattern led me to the realization that volume appeared to be a changing factor in these high intensity moments.



## Identifying Changes in Volume

I used a simple decibel meter to verify that volume levels were increasing. The decibel meter showed numerical changes in volume. Figure 1 is a screen shot of the meter. Figure 2 is a guide for interpreting the numerical ratings of volume indicated on the decibel meter.

Figure 1. Decibel Meter

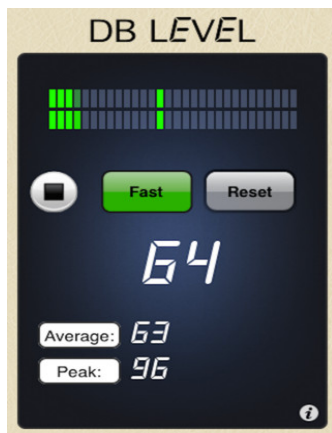
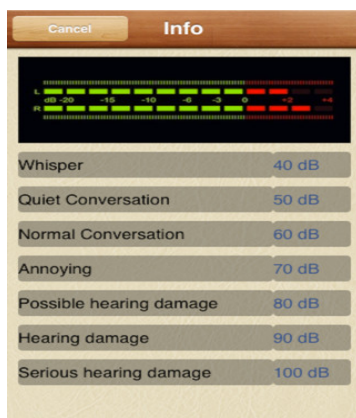


Figure 2. Guide for Interpreting Decibel Meter



As I paired the decibel meter with my audio files I confirmed my thinking that volume increased during specific moments that I described as haunting, with many of the utterances in the “Annoying 70dB” or “Possible hearing damage 80 dB” range. Here is an example of how I represented the change in volume using this new technique:

Table 5. Coding for Volume Example 1

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson			
Utterance: I expect you to act respectfully in this classroom. And this is not respectful.			
65	72	69	79
I expect	you	to	act respectfully

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson			
68	67	65	70
in this	classroom.	And	this is

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson	
65	62
not	respectful.

This intense utterance was compared with another utterance that seemed less significant.

Table 6. Coding for Volume Example 2

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson		
Utterance: Let's meet tomorrow afternoon. I'll see you then.		
58	60	59
Let's meet tomorrow	afternoon.	I'll see you then.

A simple review of these utterances shows a significant increase in volume in the first utterance by Mrs. Thompson. Her volume level reaches "Possible hearing damage" level as she chastises a student in her classroom. By contrast, another utterance remains right around "Normal conversation" level throughout.

### Volume Analysis

Volume analysis was further indication to me that haunting moments should take the central focus of further analysis. It also assisted me in overcoming the problematic nature of identifying emotions that were not my own. Although there were a few times when study participants named their emotions (i.e.: "sad," "frustrated"), most of the time they were part of unspoken exchanges. I struggled mightily not only with the accuracy of my interpretations

(how do I *really* know so-and-so is angry?) but also with how to justify it from an academic perspective. Volume analysis provided another layer of confirmation in identifying haunting moments.

I returned to the data to look for how individual study participants expressed emotions. In the margins I preliminarily named those emotions: frustration, anger, grief, etc. I went back and compared this marked-up transcript with a copy of the transcript that was coded for volume. I looked to see whether patterns for volume existed when I coded for sadness, for example. Although there were some variances in my findings, I discovered by and large that there were clear volume patterns when it came to expressing emotions through language.

It was undeniable to me that these haunting moments were important and needed further exploration. As a result the haunting moments became the macro unit of data for my analysis. I focused on these moments as I engaged in two levels of coding to contextualize and support my analysis of haunting moments.

### *Analysis of Haunting Moments*

In my first coding of data I moved turn-by-turn through transcribed talk in order to identify prominent themes (Jennings, 1996) and to confirm my findings across multiple data sources (Glesne, 2010, Merriam, 2009). In order to do this I engaged in analysis across students and events, focusing primarily on

student and teacher language in relation to technology with an eye towards the emergence of power and the performance of identities. My approach followed Miller & Goodnow's (1995) assertion "that selves are continually created and re-created through the child's participation in narrative discourse—a view that contrasts with two common views: that language is merely a window into the self and that its role is limited to enabling one to think about oneself as an object" (p. 13).

Through this process a list of themes emerged that I distilled into several categories. I called these categories the Textual Functions of Technologies. Table 7 lists this first layer of coding categories.

These coding categories became a way to compartmentalize my data and a guide for how to initially understand it. As I engaged in this process I returned again and again to the haunting moments and the emergence of emotions, power, and identities. However, I wanted to apply another qualitative analytic technique in order to be more confident of my early findings and to consider other ways of coding my data that might account for the sociocultural elements that were integral in every interaction. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was my next step in this layered analysis.

Table 7. Textual Functions of Technologies.

TEXTUAL FUNCTIONS OF TECHNOLOGIES

Designing- Technology affords children and teachers the opportunity to design something new. (For example, some students in the Think Tank worked together on a software program to animate a short story they had written. Teachers created charts during professional development sessions.)

Mimeographing- Technology serves as a tool to reify existing texts. (For example, one Think Tank student recreated the Nike logo using an illustrator program.)

Representing- Technology is used as a means to represent texts, values, or relationships that were important to the child(ren) or teacher(s). (For example, one Think Tank participant discovered a program that allowed him to Instant Message other participants. This discovery (and the subsequent exchanges) represented the value of instantaneous communication. Meanwhile, Mrs. Thompson drew a sad face on the paper of a child who wrote about a video game she did not approve of.)

Mediating- Technology mediates childrens' and teachers' learning and world experiences. (For instance, one child created a memorial for her pet cat after he died unexpectedly. Teachers' interactions and learning during professional development were mediated by computers as one teacher commented "These used to be fun. Now all we do is look at screens.")

*Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*

Interpretive phenomenological analysis is a two-fold analytic approach in which the objective is not only is trying to understand the perspectives of the research participants as they make meaning in their world, but also the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make meaning of their world by asking critical questions such as: What is the person trying to

achieve here? Is something leaking out here that wasn't intended? Do I have a sense of something going on here that maybe the participants themselves are less aware of? (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The process of this phenomenological analysis is heavily based in forming an interpretive engagement with the language of the study participants. Based on the work of Smith & Osborn (2008) I took the following steps in reading my transcripts a second time:

1. Read the transcript numerous times and engage in free textual analysis in the left margin.
2. Move to the right margin and document emerging title themes that capture the essential quality of what was said.
3. On a separate page list the emergent title themes chronologically.
4. Engage in theoretical ordering of the themes into clusters, returning to the language in the transcript.
5. Create a table of coherently ordered themes.
6. Use the existing table to orient subsequent analyses of other transcripts.

Although this process uses traditions from other data analysis methods such as grounded theory in its coding of texts and identification of themes (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987), it employs distinct techniques which were useful in understanding complex and emotional language in a new way. Particularly,

phenomenological analysis emphasizes “intuition, imagination, and universal structures in obtaining a picture of the dynamics that underlay the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 67) of the research participants. Part of this process includes engaging in:

disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments...in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies—to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22).

One strength of phenomenology in data analysis was that I approached my data with as few preconceived notions as possible. Given my history with the topic of technology and literacy learning, as well as my time spent with this data, it was an integral approach that helped me understand the most confounding moments with new perspective and ultimately led to the focus on the haunting moments that became the subject of this thesis. Specifically, it illuminated the complex social contexts of the Technology Think Tank and the classrooms. Through this method of analysis I was able to formulate a second category of codes that illuminated the social functions of technologies in the school.

As my codes revealed, interpretive phenomenological analysis helped me to see the workings of power relationships, the role and performance of identities, and the emergence of emotions in the activities of the Think Tank and the classrooms.



Table 8. Social Functions of Technologies

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF TECHNOLOGIES

Participating/Establishing- Children and teachers use technology to gain social capital with others and to establish relationships. (For example, Carson frequently taught other participants how to accomplish various technological objectives. When I complimented him about his teaching he responded “It’s cool that they think I’m good.’ Teachers regularly met in hallways and classrooms before and after school to discuss technology issues.)

Denying- Children and teachers use technology to deny social participation to others. (For example, Alyssa, Cassandra, and Jasmyn worked together to create an online memorial for her pet cat. However, when Daniel asked to help he was denied. Teachers used the results of weekly assessments to determine students who would study during recess time.)

Negotiating- Children and teachers use technology to negotiate for things they wish to acquire. (For example, Daniel agreed to help Carson sell something online, however Carson was required to give him a percentage of the profits. Mrs. Thompson negotiated with Carson regarding completion of his class work and his participation in the Think Tank.)

Controlling- Children and teachers use technology to control others. (For example, Carson threatened Matt that he was not going to help him if he didn’t listen to his directions. The school district used online charting systems to compare teachers to one another and to control their instruction.)

*Narration of Haunting Moments*

I have described how there were haunting moments that ensued during the course of this research project at Norwood Elementary School and were further identified in the course of layered data analysis. Particularly as a result of

interpretive phenomenology, a series of codes for the textual and social functions of technologies emerged.

As I began to anticipate narrating the haunting moments, I engaged in a back and forth process between my theoretical framework and ongoing data analysis. Theory pointed the way toward coding, while coding pointed back towards theory. The results of this recursive process are the upcoming chapters. But first, I situate the complex social contexts at Norwood Elementary School and in the Technology Think Tank in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

NORWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND THE TECHNOLOGY THINK  
TANK*Introduction*

Norwood Elementary School was situated in a mid-sized city with an interesting mix of industrial, agricultural, and professional jobs. As a result, socioeconomic statuses varied widely and settlement patterns in the community created economic and social divisions between the schools. For example, one elementary school, Woodville Elementary (where I taught for several years) was nestled at the center of a large neighborhood that boasted upscale homes. The students from these homes attended this local school with their neighborhood friends. Woodville Elementary School had many families that made high incomes and it was referred to as “a private, public school” by parents in the neighborhood as well as teachers in the school. At Norwood Elementary, on the other hand, many of the students’ parents worked at the local factories that populated the town. This school was considered to be working class and the families that made up the school were described by staff as “blue collar.”

Many of K-5 teachers at Norwood Elementary were within ten years or less of retirement at the time of this study. There were only three classroom teachers in the building who had less than five years of experience. Of the four

fourth and fifth grade teachers I met with in regards to this research, three had twenty or more years of experience. One had been teaching eleven years. At one point she was referred to as the “new” member of the team by Mrs. Thompson, another intermediate teacher. As was (and is) the case in many elementary schools, the majority of classroom teachers were women. There were two male teachers—one who taught kindergarten, the other third grade. The only other men in the building were the principal, the technology liaison, and two custodians.

### *Priorities and Tensions at Norwood Elementary School*

Although the school district had seemingly endless funds for very specific types of professional development, there was continual talk of saving money through cutting back on the use of basic materials and personnel at the building level. For instance, teachers mentioned in a staff meeting that it would be very useful to have the assistance of an associate to help deliver the many small group lessons required by the basal curriculum that had just been adopted. That request was denied by the school principal Mr. Wallace. For the first time ever, teachers were assigned codes to use when they wished to make photocopies. At first Mr. Wallace explained that the codes would be used simply to “track” the number of copies made by each teacher. By the third month, however, he had imposed specific copy limits for everyone. Tensions escalated when it was

discovered that teachers at other school buildings in the district were not required to enter codes for copying. Additionally, the bundles of paper for the machine, along with all other classroom supplies, were moved into a locked closet. In order to access these materials, teachers needed to seek out Mr. Wallace directly. He possessed the only key. These moves appeared to have a chilling effect on relations between many of the classroom teachers and Mr. Wallace. Ms. Ash, a teacher participant in this study, noted in an interview that these cost-saving measures were difficult to digest in light of the fact that the district appeared to “burn money” when it came to implementing the ‘data-driven’ expectations for teachers and the new basal curriculum and its accompanying technology.

The district mandates for curricular change and the emphasis on cost-cutting measures were significant issues at Norwood Elementary and were commonly paired in interesting ways through teacher discourse. In one conversation between Ms. Ash and Mrs. Pendle they called Mr. Wallace “cheap” and a “control freak” as they discussed the locked materials closet. Then they joked that they wished they could “lock the basal in the closet.” Taking the joke a step further, Mrs. Pendle noted that all the problems would be solved if they could “lock Mr. Wallace in the closet.”

### *Technocontexts at Norwood Elementary School*

There was a clear contrast between the ways that technology was used in the classrooms at Norwood School as compared to the Technology Think Tank. Unlike the enthusiasm that the Think Tank participants and I felt towards technology, it was a symbolic battleground (Bourdieu, 1977) between the classroom teachers and the school principal, Mr. Wallace.

Norwood Elementary School was deluged with new technologies along with myriad suggestions for their specific uses during this school year. Mr. Wallace, teacher committees, technology instructional liaisons, and even parents weighed in about how technology should be addressed within the context of classroom learning. Mr. Wallace was concerned with how technology could improve students' test-taking. This was an important objective as it not only met the expectations of the superintendent, and kept school funding secure, but testing results published yearly in the local paper were important for school reputation and enrollment. Four teachers who served on the school technology committee (none of whom were participants in this research) were invested in the notion that technology could improve student learning, however by the report of Mr. Wallace they were also "more progressive, more engaged in [their] classrooms." The job of the technology instructional liaison, Mr. Booker, was dependent on increasing the inclusion of technology into learning settings and he

reported directly to Mr. Wallace as well as top district administration. Parents were concerned that their students be prepared for post-secondary educational opportunities and their future workplaces. By and large the swirling discourses of these varied groups (administrators, teacher committees, technology instructional coaches, and parents) tended to lean towards technology and were able to outline its benefits in the schools. However, the objectives of each were book-ended by many classroom teachers who were not so enthusiastic about the inclusion of technology in their classrooms.

In my analysis there were four social functions of technologies that emerged as a result of data analysis: Participating/Establishing, Controlling, Denying, and Negotiating. These codes helped me to understand the juxtaposition between the technology proponents such as Mr. Wallace and the teachers who grew increasingly disenchanted with technology over the course of the year. I describe each coding category below along with several examples.

### *Technology and Participating/Establishing*

Technology was commonly used in the Technology Think Tank to gain social capital (Bourdieu, 1977). For the Think Tank participants it was “cool” to know how to use specific forms of technology. Carson, for example, marshalled his knowledge of video games into creating a spin-off group of other boys that would go to his house to play and “discuss the latest, awesomest games!” Carson

also took the lead in teaching his peers during the Technology Think Tank, and when I complimented him about his teaching he responded, "It's cool that they think I'm good." These activities not only increased Carson's participation in social milieus, but they established his identity in positive ways among his peer group.

It was also a form of social capital to be part of the Think Tank. After word spread about our after-school meetings, other students regularly stopped by the computer lab to say hello and see what we were doing. Many students asked if they could join us. Cassandra told me that it "was cool to be part of the Think Tank."

For the teacher participants at Norwood Elementary School, however, it was 'uncool' to participate with technology. Perhaps because of the initiatives at the building which caused ongoing tension and frustration, the teachers saw technology as a burden and a threat. They garnered social capital through increasingly denouncing technology. One way they did this was by castigating Mr. Booker, the technology liaison. They called him the "technology police" and rebuffed his attempts to come into their classrooms. They also held frequent hushed conversations together. These conversations typically centered around Mr. Wallace and his activities. There were several times when I encountered these conversations going on. Because I was a stranger to the building the



teachers involved would stop talking as I approached. This was a very disquieting experience. However, as I became more familiar with the teachers I was eventually included.

### *Technology and Denying*

Although technology was used to participate in social milieus, it was also used to deny social participation and/or positive social identities to others. Several of the students explained how they “blocked” some of the kids in their classrooms from their online accounts or games. Additionally, I have described how students would stop in after-school to visit our Technology Think Tank. In one unsettling instance Matt told one boy who entered the computer lab to “get out.” When I intervened Matt left the area, but he later told me he didn’t like the boy and did not “want him around.”

The Think Tank participants generally got along together, but in several instances they denied participation to one another. For example, Alyssa, Cassandra, and Jasmyn worked together to create an online memorial for Alyssa’s pet cat. However, when Daniel asked to help he was denied. “It’s just girls,” Jasmyn told him.

Although the teachers were decidedly anti-technology, they used it as justification to deny students privileges such as recess. For instance the teachers used the students’ scores on weekly online literacy assessments to determine

who could and could not participate in recess. Students who scored less than 65% on the end of week test had to remain indoors the following week and complete worksheet packets.

### *Technology and Negotiating*

Technology was used by teachers and students to negotiate for things they wanted or needed. In one funny instance I observed Daniel and Carson negotiate a deal whereby Daniel would help Carson sell a baseball card online. Daniel, who was typically the quietest member of the Technology Think Tank, drove a hard bargain and required Carson to give him a percentage of the profits.

In a more serious encounter, Mrs. Thompson attempted to negotiate with Carson about completing his school work by threatening to take away his participation in the Think Tank. Mrs. Thompson contacted me and asked that we meet briefly to discuss Carson. When I arrived in her classroom, she shared that Carson was not completing work and that the possibility of being dismissed from the Think Tank “might be a good motivation for him to get his act together.” She also explained that although the school did not have an official policy in regards to academic progress and after-school activities participation, she knew that the middle school Carson would attend next year did have such policies and that this would “be good preparation for what happens in his future.” Although I disagreed that Carson should lose the opportunity to

participate in the Think Tank, I told Mrs. Thompson that I would talk with him and see if we could figure out a way for his classroom work to get done. The result of this negotiation had disastrous consequences which I describe in Chapter 4.

### *Technology and Controlling*

Technology was regularly used as a tool in exerting control over others, even in the Technology Think Tank. For example, although Carson was generous in his teaching of other participants, he threatened another Think Tank participant that he was not going to help him if he didn't listen to his directions.

Technology was heavily used to try to control the teaching activities of the classroom teachers. Like all schools, Norwood Elementary was expected to participate in achieving the goals set forth by the district superintendent and other administration. At the time of this research these goals included an emphasis on 'data-driven, performance-based' instruction and assessment that required the use of multiple technologies. One specific way this manifested was in numerous after-school professional development sessions about ways to graph and chart student progress. At one meeting that I attended, teachers spent over two hours learning the agonizing specifics of how to create cluster charts using an online graphing program. These sessions were not collaborative or discussion-based. They were structured as step-by-step computer courses with

teachers seated at individual computer stations while the instructor stood at a screen at the front of the room. Here is a sample of a few moments from the cluster charting session (taught by the technology liaison Mr. Booker) that I attended with 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mrs. Thompson:

Mr. Booker:	To add another data point, press F1, then shift, then return.
Mrs. Thompson:	<i>(Muttering to herself)</i> F1, F1...
Mr. Booker:	Then shift again. Then F7 to save.
Mrs. Thompson:	<i>(Quietly)</i> F1. <i>(Turns to me)</i> What'd he say?
Lindsay:	I think shift next.
Mrs. Thompson:	<i>(Looking at keyboard and pushing up eyeglasses)</i> Shift, shift. Where? Wha- <i>(Under breath, quietly)</i> Oh shit.
Lindsay:	<i>(Laughs.)</i>

For anyone who has taken such a course, this brief snippet of talk may recall personal feelings of frustration. As Mrs. Thompson struggled to follow Mr. Booker's directions her ability to keep in mind the larger objective of charting students' progress seemed in jeopardy. I also had a challenging time creating the chart. As we left this particular session, Mrs. Thompson remarked that she was "exhausted" and claimed that she "already forgot everything" that was presented that day. I agreed. However, it was expected that teachers would continue to create these charts in their classrooms and display them for students and parents. Students were also expected to create their own 'data folders' wherein they would graph everything throughout their day from scores on spelling tests to classroom behavior. Mrs. Thompson later remarked in an

interview that she was “in trouble” with the technology liaison because she had “no cluster charts on the walls.”

Mrs. Thompson was not the only teacher “in trouble” with the technology liaison. Mrs. Pendle, another study participant, described efforts by Mr. Wallace to “remediate” her by requiring her to meet with Mr. Booker, the technology liaison and subsequent observations of her teaching. Mrs. Pendle was clearly aggravated by Mr. Booker whom she called the “technology police.” She described how Mr. Wallace and Mr. Booker increasingly surveyed the activities in the computer lab. On one occasion she joked that if she kept up her resistance to technology they were going to arrest her. More frequently, however, she was grim as she described how she felt that she was being “remediated” and “watched over.” Because of the district expectations and surveillance of their technology activities the teachers in this study generally felt that the technology they were asked to use was “not good,” or “a waste of time.”

The pervasive professional development and the uses of technology to measure progress was a mechanism of control that engulfed Norwood Elementary School during the year.

### **Control and Frustration**

As a result of the pervasive attempts at control at Norwood Elementary School frustration was palpable among the teachers who participated in this

study. In many cases it was directed towards Mr. Wallace. The teachers remarked that Mr. Wallace was “controlling” and “sometimes demeaning.” One teacher remarked that she felt “like a child” when she came to work. Mrs. Stone said: “I’m so frustrated my hair feels like it’s standing on end!” Mrs. Thompson said, “It’s frustrating. So frustrating, to be in this place.” Ms. Ash and Mrs. Pendle frequently inserted the word “frustrating” into their descriptions of how they felt as teachers at Norwood School.

Perhaps what was unknown to the classroom teachers was that frustration was shared equally by their students. Although they did not use the term “frustrating” explicitly, several of the Think Tank participants told me repeatedly that they “hated school” (as I described in Chapter 1, Matt said it eighteen times). Oftentimes, the students arrived at our after-school meetings looking exhausted. When I would ask how their school day went they would respond with “Fine.” My follow-up question: “What did you do today?” was often met with “Nothing.”

It is impossible to fully describe context of Norwood Elementary School and the Technology Think Tank without recognizing the enormous frustration that bubbled under the surface for almost everyone. There was constant daily pressure on teachers, administrators, and students, which was piled on top of district and school mandates and expectations for achievement, which was piled

on top of new initiatives. And if these were not enough to cause heartburn, the teachers commented that “there was always something more” —for example the requirement that teachers use codes when photocopying, schedule additional time in the computer lab, or attend more after-school professional development.

Frustration flooded the halls and classrooms of the school building. It emerged over and over again in social spaces and left its trace on the study participants. Perhaps the most telling marker of frustration is that as of this writing only one of the teacher participants in this study remains. Mrs. Stone still teaches 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Pendle opted for retirement. Ms. Ash is currently teaching science at a middle school in another school district. It is sobering to remember that while the teachers had the option to leave, the students did not.

In the next chapter I describe a series of haunting moments involving the discursive positioning of the school principal, a teacher, and two Think Tank students. I explain how this positioning was a mechanism of control by which the events in one context were carried over into other contexts and I explore how they were inextricable from power relationships, identity performances, and emotions.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCURSIVE POSITIONING AND POWER, IDENTITIES, AND EMOTIONS

#### Introduction

By the time I arrived at Norwood Elementary School in the spring, the year was underway and tensions among the teachers and principal were well-established. Interactions among school staff were often loaded. It was not uncommon to hear raised voices or see mouths set in grim lines.

As my analysis unfolded, particularly with the affordances of interpretive phenomenology, I saw the emergence of the social functions of technologies that I described in Chapters 2 and 3: Participating/Establishing, Denying, Negotiating, and Controlling. These functions were achieved through what has been theoretically described as ‘positioning’ (Davies & Harre, 2007) which theorizes how individuals are “constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” (p. 46). What made discursive positioning haunting in many cases, I realized, was its ability to marshal moves of power, identity performances, and emotions. In this chapter I describe three instances of discursive positioning that were related to one another through heteroglossic utterances. I describe heteroglossia at Norwood Elementary School in the next sections.



### *Heteroglossia at Norwood Elementary School*

In the opening chapter I described how Matt repeatedly said that he “hated school.” Although his utterances were the most numerous, he was not the only Think Tank participant to describe how he felt about school in this way. Carson, Daniel, and Kassandra at one time or another during interviews or in other settings stated that they “hated school” as well. And these students were well aware of each other’s feelings. In fact, they joked at one point about creating an “I Hate School” blog. Carson also told me that his older brother “hated his high school” and Daniel shared how his father “hated school when he was a kid.” The utterances about hating school, and everything related to those feelings, were speech performances that were shared and had roots in social histories. Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia helps us to understand language as “one link in a continuous chain of speech performances” (Morris, 2003, p. 35). The words we speak are not uniquely our own, Bakhtin (1981) asserts, but “constructed like mosaics out of the texts of others” (p. 69). Bakhtin’s further explains:

All words have the ‘taste’ of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life (p. 293).

The repeated proclamations by the Think Tank participants were just one way heteroglossia occurred. The next section examines the heteroglossic use of the term “blue collar.”

*“Blue Collar”: Another Example of Heteroglossia*

The teachers at Norwood Elementary School regularly referred to the school population as “blue collar.” While I was initially surprised to hear this descriptor, the term was naturalized among staff and was a common part of the school discourse. Mrs. Thompson said in interview, “This is a blue-collar town and we’re a blue-collar school. That’s just our reality here.” Although the term is only recorded in my audio files a total of three times (during interviews with Mrs. Thompson (two times) and Mrs. Pendle (one time), I heard this expression over and over again in casual interactions with a variety of school staff.

While it is easy to write off the emergence of an utterance such as ‘blue collar’ from multiple sources and social spaces within the school as an interesting novelty, I believe these heteroglossic utterances exposed an important undercurrent of thinking of what Norwood Elementary represented, who its students were, and what (literacy) learning could mean. In other words, it had direct ties to identities and power relationships in the school.

The big “D” discourses (Gee, 2008) of a “blue collar school” led teachers to take up specific identities that positioned them as preparers of children for

industrial and manufacturing jobs. For example Mrs. Thompson identified reading, math, and following directions as areas that were instructionally essential in order to “get these kids ready for the real world.” Mrs. Thompson’s teaching objectives were based in her belief that students at Norwood would primarily work in industrial and manufacturing jobs someday. It stands to reason that instruction in her classroom would include specific types of reading and math instruction delivered in specific ways. In my classroom observations, literacy experiences for her fifth grade students were tightly controlled and mostly literal. Students completed packets of worksheets after reading short excerpts from the basal curriculum. They completed a journal entry every day based on a prompt provided by Mrs. Thompson. There were weekly spelling lists and daily oral language. I did not observe literature circles or any types of discussions about texts outside of students being asked to respond to known-answer type questions. Even in small groups, students were primarily working on skills. The majority of the time I observed was spent identifying and defining specific vocabulary words in the text and sharing reading logs which noted how much time students were reading outside of school.

Being a “blue collar school” also accomplished power in that it positioned teachers as important in the process of preparing students for a specific world of work. For example Mrs. Thompson believed that students needed to practice

“following directions” as part of preparation for the “real world.” In her classroom this objective was accomplished through strict behavioral expectations. Students followed directions such as lining up silently, sharpening pencils before school, raising their hands to speak, and sitting quietly at their desks. When these expectations were unmet, Mrs. Thompson often required the student(s) to repeat the action in the “appropriate way.” One day I saw her class practice lining up at the door five times before they were allowed to proceed outside for recess. By the time this was complete the students had only a few minutes outside. Mrs. Thompson also had students follow directions in a more academic way. Several times each week she would list a series of directions on the board or a worksheet that students would follow. While I have observed other teachers in schools enforce classroom rules and the importance of following directions, these were emphasized to the extreme in the intermediate classrooms that I observed at Norwood Elementary School, and particularly in Mrs. Thompson’s classroom.

Power was also used by the teachers at Norwood Elementary to position themselves as different from teachers in other buildings in the school district. This was particularly evident during the release of the high stakes district-wide standardized test scores which placed Norwood Elementary towards the bottom in terms of student achievement. “Our students don’t always test well,” Ms. Ash

explained in one interview. “These tests are stacked against our kids,” Mrs. Thompson said. “They don’t have the blue collar kids that we do.” Notice that the teachers used the pronoun “our” in their statements which indicates possession of the students, while Mrs. Thompson used “we” to describe the teachers at Norwood as a collective group.

The “blue collar” heteroglossic utterances that circulated at Norwood Elementary School were inextricably linked with identity performances and power relationships. For the remainder of this chapter I turn to a haunting moment between Mrs. Thompson and Carson, her fifth grade student and a Technology Think Tank participant, with an eye to the role of discursive positioning in the emergence of emotions, power, and identities.

*Haunting Moments: Setting the Stage*

Okay, everyone. If you stand together you can see my blog here, and this is where I update each day. These are pretty easy to make, so, um, I’m going to help you set up one today. Then we can read and post on each other.

Carson, Age 11

Carson, a fifth grade student at Norwood Elementary School, uttered these words as he taught a group of his peers how to create a blog during one of our after-school Technology Think Tank meetings. Yet in his classroom he was known as a struggling, resistant learner who was told by his teacher, Mrs. Thompson, on at least one occasion that he was “a pain in the neck.” In

interviews with me, Mrs. Thompson described Carson as “not living up to his full potential,” “resistant to everything, except video games,” and “a slow learner.” Yet for the first half of the semester Carson was the group leader and resident expert in the Technology Think Tank. He was heavily involved in planning topics for weekly meetings, he taught and worked with his peers on our technology activities and he created a spin-off group of students interested in video games. The opening quote illustrates one of the many times that Carson taught his peers about technology comfortably and articulately.

Carson’s perilous membership in his classroom was highly polarized with his Think Tank membership. Ultimately his social membership and expert status in the Technology Think Tank were jeopardized after I observed a contentious interaction between Carson and his classroom teacher and subsequently attempted to initiate a conversation with Carson regarding completion of his classroom assignments. Carson’s identity performances and power relationships shifted dramatically and he became increasingly disconnected and peripheral in the Think Tank space.

Naturalized big “D” discourses (Gee, 2008) at Norwood Elementary School, along with institutionally-supported acts of power (Foucault, 1977) by his teachers which privileged traditional notions of school and its activities, increasingly dictated how Carson could participate in the Think Tank. As a

result, the discourses of the classroom and the Think Tank impinged on one another in significant ways. I raise questions about how literacy learning is intimately tied to power relationships, possibilities for identities, and the emergence of emotions as language 'teleports' heteroglossically through space and time.

### *Meet Carson*

Physically smaller in height and weight than many of the other boys and girls in his classroom, Carson had a shock of brown hair that fell across his forehead and often covered his bright blue eyes. He had an affinity for blue jeans with worn knees, colorful athletic sneakers that were often untied or without laces, and striped t-shirts of varying colors.

From our first Think Tank meeting, it was obvious that Carson was well-liked by his peers. He often initiated conversations with classmates, students would physically locate themselves near him, and his responses to our work together often set the tone for the meeting. For example, I asked the Think Tank participants to give me a tour of the school building on our first day. After some hesitation and looking about, Carson said, "Let's go to my locker!" He led the group while we trailed behind, and all of the other children insisted that we visit their lockers as well.

Although I had been discouraged from enrolling Carson in the Think Tank due to detailed descriptions of behavioral and learning difficulties by Mrs. Thompson, I discovered that he was eager to participate, enthusiastic about exploring new and familiar technology, and generally pleasant to be around. He had a ready laugh and a bright smile that was infectious. These characteristics were so unlike the unflattering reputation that preceded Carson that I initially wondered whether he had been confused with another student. However, I soon discovered that Carson acted differently when he was located in his classroom space. One significant factor in this difference was Carson's teacher, Mrs. Thompson.

### *Meet Mrs. Thompson*

A petite woman with short gray hair and glasses, Mrs. Thompson had been teaching elementary school for almost 40 years at the time of this research, with the majority of those years at Norwood Elementary School. Mrs. Thompson regularly hosted pre-service teachers in her classroom and was often selected as a mentor to new teachers in the school. She noted that she was "blunt, but caring" and I was told by many staff in the school that she was not afraid to say what she was thinking. Her candid responses during interviews figure prominently in these chapters. However, in our interactions I felt as though she



saw me as a young teacher and somewhat naïve to the ‘realities’ of classroom life. She often referred to me as “honey” or “sweetheart.”

Mrs. Thompson was an outspoken critic of video games and she forbade students from speaking or writing about their gaming in her classroom. When she learned about my intentions to form an after-school Technology Think Tank she asked, “Why a Think Tank, dear? Why not a... more...a book club?” And in a later interview said, “I think, honestly...there’s better things to do.”

Mrs. Thompson’s own experiences strongly shaped her thinking about children, teaching, and literacy learning. Her husband had gone to work in a local industrial facility and had successfully been promoted over the years. They lived in the neighborhood surrounding Norwood Elementary, and were friendly with several other families with similar experiences. Mrs. Thompson believed that their success was due to hard work and dedication. These qualities were emphasized in her classroom as she imagined a life for her students similar to her own. Although I did not agree with many of Mrs. Thompson’s views about literacy instruction or instructional practices, it was undeniable that her actions stemmed from desires to help her students in ways that she thought would lead to success. When she insisted on obedience or emphasized the importance of following directions, it was clear that she believed that obedience and following directions were critical to gaining and sustaining employment. She often referred

to how her husband's managerial position was made difficult because he "could not find qualified employees" and how "workers today just aren't as qualified or committed as they once were." When his plant was short of help, Mr. Thompson was called back to "work on the floor," a practice that she worried was leading him to consider early retirement. Mrs. Thompson's experiences and ideologies were paired with powerful school discourses that supported occupational preparation for her students. Her perspectives translated into specific types of learning activities that occurred in her classroom, many of which were highly structured and/or textbook-based. As a result, certain types of student identities, emotions, and engagement in power relations became possible and desirable, while others were discouraged and foreclosed.

### *Carson and the Technology Think Tank*

Perhaps no student was initially more interested and involved in the work of the Technology Think Tank than Carson. From the outset he demonstrated his knowledge of technology and video games through offering to tutor other participants, providing access to his own online web site, blog, and other online accounts, and voluntarily helping me plan which types of technologies we should explore during the first half of our sessions. In addition, Carson was often the first to arrive at the computer lab where we met each week and the last to leave. At the second meeting of the Think Tank, for instance, it was evident that

Carson was not feeling well. He had a cough that seemed to rattle his entire body and he complained that his head “seemed heavy.” Yet he was adamant that he felt well enough to stay and participate, and he declined to visit the school nurse on multiple occasions. I later learned from another participant that Carson had managed to make it through the entire day of school so that he could participate in the Think Tank, however he missed the rest of the school week with bronchitis.

Carson’s interest and commitment to the Think Tank was evidenced not only by his resolve at the beginning to attend each and every meeting, but also through the ways that he spoke about the activities of the Think Tank to his family members and friends. When I contacted Carson’s mother to introduce myself she shared that the Think Tank “is all Carson talks about these days” and that “he relates everything we do minute-by-minute to anyone who will listen.’ And with his friends Carson was the first to coin the term “Think Tanker” to denote those students who participated in our weekly meetings. When I visited Carson’s classroom I overheard him whisper to a classmate, “She’s here because I’m a Think Tanker,” and the classmate nodded knowingly. This moniker soon caught on with the other participants and they commonly identified themselves in this way.

For the first five weeks of the Think Tank, Carson took up the role of co-leader of the group. He assisted me in setting up and putting away equipment, volunteered to help me to plan the topics of our upcoming meetings, demonstrated his technology know-how to the group, and even spread word of the Think Tank throughout his school and home communities. Because he was so enthusiastic, I had many students approach me to ask if they could “join” our Think Tank community, and several teachers in the building commented about the positive feedback they were hearing from students. Most notable was Carson’s willingness to assume a ‘teaching identity’ (and the power that came along with it) when it came to introducing new technology. The opening lines of this section feature a few of Carson’s comments to the group about creating a blog. In this particular instance he stood comfortably in front of his peers with marker in his hand pointing out directions he had written on the board. This was only one of many times that Carson engaged in whole-group instruction. On another occasion he voluntarily created a two-page handout with detailed instructions for creating a personal website. Ultimately this handout made its way out of our group and into the hands of a third grade teacher who asked permission to copy it for her own use. Interestingly, she initially thought that the handout was created by me, and was very surprised to learn that Carson was the author.

*Preface to the Haunting Moments*

As I have described, haunting moments do not occur in a vacuum. They are born out of social histories that are often haunting themselves and they reverberate into other social contexts long afterwards. Below I describe a series of heteroglossic utterances that positioned speakers and hearers discursively with haunting effects. First a discussion between Mrs. Thompson and I where she described her frustration towards the school principal Mr. Wallace, which leaked into a frustrating interaction that occurred between Mrs. Thompson and Carson when I observed the class during literacy hour, followed by an incident that occurred in the Think Tank a day later.

*Mr. Wallace and Mrs. Thompson*

“Oh good, you’re still here,” Mrs. Thompson said breathlessly as she hurried down the hall towards me. “Come inside. You won’t believe this!” I was standing outside Mrs. Thompson’s door because I had requested a meeting to discuss the students in her classroom that were also participating in my after-school Technology Think Tank research project and to schedule a classroom observation. Before I could say anything Mrs. Thompson shared that she was upset by “the takeover of the supply closet” by Mr. Wallace which contained everyday office supplies such as paper clips, Post-It notes, tape, glue, and so forth as well as paper for the copy machine. “He told us that we wouldn’t just let

our students use supplies without asking, so he expected us to ask from now on!" she relayed with discernible tension in her voice. She described the way she perceived this directive as "being treated like a child" and noted "I could get more respect working in a McDonald's!" After a few minutes more conversation where Mrs. Thompson described looking for Mr. Wallace that morning so that she could make her photocopies, she sighed and said, "I'm too old for this."

As our topic changed to that of Think Tank business, I believed that the issue of Mr. Wallace and the supply closet was finished. However, a few minutes later Mrs. Pendle, another teacher participant, poked her head into the doorway to say hello. "Come inside. You won't believe this!" Mrs. Thompson invited. As the three of us stood together in the classroom Mrs. Thompson again recounted her morning's activities trying to access paper for the photocopier. Mrs. Pendle nodded along and made sympathetic noises. But then the conversation shifted in intensity. According to my notes and audio the change happened when Mrs. Pendle asked "Don't you usually make your copies at night?" Although Mrs. Pendle was clearly sympathetic to Mrs. Thompson during this conversation and had a history of being a congenial colleague, the question seemed to surprise Mrs. Thompson. Here is what transpired:

Mrs. Pendle: Don't you usually make copies at night? I mean--

Mrs. Thompson: (Pause). Well, yes, usually. I've got to try and prepare. But, in this case--

Mrs. Pendle: Mmm-hmm. Yes, I know--

Mrs. Thompson: I had to leave.  
 Mrs. Pendle: Yes. Right, right.  
 Mrs. Thompson: So here I am, chasing him down now. Looking all over. It's so disrespectful. I CAN'T. (Points finger downward). I WON'T BE TREATED LIKE... I'VE HAD IT. (Looking down.) I've got to get ready for the day.  
 Mrs. Pendle: Mmm. Yes. See you.  
 Lindsay: See you.

As Table 9 illustrates, Mrs. Thompson's volume increases dramatically in her conversation with Mrs. Pendle. Already she was speaking with increased volume throughout, but her last utterance goes above 80 dB which is considered "Possible hearing damage" according to the decibel meter (see Figure 2).

In addition to increasing her volume, Mrs. Thompson uses strong metaphors to indicate her frustration with Mr. Wallace ("being treated like a child" and "I could get more respect working in a McDonald's!") and names his actions as disrespectful. She was clearly upset. Little did I realize as I planned to return later for our scheduled classroom observation that these emotional utterances would emerge again in an encounter with Carson. Table 9 is the volume analysis of this interaction.

Table 9. Volume Analysis: Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Pendle

Speaker: Mrs. Pendle Utterance: Don't you usually make copies at night? I mean--	
55	51
Don't you usually	make copies at night? I mean--

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: Well, yes, usually. I've got to try and prepare. But, in this case—			
50	62	65	62
Well,	yes, usually.	I've got to try and	prepare.
62	61		
But,	in this case--		

Speaker: Mrs. Pendle Utterance: Mmm-hmm. Yes, I know—	
50	45
Mmm-hmm. Yes,	I know—



Table 9. Continued

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: I had to leave.	
65	69
I	had to leave.

Speaker: Mrs. Pendle Utterance: Yes. Right, right.	
51	
Yes. Right, right.	

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: So here I am, chasing him down now. Looking all over. It's so disrespectful. I CAN'T. I WON'T BE TREATED LIKE...I'VE HAD IT.		
65	72	69
So here I am,	Chasing him down now.	Looking all
68	68	82
Over. It's so	disrespectful.	I CAN'T. I WON'T
83	85	
BE TREATED LIKE...I'VE	HAD IT.	

*Mrs. Thompson and Carson*

The next day I visited Mrs. Thompson's classroom in order to observe Carson, as well as Kassandra and Matt, two other participants, during their language arts period. As I arrived the whole class was listening as Mrs. Thompson gave the daily assignment: write a page-long journal entry to the prompt on the blackboard ("What is your biggest fear? Why?"), followed by completing several spelling and vocabulary worksheets and then silent reading. In addition, Mrs. Thompson told the students that she would be meeting with two guided reading groups, and named the students who would be participating. Kassandra and Matt were called as part of the first group so they got up and joined Mrs. Thompson at a kidney-shaped table at the front of the room while I headed towards the back to check in with Carson. "Hey," I whispered as I slip up next to him in a chair. "How's it going?" As I have described, Carson was typically one of the most energetic, vivacious participants in our after-school group, so I was mildly surprised when he answered with a short whispered "Fine." Meanwhile, I noticed that he was looking towards the front of the room, so I followed his gaze and found that Mrs. Thompson was looking directly back at us. "We're supposed to be quiet," Carson whispered to me. "Or she'll take away my recess." "Okay, I'll be quiet, but I'm going to

observe, okay?" Carson nodded, then took up his pencil and bent over his notebook.

As I sat by while Carson wrote I gazed around the room and noticed that all of the students were working silently at their desks. The only sound in the classroom was Mrs. Thompson's voice at the front table and the scratching of pencils on paper. After approximately ten minutes, Carson put down his pencil, scratched his head, picked up his pencil again and looked at the dull tip, then slid out of his chair and headed for the sharpener across the room. He had gotten only a few steps before Mrs. Thompson's voice rang out, "Carson, where are you going?" Without speaking Carson pointed to the sharpener. "What did I tell you about that?" Mrs. Thompson replied. "Sharpen your pencils before school or after recess. Now you're out of luck. Go back to your seat." With an audible sigh Carson turned around and headed back to his desk. When he arrived he slid into his chair and sat slumped with one hand on his head. "Watch the attitude, Carson," Mrs. Thompson called from the front of the room. She then caught my gaze and shook her head from side to side. Carson did not acknowledge any of this activity and he continued to sit silently for five minutes. Finally, he picked up his pencil and proceeded to scratch out all that he had written at the beginning of class. When he finished he opened his desk, pulled out a worn library book, and sat reading.

Meanwhile, across the room Cassandra and Matt had been dismissed from their small group work with Mrs. Thompson and were at their desks working on the daily assignments. “Hi,” Cassandra whispered and smiled as I pulled up a chair near her desk. “Hi,” I whispered back while keeping a wary eye on the front of the room. “I’m almost done,” Cassandra shared while holding up her notebook for me to see. I observed that the page was filled completely with neat, cursive handwriting before Cassandra closed the cover and tucked the notebook into her desk. As she pulled a book out to read, I looked over at Matt who was still working on his journal. He fidgeted in his seat, wrote several words, erased them, and looked around the room. I was about to move closer, however Mrs. Thompson called Carson to the table at the front of the room and I moved in to observe.

His notebook in hand, Carson approached the table. At Mrs. Thompson’s request he opened to his page for that day and stood by while she looked at his scratched-out, incomplete entry. The following conversation ensued:

Mrs. Thompson: What should I think when I see your work looking like this?

Carson: (lowers head and mumbles) I don’t know.

Mrs. Thompson: I shouldn’t have to be having this conversation with you again. You don’t call the shots here, Carson. You are expected to complete the work that is assigned, no questions asked. No disrespect. No attitude.

Carson: Huh...mmm.

Mrs. Thompson: I expect you to act respectfully in this classroom. And this is not respectful.

Carson: BUT--  
 Mrs. Thompson: This isn't a choice. You'll be completing this assignment during your recess period.  
 Carson: OKAY!

Carson turned and walked back to his desk while Mrs. Thompson sighed audibly, stood from the table, and announced that students should line up for music class. As the students moved towards the door, Mrs. Thompson motioned for me to stay. Upon return, she shared that she felt "at the end of her rope" in finding ways to change this interaction pattern and "help Carson achieve in the classroom."

In the volume analysis of Mrs. Thompson and Carson there is a clear change in Carson's utterances from an almost-whisper to very loud as the conversation unfolds. He is clearly upset. Mrs. Thompson's volume stays fairly steady, although it is worth noting that she generally is speaking in a very loud voice as she reprimands Carson in front of the rest of his class.

Carson had his own view of the day's events when we debriefed at a lunch interview later that morning:

I think she [Mrs. Thompson] wants us to do what she says without asking any questions. It's like we're puppets or something, and we can't speak, can't move sometimes. She treats us like little kids. Like kindergartners. And she gets real mad when I don't do what she wants.

Volume analysis was helpful in understanding how emotions rose in this interaction. The volume analysis for this transcript is Table 10.

Table 10. Volume Analysis: Mrs. Thompson and Carson

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: What should I think when I see your work looking like this?	
59	62
What should I think when	I see your work looking like this?

Speaker: Carson Utterance: I don't know.	
42	
I don't know.	

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: I shouldn't have to be having this conversation with you again. You don't call the shots here, Carson. You are expected to complete the work that is assigned, no questions asked. No disrespect. No attitude.		
61	62	65
I shouldn't have to be having this	conversation with you	again.
62	62	
You don't call the shots here, Carson.	You are expected to complete the work	
60	62	
that is assigned,	no questions asked.	
65	66	
No disrespect.	No attitude.	

Table 10. Continued

Speaker: Carson Utterance: Huh...mmm	
42	
Huh...mmm	

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: I expect you to act respectfully in this classroom. And this is not respectful.	
65	68
I expect you to act	respectfully in this classroom.
69	67
And this is not	respectful

Speaker: Carson Utterance: BUT—	
69	
BUT--	

Table 10. Continued

Speaker: Mrs. Thompson Utterance: This isn't a choice. You'll be completing this assignment during your recess period.	
62	65
This isn't a choice.	You'll be completing this assignment
61	
during your recess period.	

Speaker: Carson Utterance: OKAY!	
74	
OKAY!	

### *Carson and Matt*

The following afternoon I had just sent groups of students off to work together in the Technology Think Tank when I was alerted by raised voices and when I moved closer I heard Carson say, "If I'm going to help you, I expect you to do what I ask, no questions asked." Noting the eerie similarity of those words to the earlier classroom observation, as well as Mrs. Thompson's comments about Mr. Wallace, I stepped toward Carson and Matt as I heard the following conversation:



- Matt: Carson, you don't have power over me. Quit bossing me around!
- Carson: You're....you are disrespecting me...(mumbles words that are unintelligible)
- Matt: You're on a serious power trip, man! Whatever. Dude. Whatever! Shut up.
- Carson: 'Cause I know what to do. Yeah, I'm in charge, man. Now listen!

Carson stated to me that he believed that Matt was "just goofing around" and "not listening to directions" and he requested that I join their group so that I could intervene. Later I heard Matt say, "'Bye, Mrs. Thompson!" "Shut up, man!" Carson retorted.

In the volume analysis for this interaction the decibel level stayed generally in the "Annoying" range according to the guide for the decibel meter — but it was certainly loud enough. The boys were clearly upset with one another.

Any of the three moments above could be considered haunting in and of themselves. However, the interaction between Mrs. Thompson and Carson in the classroom was the one that stuck with me the longest after it occurred. My analysis of the discursive positioning as a mechanism for control in this interaction, as well as the role of power, identity performances, and emotions illuminate what separates this moment from other everyday interactions.

Table 11. Volume Analysis: Carson and Matt.

Speaker: Matt	
Utterance: Carson, you don't have power over me. Quit bossing me around!	
72	73
Carson, you don't have	power over me.
75	
Quit bossing me around!	

Speaker: Carson	
Utterance: You're...you are disrespecting me...(mumbles words that are unintelligible)	
70	75
You're...	you are disrespecting me...

Table 11. Continued

Speaker: Matt	
Utterance: You're on a serious power trip, man! Whatever. Dude. <u>Whatever!</u> Shut up.	
72	73
You're on a serious power trip, man!	Whatever.
75	79
Dude.	Whatever!
75	
Shut up.	

Speaker: Carson		
Utterance: 'Cause I know what to do. Yeah, I'm in charge, man. Now listen!		
72	73	70
'Cause I know what to do.	Yeah,	I'm in charge, man.
71	79	
Now	listen!	

### *Heteroglossic Frustration*

Over the course of the three interactions above it is evident that utterances of “disrespect” and ‘doing what one has asked without asking questions’ emerged in one context and then teleported to other contexts and other participants. A backwards look at these interactions illustrates this concept nicely. In the Technology Think Tank meeting Carson said to Matt, “If I’m going to help you, I expect you to do what I ask, no questions asked.” It is possible to read this utterance sociohistorically and heteroglossically when we see that just days before Mrs. Thompson said to Carson, “You are expected to complete the work that is assigned, no questions asked.” Yet, we can trace this utterance even further back to my initial meeting with Mrs. Thompson on the first day of data collection when she noted with frustration that the school principal, Mr. Wallace, “wants us (the school staff) to do what he says without questioning, and he makes it so that we don’t feel like professionals in what we do.” In these utterances it is possible to map discourses of power across contexts. In this example power is equated with asking questions (or denying that right to others). Mrs. Thompson felt that she was expected to follow the directions of Mr. Wallace without question, a concept that was frustrating and disempowering to her, yet in another space she took away Carson’s opportunity to question. And,

Carson took up this discourse during his encounter with Matt when he conveyed that he expected him to follow directions, “no questions asked.”

In another example I trace how the heteroglossic language of respect/disrespect is conveyed. Mrs. Thompson explained how she felt disrespected by Mr. Wallace and that she “could get more respect working in a McDonald’s!” She also noted that she felt she was “being treated like a child,” which she likened to a lack of respect. She said in our talk before school with Mrs. Pendle, “So here I am, chasing him down now. Looking all over. It’s so disrespectful. I can’t. I won’t be treated like...I’ve had it.” Then, Mrs. Thompson confronted Carson about his work completion in class. She told him: “You don’t call the shots here, Carson. You are expected to complete the work that is assigned, no questions asked. No disrespect. No attitude.” She also said, “I expect you to act respectfully in this classroom. And this is not respectful.” But this discourse about disrespect continued into another space, when Carson told Matt that he is “in charge” and admonished him for “disrespecting me.”

As I map these utterances across three different contexts at different times and in different spaces the irony inherent in these tracings is undeniable. How is it possible for Mrs. Thompson, for example, to perpetuate the same types of oppression that she railed against only days earlier? And, what about Carson’s role in exerting power over Matt? Doesn’t he know firsthand how it feels to be

disempowered? Why would he recycle Mrs. Thompson's language in an after-school setting?

Returning to Bakhtin (1981), I argue that the answers to these questions lie in sociohistorical, heteroglossic understandings of language which populate our words with language spoken in history, in this case recent history. Carson, for example, 'took up' the discourses of power and (dis)respect because they were available to him in his social environment. When he needed a discourse that would serve his purposes during his work with Matt, Carson returned to what Mrs. Thompson had 'taught' him. Thus, Carson appropriated the language from his classroom for his own uses in another context, time, and space as he discursively positioned himself in his interaction with Matt. However, the story did not end there. Mrs. Thompson was also subject to the sociohistorical and heteroglossic nature of language. Although the limitations of this data prevented a wider tracing of utterances, we can be assured that Mrs. Thompson's discourses originated in other social milieus and that she appropriated these discourses for her purposes just like Carson.

What this means, more generally, is that language comes prepackaged from a variety of social contexts and histories, which are made our own through appropriation in familiar contexts. Therefore, language moves transcontextually, as well as across time and space. The transportable nature of language echoes

histories and ideologies. It also creates and forecloses possibilities by making available certain discourses while others remain unknown or unspoken. It is interesting to think about how history turns on utterances, and how different utterances may have produced different histories.

Now that I have established the emergence of heteroglossic language, I turn back to the data to understand how language in these three days circulated within relations of power.

### *The Outcomes of Heteroglossic Frustration*

#### *Discursive Positioning and Power*

In a school setting, relationships between and among school staff are often built on specific “codes of power” (Blackburn, 2003, p. 470). Norwood Elementary School was no different. Mrs. Thompson opened the previous section with comments that she felt she was “being treated like a child” and positioned Mr. Wallace, the school principal, as on “a power trip.” Interestingly, Mrs. Thompson was positioned by her students in a similar fashion. Cassandra described her perceived penchant for “control” while Carson noted that she wanted students to “do what she says without asking any questions,” and that she treated students “like we’re puppets.” However, in an interesting twist, Carson was described as being “on a power trip” and was compared to Mrs. Thompson by one of his peers.

Not only do these utterances again demonstrate the sociohistorical and heteroglossic nature of language, but they represent ways that relations of power “circulate” in social settings (Foucault, 1995). In these instances, hierarchical structures of authority are upheld in certain contexts, but challenged in others. For example, Mr. Wallace was perceived by Mrs. Thompson as exerting his control over school staff in undesirable yet fairly traditional ways. In many schools it is not uncommon for the principal to issue directives with the expectation that staff will follow unquestioningly, and apparently Norwood School was no exception. Also, Mrs. Thompson took up a ‘traditional’ position in her instructional practices. At least during language arts period it was evident that she had control of the classroom in terms of curriculum and management, and that students were expected to acquiesce. However, power was also taken up in unexpected ways, which was particularly evident in the transaction between Carson and Matt. Although they were classmates, Carson attempted to exert power over Matt while they were working together on creating a blog. Using his knowledge of the content (“Cause I know what to do”), Carson attempted to make a case for his more powerful position in this interaction. When he was unsuccessful, however, he turned to me as a ‘more powerful’ figure to resolve this issue.



However, power in these three spaces was not without its challenges. In the last example between Carson and Matt, Matt resisted Carson's intimations at power by saying, "Carson, you don't have power over me. Quit bossing me around!" This statement was followed shortly by Matt's assessment of Carson: "You're on a serious power trip, man! Whatever. Dude. Whatever! Shut up!" As these statements illustrate, Matt actively resisted Carson's power. In addition, Mrs. Thompson's power in the classroom was challenged by Carson in a variety of interesting ways. Not only did Carson resist through his actions (i.e. not completing the required assignment), but he also answered Mrs. Thompson in ways that limited dialogue. When Mrs. Thompson asked Carson, "What should I think when I see your work looking like this?" he lowered his head and mumbled "I don't know." When she countered by saying, "I shouldn't have to be having this conversation with you again. You don't call the shots here, Carson. You are expected to complete the work that is assigned, no questions asked. No disrespect. No attitude," Carson simply said, "Huh..mmm." And in response to Mrs. Thompson's verdict that he would complete his assignment during recess period, Carson raised his voice and emphatically said, "OKAY!" These responses lead me to speculate that in this social situation Carson was using language to resist Mrs. Thompson.

The previous examples have shown how power is challenged in face-to-face interactions, however these challenges often occur in other contexts with unrelated participants. Mrs. Thompson's conversation with me on the first day of data collection is an illustrative example. In speaking with me about the events of the morning's staff meeting and her frustration with Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Thompson challenged Mr. Wallace's power in the school building and established her own power as a rightful challenger to his directives. Her interesting comment that she "could get more respect working in a McDonald's," can be read in several ways. Either she was declaring herself unfit for her position in the school building and needed to find new employment in a fast food restaurant where she could earn respect, or she was purposefully challenging the status of the school and declaring it below that of the popular food chain. Based on my knowledge of Mrs. Thompson at the time of this utterance, I believe that she was making the latter claim in order to challenge Mr. Wallace's administration of the school. In addition, Mrs. Thompson said that she was "too old for this," which could certainly refer to chronological age, however "old" also signifies experience and wisdom, while the use of the demonstrative pronoun "this" indicates something that is so frivolous or unpleasant that she was unwilling to name it specifically. Put together, this phrase could be read as

Mrs. Thompson's efforts to highlight her experience and value in the school building while simultaneously weakening Mr. Wallace's directives.

As all of these examples show, power moves through social exchanges in complicated ways. Traditional structures of power are preserved within certain language events, yet flows of challenge and resistance move through every encounter and emerge in unexpected ways (Foucault, 1977). Now I turn to the role of language in the formation of social and learning identities.

### *Discursive Positioning and Identity Performances*

Our identities are made through language, and include what we say about ourselves as well as what others say about us. In addition, as described above, identities are constantly in motion as we participate in big "D" discourse communities (Gee, 2008). This section considers the ways that identities were created through language by and for Mrs. Thompson and Carson, and how such discourses created possibility and impossibility for discursive positioning in terms of social and learning identities.

In the above section on power, I argued that Mrs. Thompson's own descriptor of herself as "old" was synonymous with experience, wisdom, and status as opposed to a denotation of chronological age. And, though she argued that it was seemingly less palpable as a result of Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Thompson noted that her work was "professional." In addition, she said that she was

concerned with “helping Carson achieve in the classroom,” which denoted care towards the academic well-being of her students. The position of herself as teacher that Mrs. Thompson created, however, was subject to the discourses of others. Mr. Wallace, for example, challenged Mrs. Thompson’s position through his policies and directives. Meanwhile, Matt, Carson, and Cassandra named Mrs. Thompson as someone who liked to “control” the classroom and treated students as “puppets.” The convergence of these various discourses formed a pivot from which Mrs. Thompson had possibility for further discursive moves, yet they would be continually mediated through the social context in which Mrs. Thompson participated as a teacher and the identity that had already “thickened” through her sociohistory (Wortham, p. 48). In his text describing the convergence of social and academic identities, Wortham explicates how sociohistorical and locally emerging models converge through discourse and create opportunities for certain types of identities to be enacted, while foreclosing the possibility of others. This “convergence” was evident as Mrs. Thompson’s teacher identity was built through a multitude of positional discourses.

A closer look at ways that identity “thickens” in the classroom setting shows that Carson’s identity was informed by sociohistorical models of how fifth grade boys ‘should’ conduct themselves academically and behaviorally. In the case of this particular classroom, however, locally emerging models

contextualized these broader sociohistorical models in a chain of events that constructed Carson's identity within his classroom as someone who Mrs. Thompson felt I should "keep my eyes out for."

The interaction between Carson and Mrs. Thompson during language arts period offers a critical look at how models of identity inform discursive positions. The surveillance of Mrs. Thompson towards Carson at the beginning of the period with me ("We're supposed to be quiet or she'll take away my recess") indicates an identity as a "troublemaker". Next, Carson's troublemaker identity was supported by the interaction regarding the pencil sharpening when Mrs. Thompson immediately questioned Carson's movements in the classroom and required that he return to his seat. And, Mrs. Thompson "thickened" Carson's identity even further when she warned him to, "Watch the attitude," in front of his classmates and myself. It is interesting to note that only moments later I engaged in a short conversation with Kassandra and Mrs. Thompson did not intervene. However, Mrs. Thompson's comment that I would "be thrilled" with Kassandra's work indicated that she had a more positive academic (and possibly social) identity in this classroom.

Carson's identity as a "troublemaker" followed him in this particular social environment, and although possibilities for new identities are always possible, he faced an enormous challenge. Once models of identity are in place it

is difficult to uproot them. Many of us have experienced this when we believe we have not made a favorable impression in a social setting and attempt to rectify the situation. Ironically, discourses are full of potential and peril for our identities. Language, not knowledge, is power.

### *Discursive Positioning and Emotions*

Thus far I have explored how participants in discourse discursively position themselves in order to make moves of power and to perform desired identities. Positioning also leads to the interpersonal expression of emotions (Zembylas, 2005). In the following section I narrate Carson's emotions regarding the possibility of being excluded from the Think Tank due to not completing his classwork. Then I describe the influence of Carson's emotions on his decision-making about remaining in the Think Tank.

### **Carson Leaves the Think Tank**

After the interaction between Mrs. Thompson and Carson, Mrs. Thompson approached me to discuss how we could use Carson's participation in the Think Tank as "a lever" to get him to complete more of his classroom work. Although I disagreed that Carson should lose the opportunity to participate in the Think Tank, I told Mrs. Thompson that I would talk with him and see if we could figure out a way for his classroom work to get done. In the small span of time between this conversation and our Think Tank meeting I worried over how

I would broach this subject with Carson and experienced inner turmoil about my unexpected and undesirable position. When I told Carson that I had spoken with Mrs. Thompson that afternoon he seemed to know immediately what I would say, and with great emotion said, “I *know* what I can do! He knows. She knows (pointed at other students in close proximity). But she [Mrs. Thompson] doesn’t know. She doesn’t want to know!” These references seemed to indicate that Carson felt that he had abilities, including technology know-how, that were not recognized by his teacher. After these impassioned statements, Carson left the room to take a break and we did not return to this discussion that afternoon. And Carson did not appear at our next weekly meeting. Although he was at school that day, Kassandra shared that he told her he wanted to go home that afternoon to “do some other stuff.” And when I contacted Carson’s mother via email to inquire about his absence she wrote that “he should be there” and that she was not sure why he had gone home. When Carson did return several weeks later he no longer came early or stayed late, he declined to participate in generating ideas for Think Tank meetings or teaching the group, and he worked independently the majority of the time.

The change in Carson at our meetings was disconcerting not only to me, but to the other participants. Several students asked me about Carson’s absence, and at one point Kassandra noted, “I wish Carson was here. He would know

how to do this.” Because Carson had provided strong leadership and an infectious enthusiasm that pervaded the afternoon meetings, there was a noticeable absence when he was gone.

### **Emotional Effects**

In my analysis of Carson’s responses I theorize that emotions are interpersonally experienced, emerge out of social histories, and that the expression of emotions satisfies specific personal and social functions.

Rather than as an interior experience, emotions are experienced interpersonally (Boler, 1999, Micciche, 2007, Zembylas, 2005). One example is how the other Think Tank participants looked on as Carson said, “I *know* what I can do! He knows. She knows (pointed at other students in close proximity). But she [Mrs. Thompson] doesn’t know. She doesn’t want to know!” In this moment Carson was including all of us in his anger, disbelief, and sadness.

Emotions also emerge out of social histories. This was particularly evident when I pulled Carson aside to inform him that I had spoken with Mrs. Thompson. He knew immediately what I would say. This knowledge was founded in previous interactions with Mrs. Thompson, including previous moves of power, identity performances, and expressions of emotions. In my analysis of this moment, I have often thought that Carson’s words felt as though



they were a long time coming. Clearly these emotions were part of a longer social history.

Lastly, the expression of emotions satisfies specific personal and social functions. For Carson, his burst of emotions seemed to speak back to the power moves and identity that had become increasingly disconnected from how he saw himself. In an almost self-protective way he used his emotions to fight back. However, this response came with a cost. The leadership identity he had crafted during the first weeks of the Think Tank was displaced by a student struggling to resist power and an undesirable identity. The results were devastating as his participation in the Think Tank was no longer desirable or possible.

In this chapter I described how discursive positioning was a mechanism that was saturated with heteroglossia and had significant effects on power, identities and emotions. In Chapter 5, I turn to the role of surveillance at Norwood Elementary School and the Think Tank as a mechanism for control along with a continued exploration of power, identities, and emotions.

## CHAPTER 5

## SURVEILLANCE AND POWER, IDENTITIES, AND EMOTIONS

Introduction

In the previous chapter I described how a particularly haunting moment began as Mrs. Thompson's frustration with Mr. Wallace in one context, and then boiled over into a contentious interaction in the classroom between Mrs. Thompson and Carson, and emerged again the following day in the Technology Think Tank between Carson and Matt through heteroglossic utterances. I also explored how participants used discursive positioning and what power, identities, and emotions had to do with these moments.

In this chapter I take the same approach as I describe the uses of surveillance at Norwood Elementary School. Surveillance during the course of this research study was an omnipresent factor in the lives of the teachers and students. I narrate how surveillance was increasingly used as a mechanism for power, and the ways that teachers and students resisted that power, performed identities, and expressed emotions.

*Out with the Old (Guided Reading Library) and In with the New (Basal)*

The everyday teaching and learning of Norwood Elementary School was complicated as the classroom teachers struggled to implement an all-encompassing basal curriculum that the school district had adopted to replace all

other reading and language arts curricula. (The previous literacy curriculum was a combination of meaning-focused methods, such as guided reading, literature circles, reading and writing workshops.) The transition to this basal curriculum was more than a curricular change for many of the teachers and students at Norwood School. As the school moved away from guided reading and reading workshop approaches, Norwood's guided reading library, which contained multiple copies of picture and chapter books for students, was disassembled. Books which had been painstakingly collected for years were given away in less than thirty minutes during an after-school meeting. This was a particularly traumatic time for some teachers in the building. When the plans to take apart the guided reading library were announced at a staff meeting, the following conversation began at our table:

Mrs. Stone: I don't think this is a good idea-

Mrs. Thompson: No, not at all.

Mrs. Stone: What--?

Mrs. Thompson: This is wrong. I'm going to say (she raises her hand to address the group) something. (Speaking aloud) Excuse me, but I don't think this is a good idea. We've put a lot of work into this [guided reading library]. (Pushes up her eyeglasses.)

Mr. Wallace: Like, uh, I just said, the basal will provide new books that fit the curriculum. Ahem, and we need the space for the new associates. Who will be helping in your classrooms ( ) spaces.

Mrs. Thompson: (Shaking her head back and forth, says quietly to Mrs. Stone) Giving books away. Sad.

Mrs. Stone: Mmm-hmm.

This particular slice of conversation was especially powerful as Mrs. Thompson named an emotion she felt—sadness, along with other emotions such as dismay, “This is wrong. I’m going to say something,” and disbelief (as evidenced by the shaking of her head). In her public plea to stop the deconstruction of the library she noted the amount of effort (“We’ve put a lot of work into this”) that was required to build the space. However, her emotions appeared to not only be founded in the loss of time and energy. In her initial interview with me (before this staff meeting) Mrs. Thompson talked extensively about the value of reading books as opposed to engaging in various technologies. She said that she liked her students to “read real, physical books” and books were “the most important part of her classroom.” She also identified herself as an “avid reader.” She said:

Mrs. Thompson: I always had my nose in a book as a child. Still do. I love to read.  
 Lindsay: Do you read online? Or think that...  
 Mrs. Thompson: I’m a book gal. I like books.  
 Lindsay: Okay.

The loss of the guided reading library was indicative of a broader shift of the literacy curriculum of the school away from trade books and towards a packaged curriculum with a strong technology component. For teachers like Mrs. Thompson, who valued “real, physical books,” this was a disconcerting change.

### *Online Assessment*

As an unwilling participant on the district basal selection committee the year prior, I know firsthand that the ability to test online and create comparative charts were some of the primary reasons the new basal curriculum was purchased over other options. We were continually reminded by district administration to consider the “important role of technology” in the curricula we reviewed. This interest was driven in part by an emphasis on improving students’ standardized test scores in order to comply with state and federal legislation.

In the basal program, student progress was measured primarily through online assessment. Teachers would present the ‘story of the week’ along with skills lessons. Then, students would take an end-of-week test on the items that were supposed to be learned. Not only were students privy to their ongoing results (this included kindergarteners), but teachers were given comparison spreadsheets among students. In addition, instructional coaches received reports that measured teachers against one another. To accomplish this testing, teachers were required to take their students to the computer lab on a regular basis which quickly became a point of contention. “Is this what is supposed to teach reading?” Mrs. Pendle asked in one interview. “A waste.” Mrs. Thompson also noted the time taken to “walk down there [the computer lab], take the test, walk

back again...we have so much to do.” It was clear that the teachers saw the weekly testing associated with the basal as outside of the important work of teaching reading. As a result, they took their students and did the required testing, but went no further in utilizing any of the resources available in the computer lab. During all the times I observed except one, students were first required to take the test, and then were free to use the rest of their time to play games such as Oregon Trail or Number Munchers. The other time I observed the students were required to practice their keyboarding skills.

The emphasis on weekly testing, and the subsequent comparison charting that occurred, took time away from the teaching and learning that the teachers felt was important. However it also was a major shift in the surveillance of teachers.

### *Charting Assessment Results*

One outcome of testing students online was the ability of the school district to gather large amounts of data by which they could measure teachers and students against one another. A software program provided by the curriculum’s publishing company could tabulate test results for an entire class, and then compare it to previous weeks’ assessments as well as to other classes at Norwood School and other classes across the school district. The instructional coaches were responsible for preparing the whole class charts as well as

comparison graphs and presenting them to teachers. By the time of this research this had devolved into the distribution of charts into individual mailboxes. Mrs. Thompson commented that she “hated to go to her mailbox” because she often found “those damn charts.” In an ironic twist she proudly shared with me several times that her students always performed better on the weekly tests than her grade-level colleagues.

### *Instructional Coaches*

Classroom teachers at Norwood Elementary were admonished repeatedly about implementing the curriculum “with fidelity.” In order to be assured of “fidelity” instructional coaches made scheduled and unscheduled visits to classrooms to observe how the curriculum was being implemented in practice.

The instructional coaches used lengthy checklists in order to assess the teaching activities of classroom teachers. These checklists included specific items that included whether the teacher specifically read the lesson objectives at the start of the lesson, introduced vocabulary words in the manner dictated by the curriculum, summarized the lesson, and so on.

Interestingly, teachers rarely were privy to the results of these checklists. Instead they were presented to Mr. Wallace for review, and then sent on to district administration. Were these papers kept and added to teachers’ personnel

files? Were they used to determine leadership positions, perks, or disciplinary actions within the district? No one knew.

Teachers were also required to submit their lesson plans to the instructional coaches who collected them and made written comments about the content of the lessons. The marked-up plans were returned to teachers' mailboxes—usually after the lesson had been delivered—offering little opportunity for interpersonal collaboration and negotiation.

### *Administrative Visits*

Mr. Wallace, the school administrator, was also expected to complete “walk throughs” in each classroom every week as directed by the district superintendent. He explained in a staff meeting that he had the option to schedule these with teachers, but he decided to swing in unexpectedly in order to “be more spontaneous” and “to see what is really going on.” In the times that I saw Mr. Wallace enter a classroom I observed that he lingered around the edges. He said very little to the students or the teacher during the visit.

The ongoing visits into classrooms drew the attention of the students in the Technology Think Tank. They noted how it was “weird” that Mr. Wallace “just comes in and sits in the back.” (Up until this current year he had not visited classrooms with any regularity.) The students were even less enthusiastic about the visits from the instructional coaches. When I asked Matt to tell me about the



coach he shrugged and said, “She’s just some lady. I don’t know.” When I pressed him I discovered that he didn’t even know her name. The other Think Tank students did not either.

The teachers and students at Norwood Elementary School were subject to high levels of surveillance. Just as Foucault (1977) described, this watching lingered over every interaction. Teachers and students never knew when a visitor would appear in the classroom.

### *Haunting Moments: Setting the Stage*

Without a doubt the teachers at Norwood Elementary School were wary of the new basal curriculum. The four intermediate teachers who were part of this study commented about it frequently. They disliked the change from the guided reading and workshop approaches they had been using, felt that turning in their lesson plans each week was “extra work,” and were threatened by the weekly tests that measured them not only against one another but other teachers in the school district. Most often, however, they complained loudly about the increased surveillance that came along with the new curriculum.

### *More Surveillance: Mr. Booker*

In addition to weekly visits by the instructional coach and Mr. Wallace, the teachers felt that their work was scrutinized by Mr. Booker, the school’s technology liaison. Mr. Booker was a former middle school teacher who had

moved into this newly created position a year earlier intended to help teachers “utilize the district’s technology resources more fully.”

My assessment of Mr. Booker was that he seemed to be a person trying too hard to please his boss, Mr. Wallace. The two men throughout the semester spent a lot of time together. On regular occasions when I entered the school building I could see Mr. Booker sitting in Mr. Wallace’s office. Sometimes it appeared the two were in deep conversations, while at other times they were laughing loudly together. I was not the only one who noticed the friendship of the two. Ms. Ash used the popular culture term “brown nosing” to describe the way Mr. Booker interacted with Mr. Wallace.

The teachers also described Mr. Booker as the “technology police” on a regular basis. “I just had a run-in with the technology police,” Mrs. Thompson said as she sat down for a quick conversation with a grin on her face. “Didn’t do my charts—put me in jail!” she said to Mr. Booker another time.

During the spring, Mr. Booker proposed at a staff meeting that the teachers not only turn in their lesson plans to the instructional coach but also to him so that he could make “technology suggestions” that would fit with the lessons they had planned. Although this seemed to be a potentially helpful proposition, it was offered at exactly the wrong time. The teachers were already frustrated by many other situations which I have described and they saw this

proposal as another layer of work and, perhaps more importantly, another layer of surveillance. The result was anger—as evidenced by a string of follow-up meetings, emails, and heated conversations among teachers. “I’m tired of this,” said Mrs. Pendle. “Quit asking for more every minute.” “This guy is going to push me over the edge,” Ms. Ash said.

### *Even More Surveillance: Data Folders and Recess*

The teachers were not the only ones experiencing increased surveillance and additional workload. The use of ‘data folders’ for the charting of student progress became an expectation for all elementary teachers during this school year. These data folders were actually surveillance for students and teachers. Multiple times each day the students would graph their results in a variety of areas: math fact tests, spelling tests, behavior, naming US states, etc. These folders were meant to inspire students to “take responsibility for their learning” by helping them to “see their progress.” However, it was quickly apparent that these folders became evidence of a lack of progress for some students. Daniel, for example, struggled mightily with the weekly spelling tests. No matter how much he studied he missed many words each week. Not surprisingly he began to skip graphing his spelling scores. After several weeks his teacher discovered this and Daniel had to stay in for recess and update his graph.

The folders were also a layer of surveillance for the classroom teachers. During his “spontaneous” visits Mr. Wallace would frequently pick up random data folders in the classroom and flip through them. I was visiting Mrs. Pendle’s classroom when I observed this. He frowned as he looked at the student’s data in his hands, then leaned over and asked the student why he did not do better on his geography test.

I described how the new basal curriculum required students to take a weekly test that measured them against one another as well as students from other schools. Partly because the teachers felt this increased pressure for their students to do well they developed and instituted a school policy where students who scored less than 65% on the weekly test were required the next week to spend recess indoors in order to prepare for the next test. However, the teachers quickly discovered that having students in their classrooms day after day during this time meant that they were not able to accomplish other objectives. Therefore they set up a schedule where they rotated supervision duties and provided students with packets of worksheets.

There began a pattern of the same students having to spend recess indoors day after day. Two of these students were Matt and Carson. In fact, I learned of this entire system when the two spent time in the Technology Think Tank trying

to devise a code system whereby they could communicate without the detection of the supervisor.

It was strangely ironic that the teachers at Norwood Elementary School were so frustrated by the actions of administration to survey them and make moves of power to add additional responsibilities and expectations, however these same activities were simultaneously being carried out by teachers on their students.

### *Surveillance in the Think Tank*

Surveillance and the power it afforded were not limited to the teachers and administration at Norwood Elementary School. Students in the Technology Think Tank watched one another.

In the Think Tank surveillance took mild forms such as Daniel commenting on Cassandra's regular application of lip gloss as "lip grease" or Matt complimenting Carson's new tennis shoes. However, in several cases it took a more serious turn. In the first instance that I observed, Carson was talking with Matt and Marcus about having to stay in for recess. He started to explain that he thought he might study harder so that he could pass the week's test and return to recess with his peers. Matt interrupted him with "That would mess us up, man. You said you'd stay all year." When I overheard this conversation I asked Matt and Carson to tell me more. The boys sheepishly explained that it was their

“goal” to score below the 65% benchmark on purpose in order to miss recess for the rest of the year. They thought it would “bug their teachers” and “be funny.” When Carson suggested that he might change this plan, Matt disciplined him.

In another instance of surveillance, Daniel—one of the quietest members of the Think Tank—shared with the group that he liked a video he had seen on YouTube of a kitten. The other boys in the Think Tank immediately laughed derisively. In this moment I intervened, but the short response had done its damage. Daniel flushed and didn’t say anything for the remainder of the meeting.

### *The Outcomes of Surveillance*

The many layers of surveillance that were layered over every interaction at Norwood Elementary School were directly tied to the accomplishment of power in relationships, the performance of teacher and student identities, and the emergence of emotions. In the following sections I analyze their effects.

### *Surveillance as a Mechanism of Power*

Surveillance is described by Foucault (1977) as a primary mechanism of power. More specifically, he describes the establishment of a “Panopticon” (p. 205) which functions as a means of surveillance. I explore three characteristics of the Panopticon that were evident in my research data: visibility of the teachers and students, definition of instruments of power, and distribution of individuals.

### **Visibility of the Teachers and Students**

In Foucault's conception of the Panopticon there is the continual threat of surveillance from a "central tower" (p. 201). One can never be sure they are being watched at any given moment. This notion of visibility was central to the new basal curriculum as teachers were subject to unannounced classrooms visits by Mr. Wallace and the instructional coach, were required to turn in their lesson plans on a weekly basis, and were measured against one another through the use of online assessments.

The uses of online assessments to measure teachers against one another were particularly troubling as the effects of this practice leaked into a variety of relationships: the teachers with Mr. Wallace, the teachers with each other, and the teachers with their students. Because the teachers' relationship with Mr. Wallace was already strained due to a myriad of other issues, the addition of the online testing just served to further increase the distance between them and make the chances of a general reconciliation even more remote. However, the intrusion of the weekly comparison charts among the teachers had more serious effects. As Foucault describes, surveillance is not simply limited to those with named authority—we all engage in surveillance of one another and exercise discipline over one another as a result. The ability of the teachers to survey one another's progress amplified their power over one another—particularly for

teachers like Mrs. Thompson whose students did the best on the weekly assessments most weeks. Although she complained about “those damn charts” she was well aware that her students always performed better on the weekly tests than her grade-level colleagues. This knowledge emerged in her conversations with me and with other teachers. For instance, Mrs. Thompson told Mrs. Pendle that she should “spend more time teaching spelling,” when Mrs. Pendle shared that some of her students were struggling with weekly words. I also overheard her telling a parent that her students “had done the best of the fifth graders” in an after-school conversation about the test results.

Besides the effects that surveillance had on the relationships between teachers, the most serious outcomes involved the students whose every move was watched and measured by their classroom teachers, as well as strangers such as the instructional coach, Mr. Wallace, and unknown entities at the district offices. Recess, the only unsupervised time that remained in the children’s day, became a tool for discipline. When expectations were not met, the students lost that time and were returned to heightened surveillance once more. Just as Foucault (1977) described, ‘watching’ lingered over every interaction.

### **Definition of the Instruments of Power**

In addition to oppressive visibility, the new curriculum was saturated with various instruments of power to effect actions on the part of teachers and



students. The checklists and marked-up lesson plans by the instructional coaches were two examples. Another looming instrument of power was the weekly results of the online assessments. The teachers were well aware that their students were being compared to one another and that judgments about their teaching were made as a result. There were rumors around the school that teachers whose classes did not do well on the assessments would be reassigned to other buildings or “let go” in the following year. This was never confirmed by the school district, but it wasn’t denied either. From my perspective there was a distinct ambiguity about the entire process that led to a large amount of uncertainty and anxiety among the teachers.

### **Distribution of Individuals**

Foucault (1977) describes the way that the Panopticon serves in the “distribution of individuals in relation to one another” (p. 205). This distribution is the result of accomplishing surveillance. At Norwood School this distribution was accomplished through the weekly charts and graphs that were created, distributed, and showcased throughout the school building. It also occurred through the pervasive presence of data folders which reminded students on a continual basis of their progress, or lack thereof, in relation to others. For Daniel, for example, the data folder was a daily reminder of his difficulties with spelling.

The data folders were also a way for teachers to compare and distribute students. Although it may be argued that comparison among students is necessary in some cases to establish grades and determine future teaching, it is important to remember that the data folders could only measure quantitatively. Math facts tests, spelling, ratings of behavior on a scale of 1-10—these were the kinds of things the students were graphing. There were no narrative comments, self-assessment, ability to show change and growth over time, etc. As Mr. Booker shared during a professional development session the data folders were intended to see how students performed “at a glance.”

### **The Panopticon and Power**

Although I have just described how elements of the Panopticon at Norwood Elementary School were used as mechanisms to accomplish power, Foucault (1977) reminds us that power is never one-directional and that for every move of power there is resistance.

At Norwood Elementary the teachers resisted Mr. Wallace through a variety of mechanisms: withholding friendliness (many of the teachers in this study were not speaking to Mr. Wallace at the conclusion of this study), questioning his directives, and passively resisting school initiatives. For example, I described how Mr. Wallace and Mr. Booker were interested in bringing the technology resources of the school into everyday learning. The teachers were so

disgruntled by the expectation of the weekly assessments that they strongly resisted these advances. I have detailed how they used their computer lab time simply for keyboarding practice and school-sanctioned games. It is only speculative, but in another context it is possible to see how Mrs. Thompson and the other teachers could have embraced technology if moves of power had happened differently.

One of the most interesting examples of resistance to power was how Carson and Matt purposely tried to stay in for recess and created a code system to communicate without the knowledge of the supervisor. I will address this situation again in regards to identities, but from a power perspective Matt and Carson made moves to resist the efforts of teachers to discipline them.

Power at Norwood Elementary School and in the Technology Think Tank was pervasively exercised through the use of surveillance, however it was duly resisted. In the next section I turn to the role of surveillance in identity performances.

### *Surveillance and Identity Performances*

The pressure teachers felt from the rigorous assessment of students was compounded by an unstated yet commonly understood notion that the basal had been adopted because, as Mrs. Pendle asserted, “teachers weren’t doing their jobs right.” And it did appear that Mrs. Pendle had a point. Over and over again

teachers were reminded about the importance of “fidelity” in using all parts of the basal. Instructional coaches were in and out of classrooms with clipboards. The level of surveillance over teachers during this time was remarkable. Although the days of advertising basals as “teacher-proof” are over (Goodman, 1994), it did appear that the purpose of the new curriculum was to override the work and experience of the teacher in the classroom.

I believe that the teachers’ feeling that they were under-performing was shared by the students, particularly in the intermediate grades who grew increasingly aware of their progress in relation to others. I have described how the students in the Think Tank looked exhausted when they arrived for our after-school meetings.

The surveillance at Norwood Elementary led to the creation of specific identities for teachers and students. Although the teachers were highly experienced and loyal to the school they became, during the course of the year, ‘teachers in need of a proscribed curriculum and remediation.’ The same was true for students—and some more than others. The introduction of the new curriculum suggested that students weren’t performing well enough, and the difficulties some students encountered when taking the weekly assessments thickened their identities (Wortham, 2006) as struggling, unsuccessful learners.

It is worth considering how the identities of Mr. Wallace, Mr. Booker, and the instructional coach were constructed during this year. I am aware that my narration has painted Mr. Wallace in particularly unbecoming ways but he was also subject to a specific set of identity possibilities in his role as the building administrator. The new basal curriculum and all of its unappetizing components were not his choice—he simply carried out the directives from the school district. While one could argue that his communicative techniques were not effective with the teachers in the building, I have illustrated how communication, and the power it represents, is a two-way endeavor.

Mr. Booker and the instructional coach were also subject to limited identity performances. As surveillance arms of the school district and Mr. Wallace they became identified with everything the teachers disliked about the new curriculum. I did not have the chance to get to know the instructional coach at Norwood Elementary, but I did know many others in other school buildings who described the loneliness they experienced as they did not “fit with the teachers” but also were not administration. Although Ms. Ash described the “brown nosing” of Mr. Booker, it is possible that he was just trying to build a friendly relationship with someone in the building.

### *Surveillance and Emotions*

Although the inclusion of technology into literacy learning has been trumpeted by academics who support its use in new ways of constructing meaning and as a tool for enticing reluctant students, this use of technology in this context is just one illustration of the way that it has been co-opted unexpectedly in the service of surveying and sorting students through standardized assessments. For the teachers at Norwood, this was problematic on a variety of levels. “Our students don’t always test well,” Ms. Ash explained in one interview. “These tests are stacked against our kids,” Mrs. Thompson said. The teachers generally believed that their students were at a disadvantage when it came to the weekly online basal tests. If the history of standardized testing in the district was any indicator, they were right. In the previous five years, Norwood school was in the bottom quarter of schools in the district. This clearly bothered the teachers in this study. Many years of teaching at Norwood School as well as their connections to the neighborhood made them intensely loyal to the school and their students generally. It just so happened that I was in the building on the spring day the test results were released in the newspaper for the year. Once again Norwood was towards the bottom. “I’d put our kids up against some of those other kids [at other schools] any day,” Mrs. Thompson said as she glanced over the list.

Before she handed out the individual test result forms Ms. Ash spoke with her students at length. In her talk she told the students the “tests don’t define you” and “trying hard is what counts most.” As students looked over their sheets I observed many students’ dawning realizations that they hadn’t done as well as they might have hoped. Some students physically sagged in their seats while others shoved the papers into their desks. Some grumbled to one another about how “stupid” tests were. Ms. Ash turned towards her desk and away from the students. She touched her temples briefly with her hands, then took several breaths. When she turned back around she had a strained smile on her face. “Let’s head outside,” she said.

Again identifying emotions in moments such as these is slippery. In regards to emotions I often wondered “How can I really *know*?” And yet I did. As the discipline (Foucault, 1977) of the test scores emerged there was a shared sense of disappointment, sadness, and frustration.

## CHAPTER 6

## A FRAMEWORK FOR HAUNTING MOMENTS

*Understanding Haunting Moments*

In Chapter 2, I laid out the purposes of this research to craft a framework for understanding the haunting moments of my time with seven intermediate students and their teachers at Norwood Elementary School and in the after-school Technology Think Tank. In these concluding sections I return to the research questions that guided this study:

- 1) How does power emerge and circulate in haunting moments?
- 2) How do the haunting moments at Norwood Elementary School lead to identity performances?
- 3) What is the role of emotions in these moments?
- 4) How are haunting moments theorized in response to mechanisms of control and agency?

In the next section I begin to address each research question, beginning with question 1: How does power emerge and circulate in haunting moments? But first, I include a brief summary of the haunting moments in Table 12.



Table 12. Summary of Haunting Moments

Haunting Moments at Norwood Elementary School and in the Technology Think Tank	
Discursive Positioning	Surveillance
<p>The first series of interactions began with Mrs. Thompson's frustration over Mr. Wallace's policies, including locking everyday school supplies in a closet. Their encounter was followed by a contentious discussion between Mrs. Thompson and Carson regarding his completion of assignments and his disregard of the classroom policy regarding pencil sharpening. Finally, Caron expressed his frustration in the Technology Think Tank when he felt that Matt was not following his directions. All of these moments included heteroglossic themes of (dis)respect and were tied to efforts to discursively position teachers or students in problematic ways.</p>	<p>These haunting moments involved the role of surveillance in the new basal curriculum via weekly online assessments. They were compounded by requiring teachers to submit to spontaneous classroom observations and evaluations by administration, instructional coaches, and the technology liaison. As a result of these pressures the teachers instituted a disciplinary policy whereby some students were required to miss recess as a result of their weekly test scores. I also examined the role of surveillance among the Think Tank participants as they monitored one another's discourses and behaviors.</p>

### *Standardization and Resistance*

I assert that the mechanisms of control (positioning and surveillance) that permeated the haunting moments at Norwood School were employed in the service of a larger objective: the standardization of individuals and activities. Foucault (1977) describes standardization as "normalization" which he says is "one of the great instruments of power" (184). Normalization, or standardization

as I am referring to it in this research, is particularly powerful because it creates a “normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish” (p. 184). Foucault writes regarding normalization:

It individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (p. 184)

Foucault describes how creating a “norm” leads to “the shading of individual differences” (p. 184). One particularly troubling way this occurred at Norwood Elementary School was through weekly online assessments that allowed comparisons between teachers and students across the district instantaneously. These moves were intended to survey (and discipline) the activities and discourses of the classroom, position teachers as transmitters of a packaged curricula versus creative knowledge bearers, and stamp out uncertainty through efforts at “fidelity” with a singular concern to centralize authority and normalize teacher and student progress.

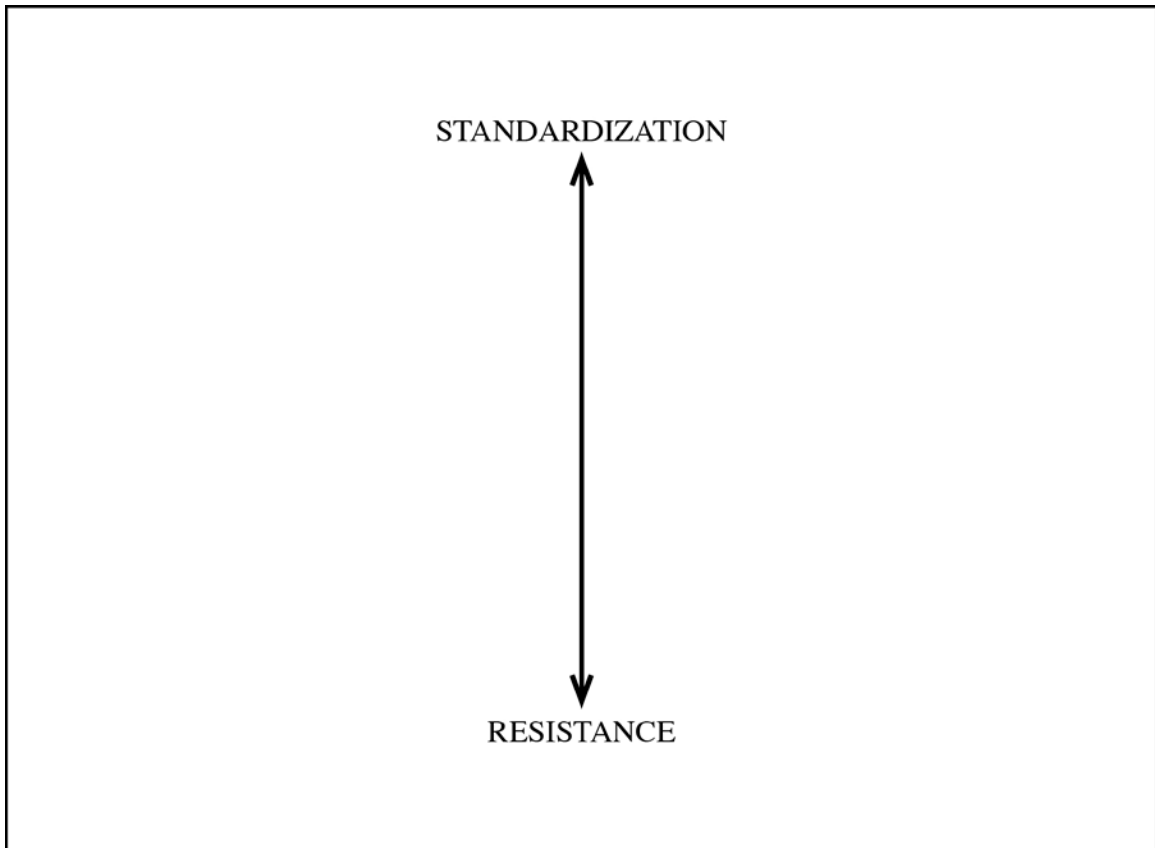
From the perspective of Mr. Wallace, the possibility of standardizing language arts and reading instruction across classrooms in his school meant that he could efficiently measure the performance of students and teachers. Within the broader social and historical context of the school district this was an achievement that satisfied multiple goals including meeting the requirements of

state and federal legislation, satisfying the district superintendent, and improving the reputation of the school in the community. The same was true for his efforts to standardize teachers' copying and use of school supplies. Copy codes and permission to access the closet meant that he could measure and control usage with an eye towards keeping the school's budget intact.

However the school district and Mr. Wallace were not the only ones to attempt standardization. Mrs. Thompson's structured classroom was another example. The preponderance of rules and regulations she imposed on her students made it possible to "measure gaps" (Foucault, 1977, p. 184), particularly in regards to Carson. I described how she immediately scolded Carson for rising to sharpen his pencil during language arts time. The breaking of this classroom rule differentiated Carson from his rule-obeying classmates, and prompted discipline. The same was true in regards to Carson's classroom work completion. His lack of standardization in this regard triggered the proposed consequence of being dismissed from the Technology Think Tank.

The efforts at standardization in a variety of contexts were meant to be absolute in their effects, but again and again resistance emerged in unexpected ways. For every move towards standardization, I observed a counter move of resistance. In Figure 3, I illustrate this dialectical effect with a straight line that also denotes the tension that exists between the two forces.

Figure 3. Standardization and Resistance



Resistance to standardization was accomplished through moves of power, the performance of identities, and the emergence of emotions. I relate examples of each below.

#### *Moves of Power*

Moves of power made through techniques of discursive positioning and surveillance by the school district and administration over the teachers at Norwood Elementary School and by the teachers over their students were fairly

obvious and were intended to achieve standardization. Power is easily traced along hierarchies such as these, and is often expected and condoned in the name of efficiency (Foucault, 1977). Less obvious were the moves of resistance to this power, and the way that power emerged and circulated as a result. Yet again and again at Norwood Elementary School I observed how moves of power were strongly resisted and countered.

Take, for example, Mrs. Thompson and Carson. Although Mrs. Thompson had 'official' authority and exercised power in order to achieve standardization in the classroom, these efforts were resisted continuously by Carson. In the case of the classroom observation I described in Chapter 4, Carson purposefully engaged with Mrs. Thompson when he got out of his seat to sharpen his pencil. After she scolded him, he continued his resistance by scratching out his journal entry. Then he exhibited even more resistance to her power when he failed to engage in conversation with Mrs. Thompson ("What should I think when I see your work looking like this?") and ultimately expressed his frustration with increased volume ("OKAY!").

The circularity of power during this event was particularly illuminated for me when Carson and I discussed what happened in the classroom during lunch afterwards. Carson said:

I think she (Mrs. Thompson) wants us to do what she says without asking any questions. It's like we're puppets or something, and we can't speak,

can't move sometimes. She treats us like little kids. Like kindergartners. And she gets real mad when I don't do what she wants.

I recall my surprise as I sat on a cafeteria bench with Carson as he outlined Mrs. Thompson's power objectives. Carson *knew* that Mrs. Thompson wanted him to comply completely with her classroom rules and he understood the emotional effects if he resisted ("she gets real mad"). Even with this knowledge (and because of it), Carson made moves of resistance.

The many attempts by the technology liaison, Mr. Booker, to increase technology use in classrooms and the staunch opposition by teachers comes to mind as another example. Remember that his attempts to come into classrooms to help with technology needs were resoundingly denied. The classroom teachers continually took opportunities to remind Mr. Booker of his status as the "technology police" (Mrs. Thompson: "I just had a run-in with the technology police.") And eventually their discourse became more heated: "Quit asking for more every minute" and "This guy is going to push me over the edge!"

Resistance to Mr. Booker's perceived efforts at standardization was accomplished by ongoing discourses that cast him as undesirable and separate from the classroom teachers. Resistance was also used in this way by Mrs. Thompson when she expressed her frustration not only to Mr. Wallace directly but in engagements with her colleagues ("It's so disrespectful. I CAN'T. I

WON'T BE TREATED LIKE...I'VE HAD IT.") In this case her power increased along with her volume as she declared that she'd "had it."

Standardization and resistance at Norwood Elementary School continually circulated with various parties taking up resistance in one context, then engaging in standardization in another. Every attempt to seize power was countered by an equal or greater move of resistance.

### *The Performance of Identities*

In Chapters 4 and 5, I described how identities among teachers, students, and administrators were thickened as a result of discursive positioning and surveillance techniques. Just as with power, however, the identities that emerged as a result of these techniques were unexpected and were tied to resistance.

One way this occurred was when identities emerged unexpectedly in context in response to control techniques. I have described how Mrs. Thompson clashed with Mr. Wallace in many settings as he made moves of power rather than acquiesce quietly as he may have expected. Carson became a "troublemaker" in his classroom after violating Mrs. Thompson's classroom rules as opposed to many of his peers who performed identities of 'good' students including Cassandra who also participated in the Technology Think Tank.

Along the same lines, the polarized technocontexts of the classrooms and Technology Think Tank made possible several identities—either as a lover or a

hater of technology (the climate of the school made neutrality almost impossible). For the teachers, the emergence of technology was a continual threat. Given the ways that technology was used it became almost impossible for any teacher to embrace it. Being someone who 'hated technology' became a badge of honor.

Another way that identities were unexpectedly resistant was how they translated into other contexts. Although Carson's identity was problematic in the classroom it translated into popularity among some of his peers. Meanwhile, Mrs. Thompson's resistance to Mr. Wallace was understood as insubordination by some but she became a defender of teachers' rights among others. And although Mr. Booker was considered by the teachers to be the "technology police," he became a close ally of Mr. Wallace.

The haunting moments at Norwood Elementary School created a polarization for identities that were valued in some communities while reviled in others. Participants had to choose sides in many cases. There was no middle ground.

### *The Role of Emotions*

Scholars who are studying the connections between emotions and literacy learning have found that emotions emerge everywhere, out of every moment, and circulate freely around spaces (Boler, 1999; Zembylas, 2005). However, as



much as the existences of emotions are undeniable they were denied on a regular basis at Norwood Elementary School. Emotions were understood as potential roadblocks.

For instance, Mrs. Thompson's frustration about the locked supply closet was superseded by Mr. Wallace's objective of standardizing the building's budget and exercising control over the usage of supplies by teachers and students. Meanwhile, Carson's frustration in the classroom was overlooked by Mrs. Thompson as she attempted to manage his behavior and academic performance.

Even more disturbing, some emotions (particularly difficult ones such as anger, disappointment, and frustration) were pathologized. The best example of this is the warnings I received from Mrs. Thompson about enrolling Carson in the Think Tank. I was told that Carson was a "troublemaker" and "a behavior problem." She described him as "a pain in the neck." At the end of the contentious classroom encounter she shared that she felt "at the end of her rope" with Carson. And yet what I experienced and observed during my time at Norwood Elementary School was none of this. Carson's leadership in the Technology Think Tank and his relationship with his peers and with me stood in stark contrast to all of these warnings. The only times that I observed Carson as a "behavior problem" were moments when he exhibited strong emotions in

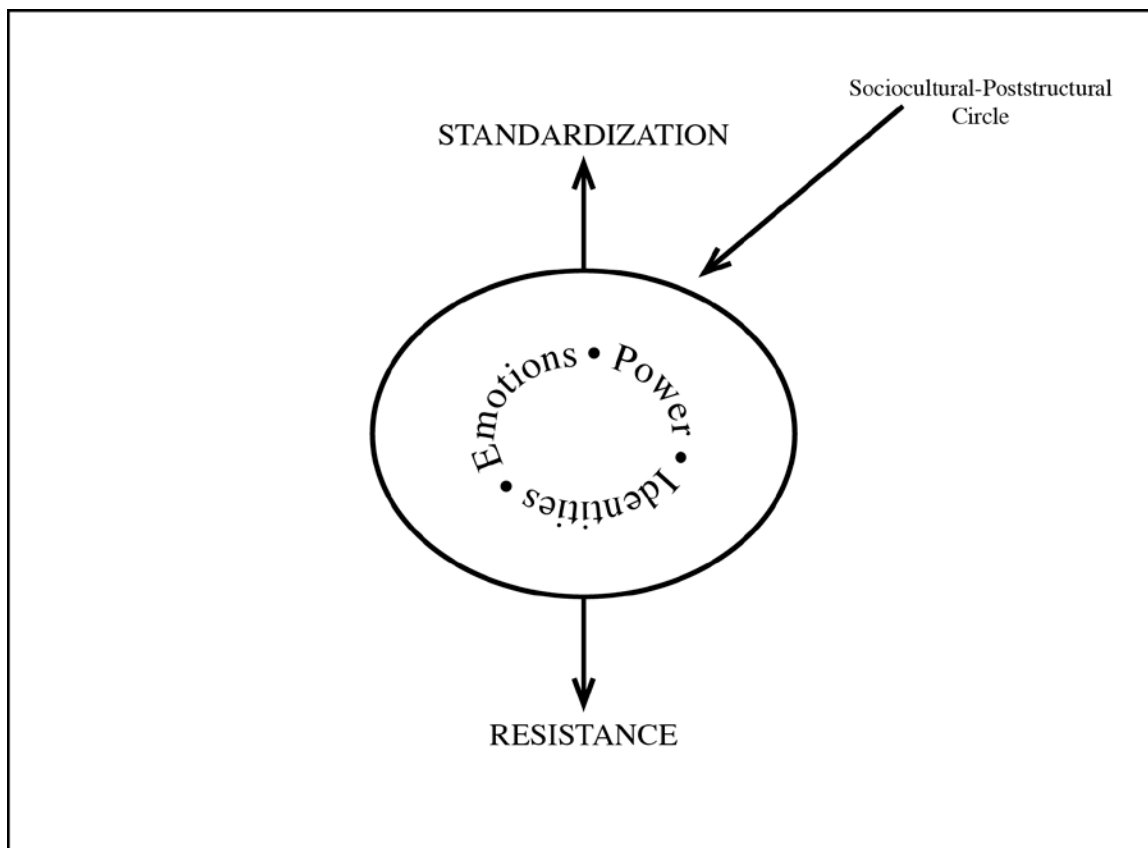
response to perceived injustices. But his emotions were misrecognized as misbehavior and were 'handled' through disciplinary measures or other undesirable interventions. Frustration, anger and grief: these were some of the unsavory emotions that were quietly ignored or loudly denounced.

The techniques of denying and pathologizing emotions at Norwood Elementary School amplified resistance in surprising ways as they emerged in social contexts. Carson and Matt's frustration with the policy of losing recess as a result of test scores resulted in a plan to purposefully stay indoors and thwart the surveillance of the supervisor through a system of codes. They knew that these activities would exasperate their teacher.

Meanwhile, the expression of emotions by the teachers in response to Mr. Wallace's techniques of control drew added attention to these moves and united some of the teachers in shared resistance. I described how teachers began to gather regularly in classrooms and hallways to discuss the goings-on of the day. These meetings solidified relationships and facilitated a shared discourse of frustration.

In Figure 4, I expand on the dialectical nature of standardization versus resistance that I illustrated in Figure 3. I add the emergence of moves of power, identities, and emotions (which I jointly call the Sociocultural-Poststructural Circle) as centrally located in this back and forth process.

Figure 4. Power, Identities, and Emotions in Standardization and Resistance



### *Technocontexts, Standardization and Resistance*

While standardization and resistance did not necessarily require the use of new technologies, they were amplified by them at Norwood Elementary School. I have described how teachers and students were measured against one another instantaneously via online assessments. Without the affordances of technology, these comparisons would have been time-consuming and cumbersome. Instead, instructional coaches arrived at the computer labs on Friday afternoons, clicked

through a series of prompts, printed reams of charts and graphs, and were out the door minutes later. Likewise, teachers used the results of these tests to determine at a glance students who would remain indoors for recess the following week. As I described, students who scored 65% or less on the test were required to “practice” for the following week’s test. Technology streamlined the “normalizing gaze” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184) for teachers in this regard as they identified students for discipline. Technology also streamlined Mr. Wallace’s “gaze” (p. 184) of photocopy use by teachers (and his ability to discipline) after he issued copy codes.

The Think Tank participants also used technology to achieve standardization. Carson’s teaching in our after-school meeting was peppered with “Do it this way,” or “Make it look like mine.” And of course the contentious exchange between Carson and Matt in Chapter 4 was based on the premise of standardization (“Cause I know what to do. Yeah, I’m in charge, man. Now listen!”). Participants regularly used technology as a social marker. Fellow video gamers, for instance, were considered “cool” and could potentially be invited to join Carson’s video game club. Meanwhile, Kassandra and Jasmyn described “blocking annoying people” from contacting them online.

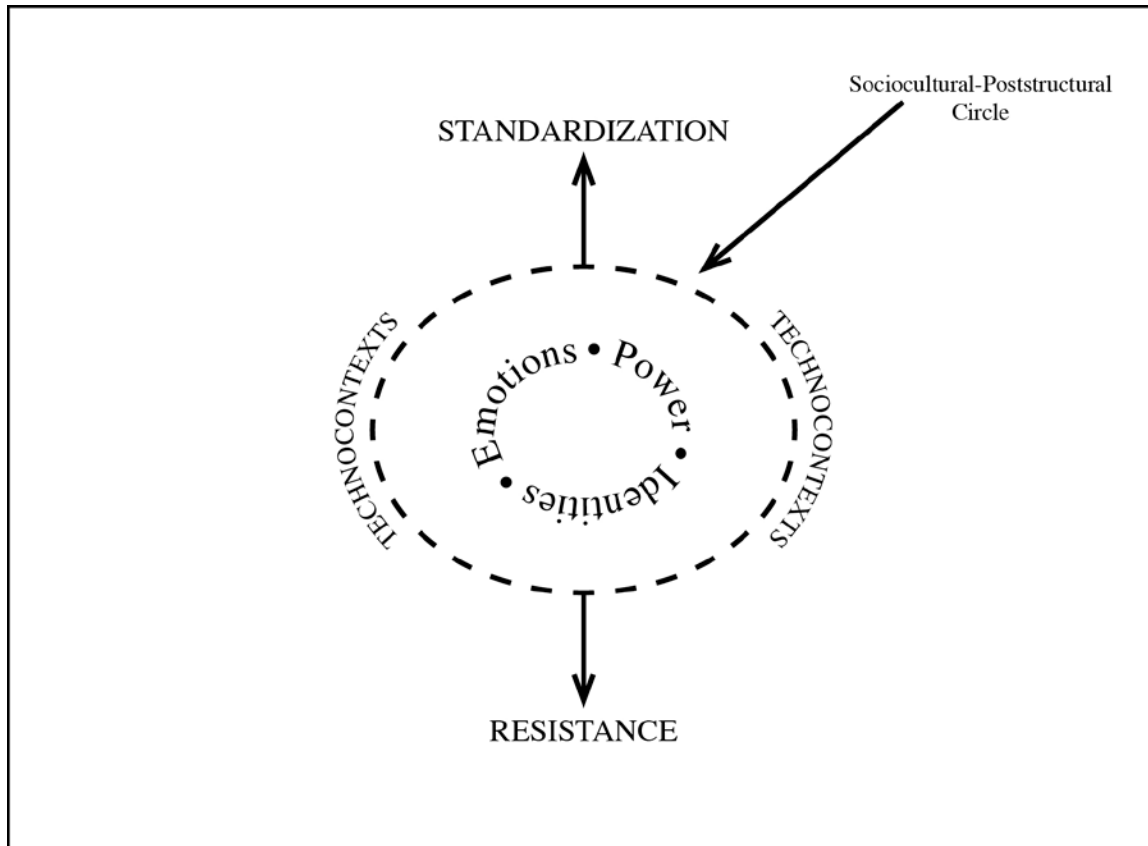
Just as technology was used to accomplish standardization, it was an equal tool of resistance. I have described how Carson and Matt used technology

to develop a code system for thwarting surveillance during indoor recess.

Kassandra, Daniel, Matt and Carson joked about the possibility of creating an “I Hate School” blog. Although I found the idea distasteful, the creation of this blog was intended a means of expression for students who had few other venues. For some students, their identities as technology users were ways of resisting the power of their teachers. Carson and Matt knew that Mrs. Thompson did not want them to talk about technology in her classroom. So they talked about it. And this is only speculation, but perhaps they embraced it even more fervently than they would have otherwise.

Figure 5 is a continuation of the previous two figures, but accounts for the role of technocontexts which facilitates moves towards standardization or resistance. The Sociocultural-Poststructural Circle which denoted the role of power, identities, and emotions has also been revised as a dashed line to show the influence of technocontexts on these three elements.

Figure 5. The Role of Technocontexts in Standardization and Resistance



*Mechanisms of Agency: Improvisation and Authorship*

I have described how standardization at Norwood Elementary School had two mechanisms for control—discursive positioning and surveillance. These mechanisms were mirrored by resistance to standardization which had two mechanisms of agency—improvisation and authorship.

Agency is defined as “the strategic making and remaking of selves within structures of power” (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Another useful definition: “Agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahern, 2001, p.

112). These definitions point to the activities that we engage in as participants in “a confluence of relationships” (Gergen, 2009, p. 56) and in light of sociocultural understandings of the roles of power and identities.

Theoretically, one of the greatest challenges in understanding agency is resisting the urge to romanticize it (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Particularly in regards to linking agency to resistance, it is important to recognize agency as a move of power with its own complexities and contradictions (Ortner, 1995). MacLeod (1992) describes agency as “complex and ambiguous” (p. 534) while Ahern (2001) argues for a nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of motivations behind all human actions.

With an eye towards the complex workings of agency, along with determination not to be seduced by the “romance of resistance” (Abu-Lughod, 1990) I turn to an exploration of improvisation as a mechanism of agency.

### *Improvisation*

Improvisation has been described as “one of the margins of human agency” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 278) and defined as:

The sort of impromptu actions that occur when our past, brought to the present as *habitus*, meets with a particular combination of circumstances and conditions for which we have no set response. Such improvisations are the openings by which change comes about from generation to generation (p. 18).

Holland et al. (1998) point to the emergence of “impromptu actions” in improvising. I argue that these actions arise out of the marshaling of power, identities, and emotions and I return to some haunting moments within this data to illustrate how improvisation became a mechanism of agency at Norwood Elementary School. In the next sections I describe two examples of improvisation.

The teachers at Norwood Elementary School created a policy whereby students scoring 65% or less on their weekly assessment were required to stay inside during recess and “study.” Shortly after this policy was implemented it became very obvious that the same students were reappearing week after week. Because the tests were completed by students on screens and the assessment systems only provided the final scores the teachers were unable to see where students might be having difficulties. Therefore the remedy for low scores was completion of a packet of extra worksheets copied from a binder that was provided with the basal curriculum.

Keeping in mind that resistance is not “romantic” (Abu-Lughod, 1990), the teachers exercised their resistance to the standardization of the teaching and learning of the language arts and reading curriculum through improvising a system for student remediation. This system included exerting power over students, as well as pushing back against moves of standardization, and the



thickening of teacher identities as surveyors and mediators of student progress in these assessments.

Ironically, the agentic moves of the teachers to create the 'recess study program' perpetuated standardization on their students. Carson and Matt were two of the students who continually missed their recess time. Their frustration and anger at losing social opportunities with their peers translated into an effort to discipline their teachers through purposefully failing the weekly test. They also worked together to create a system of codes so that they could communicate with one another without the knowledge of their teachers. These were obvious activities of power. Carson and Matt also adopted identities as students who subverted authority through sacrificing academic achievement.

Improvisation allowed participants to "opportunistically use whatever is at hand to affect their position in the cultural game" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 279) in the face of control. In the next section I describe a second mechanism of agency—authorship.

### *Authorship*

The notion of authorship is derived from Bahktin (1981) and expanded upon by Holland et al. (1998). It says that authorship is a sort of "self-in-practice" that:

Occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and the discourses and practices to

which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 32)

Bakhtin (1981), and later Holland et al. (1998), make the distinction that authorship does not mean we are a “freewheeling agent, authoring worlds from creative springs within” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 170), but instead point to the constraints of our social histories and present.

The emergence of heteroglossia that I described in Chapter 4—moments of frustration between Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Thompson, Carson, and Matt across contexts—illustrates authorship. After the activities of Mr. Wallace frustrate, disempower, and belittle Mrs. Thompson, she (re)authors herself in the classroom with Carson by exerting power that in turn frustrates, disempowers, and belittles him. He then (re)authors himself by exerting power over Matt, and on and on.

The heteroglossia of authorship and the constraints of social histories seem to belie any possibilities for agency. And yet agency does emerge through the responses to these mechanisms of control through the utilization of power, identities, and emotions. The best example is Matt’s response to Carson in the

Think Tank:

Matt: Carson, you don’t have power over me. Quit bossing me around!

Carson: You’re....you are disrespecting me...(mumbles words that are unintelligible)

Matt: You’re on a serious power trip, man! Whatever. Dude. Whatever! Shut up.

Carson: 'Cause I know what to do. Yeah, I'm in charge, man. Now listen!

In these moments Matt exhibited resistance to Carson's attempts to control him by authoring himself as someone who was not subject to Carson's power ("Carson, you don't have power over me.") He also identified Carson as "on a serious power trip" and used their shared derision towards Mrs. Thompson as an identifier for Carson when he said, "Bye, Mrs. Thompson!" This move elicited an immediate response by Carson who retorted "Shut up, man!"

Bakhtin (1981) describes the possibilities for agency within authorship as one begins to rearrange heteroglossic utterances:

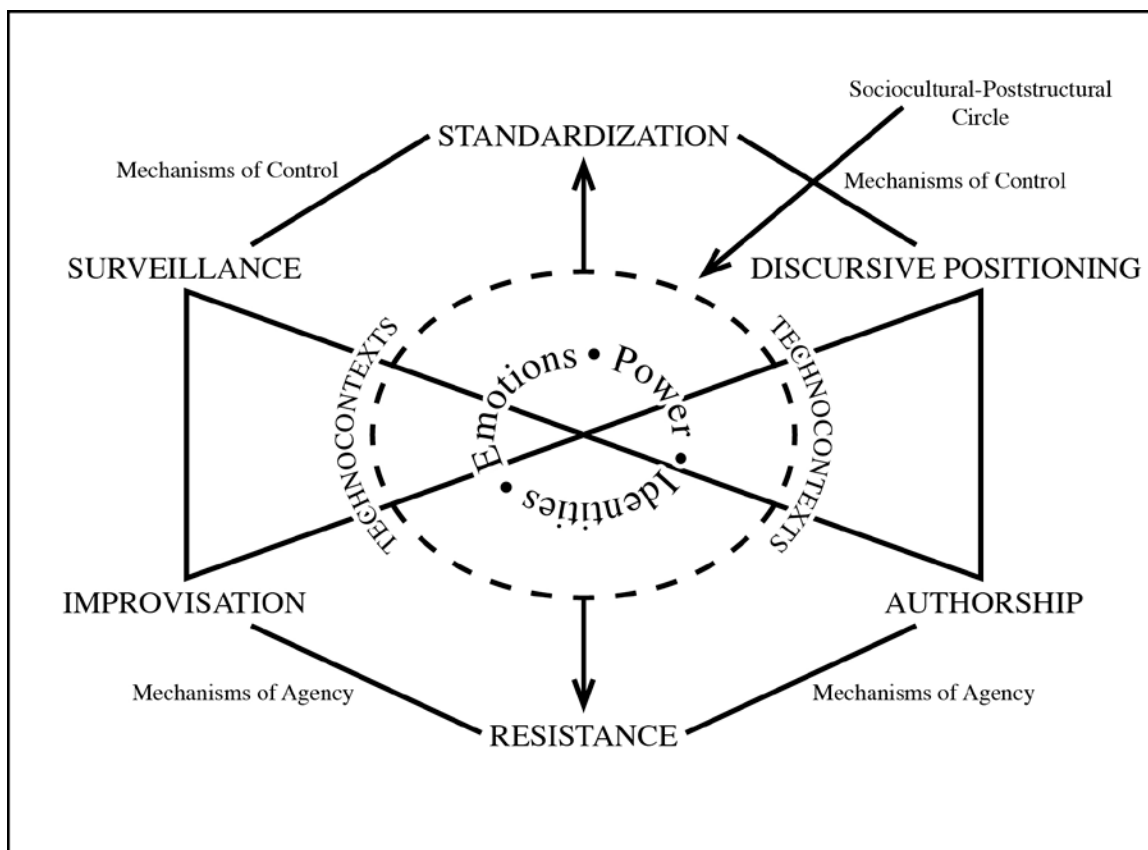
The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. (p. 348)

As Matt demonstrates, agency through authorship is arduous, but possible.

Figure 6 is a continuation of Figure 5, but includes the mirrored relationship between discursive positioning and surveillance versus improvisation and authorship. The lines that represent these mechanisms are made to cut across the line of standardization and resistance, as well as the Sociocultural-Poststructural Circle to demonstrate how these moves are inextricable from one another and mediate power, identities and emotions. (For example, the surveillance of Mrs. Thompson requires a move of standardization,

as well as the performance of identities, specific moves of power to accomplish the surveillance, the expression of specific emotions, and so on.) The lines also cut across technocontexts

Figure 6. Mechanisms of Control and Agency



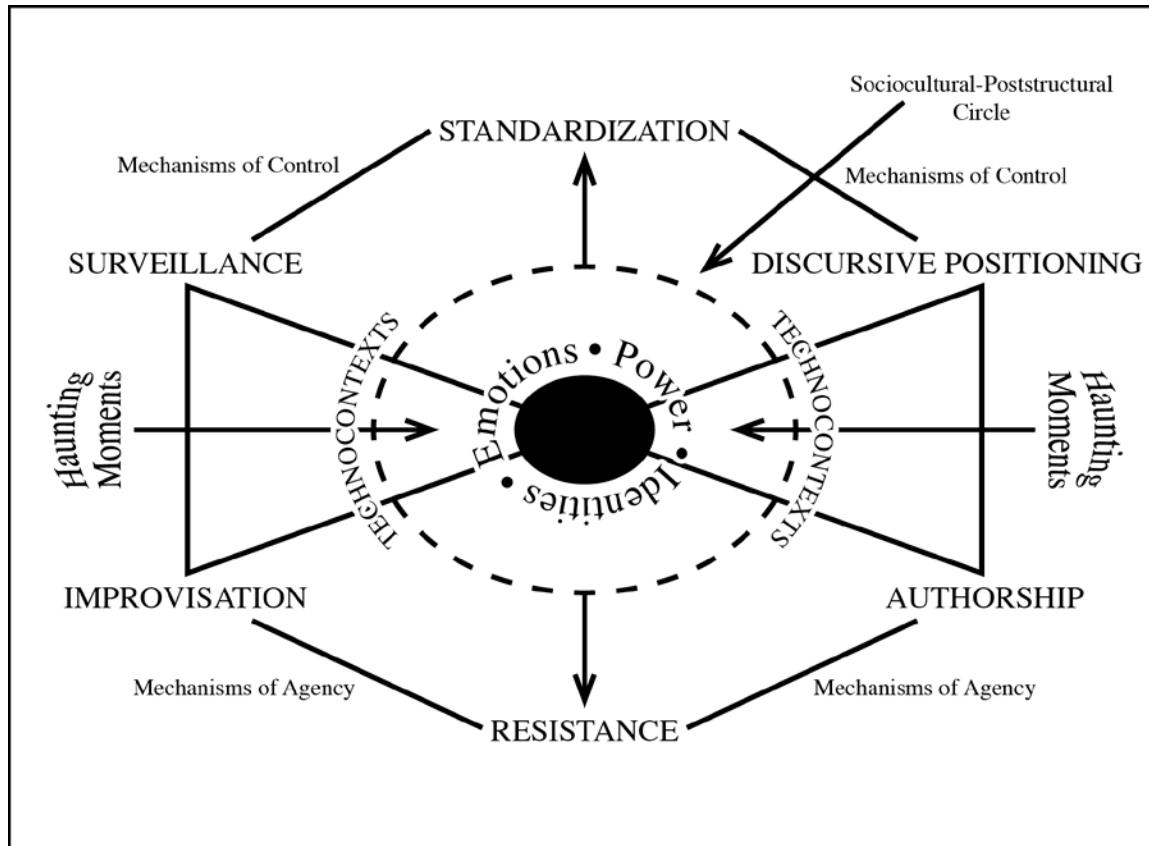
### Locating Haunting Moments

I began this thesis with questions about the haunting moments at Norwood Elementary School and in the Technology Think Tank and in pursuit of a framework so that the “invisible will be made visible, something absent will

become present” (Gordon, 2008). And, through data analysis techniques—particularly interpretive phenomenology—as well as sociocultural and poststructural theories, a framework has emerged.

In the preceding sections I have detailed the Sociocultural-Poststructural circle of power, identities, and emotions within the dialectic of standardization and resistance, the influence and amplification of technocontexts, and the mirrored mechanisms of control (discursive positioning and surveillance) and agency (improvisation and authorship). In the last figure (Figure 7), I locate haunting moments at the nexus of these dialectics, technocontexts, moves of power, identities, and emotions, and mechanisms of control and agency.

Figure 7. Locating Haunting Moments



### *Framing and Inviting Haunting Moments*

In my earlier descriptions of the haunting moments in this research I wrote they were marked by emotions such as frustration, anger, and grief experienced by the students, teachers, and me. I was bothered in these moments and I felt that others involved were bothered, too. In a seemingly impossible contradiction, the emotions and bother that drew me to these moments also elicited a strong response to run away from them. They were so loaded with

difficult emotions, so steeped in power, and so tied to identities (and threatening to identities) that it seemed safer to pretend they never happened.

And yet, I could not forget them. They became, as Ahmed (2004) describes, “sites of personal and social tension” (p. 11). These were moments when my “disturbed feelings” could not “be put away” (Gordon, 2008, xvi), and something needed to be done. This thesis is my effort to do that something.

The framework that I have described in the preceding set of figures details how haunting moments are located at the nexus of standardization and resistance, which is inextricably tied to power, identities, and emotions and influenced by technocontexts. Standardization and resistance are continually mediated by mechanisms of control, as discursive positioning and surveillance) and mechanisms of agency (improvisation and authorship).

The location of haunting moments at the center of this confluence underscores the realization that they exist within a complex theoretical matrix. Although writing of relationships, Gergen’s (2009) notion of a “multi-dimensional game” is apt here where “any move on the part of any participant can be treated as a move in several other games” (p. 43).

Theorizing and framing haunting moments (rather than running away from them) leads to a more complex understanding of the “generative structures” and “social formations” (Gordon, 2008, p. 19) of literacy learning

moments. Although standardization and resistance, along with the emergence of moves of power, identities, and emotions are an inevitable outcome of participation in discourse communities, this inescapability does not preclude agency or signify inevitability. Mrs. Thompson, Carson, and Matt have taught us this.

In my video data I captured the first day arrival of the Technology Think Tank participants as they entered the computer lab. Besides the presentation of the study I had given in their classrooms and brief follow-up conversations to collect paperwork, I was unknown to the children. The video shows the empty doorway when suddenly a head appears at an alarming sideways angle. Carson, with a smirk and a voice that I would come to recognize, asked, "Can I come in, or what?" "Of course, come in," I answered, and the rest of him quickly appeared. That moment was almost prescient in light of the haunting moments that emerged.

Inviting haunting moments is a lot like inviting Carson into the Think Tank. It is synonymous with the unknown—and often with discomfort, fear, the disruption of power, or a threat to identities. It means acknowledging the role of emotions—that we express or that are expressed by others. It always invites complexity. But it opens door for understanding. And maybe, just maybe, compels us towards something better.



## APPENDIX A. TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

(abc)	Parentheses enclosing text contains notes, usually about contextual and nonverbal information (e.g. smiles, stands up)
()	Empty parentheses indicate unintelligible words or phrases, e.g., Matt: I said that ( ), that one was mine.
[ ]	Brackets contain explanatory information inserted by me
ABC	Capitalized words or phrases indicate increased volume
<u>abc</u>	An underlined word indicates a stressed word
...	Ellipsis points indicate omitted data
Conventional punctuation marks are used to indicate ends of utterances or sentences, usually indicated by slight pauses on the audiotape or videotape. Commas refer to pauses within words or word phrases. Dashes [--] indicate interrupted utterances.	

Source: Dyson, A.H. (1997). *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary childhood, popular culture and classroom literacy*. New York: Stenhouse.

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