Challenging Ethnocentric Literacy Practices: (Re)Positioning Home Literacies in a Head Start Classroom

Mariana Souto-Manning
Teachers College, Columbia University

In what ways can teachers incorporate young people's home and community literacy practices into classrooms when such practices vastly differ from the teachers' literacy experiences? How can teacher education curriculum and teaching influence teachers' pedagogical practices? How can children's roles be pedagogically reframed and become meaningful strengths in classrooms? Grounded in these interrelated research questions, this article documents some of the influences of Freirean culture circle as an approach to inservice teacher education on the ways in which two Head Start teachers and a teacher educator negotiated and navigated within and across home and school literacy practices, co-creating a curriculum based on generative themes and making early education meaningful to children from multiple backgrounds. Further, it proposes that conducting extensive ethnographic studies is not a prerequisite to creating pedagogical spaces that honor children's home literacy practices and cultural legacies. Findings indicate that as teachers seek to build on young children's language and literacy strengths, it is pedagogically beneficial to engage in documenting glimpses of home literacy practices within and across contexts while simultaneously challenging and (re)positioning ethnocentric definitions of literacy by engaging young children as authentic curriculum designers.

Understanding the impact of teacher education on pedagogies that seek to foster more inclusive educational practices is significant, especially in light of multiple calls for outcome-based teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2001). In this article, I describe some of the influences of in-service teacher education in a Freirean culture circle setting (Souto-Manning, 2010a) on two Head Start teachers' practices as they created educational spaces of promise and possibility. These teachers sought to employ a generative curriculum reflective of the children's realities, interests, and cultural legacies, which was akin to the curriculum they were experiencing through in-service teacher education. By studying this process, I critically examine the ways in which the teachers transcended the act of merely documenting home literacy practices and negotiated ways of redesigning such practices in their classes during circle time and centers. They taught one literacy system while learning new ones.

The findings in this article derive from a larger study in which I documented literacy practices in five preschool classrooms (two federally funded, two privately funded, and one state-funded) that served children aged one to five in an urban setting over a two-year period. The participating teachers and I engaged in bimonthly teacher education culture circle meetings (Souto-Manning, 2010a). During the second year, I analyzed the various processes the teachers used to develop learning activities representative of redesigned versions of home and community literacy practices. Findings from the larger study suggest that teachers do not need to conduct extensive ethnographic studies in order to create pedagogical spaces that honor children's home practices and cultural legacies. Yet documenting glimpses of home literacy practices within and across contexts, paying careful attention to the cultural nature of definitions of literacy, and engaging young children as curriculum designers were necessary as teachers sought to build on children's language and literacy strengths. Also, re-mediating (Gutiérrez, Martinez, & Morales, 2009) time and choice—as well as the teachers' very definitions of literacy—were essential as the generative themes brought to the classroom by the teachers were problematized, creatively expanded, and deepened by the children in multiple classroom interactions.

The reasons for focusing on the two Head Start classes were threefold: (1) out of all teachers who participated in the culture circle, Head Start teachers educated children whose home cultural and linguistic experiences were most misaligned with their own, thus there was a disconnect between the curriculum and children's lives; (2) children in Head Start classes qualified for the program based on deficit orientations—the mission of the program was to bring them up to speed—and they were unfortunately positioned as biologically or culturally inferior; and (3) families of children in Head Start knew that participation in the program required teacher home visits, thus the very program granted teachers official access to children's homes and communities. In consideration of these particular reasons, this article is grounded in the following interrelated research questions: In what ways can teachers incorporate young people's home and community literacy practices into classrooms when such practices vastly differ from the teachers' literacy experiences? How can teacher education curriculum and teaching influence teachers' pedagogical practices? How can children's roles be pedagogically reframed and become meaningful strengths to curriculum and teaching in classrooms? To address these questions, I provide a literature review on Head Start and theoretical framing on sociocultural perspectives to language and literacy, which in turn lead into the study's methodological orientation and findings.

On Head Start: A Literature Review

In early childhood education, intervention and readiness discourses are rampant (Souto-Manning, 2010b). Often such discourses posit that because children from

"disadvantaged backgrounds" (read: children of color) are not well prepared for school, they must be provided with early educational interventions as a way to compensate for inadequate home environments and insufficient literacy experiences—thereby framing children of color as biologically or culturally inferior (Goodwin, Cheruvu, & Genishi, 2008). Seeking to address the needs of children who were believed to lack the skills and experiences deemed necessary to succeed in schools, the federal Head Start program was created under the Johnson Administration and was part of the "War on Poverty." According to Goodwin et al., "the War on Poverty, mounted in the 1960s, is reflective of the culturally deprived paradigm . . . [and] would ensure that poor children would not enter elementary school already 'disadvantaged' by their poor and deficient home environments" (2008, pp. 4-5). The people who created the program "had hopes that early intervention would help disadvantaged children break the cycle of poverty by enabling them to start school on an equal footing with their more privileged peers" (Lee et al., 1990, p. 495). Without such intervention (read: compensatory programs), it was (and still is) believed that children may enter kindergarten already "behind." Thus, such children are seen as having deficits to be addressed via early intervention programs before they enter formal education settings (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). Spodek and Brown (1993) wrote that the impetus to prepare children of color and/ or of low socioeconomic status to succeed in formal schooling by making up for inappropriate home environments historically shaped the field of early education.

As early as 1974 (only a decade after Head Start was established), Bronfenbrenner inquired into the effectiveness of early intervention. Yet, such a question did not consider the variety of programs available under the Head Start label. Thus, it is important to note that responses to this issue vary significantly across Head Start classes and programs. While this question remains and is periodically examined within and across situated contexts (e.g. Guralnick, 1997), I believe the question that needs to be asked is: what are the goals of early intervention and what factors make early intervention successful? Addressing this question can better help educators (re)conceptualize the goals of early intervention and move away from a cultural deprivation paradigm—which "labeled the culturally and linguistically diverse and poor as deficient . . . and sought to 'fix' them according to the standards of the dominant, white, middle-class culture" (Goodwin et al., 2008, p. 5)—and towards a diversities paradigm—which "argued that 'different' was not synonymous with 'deviant' and that the lives of people of color were grounded in and informed by values, beliefs, and norms that were culturally specific" (p. 5). This movement can encourage educators to learn from successful Head Start classes and programs as they work with diverse students (e.g., Lubeck, 1985; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Wilson, 2000).

I recognize that if the goal of early intervention is to socialize children into White middle-class ways of being (Goodwin et al., 2008; Kinloch, 2007), White

middle-class students will always be advantaged. Nevertheless, I believe that if early intervention is concerned with reconceptualizing success by building on the strengths of students—culturally shaped bodies of knowledge (Grant & Sleeter, 1990) and ways of being that have been historically absent from schools (Heath, 1983; Kinloch, 2010)—then early intervention can impact the ways in which educators view differences across community and school contexts.

In addressing these larger issues, I investigate the ways in which the process, and therefore teachers, can build on home literacies to foster successful practices in Head Start classrooms. Seeking to reconceptualize the goals of early intervention and promote more equitable early educational practices in a situated context, this article problematizes the premise and framework that originally shaped Head Start. Expanding on previous research, this article documents how two Head Start teachers and a teacher educator negotiated and navigated within and across home and school literacy practices, co-creating a curriculum based on generative themes and making early education meaningful to children from *multiple* backgrounds.

A Sociocultural-Historical Theoretical Framework: From Remediation to Re-Mediation

According to Gutiérrez et al. (2009), remediation remains a central strategy in addressing the academic needs of students who differ from the dominant norm. Yet if we are to build on the strengths of each student, we must do away with remediation and move towards *re-mediation.* The basic rule of *re-mediation* (as opposed to remediation, which frames children in terms of deficits) involves an expansive, hybrid, and additive approach to differences and diversities. The social rules of participation and learning as well as the division of labor are re-mediated by a social imagination oriented towards new forms of collective activity and multimodal literacies. In contrast to the traditional "remedial" approaches, the notion of *re-mediation*—with its focus on the socio-historical influences on students' learning and the context of their development—involves a more robust notion of learning, one that disrupts the dogma of pathology linked to remediation. Instead of emphasizing basic skills framed as problems of the individual, re-mediation involves a reorganization of curriculum and teaching.

In terms of a sociocultural-historical perspective, Rogoff (2003) asserted that it "requires [an] examination of the cultural nature of everyday life . . . studying people's use and transformation of cultural tools and technologies and their involvement in cultural traditions in the structures and instructions of family . . . and community practices" (p. 10). Sociocultural approaches to learning have provided new ways of extending students' literacy repertoires (Gutiérrez et al., 2009).

Employing the aforementioned ideas allows me to take a sociocultural approach to the development of language and literacy based on the premise that language and literacy development are interdependent and develop as children

engage in interactions with more skilled partners in various communities of prac-
tice (Vygotsky, 1978). Such an approach recognizes that children learn language
and literacies at home and that this learning is grounded in cross-cultural studies
of home and community literacies. This sociocultural approach is significantly dif-
ferent from that of more traditional emergent literacy scholars (Dyson, 2002)—e.g.,
Clay, Doake, and Holdaway. Emergent literacy was traditionally defined as the
acquisition of skills necessary for reading and/or using home literacy practices
as transitory "stepping stones" to be left behind when more traditional literacy
practices developed. Clay (1991) wrote that by the time children came to school
they already knew a lot about print from cereal boxes, TV, and everyday signs,
considering home literacy practices as a precursor to more traditional literacy
practices. Holdaway (1979) and Clay (1991) emphasized the need to enhance
children's exposure to print and to promote *regular* and *systematic* interactions
with oral and written language. Doake (1981) noted that when parents and chil-
dren participated in traditional literacy practices in the home (e.g., book reading),
children became more proficient and successful.

Sociocultural Approach to Language

According to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), sociocultural information is generally
encoded in the organization of conversational discourse—of how people talk.
Thus, paying close attention to how interactions are structured within and across
communities of practice can provide very insightful information. According to
Ochs (1986), when language is used, it is structured by an alignment of speaker-
hearer conventions and conceptions of a social activity or event. Children, then,
must develop both social and academic competence by cultivating the ability to
recognize and interpret specific ways of communicating (verbally and nonverbally)
and acting according to the context of the particular activity taking place. Accord-
ing to Hymes (1974), language does not simply serve as a response to an activity
or event—it is the actual social activity/event.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of social activities in the development
of the mind. From a Vygotskian perspective, cognitive skills are the result of using
language in particular situations for specific purposes. According to Ochs (1986),
"speakers will differ in the ends for which they use language and these differences
will lead to the development of different cognitive skills. . . . [T]acit knowledge
of these notions is critical to communication in a particular society and must be
acquired by children" (p. 4). Language has an important role as children acquire
knowledge of how to act and communicate within and across activities and events.
For instance, when caregivers use language with children, they provide information
or cues concerning what members of that specific community are doing. Much of
speech-act theory has focused on the centrality of the recognition of a speaker's
intentions as crucial to interpretation (Duranti, 1984). According to cross-cultural
research, such an understanding of intentionality and meaning is ethnocentric

and "ignores the interactive role that language plays in mediating and negotiating social relations" (Schieffelin, 1986, p. 167).

Towards a Critical Sociocultural Approach to Literacy

Over twenty years ago, Heath (1983) pinpointed specific ways communities organized events in which written language was used. She called such occurrences literacy events and emphasized that speech communities differ in the kinds of literacy events that characterize their everyday lives. For example, she documented the ways children growing up in White middle-class, White working-class, and Black working-class households in the Carolina Piedmont area of the United States had different experiences with literacy. They developed different expectations concerning behaviors and attitudes with reading and writing events, which positioned them as communicatively competent members of their households and communities. However, many children from non-White-middle-class environments experienced difficulties in certain school literacy events that drew on areas of knowledge not part of their early interactions with traditionally conceived "literacy materials." Undoubtedly, for Gee (2002), "people adopt different 'ways with printed words' within different sociocultural practices for different purposes and functions. . . . Such practices are a 'dance' in which people . . . get 'in synch' with other people and with other forms of language" (pp. 30-31).

According to Lewis, Enciso, and Moje (2007), sociocultural theory represents a useful merging of disciplines—education, psychology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics—to examine what Wertsch (1995) described as "the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and cultural, historical, and institutional setting, on the other" (p. 56). In recent years, sociocultural theory has taken a critical turn in literacy studies (Lewis et al., 2007) to better address issues of power, identity, and agency. Moje and Lewis (2007) expanded sociocultural theory that does this work, naming it "critical sociocultural theory" (p. 15), moving towards more transformative stances. Such an approach challenges prevailing race-centered analysis of "low" literacy (Purcell-Gates, 1995).

Reframing Home Literacy Practices

Home literacy practices have lasting influences on literacy learning. Purcell-Gates (2007) wrote that as literacy researchers investigate literacy learning in school, we must consider the "complexity . . . of how literacy practice in the homes and communities of learners appears to influence the effectiveness of early literacy learning in school" (p. 211). Aggregated evidence of children's home literacies indicates positive influences on academic success and "can significantly contribute to the developing picture of complex and synergistic relationships among home literacy practice and linguistic capital within contexts of power, language, hegemony, and textual resources" (p. 212).

Gregory, Long, and Volk (2004) proposed that a comprehensive view of home

literacy includes syncretic practices—reconciling or uniting two apparently different or opposing practices. These practices allow us to understand that: (1) young children's language and literacy are neither linear nor static; (2) children are active members of different groups and learn how to function within them; (3) young children navigate life in simultaneous worlds and when they are developing school language and literacy practices and experiencing different linguistic and cultural systems at home, they do not remain in separate worlds, but work within a third space (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999); and (4) young children who participate in multiple linguistic and cultural systems learn to perform multiple identities, carrying out many context-specific parts and developing deeper metacognitive strategies.

Third space is based on Bhabha's (1994) hybridity theory and comprises a merging of personal and curricular spaces—the first space is the personal and cultural out-of-school ways of knowing (often defined as student-centered) and the second space is the official curriculum (often teacher-centered). The merge between these two creates a third space that is dynamic and has permeable boundaries—allowing students to draw on specific ways of knowing within and across contexts. Often the merging does not occur naturally—that must be negotiated syncretically.

For syncretism to take place, teachers' and students' first spaces must be respectively identified and examined. Moll and Greenberg (1990) embraced the first space as "funds of knowledge" which can serve to "transform classrooms into more advanced contexts for teaching and learning" (p. 344). They proposed engaging families as resources who "contribute substantively to the development of our lessons . . . [and] to the content and process of classroom learning" (p. 339). Examining syncretic literacy practices offers a broader interpretation of what constitutes literacy and includes what families and communities contribute to children's cultural and linguistic worlds (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Within this view, children and adults can be seen as transforming existing knowledge and practices to create new forms (Gregory et al., 2004). This view opens up the doors to valuing what each child already knows instead of conceptualizing certain children as if they need to be fixed.

Children are already skilled and intentional. The challenge then is for teachers and schools to embrace this notion and acknowledge the skills and intentionality children bring with them to schools. Helping children negotiate such spaces would open up possibilities for learning to construct and embody multiple identities according to contexts, and ultimately develop deeper metacognitive strategies. This approach focuses on examining "the inextricable link between culture and cognition through engagement in activities, tasks or events" (Gregory et al., 2004, p. 7).

While home and school literacy tools—e.g., writing, reading—may be apparently similar (c.f. Moje et al., 2004), the nature of the participation in communicative events differs along the lines of role and responsibility with regard to

design, development, and implementation. When the rules of participation change starkly, the tools no longer seem useful or relevant. If, while at home, children are socialized into literacy practices that have rules of participation closely aligned with school practices and discourses (Gee, 2002), they are more likely to be successful in school. If such rules of participation (e.g., role and responsibility for design, implementation, and development) differ, children are likely to experience disequilibrium and develop a poor sense of self in school. While teachers are more likely to employ rules of participation which are coherent with their primary literacy models, aligning with their own home practices and schooling experiences (Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001), most teachers come from socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds which differ from their students' backgrounds (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

Methods

This article presents a portion of a two-year study[1] that used culture circles as an approach to in-service teacher education (Souto-Manning, 2010a). Classroom observations were primarily conducted without direct interference—from behind a one-way mirror—and initially aimed at documenting teachers' pedagogical practices. The observations were coded openly and axially (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); prominent practices and/or topics across settings were deconstructed (pulled apart to reveal their basic common components) and codified into a case, narrative, or picture (Souto-Manning, 2010a). These codifications were brought to the teachers as generative themes. In a Freirean fashion, teachers posed problems collectively and deconstructed such codifications in light of their own experiences (Freire, 1970). They dialogically exposed their views and collectively moved towards problem solving and action. Some of the culture circle meetings focused on the cultural construction of "successful" literacy practices. Two participating Head Start teachers, Marilyn and JW (all names are pseudonyms), expressed their desire to better understand community and literacy practices experienced by the children they educated.

For this study, I examined activities over one academic year designed by two Head Start teachers who were influenced by their experiences in Freirean culture circle professional development (Souto-Manning, 2010a). The curriculum and activities were designed according to interests and home/community literacy practices of the children in their classes. The teachers paid careful attention to intended frames of participation and reworked rules of interaction. Three times a week, I recorded circle time, independent play, and center time in the classroom. I asked teachers to identify activities that were generatively designed and that paid close attention to how children engaged in such activities. There were 48 activities recorded and identified by the teachers as having been designed based on their understandings of the children's home and community practices. From those, I

analyzed the activities in which children seemed deeply invested as I sought to understand ways to engage in pedagogy that builds on the strengths of children rather than approaches that superficially pay lip-service to it.

Participants

Marilyn and JW were White Head Start teachers who held college degrees but did not have state certification in early childhood education. JW had been teaching preschool (mostly Head Start) for ten years. Marilyn was in her second year of teaching. Together, they taught 37 children (median average throughout the year). Due to high transiency rates, the number of children oscillated between 34 and 43 throughout the year. As Marilyn and JW made home visits, they asked about and observed literacy practices. They took photographs and detailed notes as ways of documenting their observations. As action researchers, they systematically analyzed their observations and brought their learnings to life in their classes through redesigned curriculum and teaching practices. While the initial focus of the larger study was on culture circles in teacher education, as Marilyn and JW stated their desire to better understand the literacy practices of the children in their classes, a more focused study emerged. Marilyn and JW were enthralled by culture circles and by the relevance of topics that generatively emerged from their practices.

The children in JW's and Marilyn's Head Start classes were mostly African Americans and Latinos/Latinas. While the children varied in terms of heritage, most represented a population of color. The African American families served in this program had been in the area for generations; Latino/Latina children tended to be new (having resided in the area for three to four years at most). Many of the children in the program had siblings or cousins who had previously participated, and some of the current participants had been identified as having special needs. Most of their parents and grandparents had not completed high school. In general, parents valued education and wanted their children to do well in school. Most families had limited economic means as self-reported in their program applications.

Setting

The research site was a preschool that housed three separate programs: Head Start (average of 37 children enrolled in two half-day classes), privately funded early education (birth–4; around 55 children in full-day programs), and state-funded pre-kindergarten (20 children; 7:30am–2:30pm, with the option of paid aftercare). The preschool was located in a city with a major university in the Southern United States. Yet, it was also located in one of the ten poorest counties nationally with a population over 100,000. Forty percent of the preschool's families met federal guidelines for poverty. Head Start families represented a higher percentage of poverty.

The Head Start classroom was spacious, orderly, and colorfully decorated, including separate center areas (e.g., science, housekeeping, computer, dress-up), and areas to display student work and pictures of students at work. Centers and displays

changed at least monthly. Writing tools and a variety of texts (e.g., photos, labels, books, phone books, restaurant menus) were present throughout the classroom. There was a prominent rug area, mostly used for teacher-directed whole group activities. JW's and Marilyn's two classes reflected their conviction that students should interact with and participate in hands-on learning activities and that reading and writing should occur everywhere. They opposed skill-and-drill activities and were very creative within the constraints of the Creative Curriculum™—one of the country's leading preschool curricula that claims to be scientifically based, outcomes-focused, "research-tested," and developmentally appropriate—which they used as a resource rather than as a guide. What happened in these two classes reflected a wider trend: when children from culturally and linguistically complex backgrounds enter ethnocentrically shaped school contexts, models of literacy practices may collide.

Curriculum: A Generative Approach

While the school-wide curriculum was the Creative Curriculum™, JW and Marilyn were committed to employing a curriculum based on the experiences and interactions of children as members of multiple communities of practice. Thus, they created activities and centers that codified the experiences and skills children brought with them to Head Start. This generative curriculum aligned with Janks's (2007) analytical framework (Figure 1): a cyclical and recursive process that documents the design of home and community literacy practices and that analytically deconstructs rules that govern specific interactions. Through this framework, such rules were redesigned around authentic classroom activities.

JW and Marilyn visited students' homes seeking to understand facets of home and community literacy events and practices. These visits provided opportuni-
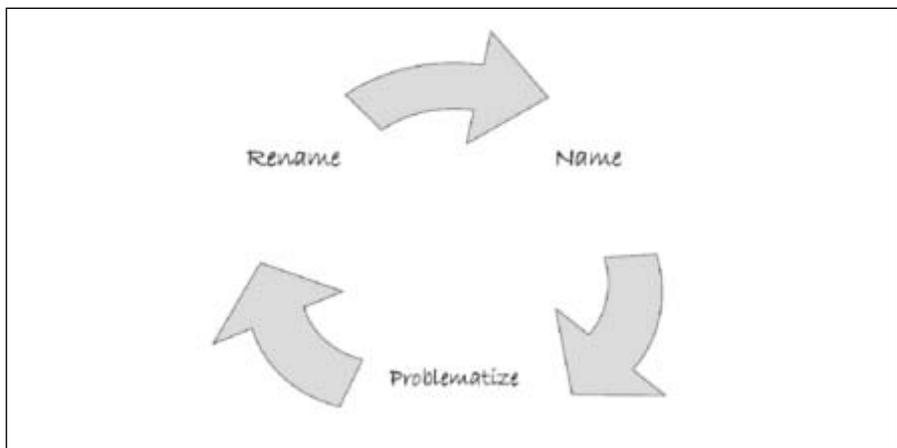

FIGURE 1: *Janks' Framework*

ties for teachers to position themselves as learners and to engage in dialogue with families (as opposed to teaching families the "how-tos" of "family involvement"). During home visits (3–4/year per student), instead of asking family members about their engagement with traditional literacy practices (e.g., book reading), the teachers asked the children to show them around and talk about things that they (and other family members) did well. This approach allowed teachers to gain insights into how culturally situated literacies mediated interactions. While most of the data used to generate curriculum was observational, the use of ethnographic tools supported the teachers' inquiries into the home/community literacies of children in the program. Those vestiges of information (albeit frequently incomplete or decontextualized) served as starting points for transforming curriculum and teaching. In particular, the role and responsibility of teachers and students were refigured as learning opportunities were redesigned. Teachers looked across homes to find similar frames of interaction that would likely appeal to groups of children.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

Data sources consisted of field notes taken throughout the year (my notes of the classroom interactions and teacher meetings, JW's and Marilyn's notes and photographs taken during home visits), videotaped data from group and independent centers between September and May (>160 hours of classroom interactions and planning sessions), and informal debriefing interviews with JW, Marilyn, and the children. I coded video-recordings for literacy practices and students' roles (using ATLAS.ti software). Relevant interactions (identified by the teachers) were roughly transcribed. Literacy events—including design, implementation, and debriefing—based on teachers' understandings of children's home and community literacy practices and on children's checks were the units of analysis. Students' and teachers' roles were examined (especially with regard to deprivation and diversities paradigms).

JW and Marilyn completed three-to-four visits to 37 families in their home and/or community settings throughout the school year. Families registering their children for the program granted JW and Marilyn official access into their homes and communities. JW and Marilyn negotiated unofficial access by creating rapport—e.g., they rode the buses to pick up the children many mornings and attempted to further introduce themselves and connect with families. The main challenge among several challenges was time to conduct the visits in which both teachers and family members were available. The most helpful data collected were the glimpses into interactions (how they worked, patterns governing participation, etc.), tools used to mediate interactions (e.g., Bibles, gospels), and the ways in which children and family members used their tools in interactions to make meaning. In addition to having access to JW's and Marilyn's notes and photographs, I interviewed them as I sought to understand what they were doing during their home visits. These interviews took place on average one time per week and lasted 30 to

40 minutes during the teachers' planning time or after school hours. I documented the activities they designed and together we co-reflected (Waff, 2009) on specific literacy events. During coreflection, I asked questions regarding the alignment of their own childhood literacy practices and practices in which the students engaged in their own homes.

I documented the process whereby JW and Marilyn were redesigning their curriculum and teaching. In doing so, I sought to identify ways in which culture circles as an approach to inservice teacher education had influenced their pedagogical practices. Teachers identified literacy events representing attempts to redesign and apply children's home literacy practices in their classes. Forty-eight complete representations of such events were transcribed and supplemented with field notes JW and/or Marilyn had taken during home visits, periodically (every two weeks) undergoing participant checks. In addition, after transcription, children were invited to explain what had happened (during events we came to term "interviews") and make connections (if present) to other practices in school, at home, or elsewhere. Twenty-eight events were identified by the children as having connections to home and community ways of interacting and were extracted for closer analysis. Of these 28 literacy events, I decided to focus on the process whereby children engaged in sustained (over 10 minutes with consistent participants) interactions negotiating specific aspects of the activity. This further reduced the literacy events to 16, including home visits, design, implementation, and debriefing.

Researcher's Roles

As noted above, data collection began in a teacher education setting. I (the teacher educator) was committed to a generative and democratic process of in-service teacher education and invited preschool teachers to be part of a teacher culture circle. This was partly a result of my own experiences with disconnected teacher development and partly because of the need for transforming the way early childhood teachers are educated (Souto-Manning, 2010a). Initially my collection of data in classrooms (Year 1) had the purpose of documenting relevant themes within and across classrooms—such themes were then codified and brought to the group as a representation of the issues teachers were negotiating in their own practices. Starting in the first year of the larger study, my roles were blurred and encompassed that of a teacher educator conducting action research, a researcher utilizing ethnographic tools to collect data representing practices and tensions in preschool classrooms, a mentor, and a friend. Though never having taught in that particular preschool, as a teacher educator and researcher in the area of early childhood education, I was knowledgeable about the standards and practices typically associated with quality teaching (i.e., those sponsored by the accrediting institution, NAEYC) and the policies shaping the programs in place. Late in the first year, JW and Marilyn approached me and said that they wanted to bring the kind of relevant curriculum in which they were engaging as a part of teacher

education into their own Head Start classes. Informally, we talked through the process whereby I—as a teacher educator who wanted to honor their practices and contextualize relevant teaching—collected data in their classroom and coded them into generative themes to be deconstructed.

While I continued in the roles described above, during Year 2 (focus of this article) I started documenting JW's and Marilyn's efforts to engage in teaching that mattered to the Head Start students. During our teacher culture circles, Marilyn and JW had identified the misalignment between their own childhood literacy practices and expectations and the home literacy practices of the children in their classes. Thus it was clear to me that Marilyn and JW wanted to find ways to facilitate and honor children's journeys as they sought to syncretically reconcile home and school literacy practices. As a researcher documenting their practices, I started engaging in data checks with them, paying closer attention to the design of their activities and curriculum, and sitting in (as a participant observer) at many of the sessions during which they planned, shared, and coreflected on their home visits. Further, I engaged children in the classroom (participants in the selected literacy events) in explaining literacy events, informally "interviewing" them in one-on-one and small group settings outside of the classroom. I asked children to explain the recorded activity and tried to establish the presence of possible connections between the classroom activity and home/community literacy practices. In the following section, I discuss the roles of teachers and students as curriculum designers within this group, presenting instances and conditions in which home literacy practices were indeed honored in integral ways in these Head Start classes.

Findings

Findings indicate the need to integrally challenge the very concept and definition of literacy, recognizing ethnocentric conceptions and perspectives. The study's findings point toward the need for: (a) educators to recognize the resources children bring from their homes and communities; (b) home literacies to be employed more integrally in Head Start classrooms; (c) goals in early intervention to be reconceptualized from remediation to re-mediation (Gutierrez et al., 2009) and from deprivation and inferiority to a diversities paradigm; and (d) recognizing and naming the ways in which current early intervention models often socialize children into White middle-class ways of being. While some of these findings are commonplace in the field of literacy, they most often appear at the "talking the talk" level. This study addresses ways in which such grand (yet abstract) concepts can be brought to life.

Overall, findings point toward three levels of change that must happen in the field of early literacy: first, acknowledging that every child comes with knowledge and building from such knowledges as resources and not deficits; second, not merely "using" existing knowledge as a transitory stepping stone to further knowledge,

but also embracing ways that broaden current definitions of the norm so teachers and children from dominant cultural groups broaden their views of what counts as language and literacy (no longer perceiving their own ways as single truths); and third, while working with educators (and society) to develop such insights, it is imperative to help students of color succeed within the existing system—learning the language and literate forms of power.

This study moves away from questioning *if* early intervention works (as so many previous studies have asked) and *if* children of color are being brought up to speed in the process of White-ification (Kinloch, 2007). Early intervention as traditionally conceived employs ethnocentric literacy practices that are not beneficial for children of color—they often undergo a subtractive process (Ball & Farr, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). This study regards early intervention as an opportunity to strengthen teachers' and children's perspectives of the value of their cultural and familial experiences and individual contributions, and moves towards positioning children as multiliterate change agents who can navigate through multiple literacy spaces while feeling capable and educating their peers and teachers in early childhood education settings and beyond. Further, I propose that, due to the fluidity and non-linear nature of children's literacy development and of diverse home literacy practices, action research is a powerful way to constantly engage in honoring multiple literacy practices and bringing them to the center of the classroom and curriculum. Within this context, this section reports four major findings—1) challenging ethnocentric literacy practices and learning to see the learning, 2) reframing ethnocentric definitions of time and choice, 3) doing away with home literacies as transitory stepping stones, and 4) redesigning literacies by involving students integrally in curriculum making.

Shift in Stance: Challenging "Ethnocentric Literacy Practices" in Order to See the Learning

JW and Marilyn experienced a shift in stance regarding the very definition of literacy. They engaged in action research as they negotiated this shift in stance—and analyzed their own roles as researchers. Initially, they were unconcerned with power issues and ethnocentrism in literacy because these issues had not affected them, nor did these issues negatively shape their own schooling experiences. Through ongoing dialogue within the context of teacher culture circles and in meetings, they started recognizing the ways ethnocentric literacies had advantaged them and disadvantaged their students. JW said: "I always thought of literacy as reading and writing . . . It wasn't until we started talking about race privilege in the teacher study [culture circle] that I, we, started thinking about how race privilege played a role in literacy." JW and Marilyn initially felt upset, but moved ahead and sought to understand literacy practices that did not center around their own ethnicity, especially since so many of their students were not White.

While some educational researchers argue that teachers can incorporate students' home and community literacy practices in classrooms even when such practices differ from teachers' practices, to do so in meaningful, non-superficial ways requires us to challenge the positioning of White middle-class literacies as the norm. Marilyn and JW took on this challenge by acknowledging literacy and language practices as culturally shaped and not as normative and/or subtractive. While not easy, this is essential in *challenging ethnocentric literacy practices.*

One of the challenges experienced by Marilyn and JW was that while it would be ideal to ethnographically learn about the cultures shaping each students' language and literacy practices, limited time and dwindling resources made it impossible to do so. This is a reality for many teachers, some of whom quickly dismiss their role as ethnographers because of limited time and resources. Yet, as demonstrated by Marilyn and JW, employing ethnographic tools to better understand students' home and community literacy practices while repositioning students as co-researchers and curriculum designers is essential. According to JW and Marilyn, bringing vestiges of home literacy practices to the classroom and acknowledging them as such can offer opportunities for students' home literacy practices to be integrally honored.

Once Marilyn and JW acknowledged the dominance of their own language and literacy practices in traditional school settings—e.g., Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequences, culturally specific turn taking, the privileging of Mainstream American English—they learned to recognize children's meaning making processes within the context of their homes and communities. They were able to then build upon those practices in the classroom. For example, JW and Marilyn found some of the documented features of African American communities (seen in studies such as Heath, 1983) to be true in many of their students' homes and communities—e.g., more direct interactional style (less hedging), and varied turn taking. In exchanges such as the excerpt below (= indicates overlapping speech), JW and Marilyn noticed that children spoke as if "cutting someone's turn" or "entering an unwelcome conversation." Yet moving beyond the interactive style unfamiliar to them allowed the teachers to see that children were co-constructing meaningful narratives and negotiating actions.

KEISHA (TO XAVIER): She be mindin' my business. She need to mind her business or come help me.

TYRA (TO KEISHA): What you want me to do? You want me=

XAVIER: =Don't you be pretendin' you don't know nothin'. You been watchin'. Find somethin'=

TYRA: Okay. Cleaning up=

KEISHA: =This a mess! You know we need help cleaning up=

XAVIER: =You know what=

TYRA: =need be done.

XAVIER (TO KEISHA): She know what need be done.

KEISHA: Uh-hum. I hear you. She betta get her behind busy. She goin' or not?

Ignoring the power of such practices in the classroom would mean placing students at a disadvantage as turn taking in the classroom diverged from the culturally situated rules governing home and community interactions. Additionally, the very concept of literacy took a more oral turn—including sophisticated hymns and intricate recipes orally recalled—as opposed to being restricted to print decoding and book reading. By acknowledging their literacy privileges, as shaped by an ethnocentric approach to academic success and learning, JW and Marilyn were able to get a glimpse of the authentic and meaningful practices taking place in the children's homes and communities. The short quote below (from a conversation between JW and Marilyn), while not exemplifying the complexities of all learning processes, does exemplify how Marilyn and JW learned about children, their families, and communities. Reflecting on the process, Marilyn stated:

> I see literacy in a whole new way now. . . . Before the teacher study, if someone would ask like, what's literacy mean to you, I would've been like, reading books to children, and having, you know, print on the mirror . . . but I think now I realize, oh, it's so much more than that, than just books and words around the classroom . . . for example, dramatic play and the whole . . . pretending to talk on the phone while cooking the meal, like that, is totally early literacy.

There was a shift in stance—from teaching children to learning with them, their families, and communities. Not in the way that so many people propose—by pathologizing and "helping" them—but by truly seeing the learning in meaningful ways. In addition, it was important to recognize the learning of teachers as they engaged in redefining literacy practices as part of this process. While this process might initially appear easy and simplistic, it involved letting go of the cultural deprivation paradigm that has characterized some Head Start programs (Goodwin et al., 2008) in order to employ a cultural difference paradigm which shifts "away from notions of inferiority or deprivation to an emphasis on the impact of cultural differences on the lives, experiences, and identities of diverse groups in ways that are not deviant but are unique" (p. 4). It involved embracing a fluid identity of teacher and learner simultaneously—teaching one literacy system while learning others—embarking on a journey similar to that of Marilyn and JW.

Reframing Ethnocentric Conceptualizations of Time and Choice

Marilyn and JW realized that along with challenging ethnocentric literacy practices, they needed to pay attention to time and choice in negotiating authentic spaces for redesigned home literacies in the Head Start classroom, spaces that did not center

on their own literacies. JW stated: "Rethinking what we do without thinking about time doesn't work. It's like trying to fit a three-act play in the time of a skit." According to JW and Marilyn, an awareness and reconceptualization of the cultural forces shaping concepts of time and choice were essential to providing comfortable spaces for children to continue developing home literacies. In the classroom, challenging ethnocentric and panoptical time (Genishi & Dyson, 2009)—which placed children constantly under watch to perform in a specified, expected way—allowed children to deepen and expand activities and interactions based on their home and community practices. JW and Marilyn were keenly aware that the "hurry" to get children to perform the standards was unrealistic and generated stress in the classroom. In addition, it pictured the children as inefficient and unproductive, as not making adequate progress.

As JW and Marilyn compared the classroom structure with students' home and community interactions, they realized that in terms of choice the classroom provided no real choice. All choices were controlled by a system of surveillance, thereby creating a false pretense of choice limited and known ahead of time by adults. Such classroom spaces and activities framed young children's play and interactions in IRE-like sequences in which the design of the activity was conceived as an initiation with expected (read right and wrong) responses—meeting or failing to meet goals and standards. Unexpected responses were often met with redirection by teachers (c.f. Souto-Manning, 2010b). Becoming aware of how time and choice were defined, delimited, and implemented differently in their own cultural upbringing and in the homes and communities of many of the children they educated, JW and Marilyn came to realize that ethnocentric time and choice were culturally situated privilegings of specific practices. Seeking to provide more realistic choices—aligning with what they had documented as community- and family-centered activities and interactions—JW and Marilyn redesigned center time. Instead of having to engage in certain pre-designed activities, responding in pre-specified ways, JW and Marilyn redesigned activities as options and honored the many ways children engaged in learning—making it "choice" time. In doing so, the teachers expanded their own understandings.

Initially, for them, time was conceptualized as past-present-future in Mainstream American English (MAE) ways. As they engaged in observing the children and visiting their homes and communities, they started seeing how their own conceptualizations lacked "in betweens" (Marilyn) as embraced by so many of the children's linguistic expressions. When coreflecting, we talked about how Spanish and African American English provide much more nuanced and multi-faceted ways to conceptualize and talk about time—e.g., the MAE verb "to be" functions as either transitory or permanent in *estoy* and *soy*, or *he missed the bus* and *he be missin' the bus* (Ball & Farr, 2003). In addition, the concept of having a definite ending time to an activity without the activity or interaction coming to completion

was also ethnocentrically located—a common practice for the teachers but not for many of the students and their families. This was evidenced by the many times in which teachers scheduled home visits with definite beginning and ending times, yet were met with "kind resistance" (according to JW) to leaving if the interaction and narratives were not yet done. Often in the classroom, children were resistant to leaving an activity and transitioning to another without coming to a sense of closure. In terms of time, ethnocentrism imposes a time frame where none exists. JW and Marilyn created spaces for children to exit choice activities at different times, although noting the challenge given the time boundaries set by the school day.

Marilyn and JW expanded choice to allow students a voice as to timing and audience for disclosing their work. This approach allowed students to risk more and engage in more traditional literacy practices—albeit on their own terms. It also allowed for innovation with format. For example, Jake (one of the students) authored a text on post-it notes over a period of several weeks, not having to explain what he was doing as he scribbled/wrote on several purposefully sequenced post-it pages (Figure 2). He would bring separate post-its to play interactions. For example, one day, he brought one of the pages to the housekeeping area and said to Kyra: "The momma, she want to buy her some greens, beans, and fried chicken." Kyra said, "You mean you goin' over there [pointing to the restaurant] to tryna get some fried chicken." Jake walked over to the restaurant area and asked for greens, beans, and fried chicken. He got a plate full of plastic food. He then went back to his book and wrote about his experience. As Jake weaved symbols (Dyson, 1990), he knew that symbols carried meaning and that the combination of a variety of symbols across pages comprised a book. His drafts were "tested" in real interactions in the classroom and then revised. He also knew (and wrote in his book) that if you want fried chicken, this grocery store "don' have none."

FIGURE 2: *Writing a Book*

Two months later, as Jake read his book, we could see and hear how it captured so many of the interactions he negotiated in the process. Such approaches to time and choice allowed him to be more successful in writing a book—a more traditional literacy practice.

In another example (Figure 3), Jere (another student) said, "it's okay to write a letter like this because I can read it to Ms. Sun-A (student teacher)." Thus, re-thinking time and choice were great ways to engage in more traditional literacy practices such as book writing and letter writing while valuing home literacies. Not knowing the genre of a letter did not stop Jere from communicating with Ms. Sun-A. He did not share it with the entire class, though, until he wrote a letter with wiggly lines progressing from left to right, top to bottom and including shorter lines for greeting (left aligned) and farewell (right aligned). Choice and ownership were important and allowed many students to experience success after negotiating multiple representations and renditions. The Head Start children had space and time to try, improvise, and practice without pressure to perform.

After observing the children move toward creating a third space where their home literacy practices were valued while simultaneously experiencing more dominant and official literacy practices (i.e., school literacy), JW, Marilyn, and I concluded that time and choice were essential constructs to consider. Marilyn and

FIGURE 3: *Negotiating the Genre of Letter Writing*

JW found that there is much to be learned from the children through observing them negotiate such spaces without interference. JW and Marilyn found that the children socially remediated home literacy practices and academic literacies collaboratively, establishing a symbiotic relationship in which one practice apprenticed from the other. Marilyn and JW witnessed an incredible learning process occurring via roads that were not part of the traditional early intervention curriculum and teaching maps.

> **Marilyn:** I learned to watch and understand what they were doing, you know, instead of trying to get them back on task. I learned a lot by doing that.
>
> **JW:** Yes, and a lot of times a completely unexpected situation created a great opportunity for learning, but we had to step back and watch . . . try to figure out what was going on, instead of getting them to do what we wanted them to do.

While some may argue that with this approach some students may never progress towards formal literacy development, children like Jake and Jere took more risks when not under constant pressure to perform. The children were encouraged to negotiate, develop, and engage in both home and academic literacy practices. At their own pace, having choice and ownership, the children were able to embrace more official literacy practices by experimenting and trying. They read and preached to invisible audiences. They composed songs with lyrics based on a story they had previously read or heard. They used artifacts to convey a certain identity—such as a shirt worn on the head to signify wisdom and longer locks. In trying and experimenting, children negotiated third spaces and expanded their repertoires, not replacing literacies, but becoming multiliterate (Dyson, 2002).

Doing Away with Home Literacies as Transitory Stepping Stones

Home literacies are not stepping stones to be left behind. They are not crutches to be cast off. They are real and meaningful culturally specific practices that govern human interactions and experiences. I am not advocating that children of color should not be taught the power code. What I am advocating is that children have the right to continue developing home and community literacies alongside the more traditional schooling practices so that they develop into full participants of different (and sometimes conflicting) cultural contexts. Instead of taking an assimilationist approach seeking to colonize students and attempting to promote processes of erasure, home literacies should be conceptualized as value-added literacy systems, as strengths. As with languages, there are overlaps, yet there are culturally specific rules that are separate across contexts.

In seeking to promote the development of home literacies in their classroom, JW and Marilyn found that literacies in homes and communities came in many forms and that families of Head Start students, contrary to commonly held views

about them, valued literacy learning. Home literacies were used to support author-
ing and responding in the Head Start classes. During home visits, JW and Marilyn
noticed that if literacy practices were defined as social practices, home literacy
practices had to do with children making meaning through music and performance,
playing and reenacting certain situations that routinely occurred in their homes.
Some of the signification was done in embodied ways (hair and body literacies—
e.g., the signification of social practices via tattoos and hairdos). By paying close
attention to how children embodied literacies as well as glimpsing into home and
community practices, JW and Marilyn came to understand some of the students'
meanings; for example, the great significance of hair to many participating Afri-
can American families. Jamaal's improvised dreadlocks (dreads) were part of his
identity as a learner in the classroom. Jamaal, who had a shaved head, believed that
to embrace the identity of a learner, he had to put on his thinking dreads—which
were represented by a long sleeve shirt worn as a hat/wig. As soon as Jamaal put
on his dreads, he was ready to learn. His dreads were part of his identity, of his
social practice as a learner. In addition, such understandings led to interactions
that were reshaped based on knowledges emanating from home cultural contexts
as exemplified in the following interaction:

> MARILYN: Are you ready to learn?
> KEISHA: If I'm gonna learn, I need to be ready. Oooooh, I better get my hairdid.
>   Ain't nobody gonna think I ready this way. I tryna be ready.

By bringing both home literacies and more traditional school literacies (which
are typically ethnocentric) to the classroom, JW and Marilyn sought to shift the
power conferred to specific systems and representations of literacy (Moje et al.,
2004). One of the things that JW and Marilyn had learned was the importance
and status associated with hair in many of the children's homes and communi-
ties. Once, Marilyn went to a hair salon with one of her students and the mother
without realizing that she would still be there three hours later. Differently from
what she had experienced when getting haircuts, African American hair salons were
not only places to beautify, but places to confer and to consult, to learn within a
community over unmeasured time.

As JW and Marilyn engaged in deconstructing home literacy practices (not
based on specific activities, but on interactions), they sought to understand the
interactional rules and tools shaping and constructing a certain situation. Oral
storytelling, so common in these (and many other) African American households
(Heath, 1983) also gained a place of prominence in the classroom. Marilyn and
JW gave the children a choice of telling their stories from their heads (or hearts)
or writing them down. The children started hybridizing such practices and used
art notes either as springboards for storytelling or as tools for enhancing the story

(e.g., using a piece of paper to make rain sounds). The children weaved symbols in their interactions as they made sense of the world (Dyson, 1990).

MARIANA: So . . . how did home literacies change children's participation in the classroom?

MARILYN: Like, they could draw and then tell complicated stories, but if we wanted them to write, they got lost in the process and didn't like it.

JW: Yes, and the stories [they told] were so sophisticated and complex. Many adults, many of our college students could not tell (or even keep track) of all the layers.

MARILYN: So, their drawings told the story, and they had so much on the page. Sometimes it didn't make sense to look at and they didn't even look nice=

JW: =Aesthetically=

MARILYN: =Yeah, but when we listened to them, it was all about the relationships, which are so hard to picture anyway.

JW: So it's important for us to understand what they mean on their own terms—without going, "ooh, this is not how you do this!" Not judging it against how I always thought of literacy, against how I grew up knowing interactions work.

JW and Marilyn positioned the children as co-constructors of curriculum, as being unique contributors. Within these Head Start classes, the children and the teachers negotiated ways to (re)define texts to include practices that meant much to the children. Often, in responding to texts being read, children performed their responses as opposed to simply verbalizing them, a practice adopted due to the extent that children performed as a way to communicate in their homes and communities as documented by JW and Marilyn. So many of the children were used to dancing to music and letting their feelings emerge as they moved that their performative responses were more complex than their oral reactions to texts and situations. Expecting children to connect to a text verbally while sitting down on carpet squares conflicted with how many of the children expressed feelings and experiences in their own homes and communities. Thus, JW and Marilyn encouraged children to engage music and performance as ways of authoring and responding. It was amazing to hear some of their drum performances "speak" more eloquently than any of us could. They engaged in call and response and in very complex rhythmic patterns requiring attention, repetition, and extension (with complicated mathematical permutations situated well beyond the curricular scope of Head Start) as they drummed and composed together. For example, if one student started with two beats, another student could repeat the two beats in the same rhythm, add something, and toss it back to the initial drummer, adding complexity yet co-constructing patterns at every turn.

Teachers redesigned classroom practices based on their own learnings. Turn taking was reworked (especially during whole group activities). Instead of raising their hands, children jumped in, spoke into the silence, and co-constructed narratives, shifting power and control in the classroom. Respect was redefined. When Tyron said to Stefiauna "Yo' momma so skinny she can hula hoop in a Cheerio," there was a clear understanding that while to some that may be a compliment (someone's mother being slender taken as a positive trait), within the context of many of the children's interactions, "dissin'" one's momma was the worst possible insult. So, in bringing together ways of interacting at home to the classroom, *all* students and teachers were winning, being socialized in multiple ways of knowing, in multiple literacy practices which were culturally located, while challenging the privileging of certain ethnocentric practices. In the process, the children became aware of multiple ways of communicating in their homes and communities— e.g., a mother speaking differently to a girlfriend and to a child—and engaged in embodied literacies. So, not only were they aware of how oral language use varied across contexts, they were also able to use their bodies as texts. Embodied literacies were not only honored, but encouraged.

By honoring such representations and not seeing them as transitory or scaffolding points, the teachers created spaces in which the children took risks and felt successful as authors. They were able to draw on home literacy practices to add depth to their stories. Marilyn and JW sought to encourage creativity and embrace the discourses children brought into the classroom, expanding and complementing their repertoire and not replacing their experiences via a process of erasure or subtractive schooling (Ball & Farr, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). As home literacy practices became more central in these Head Start classes, students' feelings of success directly related to their developing competencies, as confidence allowed them to take more risks, experiment, and learn.

Redesigning Literacies through Shifting Power in Curriculum Making

In redefining literacy and challenging ethnocentric practices, JW and Marilyn were not able to fully access all cultural practices enacted in children's families and communities. What they got were glimpses, vestiges. They aptly used such learnings to redesign curriculum using Janks's framework (Figure 1). JW and Marilyn sought to document the design-deconstruct-redesign sequence/model. Yet, the teachers knew that they were not the experts. The children, who were full participants and had been apprenticed into such practices, were. So, while the activities designed by JW and Marilyn were initially superficial, they were taken as starting points. Interactionally, the children yet again redesigned the (redesigned) literacy activity according to their own cultural experiences and expertise.

In seeking to create (or at least to make visible) overlaps and interconnections between home literacies and academic literacies, in terms of music and performance, Marilyn and JW came to recognize how common spirituals, hymns, rap,

and hip-hop were in the children's households and communities—e.g., African American churches were an important part of many children's lives. Thus, during reading aloud and shared reading, JW and Marilyn chose books which brought words and illustrations to enhance (or to be associated with) texts that were already familiar to many children. Not only did the texts enter the classroom, so did culturally situated ways of acting. Marilyn and JW also created spaces for children to express themselves and let their bodies feel the text and the beat as opposed to quietly sitting during read aloud circle time. Marilyn and JW designed different kinds of read alouds—some of which were done standing up and with more active participation. In the beginning, the children felt a bit weary about such a structure as indicated by their looks and debriefing "interview" events, but soon the two kinds of read alouds became more of a hybrid form in which children were not necessarily dancing, but were using their hands to express the rhythm of the text. Children re-designed the activity with lots of fist movements. Yet, such redesigning represented just the beginning. The activities identified by the children as occurring in out-of-school settings were those that were redesigned by them based on the initial (re)designs presented by the teachers.

JW and Marilyn observed that singing hymns was not only a practice in church but enacted in households when adults and children were happy or carrying out their everyday chores (evidence of singing religious songs was found in 21 of 37 households). The teachers documented the design and the role of hymn singing not only as carrying a traditional message of worship, but of a background soundtrack to many of the families' lives. JW and Marilyn struggled with the separation of church and state, yet decided that hymns were just too central to many of the children's lives to go ignored. So, they decided to bring *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands* (Nelson, 2005) to the classroom as a read aloud and shared reading. They did so because when asking family and community members about their favorites, this hymn emerged as the clear favorite. They wanted not only to honor one of the favorite tunes in the children's homes and communities, but to create a third space, a connection where a book (more traditional literacy) could capture some of the children's everyday practices. As JW read the book, the children were wiggling on their carpet squares on the floor during circle time. Tyra said: "Mr. JW, this ain't how we do it" and proceeded to ask her peers to get on their feet and "sing it like you mean it, like you feel it." They did. Beyond singing, they improvised and extended the text to include their classmates—e.g., "Jamaal got the whole world in his hands, he got a momma and a sista in his hands . . ."—thus redesigning the activity. They left the book aside (as it served only as a representation of a text which was common to them) and started reciting texts from church, which many of them had memorized. Texts which, JW, Marilyn, and I would (according to our own perspectives) have difficulty reciting immediately after reading them due to their great linguistic complexity. When showing that segment of video to Tyra, I asked

her to explain what was going on and if she had engaged in something similar to this before. She said: "Hellooo, that what we be doin' in church every Sunday." So, while JW and Marilyn managed to bring in codified representations of important home and community literacy practices and texts, the children used such tools as starting points to re-envision curriculum. Spiritual beliefs have historically been used as a strategy to deal with adversity and were common means of socialization for African Americans from the time of slavery (Haight, 2002).

Another literacy practice observed in Latino and African American households was storytelling from a very personal perspective linked to culturally located moral messages—e.g., kinship, the importance of extended family, etc. JW and Marilyn observed that many of the ethical and moral teachings happened through oral stories based on personal experiences (26/37 households). When asking families later if the stories were true, the teachers found out that many of them were based on real occasions, yet constructed as realistic fiction with added details. Others were completely improvised. The "real" was a very ethnocentric concept—the central tenet of such stories was to pass on *consejos (advice)* by bringing them to life. So, after observing such practices in many homes, Marilyn decided that she was going to encourage children to engage in telling stories about themselves that did not actually happen (or that may have happened in a different way). Within the context of clean up time, Marilyn started telling a story about Antonio. The child played along with great mastery. Within the classroom context, Antonio took Marilyn's lead and told about his experience "and then my momma said: 'Clean up your room. It such a mess' . . . I didn't want to do no clean up, so I said 'I ain't gonna do it' . . . God was so upset that he cried. Then, it started raining and I could not play." Antonio had observed that Marilyn had asked children to clean up, yet he was the only one cleaning up. Marilyn engaged Antonio to honor his practice but also to reward a child who was following directions. Yet, Antonio took Marilyn's practice as the initial design (a story about him which was to be made up) and added the moral dimension as a compass which directly applied to that context. Eventually other children started connecting and telling their own stories of not cleaning up, evolving to a larger narrative constructing the need to follow adults' directions and take care of those who you love (invoking the concepts of responsibility to members of the extended family and kinship).

In both of these cases, Marilyn and JW opened the "curricular closets" (Dyson, 2010) to multiple voices and literacy practices. They re-visioned the participation of critical players in the linguistic and textual transformations of our times—the children in their classes. They embraced home and community literacy practices, but could not include the nuances which could only be reproduced by members of those specific communities of practice. In redesigning literacies to challenge the privileging of specific ethnocentric practices, they shifted the power in curriculum making. The child as expert was authentic. The children knew more about the literacy practices glimpsed by JW and Marilyn and as such were repositioned as

key players in the classroom. This made for a better learning journey not only for the children whose home literacies had not previously been honored but for *all* children who expanded their literacy repertoires.

Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of engaging teachers in teacher education pedagogies that can be used in their own teaching as well as considering the importance of boundary crossing as teachers seek to position themselves as cultural workers (Freire, 1998). Teachers, such as JW and Marilyn who are portrayed in this article, can position themselves as action researchers who collect information in and out of the classroom, making sense of the data inductively and codifying common themes in classroom activities (redesigning home literacies in the context of the classroom and/or school). Children are engaged in member checks to add validity to the work being done by teachers within a context of limited resources. Beyond that, children are the ones to redefine and refine classroom practices based on home literacies, making them more complex and culturally relevant. Such a process can usefully inform teachers and teacher educators seeking to better educate a new generation. Specifically in the case of Head Start, (re)conceptualizing the role of home visits as opportunities for learning while challenging privileged, ethnocentric literacies and positioning children as curriculum makers becomes a necessity—as a generative curriculum is fashioned from the fabric of children's very lives.

For Marilyn and JW, their experience with culture circles in teacher education influenced their classroom practices. As they embarked on this journey, they started questioning both curriculum and teaching in light of their engagement in a teacher culture circle (Souto-Manning, 2010a), which conceptualized curriculum generatively, from the teachers' practices and experiences. Furthermore, my positioning of teacher educator as action researcher and learner of their practices influenced the roles they took in their own classroom—learning about and with their students and engaging in action research to address ways to incorporate more meaningful and representative literacy practices in their classes. Teacher educators constantly talk about walking the walk. There is a need to go beyond talking and start walking so that teacher education practices can have a greater impact in the lives of children.

This study offers ways in which Head Start teachers (and all teachers who experience/d literacies which differ from their students') may start to authentically incorporate home literacy practices in their classrooms, challenging traditional roles of students as recipients of knowledge (Freire, 1970). Teachers alone cannot singularly redesign processes that represent and include students' home literacy practices in the classroom. Students are the ones who are full participants of such communities of practice and as such should be positioned as experts.

Thus, if students of color are to be authentically reframed in educational settings and ultimately in society—from being conceptualized as inferior to being valued as knowledgeable—the ways in which their roles are reframed have to be meaningful and integral. The process by which students refined, complicated, and deepened the initial designs whereby JW and Marilyn brought redesigned home literacy practices to the classroom is a situated representation of the many possibilities that lay ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTE

1. I did not employ participatory action research (PAR) as a label because this study does not meet its "underlying tenets" (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1). JW, Marilyn, and I committed to investigate related yet distinct issues. While we entered a joint decision to seek a solution that benefitted all involved (coherent with PAR tenets), we did not engage participants (children, family and community members) in all phases of research—planning, implementation, dissemination. Therefore, I decided to describe the study rather than label it since it does not neatly fit within the tenets of PAR (McIntyre, 2008).

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