MANIFESTATIONS OF MEANING MAKING: KINDERGARTENERS' COLLECTIVE, MULTIMODAL, AND PLAYFUL READINGS OF NONFICTION PICTUREBOOKS

by

COURTNEY SHIMEK

(Under the Direction of Jennifer M. Graff)

ABSTRACT

Informed by Bakhtin's (1929/1984) notions of heteroglossia and dialogism, Rosenblatt's (1938/1978) transactional theory of reading, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic multimodality, this qualitative study explores the question: How do readers respond in multimodal ways to nonfiction children's literature, both individually and as a part of a collaborative learning experience, such as a whole group interactive read-aloud? And ancillary questions: 1) How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning? 2) What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks? 3) How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play? This case study of one Kindergarten classroom in the Southeastern U.S. observed teachers and students as they participated in read-alouds and throughout the school day two to three days a week from January – May. A multimodal interactional analysis was conducted of the 77 video recordings, photographs, audio recordings, daily written observations, and reflective memos collected over

the five months. Findings indicate that readers of nonfiction consider the responses of those around them in their takeaways, that making sense of nonfiction is a continual and discursive process, and that all readers responded to nonfiction picturebooks in multimodal ways. Findings also suggest that play is an integral site for children to continue their meaning making of nonfiction picturebooks collectively and individually, even when the play is fantastical or deviates from the nonfiction picturebook. Additionally, children responded to nonfiction books in both aesthetic and efferent ways, even though teachers continued to prioritize an efferent stance when reading nonfiction. This study has implications for elementary teachers and administrators, readers of nonfiction picturebooks, and reading researchers. It suggests that free play provided invaluable opportunities for young children to make sense of the nonfiction picturebooks and their worlds, that readers are always on the aesthetic-efferent continuum, even when transacting with nonfiction, and that young readers respond to picturebooks in multimodal ways.

INDEX WORDS: Nonfiction picturebooks, Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, Bakhtin, Multimodality, Play, Literacy

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B.A., The University of South Carolina, 2011

M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2015

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

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May 2020

DEDICATION

To Pop Pop

Thank you for modeling how to never stop learning, for always exhibiting a strong work ethic, and for emphasizing the importance of an education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this dissertation, I recognize that learning is a collective experience and demonstrate the incompleteness of spoken and written language as communication. My acknowledgments section, too, emphasizes this, for words will never be able to fully encapsulate all that I owe to the people I mention. Each of them has impacted me in indelible ways.

To Jenn Graff: Thank you for being the most devoted, dedicated, and detail-oriented mentor, teacher, and friend I have ever known. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself, for giving me courage, and for always being willing to read another round of edits. Someday, I hope to be half the mentor to someone else that you have been to me.

To Donna Alvermann: Thank you for showing me how to be a strong advocate for doctoral students and our field. I will forever remember your passion, your energy, and your kindness and promise to emulate your devotion to students throughout my career.

To Melissa Freeman: Thank you for instilling in me a strong sense of ethics and morality as a researcher. From your work on conducting research with young children to the drawings of your grandchildren on your walls during my defense, your presence in my journey has continually reminded me of my purpose: to better understand the ways children move about the world.

To Mary Guay: Thank you for reinforcing my beliefs about reading, for modeling how to be a thoughtful and caring teacher, and for being a genuine inquirer into the complexities of the learning process. I have learned more from you than words will ever describe.

To other UGA faculty members I took classes from, served on committees with, and socialized with: Thank you for changing the way I view and move through the world. Your passion, knowledge, and care have shaped me forever, and I promise to always try to emulate these qualities throughout my career.

To the doctoral students at UGA, especially those I entered this program with and former and current Graffites: Thank you for being the best part of this journey and for allowing me to be a part of yours. Your words of encouragement, your humor, and your questions about the world pushed me to become a better and stronger scholar. Thank you for reading my writing when it was rough, for suggesting readings when I needed to know more, and for socializing when I needed to blow off some steam. I could not have done this without all of you, and I am forever grateful for your friendship, guidance, and professional network.

To TERSG members, particularly Joy Myers and Roya Scales: Thank you for your leadership, mentorship, and collaboration. Because of you, I have found my scholarly home. Thank you for showing me how to conduct qualitative research, for reminding me that what we do matters, and for always being a source of inspiration.

To Rabbi Meir: Thank you for being a constant source of wisdom and joy in this process. I owe so much of who I am to you and your wonderful school. Thank you for your continued belief in me, and for always being someone I can turn to.

To Tasha Laman: Thank you for setting me on this path, for your continued guidance, and for inspiring me to become a professor. You saw potential in me and opened up a world I never knew existed. Thank you for believing in me.

To Mrs. Burnette and the School for Questioning (especially the Principal): Thank you for being the beautiful place I come back to time and time again when I feel discouraged about

the state of education. Your devotion to children, your general dispositions about the world, and your welcoming community will always be my home. Teaching in our current world is complicated. Thank you for the example you set for all of us on what really matters in education, for showing me how to view children in positive ways, and for allowing me to a part of this magical place, again.

To Ms. Lisa: I don't know if one person has changed my life as much as you have. Thank you for trusting me, for seeing my potential, and for making me a part of your family. It has truly been the highest honor of my life. To the larger Smith Crowd: Thanks for welcoming with open arms, for always putting up with me, and for your support in this process. I am so grateful to have such a wonderful extended family.

To Hannah, Krista, and Emily: Thank you for being the kind of friends that always pick up right where we left off. Despite multiple moves across states, careers, and life changes, you three continue to show me, again and again, the power of strong friendships.

To wine night girls and the trivia crowd: Thanks for helping me balance real life with work and for pulling me out of my shell when I needed it. You all welcomed me with open arms even after being away for so many years and kept me sane, learning, and laughing when I needed it most. I am forever grateful.

Grandma Shimek: Thank you for showing me what it means to lead a life of devotion and for being such a strong matriarch. Your guidance, support, and love have been instrumental in this process.

Grammy and Pop: Thank you for the example you set for all of us. The generosity, humility, and goodwill you put forth in the world always astounds me. I promise to continue your legacy in making our world a better place.

To my extended Alig and Shimek families, especially my Fairy Godmother: Thank you for all of your understanding, for your continued support, and for your help as I embarked upon this journey. Having your love and support to return back to time and time again was invaluable.

To the Good Aunt Mary: thank you for your continued vision and devotion to the field of education. I continue to learn so much from you and sincerely appreciate all of the invaluable insights you have provided me in my career.

To Jake: Thank you for being the best sibling a girl could ask for. I can always count on you to brighten my day and to help me when I need it most. Being your Sissy/Squirt is such an honor.

To Mom: Thank you for raising me to be an independent woman, for showing me how to turn my passion into a career, and for being the most hard-working person I know. So much of who I am and will become stems from you.

To Dad: Thanks for being the person I call when I need some life perspective and for never letting me quit, even when I wanted to. I know that I could not have done this program without you, and I am so grateful for your continued love and support throughout life. *Nō ka ʻoi.*

To Jubal: Thank you for being the most devoted writing partner, for making me go outside when I needed to clear my head, and for bringing me so much happiness.

To Judson: Thank you for enduring every step of this arduous journey. I don't think either of us knew what we were getting into when it began, but you have been the most devoted friend, partner, and husband. Thank you for doing all of the dishes, for getting me out of the house and away from technology, and for always reminding me of what truly matters in life. I am not sure where our lives will take us, but I am forever grateful that I have you to navigate it with. I couldn't do it without you, and I wouldn't want to either.

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CHAPTER ONE

"THE BODY IS THE TEXT"

Without the body there is no text

There is no text without breath

No breath without the body

The body is the text

This is about landscape and psyche

This is about language and earth

Breathing together we are the text

We are speaking even when we are silent.

By Elizabeth Carothers Herron (As Cited in Katz, 2013, p. xix)

In my first semester as a graduate student, I was introduced to Duke's (2000) *3.6 Minutes per Day: The Scarcity of Informational Texts in First Grade* for the first time and was surprised that nonfiction was not being read-aloud regularly in elementary classrooms. I was fresh from my own classroom where I read-aloud nonfiction books to preschoolers several times each week, if not daily, so this was a problem I had never considered before. My students frequently chose to read nonfiction to themselves, half of our class library was dedicated to nonfiction, and more often than not, when I visited the local library, it was to pick up nonfiction, not fiction books for my students.

Although my work as a doctoral student has exposed me to other areas of study, I continued to be curious about the lack of nonfiction children's books in elementary classrooms.

While exploring scholarly literature on nonfiction books, I also found there to be a lack of research examining responses to nonfiction picturebooks. For example, Sipe's (1998) groundbreaking work on the synergy of picturebooks excluded nonfiction picturebooks. My literature review focused on how girls read nonfiction became a review of the genres girls and boys prefer to read in general due to a lack of research that examined how girls read nonfiction (Merisuo-Storm, 2006; Sanford, 2005; Simpson, 1996; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). I took a reader response course where not one of the theorists discussed children's responses to nonfiction books, specifically. Simultaneously, my explorations of nonfiction picturebooks have shown that these books have shifted to become more engaging (Graff & Shimek, 2020; Moss, 2003), synergistic (Shimek, 2019), aesthetically appealing (Gill, 2009), and entertaining (Colman, 2007) than ever before.

In addition to my concerns about the lack of research exploring nonfiction picturebooks and children's responses to nonfiction, I was surprised to find that most studies that examine reader response analyze children's verbal or written responses to texts (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Sipe, 2008). As a teacher, I rarely thought about my body as a way of communication. I focused consistently on the language I used with my students, but never thought twice about the language my physical body was communicating as well. Now, however, I realize that I was continuously negotiating what it meant to embody "teacher" (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015). My students, too, often expressed themselves in physical ways. As a part of our classroom curriculum, I frequently had students act out the concepts we were studying. For example, when we studied apples, we re-enacted the life cycle using our bodies to represent the seeds, the flower blossoms, the tree trunks, etc. Translating what we learned into physical movement became a part of

children's play as well. Movement was a part of their meaning making process and the physical gestures they made were a part of their "reading" of the books we read together in class.

As an instructor of record of undergraduate literacy education courses at UGA, I have been surprised at the policing of bodies that I have witnessed teaching onsite at some of the local elementary schools. Children are only allowed to sit on the carpet with their legs crossed and hands in their laps, they must hold their hands behind their backs in the hallways and walk in straight lines, and they are only allowed to sit in their desks in an upright posture with both feet on the floor. While I admit, these are all behaviors I tried to implement in my classroom as well, the amount of energy spent on children moving their bodies in certain ways has surprised me. I began to ask myself, when do students get to embody what they're learning or, more specifically, what they are reading? When do children have time to process their understandings of classroom read-alouds, particularly of nonfiction read-alouds? When are children provided the time and space to play with the content and extend their meaning making processes? The above poem by Elizabeth Carothers Heathers speaks to this wondering: when do we allow young reader's bodies to become a text within a larger body of texts?

Purpose and Overview of the Study

In response to the lack of literature examining nonfiction reader response and the emphasis on response as being something spoked or written, I embarked upon this research with the goal of better understanding how teachers and students used nonfiction books in public school classrooms. I wanted to investigate how readers make sense of nonfiction picturebooks in heteroglossic and dialogic ways, not just through their verbal responses but also with their physical actions, gestures, and facial expressions. I wondered how readers make sense of nonfiction books read collectively, during whole group read-alouds, but also how their individual

experiences shape their understandings of nonfiction books. Finally, based on my own experiences teaching young children, I recognized that children often continued to process the content of our read-alouds over time and throughout the entire school day. I wanted to explore what happens when educators notice and value the work children are doing through play (Dyson, 2008; Wohlwend, 2015) and see if this processing of nonfiction read-alouds would be evident during non-academic moments of the day too. I set out to determine if children were making sense of nonfiction books through their play. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to explore how reading nonfiction books could be a collective, dialogic, and playful process that children continue to engage in as they move throughout the world.

Inspired by Adomat's (2009) recognition of the complexities and multiple layers of understanding stories, as well as the lack of research examining reader's responses to nonfiction children's literature and children's play as a part of reading, I examined how young readers collectively make meaning of nonfiction picturebooks with the help of the teacher and their peers during a whole group interactive read-aloud in one Kindergarten classroom. This was as a case study of one elementary school classroom in the Southeastern United States undergirded by Bakhtin's (1934/1981) concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism, Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) transactional theory of reading, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic multimodality as the theoretical foundations. I examined how 20 Kindergartners individually and collectively responded to nonfiction picturebooks daily from January to May by conducting a multimodal interaction analysis of videos of the classes' nonfiction read-alouds. I highlighted the ways children respond to nonfiction picturebooks multimodally by analyzing video recordings that capture how the body is an integral part of communicating and meaning making in a group of readers. Additionally, I investigated how the collective understandings of

nonfiction picturebooks occurred not only during the immediate reading event but also over time. I observed children outside of the instructional or academic parts of school, for example, during lunch, recess, and in transitions throughout the day, to examine how students' meaning making of nonfiction picturebooks continued to be processed. These non-academic times, what I am referring to as "playful moments," were opportunities for children to make sense of the information they learned about in unstructured ways that they or their peers initiated—devoid of adult facilitation and/or intervention. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with the teacher and all student participants, took field notes, collected relevant documents, and photographed moments related to nonfiction read-alouds over the course of six months. I engaged in all of these activities to answer the following research questions:

How do readers respond in multimodal ways to nonfiction children's literature, both individually and as a part of a collaborative learning experience, such as a whole group interactive read-aloud?

1. *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?*
2. *What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?*
3. *How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?*

Definition of Terms

For clarification, I defined the following terms that are critical to my study: nonfiction picturebook, interactive read-aloud, multimodal resource, and play.

Nonfiction Picturebook

Children's literature scholars have long debated what counts as nonfiction and what the differences are between terms such as nonfiction, informational, expository, narrative nonfiction, poetic nonfiction, and even creative nonfiction (Kesler, 2012; Maloch, 2013). Recognizing this debate, I purposefully use and define nonfiction, in this dissertation, as a broader umbrella term that includes genres such as biographies, narrative nonfiction, and even poetry. Cianciolo (2000) suggested that when considering if a book is nonfiction or not, ultimately, we must settle on the intention of the authors. Did the author intend for this book to be informational? Did they intend to be informative and rely primarily on facts rather than on what they created in their mind? When determining if a book was nonfiction or not, I asked myself throughout the data collection: what do I think the author intended to write? Although I recognize that children's literature scholars have differing and complex opinions about what counts as nonfiction (Colman, 2007; Maloch, 2013), nonfiction in the Kindergarten class where this study took place was clearly defined as, "True books that contain facts" (Mrs. Burnette, Written Observation, January).

I used the term nonfiction, in particular, for several reasons. First, I wanted to include several different text structures, genres, and expressions of written texts in this study, not just those that are deemed expository. Second, as I am interested in how young readers respond to books, I believe that using the term nonfiction will allow me to have the same terminology as other scholars who analyze children's responses to books, such as Adomat (2009), Apol (1998),

Olness (2007), and Sipe (2008). Third, this term allows me to align myself with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010), for even though they use the term informational text, both my research and the guidelines for the standards refer to a broader umbrella term that encompasses non-expository genres. Lastly, the classroom I entered for this case study refers to these books as nonfiction and included multiple texts structures under the category of books.

Defining the term picturebook is challenging because picturebooks come in a variety of shapes, sizes, lengths, artistic mediums, formats, and designs. Barbara Bader's (1976) definition of picturebook is commonly cited (Kiefer, 2011; Matulka, 2008) and used in this study. Bader described, "A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child" (p. 1). A nonfiction picturebook, then, is a commercial product produced within a particular sociocultural context that has words and illustrations and seeks to provide factual information to its readers. I focused on nonfiction picturebooks such as *Grand Canyon* by Jason Chin (2018) and *Giant Squid* written by Candace Fleming and illustrated by Eric Rohmann (2017). Although more research should be conducted on how children respond to digital nonfiction texts or other forms of nonfiction, the classroom I observed did not have access to many technological devices beyond their SmartBoard and, thus, I did not observe how children respond to digital nonfiction texts. I considered digital to include any object requiring a screen of some kind (including, but not limited to, cameras, projectors, iPads, Smart Boards, etc.)

Interactive Read-Aloud

I considered an interactive read-aloud to be a whole class (or as many of the children as are in the room) read-aloud that occurs at any point in the school day, not just during English Language Arts. Throughout the read-aloud, teachers and children interact with the book and each

other. They ask each other questions, articulate noticings, and make connections as the teacher reads aloud the picturebook.

Multimodality

Multimodality is a field of application used to examine the variety of ways communication exists. It is the recognition and study of multiple communicative modes, both those embodied such as gesture and gaze, as well as those disembodied such as music, or layout (van Leeuwen, 2005). Multimodality examines "The interaction of multiple semiotic resources such as language, gesture, dress, architecture, proximity lighting, movement, gaze, camera angle, and so on" (Yang, 2016, p. 1596). Individual sign makers have agency over their understandings and contend that communication occurs through a range of modes, also known as resources, such as gesture, gaze, sound, etc. I examined which resources social actors (the children and the teacher) relied upon to communicate and used through their meaning making processes.

Play

Play is one of those concepts many people assume is understood and few people define (Pellegrini & Nathan, 2011; Sutton-Smith, 1997). "Play is multifaceted, diverse, and complex. It resists easy definition and engages many disciplines" (Dyson, 2008, p. 305). The variety of understandings about what constitutes play and the purposes of play make studying play an increasingly challenging task. Often, play is defined by a list of characteristics (Fromberg, 1999). Generally, it is said that play "is for no external purpose," but research has shown that children rehearse and prepare for situations through play, and thus play serves a purpose even if it is not evident at the time (Eberle, 2014; Pellegrini & Nathan, 2011). I defined play using Garvey's (1977) five qualifications, which state that play is "intrinsically motivated and self-initiated, process oriented, non-literal and pleasurable, exploratory and active, and rule-

governed" (pp. 4-5). I used this definition because it values play regardless of being considered "work" or not and allows for a distinct separation from the behaviors and work traditionally expected of children in a school setting.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks of Bakhtin's (1934/1981) theory of language and communication, Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) transactional theory of reading, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic multimodality informed the design and implementation of this study, including the development of the research questions, data collection, and approaches to analysis. In the following section, I describe some of the central tenets of each theory. I begin with Bakhtin's understandings first, as his theories of heteroglossia and dialogism provided the foundation of communication and meaning making between and among individuals, then I describe Rosenblatt's transaction theory of reading as this incorporates how meaning making occurs with texts, and end with a discussion of social semiotic multimodality, which examines the multiple ways communication exists.

Bakhtin's Theories of Dialogism and Heteroglossia

Mikhail Bakhtin (1934/1981) was a Russian philosopher, social theorist, semiotician, and literary scholar that wrote primarily between 1920 and 1960 in the early stages of the Soviet Union and eventually Kazakhstan, where he was banished for his philosophies (Clarke & Holquist, 1986). Because of this banishment, Bakhtin's work did not become popular amongst Russian scholars until the mid-60s and was not available to an English-literate audience until the mid-80s.

The central understanding of language and society for Bakhtin (1934/1981) is the belief that both are ever-evolving, mutually inform one another, and change based on location,

moments in time, cultural preferences, social expectations, and more. Bakhtin theorized that individuals do not speak original thoughts, but rather piece together bits of language they have previously heard from predominant discourses spread by individuals in their particular society. "In the everyday speech of any person living in society, no less than half (on the average) of all the words uttered by him will be some else's words" (p. 339). Authoritative discourses are perpetuated by institutions such as schools, religions, governments, localized families, scientists, and businesses (Althusser, 2006), but individuals also take up these discourses and repeat them.

Bakhtin (1934/1981) believed, "What matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions- this is a false front of the word; what matters is rather the actual and always self-interested use to which this meaning is put" (p. 401). Thus, when individuals speak, it is always in response to their particular context and anticipates how those around them will react. Bakhtin was interested in who was doing the speaking, what the speaking was in response to, and why. Also, humans limit what they say or select different discourses depending on what they think about those around them. The teachers in this case study spoke differently to one another and to me than they did to the parents of the children or even to the children themselves. Even if the intent of the message was similar, our word choice changes based on how we think those around us will react. Thus, in order to understand what someone means, we must understand the context, what was happening culturally at the time, who it was said to, and how the speaker was positioned in the conversation.

Education scholars have gravitated towards Bakhtin's (1934/1981) philosophies because of his recognition of language as a living entity, his attention to context, and his examination of speakers' socially situated word choices (Fecho & Botzakis, 2007; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015). In the following sections, I describe some of the most popular concepts theorized by Bakhtin:

heteroglossia, dialogism, and internally persuasive and authoritative discourses. Although these are only a few of Bakhtin's central ideas, they were the concepts that I found most salient to my study as they illuminate how individuals communicate and understand both individually and collectively, which is central to my exploration of how kindergartners' generate individual and collective understanding of nonfiction picturebooks.

Heteroglossia. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin (1934/1981) lays out perhaps his most popular theoretical concept, heteroglossia, which translates literally to mean many tongues. Bakhtin believed that every individual is a reflection of the people they surrounded themselves with and that no voice can ever be isolated from its social context. People are always a mix of "varied and opposing voices"(p. xxviii), and thus language is never unitary. "Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems …Therefore languages do not exclude each other, but rather intersect" (pp. 288-289). Heteroglossia is the collision of the social, historical, and ideological beliefs that a person has encountered, and is the foundation of everything we say, or every utterance we make, therefore, the idea that language is solitary and unified is "mythical" (Bakhtin, 1934/1981, p. 68).

Our language is never what we intend for others to understand because it is a collection of discourses we have heard and is full of conflicting messages from a variety of sources. Also, because we repeat what we encounter, and everyone has experienced different parts of our world, we share unintended meanings that we may or may not be aware of. In a school setting, each member of the class brings their own experiences, cultural ways of being, discourses, and beliefs into the classroom with them. A classroom, then, is a heteroglossic environment where more than 20 different constructions of language and numerous discourses are coming together

intending to understand specific content about the world, making it a unique place to observe and understand how learning takes place.

When people speak, they do not necessarily hear their own thoughts but rather hear the multiple voices and beliefs of those around them. For example, the Kindergartners would repeat phrases they heard such as, "go wash your hands" when they saw a classmate pick their nose or "we have to be quiet in the halls" when they walked through the school. These are the discourses they heard from teachers and repeated with their friends. They also had their own discourses amongst each other that they shared. Comments such as, "the red Power Ranger is the best!" and "Sonic is better than Power Rangers," or "let's pretend to be teenagers" demonstrate how children brought their outside worlds and discourses into conversation with one another. Discourses from home were also present in the classroom, like when it was near the Super Bowl, and one child said, "My dad says the Patriots are gonna win, but he's still rooting for the Rams" to his friends to which they nodded their heads up and down and said, "Yeah, I know" (Written Observation, February). Although this student probably knew what the Super Bowl was and likely watched football prior to this conversation, he was clearly repeating what his father said rather than coming up with his own opinion about who would win.

Additionally, Bakhtin argued that language is always ideological. "Language is not a neutral medium. . . . it is populated- overpopulated with the intentions of others" (Bakhtin, 1934/1981, p. 294). Thus, we repeat and continue discourses both willingly and unwillingly. An example of this is in Chapter Four when Mrs. Burnette[1] interrupted Callie's statement that "Blue was for boys." Mrs. Burnette did not always correct children, but she admitted anecdotally to me that she was aware of the research on how frequently boys are called on compared to girls and,

[1] All names and places are pseudonyms.

thus, always tried to alternate calling on a boy and a girl during whole group lessons. She also never said the phrase "boys and girls," though gender was constructed in other ways throughout the classroom. Still, Mrs. Burnette's ideology about gender was evident when she disrupted Callie's assertion that "Blue was for boys," even if Mrs. Burnette did not realize that she was purporting this ideology at the time.

The convergence of so many different ways of seeing and being in the world in one classroom results in inherent tensions, challenges, and misunderstandings. Bakhtin (1934/1981) argued that a shared understanding between individuals is always lost during communication because no one experiences the same heteroglossia as another person, even when they live in similar environments. Sometimes, people may recognize when this sharing of unintended meanings occurs, like when someone responds differently than the person they are communicating with anticipated. But often, these moments of missed understanding go by without people knowing, which is how people walk away from the same conversation with two different understandings about what occurred. According to Bakhtin, then, people do not speak truths or absolute meanings, but rather share and negotiate the contexts, culture, discourses, and heteroglossia they have experienced. When a teacher is presenting information to a class of students, each student's understanding is informed by the linguistic and multimodal resources available to them. In this research, I highlight these varied understandings and show how a room full of individuals that experienced a similar event can have different takeaways based on a wide variety of factors.

Dialogism. Bakhtin (1929/1984) introduced his concept of dialogism, or polyphony, in *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, where he argued that the Russian author, Fyodor Dostoevsky is not monologic in his writing but includes multiple voices and discourses from a

variety of people and perspectives. Dialogism is the diverging opinions of the numerous voices and requires continual engagement and disagreement. In a classroom, dialogism occurs when a variety of ideas, opinions, and beliefs are shared between members of the class. As other members of the class share their thinking, which inherently is a result of and contributes to their own heteroglossia, the members that are listening are also revising their understandings, interpretations, beliefs, and experiences. Dostoevsky's novels end with a more complex understanding of a problem rather than a solution; his ultimate goal is to understand the variety of voices and perspectives that exist, not to find an answer. A dialogic teacher seeks to provide a similar experience for the class; their goal is not to provide one answer or solution to a problem, but rather to emphasize the variety of opinions, understandings, and ideas within the classroom.

Dialogism requires that the topic at hand should be further complicated and teased out, rather than tied up in a simplistic resolution. Through this complexity, a more nuanced and complete understanding of a topic can be reached. While members of the class may not change their beliefs based on the discourses and responses of those around them, they will at least recognize and know that others have different opinions and will be informed about what those understandings are. In literature and life, Bakhtin (1929/1984) argued, agreements or a resolution should not be the goal, but instead, we should strive to engage in disagreement, to elaborate on nuances, and to recognize the complexity of everyday life.

Another aspect of dialogism recognizes that the discourses we bring into a conversation are based upon what we know about those around us, what we expect they will say, and how we react or respond when our anticipations are confirmed or contradicted. When I entered into conversations with Mrs. Burnette, I considered discourses I had previously heard her say, the discourses I heard within the school, how the children were speaking and acting, who was

around us, and many other considerations. She, too, was conscious of my recordings, my written field notes, and that she was being observed. At one point, she said, "I just don't want to misrepresent what we do at this school" (Initial Interview), which also demonstrated how she considered her position as a spokesperson or representative of the school within this research study. Both of us carefully chose the discourses we felt best represented what we were trying to articulate, but also altered or shifted what we discussed in response to and in anticipation of one another. In a classroom, response and anticipation occur between all of the engaged members, which creates a complex network of discourses. This complexity of a group of individuals repeating discourses in response to and in anticipation of those around them also contributes to the dialogism and many perspectives shared in a classroom.

Internally persuasive and authoritative discourses. Bakhtin (1934/1981) did not often connect his various theoretical concepts for his readers (Holquist, 1983), but within his notion of dialogism can be embedded internally persuasive and authoritative discourses. Authoritative discourses are beliefs that come from positions of power (though Bakhtin did not use this term), such as religious or political institutions. Bakhtin considered discourses that come from the mouths of parents, teachers, or particular adults to be authoritative in nature. Internally persuasive discourses, however, are beliefs that stem from places without privilege and usually arise from personal experiences. They are the thoughts and language that occur when someone encounters a situation that contrasts what authorities had previously told them.

In a Kindergarten classroom, these internally persuasive discourses become present when children realize that people live different lives from them. For example, one child in the class lived only with his Dad, which surprised some of his peers. When the children learned about Emperor penguins and how the male penguin keeps the egg on its feet, he said, "The daddy

penguin takes care of the baby. Just like my dad takes care of me!" Another child who lived only with his mom and grandma replied, "Well, my mom and grandma take care of me." Mrs. Burnette replied, "We all have different people in our lives that take care of us. My mom is getting older, so I actually take care of her now" (Written Observation, January). This made the children in the class realize that not everyone has a nuclear family and that different family members take on the role of caregiver. The notion that families did not need both a mom and a dad, or that sometimes in life children must take care of their parents went against the authoritative discourses some of the children previously believed.

The negotiation of these discourses is "ideological becoming" (Bakhtin, 1929/1984, p. 344), which is when an individual grapples with multiple and varied ideological viewpoints, cultural beliefs, approaches, and directions. As people are always in a state of response and anticipation, the language they use with others is inclusive of both authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses; people are constantly experiencing ideological becoming. Language, then, and the discourses we purport continually vacillate between these two opposing discourses and expose the inherent tension between these forces. The words we speak are rife with the negotiation of multiple discourses and, thus, inevitable contradictions. Ultimately, Bakhtin's goal was to highlight the varied and conflicting ways language gets put together and to recognize the tensions that exist in communicating. "We must deal with the life and behavior of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world" (p. 275). Bakhtin does not view the tensions between discourses as negative, but rather as inevitable experiences of the human condition. Because humans are complex beings, and communication is always contextually situated, the recognition of these tensions emphasizes the complicated work we do to make sense of and spread information. Rather than viewing tensions as phenomena that should be

eliminated, they should be encouraged as they demonstrate the intense and intricate work humans do as they move through the world.

Scholars' dialogues with Bakhtin's work. There are many debates amongst scholars about what Bakhtin (1934/1981, 1929/1984) intended, how his work should be taken up, and if Bakhtin was actually a philosopher and social theorist, or merely a literary critic. Bakhtin's circle, a group of colleagues including P.N. Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov, published similar ideas to Bakhtin's around the same time, which has led to some controversy (Holquist, 1983). Also, Bakhtin frequently moved, so many of his writings and manuscripts were lost or destroyed (Clarke & Holquist, 1986). Within Bakhtin's writings are the contradictions inherent in all language, leaving scholars to wonder how to use Bakhtin's concepts. For example, after using Bakhtin's notion of dialogism to examine secondary language learners' classroom community in an arts literacy program, Landay (2004) questioned, "Do we stray too far afield from the circumstances for which these concepts were developed? . . . Or . . . are these theoretical concepts a helpful lens through which to look at language learning in school settings?" (p. 123). Although Bakhtin considered the way language is taken up and used to perpetuate societal discourses, his theories did not go so far as to discuss how power structures play into the cacophony of language and how some people are silenced through discourse (Emerson, 2018). Still, other scholars remind readers that Bakhtin was writing in Soviet Russia, and therefore was silenced by his own government (Clarke & Holquist, 1984).

Despite the numerous challenges with Bakhtin's (1929/1984) work, many scholars suggest that his theories are helpful and worth applying to social sciences, specifically education (Enciso & Edminston, 1997; Fecho & Botzakis, 2007; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015). These same scholars argue that Bakhtin knew his work would be taken up differently than he anticipated it,

as this is the evolution of language. In the introduction to *The Problem of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Emerson (1984) addressed this issue when she wrote, "Bakhtin provides a philosophical inquiry into our limited ways of mirroring-and improving-our lives" (p. xxv). Taking up Fecho and Botszakis' (2007) and Emerson's (1984) call to use Bakhtin's work from a philosophical standpoint, and sometimes as a larger metaphor (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015), I applied Bakhtin's theories about language and social discourses to examine the literacy practices of kindergartners and their responses to nonfiction picturebooks.

Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading

Although Bakhtin's (1934/1981, 1929/1984) concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism provided me an understanding of how humans negotiate understandings through language, Rosenblatt's transaction theory of reading provided me the foundation for how these understandings develop in response to books. Through the children's responses to books, I was able to identify, at times, which discourses children had been exposed to, what connections they were making across the school year, and how they were negotiating a variety of discourses at once. First published in the late 1930s, Louise Rosenblatt's description of the reader's transaction with a text has become a widely cited theory of reader response in the U.S. (Cai, 2008). In *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt (1938/1978) argued against the belief that there was one "true" understanding of a text. Rosenblatt theorized that reading literature requires a transaction between the individual reader and the text. Thus, each reader has their own background knowledge and experiences with the world and bring these experiences with them when they approach a text. It is because of these various experiences that each reader will focus on different parts of a particular text, or why the same reader will have a different understanding

of the same text when they transact at two different moments in time. Rosenblatt (1938/1978) wrote,

> There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works. A novel or poem or play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols (p. 25).

Reading does not occur when a human looks at a page, but rather when they use their own life experiences and knowledge to make sense of the words the author wrote when they are in dialogue with the text. Because each person has different experiences, connotations, and understandings of life, the static words that an author publishes begin to take on a unique and individual meaning. Rosenblatt (1978/1994) goes on to caution that there are universal human experiences which help readers connect to a particular text, or even gravitate towards some kinds of texts more than others but reminds readers that these experiences as a human are filtered through a reader's cultural beliefs. The reader will create for themselves their own understandings of a particular text, and those understandings will be informed by the cultural communities with which they live.

A reader's response, then, is always situated within their own heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1929/1984) and is always in response to and anticipating the current sociocultural context and those around them. Readers are only able to respond to texts with the discourses available to them and thus are situated within an individual's dialogic and heteroglossic circumstance. In this study, the members of the Kindergarten class each bring their own understandings of the world with them into the whole group read-alouds, including the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses they had experienced within the world.

Although Rosenblatt (1978/1994) only briefly discussed what the transactional theory might look like in a group of readers, her theories have been applied to group settings by several researchers (Adomat, 2009; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Greeter, 2016; Many & Wiseman, 1992; Sipe, 1998, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). These studies have shown that the teacher and what the teacher chooses to focus on during the read-aloud directly affects the responses that children have to the text (Many & Wiseman, 1992; Wiseman, 2011). Additionally, researchers have argued that the discussion around literature in the classroom should focus on child-centered talk because, "the elements of literature can be expected to emerge naturally as children and teacher talk about the book together" (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 23). Despite these influential studies, Sipe (2008) argued that many of these studies were not conducted with young children, and none of these have examined what a transactional theory of theory looks like in practice with nonfiction picturebooks. Sipe (2008) wrote, "We need multiple perspectives on literacy teaching and learning that include the power of literature for young children, without turning it into a mechanical tool for teaching children how to 'do school'" (p. 7). As a group, the members of the classroom negotiate their different responses to better understand the variety and nuances of response that a reader can have with a text. Within these negotiations are also the pervading discourses of schooling that require children to navigate how print language works, what school culture is like, and how to assimilate other's responses into their personal understandings. Ultimately, what each member of the class takes away from the reading experience is based upon their unique position in the world and the positions of those around them. Using Rosenblatt's transactional theory with individual students and as a collective whole, I explored the collective transactions with nonfiction picturebooks, as only a select number of studies at the time I

conducted my study had examined how an entire class responds to nonfiction (Greeter, 2016; Khieu, 2014).

Efferent responses and aesthetic responses. Rosenblatt (1938/1978) also theorized about the positions, or stances, a reader takes toward a text and suggested that readers' stances exist on a continuum. On one side of the continuum is an efferent stance, which occurs when "the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after the reading-the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (p. 23). Rosenblatt used the example of a mother reading a bottle of poison after a child ingests it. The mother is not interested in what the bottle looks like or how the text is worded, but rather solely wants to gain information from the bottle to use. Rosenblatt also argued that much of what was taught in schools was efferent reading due to the purpose of school, which was to provide information about the natural world and its processes, and this is certainly the prevailing emphasis with nonfiction picturebooks.

On the other end of the spectrum is an aesthetic stance. In aesthetic reading, "the reader's primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading event. . . the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt, 1938/1978, pp. 24-25). Although often overlooked, Rosenblatt (1938/1978) argued that an aesthetic stance is essential in reading because it allows the reader to connect the text to their experienced meaning. By taking a more aesthetic stance with a text, the purpose becomes not just transferring information to another part of life after the book, but actually enjoying a text, living in the transaction, and connecting with a text in necessary ways.

The authoritative discourse of nonfiction picturebooks has often been to focus on the efferent responses of readers (Apol, 1998; Galda & Liang, 2003). Nonfiction, after all, has

primarily been used to "share facts" and "relay information" to the reader, which are inherently the descriptions Rosenblatt (1938/1978) provides for an efferent stance towards a text. It is also the focus of most curricular mandates that require teachers to instruct readers on how to take away information (Gewertz, 2012) and is supported by scholars who purport close reading (Cummins, 2013). In this study, however, I argue that readers also read nonfiction picturebooks on the efferent-aesthetic continuum, and demonstrate the value in emphasizing an aesthetic stance towards reading nonfiction (Khieu, 2014).

Multimodality

Although Bakhtin (1929/1984), scholars of reader response (e.g., Fish, 1980; Sipe, 2008), and discourse analysis scholars (e.g., Cazden, 2001) typically focus their attention on the spoken or written discourses people use, some scholars have examined the ways body movements communicate for many decades (Goodwin, 1986). In 1934, Marcel Mauss (1973) gave a lecture called the *Techniques of the Body*, where he examined how men used their bodies in different societies and found, "each society has its own special habits" (pp. 71-72). Mauss suggested that our body movements are indicative of our social class, era, culture, job, and other positions in society (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015). Kendon (1972), too, picked up this idea and wrote, "It makes no sense to speak of 'verbal communication' and 'nonverbal communication'" (p. 443). Kendon argued that verbal communication does not exist in a vacuum and that when we communicate we use all of the resources available; communication is always verbal and nonverbal simultaneously. To separate these resources is to ignore how they work together. Similarly, Norris (2004) wrote, "All interactions are multimodal. . . . nonverbal channels such as gesture, posture, or the distance between people can – and do – carry meaning in any face-to-face inter-action" (pp. 1-2). Norris

claimed that language is only one mode of communication, but our postures, gestures, gazes, and body movements are equal if not more impactful forms of communication.

The concept of embodied communication is one that scholars have focused on when analyzing multimodal discourses. Kress (1997) wrote that readers "make meaning in a plethora of ways, with an absolute plethora of means, in two, three, and four dimensions. . . different ways of making meaning involve different kinds of bodily engagement of the world" (p. xvii as cited in Adomat, 2009). Streeck, Goodwin, and Lebaron (2013) argued, "By itself, each individual set of semiotic resources mutually elaborate each other to create a whole that is both greater than, and different from, any of its constituent parts" (p. 2). Multimodality, then, is the field of application used to examine the variety of ways communication exists. Our world has always been multimodal, but many scholars have focused on the written or spoken word (Goodwin, 2000; Kress, 2009). Although there are numerous approaches to conducting multimodal research, I chose social semiotic multimodality due to its theoretical alignment with Bakhtin's (1934/1981) and Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) theoretical tenets of meaning making.

Social semiotic multimodality. "We need a theory that deals with meaning, in all its appearances, in all social occasions and in all cultural sites. That theory is social semiotics" (Kress, 2009, p. 22). As a systemic functional linguistic (SFL) multimodal analysis was being developed, some researchers felt that SFL did not give enough agency to the sign makers, or the people who were making the meaning out of the semiotic resources. Kress and Van Leewuen (1996) developed the social semiotic approach to multimodality, where the "aim of social semiotics is to understand the social dimensions of meaning, its production, interpretation and circulation, and its implications" (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016, p. 58). Social semioticians believe that individual sign makers have agency over their understandings and

contend that communication occurs through a range of modes or channels of communication. "In multimodal social semiotics, social actors rely upon available modes to create meaning; the potential meaning created is directly influenced by the availability of resources and their related affordances and constraints" (Wiseman, Pendleton, Christiansen, & Nesheim, 2017, p. 56).

Inherent in social semiotics is the belief that embodied modes of communication have "been shaped through their cultural, historical, and social uses to realize social functions" (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010, p. 183). Thus, social semioticians are interested in how meaning making occurs simultaneously through multiple modes within a particular context (Jewitt, 2009). Social semioticians, such as Wiseman et al. (2017), Kress (2009, 2015), and Shanahan and Roof (2013), have considered body movements, gestures, gazes, etc. as communicative modes as well, though most of the work published using social semiotics in literacy education examines text-centered modes (Leander & Boldt, 2013).

Ultimately, the combination of all three theoretical frameworks provided me different ways of conducting this dissertation. Bakhtin's (1934/1981) theories about making sense of the world greatly influenced my understandings about how the members of the classroom communicated, moved, and acted throughout the school. Members are also responding to and anticipating the actions and words of those around them and comparing these with their personal life experiences, and Bakhtin helped me to consider classroom conversations in new ways. Rosenblatt's (1938/1978) transactional theory of reading provided insights into how readers understand and respond to texts and how these might continue to be processed throughout the school day. Finally, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic multimodality allowed me to see how each member of the classroom's efforts built upon one another and were always in response to each other. Bakhtin's concepts, then, establish an overarching understanding of how

information is negotiated, Rosenblatt demonstrates how this information is negotiated with books, and Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodality theorizes about how this information negotiation amongst people and books might be expressed by members of the classroom. Norris' (2019) book, *Systematically Working with Multimodal Data: Research Methods in Multimodal Discourse Analysis*, provided me with a framework that assisted me in sifting through the data I collected and begin to make some understanding of the complex nature of learning in classrooms.

Organization of the Dissertation

Undergirded by the theories described above, this dissertation seeks to understand how members of a classroom make sense of nonfiction picturebooks by exploring their classroom read-alouds and how these continue to permeate other non-academic aspects of the school day. In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of three bodies of literature: nonfiction picturebooks, how Bakhtin (1934/1981) and Rosenblatt (1978/1994) are taken up in literacy research that examines multimodality in educational settings, and the researched connections between play and literacy. Then, in Chapter Three, I describe my research design, methods for data collection and analysis, and limitations to this research. Findings about how multimodal resources are used by members of a classroom during read-alouds of nonfiction picturebooks are in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I examine how students continued to process the read-aloud events during other parts of the school day, particularly through play. Finally, in Chapter Six, I describe some overarching themes from across the two findings chapters and some considerations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The overarching purpose of this study was to better understand how readers collectively respond to nonfiction texts in multimodal ways and how these responses might have occurred during playful moments of the day. Through this literature review, I provide studies that highlight the meaning making process of nonfiction books that occurs in everyday classrooms and that seek to understand children's multimodal actions and play as a form of reader response. Aligned with the intentions and purpose of Bakhtin's (1929/1984) concept of dialogism, this interdisciplinary research study combined three robust fields of research: nonfiction children's literature in the elementary classroom, multimodal responses to literature, and play as an essential function for early literacy learning. I begin with a review of scholarly literature that investigates nonfiction in elementary classrooms, including nonfiction read-alouds, reader's stances, and comprehension. Although I used the term nonfiction consistently throughout my study, in this literature review I use the terms the researchers selected for their work. I then provide an overview of studies that focused on multimodal responses to literature in educational contexts. Lastly, to address my third research question, *How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?*, I review studies that examined play and literacy as similar processes and describe current understandings about play and various semiotics resources used by children as a form of reader's response.

Nonfiction Children's Literature

When addressing the topic of nonfiction in the elementary classroom, Duke's (2000) widely popular and well-cited article *3.6 Minutes per Day: The Scarcity of Informational Texts in Elementary Classrooms* inevitably arises. Duke (2000) and her research team recorded how often informational texts were read in 10 different first-grade classrooms and found that some classrooms did not even have nonfiction books in their classroom libraries. This began a series of studies examining children's preferences for nonfiction or informational texts and a call for more nonfiction to be included in elementary classrooms. Palmer and Stewart (2003), for example, found that primary age children prefer to read nonfiction, but that teachers are often unaware of more recently published nonfiction or do not have access to it. Barbara Moss (2003) argued that nonfiction books were becoming more engaging, more dynamic, and better situated for read-alouds than ever before, which is an argument picked up by other scholars (Colman, 2007; Gill 2009; Rohloff & May, 2017).

Still, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in 2010 required that teachers spend equal amounts of time teaching nonfiction/information texts as fictional texts for the first time. This is no doubt influenced by our society's current emphasis on STEM (Gewertz, 2012), concerns with understanding what is true or false in the news (Yenika-Agbaw, Hudock, & Lowery, 2018), and recognizing that adults primarily read nonfiction in their daily lives, not fiction (Beers & Probst, 2017). More recent work examining nonfiction children's literature demonstrates the lack of diversity in published texts (Crisp, 2015; Crisp, Gardner, & Almeida, 2018; Watanabe Kganetso, 2017), the need for critical literacy in teaching nonfiction to children (Maloch & Horsey, 2013; Yenika-Agbaw, Lowery, Hudock, & Ricks, 2018), and a process-oriented focus to teaching nonfiction to young readers (Dawes, Cappiello, & Magee, 2019).

Teaching Nonfiction

When it comes to approaching nonfiction in the classroom, teachers continue to rely on the discourse that "nonfiction contains factual information about the world" (Kersten, 2016, p. ii). The prevailing concerns for teaching nonfiction to young readers, then, is how to help students navigate the various text structures of nonfiction and how students comprehend nonfiction (Bluestein, 2010). These goals continue to be highlighted by the Common Core State Standards, which emphasize that students become independent learners, possess critical thinking skills, have foundational knowledge in content areas, and can discover and point to evidence in a variety of texts (CCSS, 2010). This focus on students being able to point to evidence has caused scholars to emphasize the close reading of texts. "Close reading is a process that helps understand both the surface and the deeper levels of complex text" (Dollins, 2016, p. 49). Close reading is labeled as a necessary skill for readers of nonfiction in order for them to recognize the various information that is important or not (Bluestein, 2010) and is classified as an intense, attentive reading and rereading to obtain new information (Cummins, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2015).

In 1999, Kamberelis argued that children's difficulties with nonfiction books stemmed from a lack of instruction in school and that providing students with an overview of various text structures frequently used in nonfiction books would help students navigate these texts. This discourse has continued to pervade scholarly literature related to nonfiction, as numerous scholars continue to write about the various structures and changes with text structures that occur in nonfiction children's books (Bintz & Ciecierski, 2017; Bluestein, 2010; Maloch & Bomer, 2013). Belfatti (2015) demonstrated that informational/nonfiction includes more visual and textual features than fiction, which supports the instructional discourse of text structures and

features. Bluestein (2010) provided readers with an overview of text structures typically in nonfiction genres such as biography, journalistic text, and textbooks, with the intention of breaking down these text structures for teachers so they could, in turn, assist students with a similar task. In response to research that demonstrates the numerous text features of nonfiction (Bintz & Ciercierski, 2017; Leal & Moss, 1999; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003), Chlapana (2016) designed an intervention for 15 Kindergartners to determine if they could help young children navigate different text structures and found that children could accomplish this reportedly challenging task in only two months. While the prevailing discourse seems to be that understanding text structures is essential for readers of nonfiction and must be taught, Chlapana's research shows how young children can learn how to navigate these structures in a relatively brief amount of time when provided sufficient instruction.

Finally, comprehension in relation to strategies to navigate text structures and features continues to be heavily emphasized in teaching nonfiction in elementary schools. Fisher and Frey (2015) described how readers need to employ a variety of strategies as they read nonfiction, but readers also need to recognize when these strategies are working and when they are not to aid with comprehension. Rereading is often recommended for students to practice and engage with in order to aid in their comprehension (Hedin & Conderman, 2010). Strong, Amendum, and Smith (2018) suggested finding one area of study for readers to focus on, as this supports developing background knowledge, which then supports readers' long-term comprehension. They also suggest that teachers present readers with simple texts first on a specific topic and increasingly allow the texts to become more complex. Regardless of the strategy, the scholarly emphasis on helping readers comprehend nonfiction suggests that readers' goals or stances should be efferent in their approaches to nonfiction (Galda & Liang, 2003). Emphasizing what

students take away is important, but it also ignores other essential components of the reading transaction that Rosenblatt (1978/1994) theorized about. While the discourse of teaching nonfiction in schools remains focused on assisting students with close readings, text structures, and comprehension strategies, this dissertation focuses on children's aesthetic and efferent responses to nonfiction, not just the latter.

Nonfiction Read-Alouds

Although efforts in expanding approaches to reading nonfiction (Dawes et al., 2019; Graff & Shimek, 2020) are currently being published, studies that focus on nonfiction read-alouds also continue to emphasize efferent approaches to nonfiction and include strategies such as rereading, asking comprehension questions, and KWL charts (Yenika-Agbaw et al., 2018). Studies have shown that teachers do not read-aloud nonfiction often to children and parents read nonfiction aloud to their children about as often as teachers, which is approximately seven percent of the time (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). And yet, there are a variety of scholars who have conducted research highlighting the benefits of regular nonfiction read-alouds.

Pentimonti, Zucker, Justice, and Kaderavek (2010), for example, found that nonfiction read-alouds in early childhood classrooms benefitted student's vocabulary and the development of abstract concepts, gave student's knowledge of text structures, and promoted student's interests in new topics. Donovan and Smolkin (2002) emphasized how nonfiction assisted students' construction of knowledge, provided more depth in the class content, allowed students to develop understandings of the real world, and provided more elaboration on topics of interest for students. McClure and Fullerton (2017) examined one teacher's use of informational read-alouds in her third-grade classroom and argued, "Teachers are able to demonstrate strategies and provide students with multiple opportunities to practice the strategies when the text is read

aloud" (p. 58). Finally, research in nonfiction read-alouds emphasizes that like reading aloud fiction texts, teachers should use expression, allow students to converse about what they are hearing, find interesting books, build anticipation by only reading short segments, infuse talk throughout, and emphasize questions (Stead, 2014).

Reader Responses to Nonfiction

There are a few studies that examine reader responses to nonfiction or informational texts, but none of them examine the responses of young children or Kindergarteners, specifically. Moss and Hendershot (2002) used nonfiction books with middle school students and found that the use of trade books encouraged the participation of reluctant readers. After Wilfong (2009) noted middle school students' positive approaches to nonfiction in literature circles, Barone and Barone (2016) adapted Daniels' (2002) literature circle roles to focus on informational texts with 61 fifth graders. They found that students enjoyed reading nonfiction texts and that, collectively, students worked together to make sense of the texts, they returned back to the books without prompting for further clarification, and they incorporated the vocabulary of the books into their discussions.

Khieu (2014) collected the responses of fourth graders participating in small group discussions with nonfiction literature and reported, "small group peer-led discussion groups provided a low-risk forum to begin to personally respond to nonfiction by asking questions and making comments freely. In addition, students responded to nonfiction in many, varied, and often unique and individual ways" (p. ii). Although all of these studies were instrumental in my desire to better understand how reader's respond to nonfiction texts, they examined reader's responses of nonfiction books during small groups, rather than whole group read-alouds, and they focused on upper elementary or middle school students, where my goal was to observe

young children's meaning making of nonfiction. This further confirmed the need for a study like mine.

Nonfiction as an Evolving Category of Genres

The discrepancy between what we know about the benefits of nonfiction read-alouds, the lack of nonfiction in elementary classrooms, and the emphasis on teaching nonfiction as a source of efferent learning, makes the need to study nonfiction more important than ever (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2014). Researchers are calling for a better understanding of how readers approach nonfiction books (Ghiso, 2013; Maloch, 2008; Newkirk, 2012; Yenika-Agbaw et al., 2018). However, the genre of nonfiction picture books changed at the turn of the century (Colman 2007; Moss, 2003; Zarnowski, 1990), putting more emphasis on engaging writing styles, attention to accuracy, and incorporating visual elements in design layouts (Gill, 2009). As a result of this shift to what Gill called "the 'new' nonfiction," the ways we approach conducting research and how we teach students to read nonfiction picture books must change. And some of this change has begun to happen. For example, Butterfield (2002) encouraged second graders to respond in aesthetic ways to science texts and found, "Students seem to learn science best and retain their learning longest when they are encouraged to imaginatively connect the new learning with their prior knowledge and experiences" (p. 11). Similarly, Newkirk (2012) argued, "If we only read for bits of information, if all nonfiction is viewed as a glorified phone book, we simply plug that information into pre-existing schema and we don't change" (p. 32). Newkirk called for teachers and researchers to recognize the ways informational texts and narrative are tightly intertwined, and for researchers to explore the ways readers approach these books for both obtaining information, but also for pleasure and enjoyment.

In addition, numerous studies have been published that emphasize shifts in nonfiction including the remixing of genres (Graff & Shimek, 2020), the emphasis on the multimodality of the texts (Smith & Robertson, 2019), and the hybridity of currently published nonfiction texts (Bintz & Ciecierski, 2017; Rohloff & May, 2017). These shifts require new approaches to helping readers navigate nonfiction texts, as teaching nonfiction provides opportunities for classrooms to engage in meaningful conversations about the world, not just in reading for information but also in reflective, exciting, and fun ways (Khieu, 2014; Moss, 2003; Yenika-Agbaw et al., 2018). My research was designed in response to this literature and provides new thinking about nonfiction books in the elementary classroom. It is meant to emphasize the complex meaning making that occurs beyond close readings or comprehension, with textual transactions that dialogue with classmates and, potentially, the world.

Multimodal Understandings of Literacy

Literacy scholars have argued for decades that a new understanding of multimodality and multimodal analysis is needed in order to consider the ways in which literacy is embodied. Hoyt (1992), for example, argued for a more comprehensive understanding of what counts as literacy in their study of elementary school readers and writers. Hoyt wrote, "It isn't enough to have a reader's time and attention. We need to help learners activate their senses, their imaginations, their emotions, and all their life experiences while interacting with a text" (p. 584). Where Hoyt was adding drama and visual arts into the elementary classroom, some scholars have focused on the literacy learning that takes place outside of the classroom, particularly at the secondary level. For example, Leander's (2001) study of high school students who took a field trip to research Civil Rights leaders in Memphis emphasized the learning that can occur in unexpected settings, like the school bus. Using Bakhtin's (1934/1981) notion of chronotope, Leander found that

"Pedagogical discourse routinely produces and hybridizes space-time contexts" (p. 637). He argued that the boundaries put around certain spaces and times do not always exist and that by understanding how students transgress these boundaries, we may understand more about identity formation and literacy learning in general.

Similarly, Cross' (2003) study of Jamaican middle school boys incorporated participants' gestures, stances, and prosody in consideration of their literacy practices. Her study set out to understand how Jamaican adolescent boys navigated multiple discourses from their local community, school, family, etc. Cross (2003) discovered, "I realized they were arguing by image and instance, instead of making the switch to the generalizations of schooled discourse, which I was more accustomed to and subconsciously privileging" (pp. 75-76). Cross realized that much of what her participants chose to "read," and consequently use to communicate with, was visual movements and gestures, not in the spoken words she expected to collect as data. Cross' recognition of the various discourses the boys used to communicate inspired my emphasis on children's gestures and movement in the classroom as meaning making.

Scholars have considered multimodal literacies from fields such as neuroscience and evolutionary biology, as well. Sumara (2003) found, "Reading is the act of continually noticing and interpreting links between and among different 'bodies' that comprise our physical, psychic and ecological experience of the world" (p. 92). Sumara claimed that the separation between mind and body is false, and in fact, what happens physically to the body or psychologically to the mind directly affects the other. Grosz and Grosz (1994) argued, "The body is neither brute nor passive but interwoven with, and constitutive of, systems of signification within the social world" (p. 4). Because the body has always been present, though not always acknowledged in research, literacy scholars began to reconsider their approaches to studying literacy and have

examined how embodied communication has always been intertwined with literacy practices. Marple (2011), too, claimed that any theory of literacy without the role of the body was lacking and argued that gesture cannot be inserted into existing theories, but rather that literacy researchers must reconsider embodied literacy as its own theoretical foundation.

Additionally, Gee (2012) argued that learning, and consequently reading, occurs most effectively when it is embodied. He wrote, "People understand content, whether in a comic book or a physics text, much better when their understanding is embodied: that is, when they can relate that content to possible activities, decisions, talk, and dialogue . . . they learn through action and talk" (p. 35). These embodied approaches to understanding literacy were instrumental in thinking through what counts as reader response in this study, and the findings in Chapters Four and Five emphasize the multimodal nature of learning. Finally, Lenters (2018) recently claimed, "The design approach to multimodality fails to recognize the ways students (and people in general) use texts in much of their everyday lives. . . [we must think] with the body as a site of multimodal literacy" (p. 646). Inherently, this shifts literacy development away from a cognitive approach to learning and makes it an embodied learning experience.

Literacy scholars have also examined the multimodal teaching of educators in the classroom. Bezemer and Jewitt (2010) focused on a high school social studies' teacher as they used the modes of gesture, gaze body posture movement, spatiality, talk, writing, and interaction and found that these modes heavily influence what happens in the classroom. "Through her gesture and gaze the teacher retrained and encouraged individual students to talk" (p. 189). These authors examined the way one teachers' actions communicated with students and subsequently learned that the students' actions greatly impacted what a teacher does, despite what the teacher might have planned that day. Thus, Bezemer and Jewitt showed how the

embodied communication between students and teachers is reciprocal and complex. In a similar, but different approach, Hansfield, Crumpler, and Dean (2010) examined the multimodal literacies of a Midwest fourth grade teacher using Bakhtin (1934/1981) and de Certeau (1984) to see how teachers negotiate multiple and competing ideologies of literacy and teaching. Using Bloome et al.'s (2004) microethnographic analyses and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) visual analysis to examine data from staff meetings and classroom observations, photographs, and instructional artifacts, they found that the teacher, "recontextualize[d] discourses across space-times to redesign the curriculum and forge multiple simultaneous possibilities for her teacher identity" (p. 428). Through the teacher's spoken words and embodied interactions, Hansfield and colleagues observed one teacher's ideological becoming and negotiation of her multiple identities.

Finally, Hayashi and Tobin (2015) applied Bakhtin's (1929/1984) theories to the embodied practices of students and teachers in Japanese preschools. They argued that similar to our language, our bodies move by putting together pieces of the "discourses" that surround us. "Bodily movements, like utterances, require not just models to cite but also the response of another to have meaning" (p. 83). This could be how children learn to walk like their parents, or teachers learn to respond to children with their bodies from watching other teachers. It is evident from the scholarly literature that multimodality shapes one's identity in the world, which in turn shapes their literacy development. In addition to adopting other's verbal discourses, humans also imitate the multimodal discourses and resources of those around them.

Multimodal Responses to Literature

Despite the calls for research to study embodied learning, many studies of young children's responses to books rely upon what children say or write (e.g., Albers, 2007; Arizpe &

Styles, 2015; Pantaleo, 2007). What more could be learned about the reading process if researchers began to pay attention to the physical movements and embodied ways students make sense of books? The earliest study I could find involving multimodal responses to literature was a book chapter by Enciso and Edmiston (1997). They used Bakhtin (1934/1981) and Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) reader response theory to understand the dramatic and embodied responses of third graders to traditional fairy tales. They found that the embodied responses of children created space for children to engage in debates about the fairy tales and questioned truth.

Adomat (2005, 2009) implemented additional reading support for 10 first graders by incorporating drama into their additional reading instruction time for her dissertation. Pulling from Bakhtin (1934/1981), Vygotsky (1978), and Rosenblatt (1978/1994), among others, her findings show that students were comprehending the books by embodying characters, playing with story plots in spontaneous ways, and working with others to establish a social understanding. The children she worked with, "learned through embodied, multimodal instructional contexts, and went beyond a literal understanding of texts" (Adomat, 2009, p. 635). Adomat (2005) found "young, struggling readers are capable of demonstrating rich understandings of children's literature on multiple levels as they imaginatively generate, enact, and transform their own understandings" (p. vii).

Asplund's (2016) study used reader response theory to analyze the embodied responses of high school boys during literature discussions. Asplund argued that Rosenblatt's reader response theory was meant to extend beyond verbal responses, and cites "the text as an even more general medium of communication among readers" (Rosenblatt, 1938/1978, p. 146). Asplund explained that without understanding the boys' body movements from her study, their

verbal dialogue makes no sense. Although studying the embodied response was not Asplund's original intention, her study showed how high school boys' use of gesture as reader response was necessary in order for them to comprehend complex texts.

Greeter (2016) examined how semiotic resources were shared between students and teachers in bilingual classrooms as they engaged in whole group drama sessions during language arts instruction. Using Bakhtin's (1934/1981) notion of dialogism and a social semiotic multimodal analysis, Greeter found that re-enacting diverse children's books in multiple languages allowed children to make decisions about the central characters, better comprehend the picturebooks, and that meaning making occurred as a collective process. She argued that Bakhtin's "dialogism is a form of semiotic mediation" (p. 11) and that the interplay between language and other semiotic resources work together in the classroom to create a deeper understanding of diverse picturebooks.

Some of the books the children responded to were nonfiction, but her goal was to explore bilingualism in children's literature more than the genre of the books. While these studies all point to the multimodal nature of reader's responses, I have yet to find a study that considers the body movements of children as they engage in reading nonfiction books explicitly. Stemming from these studies, particularly Adomat (2005) and Greeter's (2016) dissertations, I conceptualized a study that uses a multimodal analysis to analyze the embodied responses of children to nonfiction picturebooks.

Play and Literacy

"Regardless of children's culture, ethnicity, gender, language, race, or social class, their learning is profoundly social" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 8). This social learning is constantly being constructed, especially during play. There is an extensive amount of research specifically

focusing on language and literacy skills and the ways they develop through play. "Play provides a collaborative medium in which children may practice literacy skills, mutually develop scripts based on event knowledge, provide mutual scaffolding, and further expand and extend literacy use" (Fromberg, 1999, p. 41) all in multimodal ways. Literacy scholars have long examined children's play as an integral site for meaning making (Galda & Pellegrini, 1985; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984). Goodman, Smith, Meredith, and Goodman (1987) argued that in language development, "there is an almost explosive force from within the children that propels them to express themselves, and at the same time there is a strong need to communicate that pushes the direction of growth and development toward the family" (p. 34). It is this need to develop communication skills with families and surrounding communities that pushes children to play, and through play they learn how to structure language, how different people speak, and how others react to language.

Similarly, Whitmore, Marten, Goodman, and Owocki (2004) argued, "Play creates a text for expressing and constructing knowledge" (p. 302). Play creates a safe environment for children to explore language, allows children to take risks, but also provides a safety net for them to learn from. Also, "The symbolic nature of language and play share underlying cognitive abilities, making it possible for children to access written language through the act of play" (Yoon, 2014, p. 110). Similar to Bakhtin's (1934/1981) concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism, which theorize that the context and people we interact with greatly shape how we develop and we are always acting in response to and building upon those around us, play is viewed as an integral component of human development where children simultaneously expose what they know about the world, challenge those that play with them about different ways of being in the world, and build upon one another's experiences.

Heath's (1983) widely read study of the literacy development of children in three different communities has greatly impacted the sociocultural understandings of play. Heath's observations about the differences in literacy development between children of disparate social classes have also been applied to understanding how children play and why they choose to play the way they do. Since Heath's groundbreaking study, researchers have focused on observing children's play more closely and noticing what can be learned about a child's culture, background experiences, and language development through play and language (Owocki & Goodman, 2002). Additionally, Dyson's (1993) longitudinal study of five and six-year-olds in an urban magnet school found that children not only played, talked, and wrote about their own imaginary worlds but also the imaginary worlds of those around them. While watching a child's solitary play can tell you a great deal about their life, watching children collaborate and play together expands the potential background experiences, and thus is worth paying attention to (Dyson, 1993).

Galda and Pellegrini (1985) showed in a plethora of ways that play establishes children's language learning and development. Combined, Galda and Pellegrini have written 25 different books, countless chapters, and published over 100 articles examining children and how they develop through play, with Galda specifically focusing on how literacy learning occurs through play. They have, among many other research studies, shown how children's language during play reflects the language of schools, how language develops over time through play and emphasized the need for play in early childhood classrooms. Their research continues to show time and time again, "the complexity and strength of the relation" between play and language (p. ix).

Dyson (1993) argued that play is the precursor to any literacy skills. She argued that the writing we ask children to do in schools parallels the imaginary worlds children create when they play. "The developmental precursors to literacy…are not to be found in children's lonely, passive behavior with worksheets…authors use the stuff of children's constructive play: young artists build with color, shape, and sounds, just as do adult authors" (p. 99). She conducted a longitudinal study in an urban magnet school to examine how young children used their own life experiences to inform their writing. Dyson found, "If we are to understand how children come to create imaginary written worlds- how they come to play together inside the writing- we must look not simply to play with print, but to imaginative play itself" (p. 112). Dyson's study blurred the lines between literacy and play with regard to writing and showed how much could be learned about a child and their life experiences when we take the time to understand why children choose particular subjects to write or draw about.

Rowe (1998) argued that children practice transmediation, or the transference of information in one form to another, through their play, which establishes the foundation for early reading. According to Rowe, the transmediation of text into dramatic play "allows children to walk around in story settings... to touch, feel, and actually look at objects from the vantage points of book characters" (p. 20). When we allow children to engage in play, they practice the same set of skills they need to consider alternative perspectives when reading, the purpose of setting and plot in a story, and how books work. Play establishes many of the skills readers need even before children can conventionally read.

Owocki (1999) wrote a book for teachers outlining the ways they could merge their classroom instruction and play. She argued, "In a developmentally appropriate classroom, play time is teaching time" (p. 29). Her book highlights all of the things children are doing innately

during play, including developing early literacy skills, and focuses on how teachers can document children's shifts in play to document evidence of growth. Similarly, Roskos and Christie (2000) argued that researchers should move away from describing literacy-play connections and must focus on the meaning and processes of these literacy-play connections. "We need to discover ways to put understanding to work…to further the literacy well-being of young children" (p. xvi). Their research has shown the value of literacy-related play centers, adult involvement in play, and the power of story reenactment for young children, to name a few.

Finally, Wohlwend (2008) argued that play is an essential component of literacy learning for children. Play and reading create a "nexus of practice" where reading supports the goals of the play, and play supports children's reading development (p. 332). After studying Kindergarteners as they played school together, Wohlwend found, "Play, through its multimodal facility for manipulating meanings and contexts, through its multimodal facility for manipulating meanings and contexts, powerfully shapes children's learning and participation in classrooms" (p. 128). Wohlwend argued that that by examining children's movements and discourses in play researchers could see that the elements of literacy are present. Wohlwend (2015) went on to theorize that play is a form of literacy and that through play children produce collaborative and meaningful texts.

Reader Response as Play

Although reader response usually examines reader's verbal or written responses, there are a few scholars that have examined responses to literature through a playful lens (West, 2017). Some scholars have looked at playful reading of texts, such as West (2017), who examined the confluence of play theories and reader response theories within Mark Twain's (1876/1998) *Tom Sawyer* and Pantaleo's (2007) findings of Macaulay's (2005) *Black and White* as play. Still,

other scholar have examined student's dramatic responses and playful responses to texts through established dramatic reenactments or play (Adomat, 2005, 2009; Greeter, 2016). Tandoi (2019) examined 10-year-olds' dramatic responses to David Almond's (2012) novel *My Name is Mina* and found that children engage in fictive negotiations of childness and adultness. Although this research illuminates the multimodal and embodied play as response in children, other scholars have examined play within a specific structure, such as during a whole group read-aloud (Greeter, 2016) or during purposefully designed dramatic reenactments (Adomat, 2005; Tandoi, 2019).

While these studies determine the importance of studying children's responses as play, my dissertation was inspired by a few scholars that examined children's responses to literature through spontaneous play. Nikola-Lisa (1992) established that play in a K-2 classroom took on many forms, including creating sounds, playing with the rhythm of language, and actions during read-alouds. Flint's (2016) dissertation used sociocultural theories, reader response theories, and funds of knowledge to study how first grade children respond to texts through play to construct meaning. Flint referred to Bakhtin's (1929/1984) notion of the carnivalesque as the children used play to escape from the discourses of the everyday classroom. Flint (2016) suggested, "Through their play as reader response, their responsive play, children create a social space in the classroom which connects official school literacy practices and academic instruction with their social play practices" (p. 12).

Flint (2020) extended her dissertation work of exploring children's play as a response to literature by conducting an eight-month qualitative study in a first grade classroom to investigate how children construct understandings of gender in children's literature through play. Her findings demonstrate how the multimodal responses of children are a form of reader response

that consider both the text and the world, how children interrogate notions of gender and beauty through their play, and argued that children are indeed critical readers of both texts and the world. Although Nikola-Lisa (1992) and Flint (2016, 2020) spurred my desire to examine children's play as reader response, neither scholar determined what children's responses or play looks like when responding to nonfiction books. This dissertation takes up Flint's notions of play as a form of reader response by emphasizing the multimodal and spontaneous transactions young children have with nonfiction books through playful interactions with one another.

Challenges with Play and Literacy or Reader Response

The task of studying play as a site for research is not without its critics and complications. Göncü (1999) argued that many studies examining children's play are biased because, "The efforts to understand children's play have been guided by two assumptions of dominant developmental theories that are based on the play of middle-class children in the Western world" (p. 149). Göncü studied four- to six- year olds from different economic backgrounds in the U.S. and argued that play is an activity children engage in to understand adult situations and roles in their community and that differences in children's play reflect differences in their daily lives. As Göncü's research, and many of the studies cited as a part of this review of the literature, examined play situated within a school-setting, they had to consider and reconcile the influence of school discourses and perspective. This dissertation, too, took place in a school setting with discourses of educational efficiency and growth, which in turn shaped the ways members of the classroom acted.

However, if "Play . . . is the site where children can learn to synthesize and understand the language resources that are available to them, including school literacy" (Yoon, 2014, p. 110), it makes sense that so many literacy scholars are using play as a site for their research.

Literacy is an opportunity to see what children know about the world, share experiences with others, and collectively learn together, even within a larger institutional construct like public education in the U.S. In this dissertation, both children and teachers navigated these constructs in a process of ideological becoming (Bakhtin, 1934/1981). Children, in particular, experienced ideological becoming due to the repeat-probe-or accept discourse processes in play. That is, in play, children experienced and heard new discourses, chose to take these up, or reject them entirely. Since classrooms bring together children from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, play in these spaces proves to be rich with conflicting discourses, intentions, and understandings, which children navigate as they also learn how to make sense of texts in meaningful ways. Literacy and play both provide opportunities for children to live out their social worlds with others in powerful ways.

Conclusion

All three bodies of literature shaped my thinking about this study. The scholarly work done with nonfiction picturebooks highlights the need for a more expanded approach to reading nonfiction (Yenika-Agbaw et al., 2018), a need for more current research that examines how teachers are using nonfiction in their classrooms (Graff & Shimek, 2020), and shows that nonfiction is a dynamic and fluid construction that students must learn to navigate (Shimek, 2019) in order to make meaning. The research on multimodality shows that literacy researchers are beginning to use these methods for better understandings of what takes place in classrooms (Greeter, 2016; Khieu, 2014), but these have yet to focus on the read-alouds experiences focused on nonfiction books, specifically. Finally, the work on play and literacy highlights how play establishes the processes needed for writing (Dyson, 2008; Rowe, 2019; Wohlwend, 2015), but has not examined in-depth the ways play and reading inform each other. Using Bakhtin

(1934/1981) to establish how embodied communication is shared (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015), Rosenblatt (1978/1994) to understand how readers respond to texts in a variety of ways, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) multimodality to understand that we are always using multiple modes to communicate with those around us, this dissertation sets out to better understand how members of a classroom make sense of nonfiction books through whole group read-alouds and in playful moments throughout the school day.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

I conducted this study from January – May, 2019 to examine how young readers collectively make meaning of nonfiction picturebooks individually and collectively in one Kindergarten classroom. I embedded myself in this classroom two to three days a week to document and analyze the ways children respond to nonfiction picturebooks, paying particular attention to the aesthetic-efferent continuum of response embodied through oral, written, and physical communication. While moving throughout the school day with the class, I also observed how children's understandings of nonfiction picturebooks occurred not only during the immediate read-aloud event but also throughout the non-academic or playful moments of the school day. This chapter describes the methodology for addressing the following overarching questions:

How do readers respond in multimodal ways to nonfiction children's literature, both individually and as a part of a collaborative learning experience, such as a whole group interactive read-aloud?

1. *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?*
2. *What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?*

3. How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?

To address these questions, I conducted a case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) that used a combination of methods including collecting video of whole group read-alouds and children reading independently, semi-structured individual interviews of the teacher and students, and written observations. Data sources included videos of read-alouds focused on both the teacher and the students, photographs of documents that connected with nonfiction books, audio recordings of interviews, and research field notes. In accordance with my theoretical framework, which establishes that everything is entangled in one's own heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1934/1981), I begin by describing a case study approach and introducing the teachers and students that were a part of this study. I then proceed to provide the classroom and school context to better situate these individuals within a particular space and moment in time. I also explain the various methods I used in this research and how the data sources I collected were analyzed to provide context for the findings in Chapters Four and Five. I end with a discussion of the methodological concerns and limitations of this research.

Research Design

Over the past 30 years, case study research has gone from being the "weak sibling" of social science methods to a research design that allows for a close examination and a complexity of a phenomenon that is often limited by other research designs (Duke & Malette, 2004, p. 7). A case study is descriptive, nonexperimental (Merriam, 1988), and meant to provide a complexity to interaction within particular contexts (Stake, 1995). According to Merriam (1988), case studies should be centered on a specific situation, phenomenon, person, etc.; they should provide

a rich description, deepen understandings, and data should drive the understandings. Stake (1995) also described case studies as intrinsic because researchers seek out questions they have about particular places and moments in time. Case studies, then, do not provide generalizations that can be applied to every situation but can produce understandings that occur across the specific situation (Stake, 1995).

One of the challenges of determining a case study is deciding what a study should be bound by (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Considering my theoretical framework, I determined that this case will be bound by one classroom. As I am interested in the collective meaning making that occurs in a classroom, it would make sense that I focus on all members of the classroom that have provided consent, including but not limited to the teacher, the children, myself, and any other staff member that spends time in the classroom. The findings of this research, then, describe events that occurred across five months in one Kindergarten classroom. Although the relationships, the sense of excitement, and the complex meaning making process of nonfiction picturebooks identified in this study may not be applicable to *all* Kindergarten classrooms, one could seemingly find similar understandings in other early childhood classrooms.

Members of the Classroom: Teacher Participants

Since the theories of dialogism, reading as a transactional process, and multimodality all emphasize the personal lived experiences of individuals in the world as an essential component of communication, I will first introduce the participants of this study, and then share more about the context, school, and classroom setting. Of course, individuals and the contexts within which they are situated can never be separated from one another, as individuals are always informed and act in response to their surroundings. Still, each member of the classroom, including myself,

was integral to the conversations, the play, and the daily actions that occurred throughout this study and thus are described first.

Mrs. Burnette. Within the school, Mrs. Burnette had a reputation for creating a loving, supportive, and creative environment that her students flourished in. Mrs. Burnette has been a teacher at the school since 1996 and had won awards for her approaches to teaching Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) from a state-wide teacher's association. Mrs. Burnette knew each child of her class and their families extremely well and she worked hard to keep up with the amount of parents emails and communication she received daily, while also remaining in the moment with her students throughout the school day. Being a teacher for over 20 years provided Mrs. Burnette with a lot of perspectives about the profession and she admitted to exploring alternatives for her career once she retires from teaching, including putting herself "out there" on Twitter and working on a classroom blog that could be useful for professional development.

When asked about how she decides what the class will be studying, she told me she often determined her curriculum choices around the seasons, events she knows will be taking place in her student's lives, and what the children were most interested in. Although she openly admitted to knowing the standards "by heart," she never told the students that what they were learning about came from the standards or seemed to reference them in her conversations with other teachers about what they were studying and why. Instead, she relied upon previous experiences with students that went well, her own personal expertise, and the student's interests to guide their instruction, though she warned that, "Sometimes students don't even know what they are interested in" (Initial Interview). Mrs. Burnette felt it was her job to expose students to new things so that they can be more informed citizens of the world.

Mrs. Burnette discussed how challenging it was for her to keep up with current nonfiction book publications when selecting books for read-alouds. She confessed that she often hears about books from her teacher friends, "and even Twitter," though she also subscribed to emails from Horn Book to try and help her stay abreast of more recent books. Mrs. Burnette also had well-loved and worn books, too, which she often relied on for her read-alouds. "I have hundreds of books I should probably give away, but there are some that are so tattered and worn, I just couldn't even think of giving those away." Some of these were nonfiction, such as *Ice Bear* by Nicola Davies and illustrated by Gary Blythe (2001), but many of them were fiction, such as *The Old Lady who Named Things*, written by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Kathryn Brown (1996). She also admitted to having favorite nonfiction authors, such as Sandra Markle, Steve Jenkins, and Jerry Pallotta, which she also relied upon often for whole group read-alouds.

Mrs. Jones. Although Mrs. Jones does not have a formal degree, she has been a parent at the School for Questions since it opened in 1996 and has worked at the school as the Kindergarten paraprofessional for the past 12 years. As a result, she is known by almost every family in the school and is regularly relied upon for "training up" new Kindergarten teachers at the school. Mrs. Jones was continuously relied upon by Mrs. Burnette, other teachers, and occasionally the Principal for her knowledge of what children need, how parents might react or respond to certain information, and how the school should handle issues throughout the school year. Although Mrs. Jones primarily considers herself to be a support for Mrs. Burnette and does not do any of the curriculum planning, her skillful presence in the classroom was evident and both teachers were very comfortable working with one another. When Mrs. Burnette was absent to care for her sick mother, Mrs. Jones immediately stepped in, often without a substitute teacher, to lead the class in their daily routines, to conduct read-alouds, and even to design

presentations for the entire school when it was the responsibility of the class. Despite this, when I asked Mrs. Jones if I could interview her multiple times, she replied with statements such as, "Oh, I don't have much to say about any of that! I don't decide what we do. I just help get it done" (Written Observation, January). Thus, I did not formally interview her. Although I did capture a few recordings of her conducting read-alouds with the class during rest/nap time, I primarily focused on the teaching of Mrs. Burnette in this analysis of this study because of Mrs. Jones' responses to some of my requests. Still, Mrs. Jones' presence or absence was in every video I captured and her impact on the classroom was invaluable.

Members of the Classroom: Student Participants

Within my larger case study, I followed the lead of Dyson (2003) by selecting a smaller number of students that were representative of the class as a unit in both similarities and uniqueness. Because 20 students agreed to participate in my research, the ability to focus on each member of the classroom as I reviewed hundreds of hours of video data was impossible. I selected eight children of self-identified genders, four boys and four girls, as my focal students. These children were chosen based on the literacy history interviews I conducted, the observations I completed throughout the study, student assent and willingness to work with me, a variety of demographics that represent the classroom diversity, and because these children are representative of what I have observed in the classroom collective. The eight children I chose to focus on for research questions one and two are: Callie, Clarence, Destiny, Grant, Jason, Kennedy, Maddox, and Zuri. By focusing on these children's multimodal responses to nonfiction picturebooks, I was able to look more closely within the case and better understand the phenomena of young readers' responses from a variety of perspectives (those that enjoy nonfiction and those that don't, girls and boys, various reading abilities, etc.).

Although I initially selected these eight focal children to represent the larger case study, it became impossible to ignore the other children in the class during my analysis. Due to the whole group read-alouds containing all of the children, many of the comments or actions of the focal children were connected with or in response to children I had not selected. Bakhtin (1934/1981) theorized that everything we say (or do, as I will demonstrate) takes into consideration not only our setting but also what we know about those around us. Our transactions with texts, too, are shaped by the comments, opinions, and understandings of those around us (Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994; Sipe, 2008). As such, I could not ignore or omit any of the children who were interacting with the eight focal children. I focused on these eight children as a representative snapshot of the class, but all of the students in the class were integral members of the multimodal transactions that occurred around nonfiction books. Below are portraits of each of the focal children (as individuals, readers, and contributing members of the classroom) listed in alphabetical order by their first name. As all of these children were in Kindergarten, they were either five- or six-years-old.

Callie. Callie regularly had nonfiction books in her book box, particularly about animals, and was usually one of the first three children to raise her hand to ask a question during whole group read-alouds. As the oldest girl in her family and the only child that spoke Chinese at home and English as school, she would often share her experiences and knowledge about China, though was not willing to speak or write in Chinese at school because "I do that at home." Callie enjoyed writing workshop most, and played primarily with her best friend Elizabeth, though was friends with everyone. Most of the books she wrote centered around unicorns, love, and friendship.

Clarence. Clarence is an only child who was often soft-spoken in the classroom, despite being one of the more popular kids in the school. He was always the first child to say hello and give me a hug in the mornings, and I found him often choosing to sit with me at lunchtime or on the gathering carpet. Clarence's mom often recorded him doing work at home and shared it with the teacher, and it was evident that school was a major priority for their family. Although he did not always enjoy reading nonfiction because "sometimes the words are too hard," Clarence often incorporated nonfiction into his play through his love of animals.

Destiny. Destiny was easily the most charismatic and outgoing girl in the classroom, though sometimes appeared to lack confidence in herself as a student. She was quite the leader and was friends with everybody. She would verbally share elaborate stories about dreams or experiences she had on the way to school, but when it was time to write would become concerned about everything looking perfect and "correct." Although she did not often select nonfiction books for herself to read, she was frequently found exploring nonfiction with others. She readily engaged in read-alouds by making comments and was an exuberant contributor to the classroom.

Grant. Although Grant was relatively quiet in the classroom, he was the second child in his family to have Mrs. Burnette as a teacher and his familiarity with her was evident. Grant had contributing comments to make during whole group read-alouds, although he would often approach Mrs. Burnette after the read-aloud experience and whisper to her what he was thinking about or the connections he was making because he did not want to share them with the class. Mrs. Burnette would often share these thoughts during other read-alouds or tell him to think about including those questions in a book during writing workshop. Grant was an avid reader of

nonfiction and, on multiple occasions, brought in nonfiction books from home about whatever the class was studying.

Jason. Jason was the oldest child in his family and his mom taught in a nearby classroom, so she was fairly present during the day. Jason was an interesting child fascinated with very specific topics of interest, like violins and other string instruments. He would find them in books, create them out of tin foil left-over from his lunches, and pretend to play them on the playground. As the year progressed, other interests like giant squid and belly buttons began to emerge. Jason excelled in writing, reading, and math, though he was also usually off-topic or fixated on the subjects he was passionate about, rather than contributing to whatever the class was focused on. While he did not always contribute loudly during whole group read-alouds, he regularly read and wrote nonfiction books and expressed himself frequently in playful ways.

Kennedy. Kennedy was the baby in her family and her diligence and attention to detail allowed her to quickly become one of the strongest students in the classroom, although she was not a social leader. When I met her mom for the first time, I expressed how impressive I found her daughter and she began to cry. "We work so hard," she told me. "Thank you for your kind words." Kennedy was good friends with Destiny, so they often worked together on projects. She was usually someone Mrs. Burnette could count on to make interesting connections during whole group read-alouds and consistently read and wrote nonfiction books, even during Explorations (free play).

Maddox. Maddox was the youngest of three children and was always involved in whatever the class was doing. Maddox liked to be the first class to answer a question, so you could always count on him to be paying attention to whatever the class was learning. He could often be found reading nonfiction books during independent reading and once told me, "I don't

like books that don't make me smarter." Still, Maddox's unwillingness to hear other's perspectives, at times, held him back from having as many friends as some of the other children in the classroom.

Zuri. Zuri was the oldest in her family and was initially a bit shy, but eventually warmed up to me. Her dad worked from home and was very involved in the classroom, so he was a frequent presence in the class. Zuri was very petite for her age and spoke with some speech issues, but was strong-willed and determined. She was friends with everyone in the class and much more willing to hang out with the boys than other girls appeared to be. Zuri was fascinated by dinosaurs, obsessed with birds, and often read nonfiction during Explorations (free play). Although she did not prefer to write nonfiction books, she could often be witnessed reading nonfiction or playing with objects related to nonfiction books during her free time.

Local Geographic and School Context

The school site for this research, School for Questioning, was a publicly funded K-5th grade magnet school located in the Southeast United States. Although the school does not post their demographics publicly, the front office staff informed me that the population of the school reflected the district at large, which was 42% White, 48% African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 1% other. Forty-eight percent of the students in the district qualified for free and reduced lunch. The magnet school runs on a lottery system: anyone that attends school in the district can attend if their guardians enter the lottery and they are selected, but preference is given to the siblings of children who previously attended the school.

I chose the School for Questioning for a variety of reasons. First, this school was developed as a collaboration between a major research University in the area and the school district as a place intended to follow the lead of children and consider alternative education

methods from traditional public school curricula. Their website mentions the importance of education being used to create a more compassionate, equitable, and democratic world. Thus, this site was partially chosen because of the curricular freedom the teachers, and thus children, were provided in the classroom. Although the school still followed all of the standards required by the state and children were tested with assessments, before beginning this study I witnessed a school-wide teaching philosophy that allowed children to follow their interests and ask questions, an emphasis on project-based learning, and a blending of subject areas that provided children the time and space to be curious, explore their own interests, and learn traditional academics in less traditional ways. The school also employed an approach to literacy instruction that aligned with the goals of my study. Even in Kindergarten, children experienced a reader's workshop and a writer's workshop on a regular, if not daily, basis. Read-alouds of a variety of books were conducted daily, and students were encouraged to respond, ask questions, and pursue their own interests as readers and writers.

Second, this site was chosen because the literacy specialist for the 2017-2018 school year was also a member of the NCTE Orbis Pictus Award Committee, an award for "excellence in the writing of nonfiction literature for children" (http://www2.ncte.org/awards/orbis-pictus-award-nonfiction-for-children/). She assisted teachers with literacy curriculum development and provided additional instructional support for children who needed help with specific literacy skills. She also ran an extra-curricular group where students in fourth and fifth grade read all of the Orbis Pictus nominees with her and held their own elections for the school. Thus, her presence was felt in the school and she worked to introduce contemporary, high-quality nonfiction to the staff and children throughout the school year.

Third, I was a student teacher at this school more than ten years ago and have retained a strong relationship with the Principal, several of the teachers, and the administrative staff at the school. Additionally, many of the students I taught before entering Graduate School attended this magnet school, and thus I already had a reputation of trust amongst some parents. This relationship of trust assisted me in getting this study started, allowed me to capture video as a form of data, and made families within in the school generally welcoming toward me and my work.

Classroom Context

Mrs. Burnette's Kindergarten classroom had 21 students and a Kindergarten paraprofessional, Mrs. Jones, per the laws of the state the school is located in. Before receiving approval from UGA IRB and the school district's IRB board, I met with the Principal to see which classroom might be a good fit for this study. I initially wanted to be placed in a second-grade classroom, but the Principal strongly suggested that I remain in the Kindergarten or first grade for the duration of my study, so I visited four classrooms (two Kindergarten and two first grade) to see which seemed to best support my research purpose. Although all four classrooms were viable, I chose Mrs. Burnette's class because I considered her to be an expert in her field, she had a lot of parental involvement and support from families which would be useful for my consent process, and she emphasized free play (called Explorations) for 45 minutes near the end of each school day. I observed the class four times during the month of December to get a sense of how read-alouds were conducted, to see how nonfiction was used in the classroom, to develop rapport, and to better understand the policies and procedures of the school and classroom.

I found this Kindergarten class to be extremely colorful, bursting with books and art and tools for learning. The room was centered around a giant rug that pictured an image of a pond,

which is where the class met daily for Morning Meeting, whole group read-alouds, and other forms of instruction. On the wall by the rug was two whiteboards and a SmartBoard and along the other side of the rug was Mrs. Burnette's teacher chair and easel. This easel held, at times, six or seven books that the class had been reading, numerous rulers or tools for measuring, hundreds charts, big paper for writing, pointers, and anything else Mrs. Burnette might need in the moment when teaching. The classroom had two normal tables with chairs and two low tables that children could sit at for working, as well as a housekeeping center, an art center (called the Atelier), several bookshelves, a science center, and a shelving unit full of math manipulatives. The walls of the classroom were covered with student work and pictures that had been accumulating over the course of the school year. A drawn visual of the classroom layout can be found in Appendix A.

Class Operations and Curriculum Overview

The classroom schedule typically went as follows:

8:00-8:10 Children enter classroom and unpack

8:10-8:30 Morning Meeting and announcements

8:30-9:00 Mrs. Burnette Read-aloud and whole group instruction

9:00-9:30 Reading workshop/Independent reading

9:30-10:00 Specials (e.g., Music, Art, P.E., Computers, and Spanish)

10:00-10:50 Writing workshop

10:50-11:30 Lunch (includes walking to and from the lunchroom)

11:30-12:10 Sharing/Science

12:10-12:45 Math

12:45-1:15 Recess

1:15-1:45 Rest/Mrs. Jones Read-aloud

1:45-2:35 Explorations (Free play in centers)

2:35-2:50 Pack up, Closing Circle, and dismissal

Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones made sure that the children had a lot of ownership over their classroom space and required them to be responsible for all of their personal objects. Children were expected to un-pack their folders every morning, put lunchboxes where they belonged, and get themselves ready for the day. The teachers would both admit, "Our classroom looks really junky" (Written Observation, February), but they also shared that the students knew where everything was located in the classroom, and it was their responsibility, too, to keep it clean. On multiple occasions, I asked children for different classroom supplies and they retrieved them for me without hesitation or problems. The teachers worked hard to display as much of the student work as possible on the walls of the classroom, which made the classroom transform into a visual representation of the children's work as the year progressed.

The curriculum of the classroom revolved around topics of interest to the students but was infused with ideas from Mrs. Burnette. Mrs. Burnette primarily designed all of the learning that occurred throughout the day, though she often bounced ideas around with Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones often created large class projects that centered around art and creativity, where Mrs. Burnette focused her attention entirely on which books they would read and concepts they would emphasize throughout the unit, how they would integrate different content areas together, and what other topics should incorporate into their learning. Luckily, these conversations usually took place in the morning before school or during recess, so I was often present for them and knew what to anticipate. Mrs. Burnette was not required to write explicit lesson plans, though

she documented the work the children did through innovative family take-home journals, using pictures, and writing weekly about the class progress in her blog.

During my time in the class, the children moved from studying art masterpieces in January and early February to doing an eight-week study of birds. This shift in studies developed from a child noticing that a nest was being built in a tree outside in the garden. Mrs. Burnette used this child's observations to design a two-month study of birds and everything about them, which occurred from late February through late April. As a result, much of the data I collected centered around the curriculum focus of birds. In late April, the class moved on to study lesser-known animals and ended with a unit on inventions and transportation. Even though Mrs. Burnette worked to design the curriculum around the children's interests, she did align her teaching generally with the other Kindergarten teachers by talking about broad concepts from the state standards with them and collaborating with certain projects across the classes. For example, Mrs. Burnette collaborated with another teacher on transportation by inviting parents of both classes to a Kindergarten Vehicle Day in May. I did not witness any collaborations during the two units on birds and animals.

In general, behavior was not an issue in Mrs. Burnette's class. Children would occasionally have melt-downs or get upset, but Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones worked hard to always remain positive and upbeat. They began each day by greeting each child and saying their name, used a lot of positive reinforcement and re-direction in the classroom, and set guidelines for children that were reasonable, but firm. For example, when children were walking outside of the school, they were allowed to be as boisterous and loud as they wanted but had to whisper inside the school building so as not to disrupt the other classes. If a child misbehaved, they usually had to walk one lap around the playground at recess before going to play. Although Mrs.

Burnette told me she did not enjoy giving out consequences, she confided, “We have them walk a lap because it allows them to get energy out and it only takes a few minutes. Usually the idea of having a consequence is worse than the actual punishment” (Written Observation, January). Mrs. Jones spent most of the time making sure the children were doing what they were supposed to do, assisting individual children with their needs, and finishing class projects with children individually, though both teachers handled classroom management.

Overall, despite the challenges inherent in any school year, this Kindergarten classroom was a joy to visit every week and seemed to be a place the students wanted to come every day. There were multiple occasions where parents would email, saying, “My child is sick and is so upset they won’t be present to experience _____” (Written Observation, February). It was also common for parents to share how excited their children were to be studying whatever content area the class was focused on and to share connections the child was making outside of the classroom. Zuri’s dad, for example, often verbally shared things they were doing at home to be bird watchers during the class unit on birds. More examples of how families were involved in the classroom are described in Chapter Five. All in all, Mrs. Burnette’s Kindergarten classroom was generally filled with laughter, excitement, and curious minds asking important questions about the world.

Data Collection

Dyson and Genishi (2005) warned that “phases” of research, particularly in case study design research, are often flexible and blend together rather than abruptly start and stop. Still, designing my research in “phases” was useful to me. The following table describes the phases generally and then I describe each of the phases further.

Table 3.1: Timeline for data collection phases

Research Questions:

Overarching question: *How do readers respond in multimodal ways to nonfiction children's literature, both individually and as a part of a collaborative learning experience, such as a whole group interactive read-aloud?*

1. How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?

2. What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?

3. How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?

Prior to Phase One: I spent the month of December and January getting to know the teacher, assisting in the classroom, meeting families, and taking anecdotal notes to help me refine my plan for data collection.

	Data Source	**Purpose**	**Artifacts**	**Time Frame**
Phase One: (Embedding myself in the classroom; focus on teacher's influence of NF in classroom)	Teacher interview	Ask about classroom practices with NF, standards, perception of NF in general	1 60-90 minute interview audio recorded	February 2019
	Student literacy background	Interview consenting students about literacy history	Short interview (10 minutes) about NF and reading preferences, 1 per child with permission	February 2019
	Document collection	Examine standards/lesson plans, written responses to/about NF	Collect from teacher and children with permission when appropriate (photographs or copies)	January and February 2019
	Classroom observations	Observe classroom, specifically during whole group read-alouds	Field notes; pilot video recording; reflective memos	2-3 per week, January and February 2019

	Data Source	Collection Methods	Artifacts	Time Frame
Phase Two: (Participating in the classroom; focus on whole group read-aloud; focus in on 8 students' reading practices relating to nonfiction)	Whole group read-aloud video	Video record NF whole group read-alouds (could occur at any point during the school day)	Video recordings; observation notes; reflective memos	2-3 times per week, ~30 minutes (12 weeks total) February-May 2019
	Teacher Debriefing	Few questions about goals of read-aloud, how she thought it went, what surprised the teacher, how will this inform the next read-aloud	Verbal conversations with written documentation	After each NF read-aloud event
	Student recordings	Video record students reading NF during reading workshop and throughout their play	Video recordings; observation notes; reflective memos	Focus on children connecting to NF February- May 2019
	Document collection	Examine standards, written responses to/about NF	Collect from teacher and children when appropriate (photographs or copies)	February-May 2019
	Classroom observations	Observe students throughout their day	Observation notes; reflective memos	As needed (when something connected to NF occurs) February-May 2019
	Data Source	**Collection Methods**	**Artifacts**	**Time Frame**
Phase Three: (Slowly back out of classroom; Follow up focus on teacher, tie up loose ends)	Teacher interview	Follow up questions from study, how the study shifted/changed perceptions of NF, Member checks	1 60 minute interview with audio recording, 1 member check	May 2019
	Student interview	Interview children about reading practices/questions that arose, Member checking	10 minute interview per child with audio recordings; video recorded 8 interviews	May 2019
	Classroom observations	Observe classroom to answer lingering questions	Observation notes; reflective memos	May 2019

Phase One

This phase occurred from January 17, 2019 until February 15, 2019. I sent home individual parental consent forms to families after Mrs. Burnette had written about my dissertation goals and project in her weekly newsletter. Although I sent parental consent forms the first week of February in each child's take-home folder, it took about two weeks to have them returned. As a result, during this time, I primarily took field notes and reflective memos. I did not record any literacy events with video, though I did set up my cameras and "practice" filming with the cameras during this phase to make the video data collection process more routine for the class.

Phase One was designed to also help me better get to know how nonfiction is used in the classroom and what the literacy histories of the teacher and students were. I entered the classroom primarily with the role of the case researcher as interpreter (Stake, 1995), meaning that I had identified a problem and was "hoping to connect it better with known things" (p. 97). Still, this phase allowed me to get to know the students and have them get to know me. I was able to recruit all but one of the students in the class, giving me a total of 20 children to observe.

I began with formal observations of the read-aloud experiences that regularly occurred and other literacy events that included nonfiction picturebooks and conducted an hour-long interview with the teacher to establish the teacher's opinions about nonfiction, what she was required to include as a part of the standard curriculum, how she selects nonfiction books, etc. Also, during this phase, I conducted a brief interview with each child who gave assent about what kinds of books they like to read, what kinds of literacy experiences they had outside of school, how they went about selecting books for their book boxes and specific questions about nonfiction picturebooks. This allowed me to have a stronger background knowledge of their

literacy histories and preferences, understand their reading preferences at school and at home, and identify some of the discourses the children repeated about nonfiction books, i.e., "They are real!" (Jason, Initial Interview). I collected documents including notes that went home to parents about course content, copies of artifacts students created, and images from children's take-home notebooks that connected to the nonfiction read-alouds I witnessed. Finally, at the end of each week, I recorded reflective memos about the research decisions I was making and why.

Phase Two

Having established some background knowledge and cultural understandings of the classroom in Phase One, Phase Two focused specifically on answering my research questions. I was in this phase from the last week of February until the first week of May, approximately 12 weeks (excluding Spring Break). Although testing did occur in the school mid-April, this was only required for students in third grade and above in the state this class was situated in. The only way this changed the Kindergartners' regular school day was that the students either had to be silent during lunch, or the class had a picnic lunch on the playground. I used this time to collect video recordings of at least two-three nonfiction read-alouds per week and I recorded students during reading and writing workshop whenever I noticed children using nonfiction books or writing their own nonfiction books. While observing children using or creating nonfiction books was not a challenge, often, the class was reading multiple books at once, so it was common for me to see the same nonfiction book being read over the course of three or more days. As a result, some books I was only able to record parts of, as I had university responsibilities that prohibited me from attending the classroom every day of the week. However, I was able to record a total of 14 different nonfiction books and 24 read-alouds events over the course of the 12 weeks. A list of the books is located in Appendix B. I audio recorded

the interviews I conducted with the children and teacher and occasionally when the group was having conversations that connected to their read-alouds, such as during "share time" in the mornings when the children brought in nonfiction books or referenced content they had been learning about in class. After each read-aloud, I had a quick debrief with the teacher where I asked how she felt the read-aloud went and if anything surprised her during the event. This primarily took place either during special areas or while walking to lunch, so they were written in my observation notebook. Mrs. Burnette often reflected upon comments the children made or how she was connecting the read-aloud to other parts of the school day.

Initially, my goal was to determine a select group of children to focus on throughout phase two in the hopes of addressing my first research question, *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning.* In reality, I focused my attention on any child who chose to read nonfiction books during reading workshop, children who were using nonfiction as mentor texts during their writing workshop, and any children who seemed to be using nonfiction books during their independent play. Each Kindergartener contributed so many unique perspectives and ideas, it was hard to ignore those responses or the ways these shifted the class' focus. Additionally, I had planned to meet formally with each of my focal children during reading workshop once a week, but the reality was that reading workshop did not always occur in the same way every day or even every week. Some days there would be a presentation or field study that provided wonderful experiences for the children but removed them from the classroom. Other days, Mrs. Burnette would encourage children to read with each other and I would find that the children did not want to speak to me when they had the option of reading with friends. Ultimately, while I consistently observed nonfiction read-alouds and

children learning through inquiry and play in the school day, my plan to interview children during reading workshop did not work for a variety of reasons and, thus, I often spent this time video recording children reading nonfiction by themselves or with others rather than interviewing the children. During this phase, I also collected numerous other pieces of data using a combination of audio, video recordings, and observation notes, depending on what seemed appropriate at the time, such as when students made connections walking to and from lunch or on the playground. Many of these examples can be found in Chapter Five. I continued to collect student artifacts primarily through taking photos of work that connected with the nonfiction read-alouds I witnessed, which I include anecdotally in Chapters Five and Six.

Phase Three

Finally, Phase Three took place during the final weeks of May 2019. I used this phase to tie up loose ends and seek answers to lingering questions. During this time, I began to distance myself from the class and no longer video recorded read-aloud events in the classroom. I conducted a final 60-minute interview with the teacher and completed a short, 10-minute interview with each of the children that agreed to participate. I also conducted a member check with the teacher about the descriptions I provided of herself, the classroom context, and some large themes I was thinking about based on my time in her classroom.

Data Sources

A qualitative researcher is not "one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings" (Stake, 1995, pp. 8-9). While I did my best to capture all aspects of the classroom, I entered the classroom with a specific goal and thus, this influenced the decisions I made throughout the data collection process.

Video Data

The video recordings I took of whole group read-alouds and of children playing as a part of Explorations are the primary data sources for this research. These videos were recorded using an iPad Pro on a stand and a handheld video camera. The use of two different devices allowed me to capture the multimodal actions of the students and the teacher simultaneously, so I could focus on each group individually to focus on their particular transactions, but also combine the two camera angles to determine how the interactions of everyone in the class contributed to the read-alouds. A map of the classroom and where I set up these recording devices can be found in Appendix A. In addition to collecting video of the read-alouds, I often used a camera to record children reading during reading workshop, writing during writing workshop, and during their share time. I would decide which children to film by determining if and how their work connected to the nonfiction books in the classroom, then ask the child's permission to record them. If the child/children agreed, I would begin the recording. At times, this resulted in children waving to the camera or speaking at the lens, but early on I asked children to continue going about their business, so they got used to maintaining business as usual with the camera on for the most part.

Occasionally, moments would occur where I did not have my camera readily available, so I would document these events using my cell phone and record them in my observation notebook. The data I include in Chapters Four and Five are representative of the collection of 77 recordings (53 play and 24 read-alouds) I captured involving nonfiction and play. For the purposes of analysis, I selected recordings that connected most saliently to the nonfiction read-alouds or books found throughout the classroom, but these additional recordings contributed to my memories and understandings of my time in the Kindergarten classroom.

Interviews

I conducted an hour-long, semi-structured interview during Phase One and Phase Three of my research with Mrs. Burnette. The first interview was designed to understand Mrs. Burnette's teaching philosophies, how she selects books, and what she is required to do for assessments by her district. The second interview included more questions about how she sets up her classroom environment for play, what she feels she does well as a teacher, and how she navigates the balance between allowing for creative expression in her classroom and the perceptions of her job. The questions I used in these semi-structured interviews are in Appendix C. I never formally interviewed Mrs. Jones, however, throughout the semester I would ask her opinions informally and jot them down in my observation notebook.

I also interviewed each child who agreed to participate in my study during Phase One and Phase Three (See Appendix D). These audio recordings often took place during reading workshop or during Explorations and lasted seven-ten minutes. The first interviews conducted in Phase One allowed me to gain insights into the kinds of books the children preferred to read and how they engaged with books outside of school. The second interview conducted in Phase Three focused on how they conceptualized reading nonfiction and what they thought about using books as a part of their play. I transcribed all of the interviews.

Photographs/Document Collection

I documented over 1,000 photos of work children did, excerpts of family take-home journals, formal letters Mrs. Burnette sent home to families, or playful moments that took place throughout the day that connected with nonfiction books. These were taken with my cell phone so as to be discreet in the classroom, though I received permission from the teacher and the students if the documents were students' work. In addition to these photographs, Mrs. Burnette

kept parents aware of the classroom events through her blog, which I had access to. Mrs. Burnette did not make official lesson plans, so I did not have the ability to analyze these, however, I have a wide variety of documents that are supporting evidence for the video data I collected in this research.

Observational Field Notes and Reflective Memos

I took observational field notes from January-May in a compact notebook I kept with me throughout the entire school day. In this notebook, I recorded expressions or ideas children presented, events that occurred throughout the school day, and notations of any photos or video footage I took so that I could put it back into content and which device I took the data on (cell phone, iPad, camera). At the end of each week, I expanded on my thinking through audio recorded reflective memos while I was driving home. These recordings have been roughly transcribed and have helped me to keep track of the methodological decisions I made throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis is the method by which researchers studying multimodality approach their data (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). A social semiotic approach to multimodal discourse is interested more in the interactions between people and the ways people respond to these interactions. Social semiotics emphasizes the cultural, historical, and ideological context of meaning making and the tensions and complexities that arise between individuals of different contexts communicating in a specific place and time, which aligned most closely with Bakhtin's (1934/1981, 1929/1984) theories of dialogism and heteroglossia. Thus, I used Bakhtin's theories of language with Rosenblatt's (1938/1978, 1978/1994) transactional theory and a social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis.

One of the challenges of working with a social semiotic multimodal analysis is that much of the work done analyzes two-dimensional artifacts such as images, advertisements, and art. I needed to find a way to apply the concepts of social semiotic multimodal analysis to three-dimension and ongoing events like my video. I found Sigrid Norris' (2019) most recent book, *Systematically Working with Multimodal Data: Research Methods in Multimodal Discourse Analysis,* beneficial in thinking through a multimodal analysis. In the following section, I describe my process in further detail.

Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis

Norris (2019) designed her Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis to be the first "inter-disciplinary approach that has been developed specifically for the analysis of multimodal action and interaction" (p. 2). Considering my theoretical groundings, it was important that I found a method of analysis that not only examines the multiple modes, or resources, the Kindergartners communicated with, but also how these modes of communication built off one another to create a unique learning and reading event. While Norris bases much of her analysis on Ron Scollon's (1998) principles of social action, she argued that her methods are meant to be guidelines for researchers applying multimodal analysis to video data and should be applied in diverse and new ways. Scollon (1998) argued that human beings' actions are always socially contextualized because they were learned through social processes and that, ultimately, all actions are meant to communicate in some form or fashion. He also argued that because all actions are social, they are also inherently embedded in cultural and historical contexts, and thus shouldn't be dislocated from these events. Because actions always take place in response to and considering a particular place and time, they are inherently always mediated, meaning they exist in response to and because of what occurred before them. This aligns well with Bakhtin's (1934/1981) notions of

heteroglossia and dialogism. For example, in May, when Mrs. Burnette asked the children what they knew about cameras, Clarence spoke up and said, "Ms. Courtney always uses a camera!" (Video, May). Despite my efforts to be discreet, particularly during whole group read-alouds, my presence was felt by all members of the class and, thus, affected how they behaved, what they said, and the experiences they had in the classroom.

Norris (2019) divided all actions into lower-level mediated actions, which is a "mode's smallest pragmatic unit" (p. 40). I see these lower level mediated actions as aligning well with Bakhtin's (1934/1981) notion of utterance, which is the smallest unit of speech. For example, an utterance in my study could be a student raising their hand, letting out a gasp, or touching their nose. These lower level mediated actions add up to become higher level mediated actions, which are chains of multiple lower-level mediated actions that work together to send communication. I called these higher mediated actions utterance strands. While an utterance might be Destiny touching her nose, an utterance strand would be when she uses her fingers to grasp at her nose and pull her hand away from her body three times as she says, "Better than beaks!" (Video, April). Thus, utterances and utterance strands always exist simultaneously, as utterance strands cannot exist without utterances and always wind up producing a larger signal of communication, the utterance strand. In my descriptions of my analysis process for my research questions below, I discuss how these utterances and utterance strands helped me make sense of the data I collected.

Question One and Two Analysis

My first two research questions, *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?* and *What multimodal resources do readers (children and*

teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?, both required an in-depth look at the read-aloud events, so I present the findings of these questions in Chapter Four. For my analysis of these questions, I focused on my videos of whole group read-alouds with Mrs. Burnette reading nonfiction books, since the read-alouds Mrs. Jones did took place during rest and were not designed to be interactive. Using a password-protected external hard drive, I collected all of my data and organized it into folders by type. Below is a snapshot of this organization.

Video Recordings	**Located: On SD Cards/iPad (Original Sources); on External Harddrive; in Dropbox Cloud**				
Name of data piece	**Length of Recording**	**Participants**	**General Observations**	**Methodological notes**	**Date/Time in Year**
MB_RA_A Beavers Tale_Responses	3:41	Whole Group	On Carpet	IPad; Follows up A Beavers Tale Book (Been reading over length of time)	May
MB_RA_A Beavers Tale	11:07	Whole Group	On Carpet	Camera view	May
MB_RA_A Beacers Tale_Responses	3:03	Whole Group	On Carpet- Follow up to RA	IPad; Conversation afterward	May
MB_RA_Baby Animals	4:21	Whole Group	On Carpet- Not good video of children	Taken on cell phone: Read Aloud wasn't planned but the class was waiting on the Bus she MB designed a "farm animal or not?" discussion as she read through the baby animal books.	March
MB_RA_Baby Animals_2	3:56	Whole Group	On Carpet- Not good video of children	Taken on cell phone: Read ALoud wasn't planned but the class was waiting on the Bus she MB designed a "farm animal or not?" discussion as she read through the baby animal books.	March
MB_RA_Bird Alphabet Book_Cell Phone	1:56	Whole Group	Not during traditional RA time; Use of toys (stuffed birds)	Taken on cell phone because it was integrated into other part of the day	February
MB_RA_Bird Alphabet Book_Cell phone_2	3:48	Whole Group	Not during traditional RA time; Use of toys (stuffed birds)	Taken on cell phone because it was integrated into other part of the day	February
MB_RA_Bird Alphabet Book_Camera_3	13:37	Whole Group	Different day from other bird alphabet books	After reading pages, group discussion of different beaks happened	March
MB_RA_Bird Alphabet Book_IPAD_3	15:08	Whole Goup	Ipad view of other 3 video	After reading pages, group discussion of different beaks happened	March

Figure 3.1: Read-Aloud Video Organization Example

As I was focused on the video data of read-alouds for these research questions, I took all of the read-aloud videos I collected and organized them by the title of the book and made sure to identify which device was used to record the video.

After my data was organized, I followed Norris' (2019) advice and began recording the utterances and utterance strands of the read-aloud events. Because of the two different camera angles and the need to examine the multimodal utterance strands of numerous individuals at once, I decided to study the actions of the teacher first, as it was easier for me to focus on one individual. Then, I started analyzing the actions of the eight focal students, but I found myself including other children's utterance strands as well. Isolating the utterance strands of the different members of the classroom allowed me to identify the unique transactions (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994) of members of the classroom to determine which parts of the reading events necessitated a microanalysis and transcript. Then, I was able to identify portions of the read-alouds where the teacher's multimodal actions and the children's multimodal actions were heightened. For example, I identified moments where children had misunderstandings or moments of dissonance, when they used exaggerated physical movements, or when numerous children began acting things out at once. I selected these moments of the larger video recordings as examples of dialogic learning and followed Norris' steps for systemically determining which pieces of data to analyze further. I completed the following steps.

1. Using Excel, I created a spreadsheet of each read-aloud experience, where I documented Mrs. Burnette's timestamped utterance strands. I first established the time chunks of data based on what took place in the video and then wrote general observations about what I noticed her doing or physical movements she made. Next, I pulled out keywords or phrases from these observations as a more general code. Below is an example of the teacher's utterance strands.

Teacher's Actions		
Time	**Lower Mediated Actions/Utterances**	**Higher Mediated Actions/Utterance Strands**
0:00	Read the title and Title introduction- making connection to outside classroom (Garden); behavior management; listen to comment from Hudson	Make connection to student life; respond to student comment

Figure 3.2: One Utterance Strand of Teacher's Actions

2. Using the same Excel spreadsheet for each read-aloud experience, I looked at the camera angles focused on the students to determine their utterance strands, focusing specifically on the eight children I highlighted above. I examined these actions using the same timestamps I recorded for the teacher to keep the two aligned time-wise. This is an example of the children's corresponding utterance strands.

Student's Actions		
Time	**Lower Mediated Action/Utterances**	**Higher Mediated Actions/Utterance Strands**
0:00	Callie: Sitting in the second row, looking in MB's direction Clarence: Tilts head, holds head in hands (paper towel on face), turns around and says something to Destiny; looks at window from time to time Destiny: Begins by itching her nose, does a gesture upward with her right hand as if there is something in it, goes back to rubbing hands on the carpet in front of herself in a circular motion; MB says Diana and she looks up with wide eyes- surprised, points to herself and then goes back to doing the circular movement with her arms; MB nods head and she stops; looks at window and says, "I just saw a book pass by!"; holds stomach and leans forward- looks like she is in pain, tells Kennedy to stop following her; when the book says "snatch" she pretends to grab something off the tree limb and eat it; does a thumbs down when MB asks a question Grant: Looks at D when she sees a bird and smiles, leans to the left and peers out the windw, then focuses back on MB Maddox: Front and center; Jason: **not in video Kennedy: Seems to be copying Destiny's movements- Weston: looks out the window when Destiny says she saw a bird, looks her in the eye and shakes his head fromt left to right 4 times, goes back to looking at the window briefly, then MB Zuri: Playing with piece of yarn on her lap; stretches piece out in front of weston to show him; sits down when Kingston	Callie: Looking/watching; Clarence: Talking with Destiny Destiny: making connections to outside window; Grant: Watching Destiny as she makes her connection Maddox: looking at MB Jason: Kennedy: Copying and talking with DestinyWeston: Zuri: distracted by yarn

Figure 3.3: One Utterance Strand of Focal Children's actions

3. After documenting the utterance strands of both the teacher and the students, I identified moments of dialogic learning that occurred. Although all of the videos included dialogue, dialogic moments were identified as moments where the class was creating more complex and nuanced understandings of the nonfiction books through

classroom (inter)actions. Although I documented the utterance strands for all 24 videos of the 14 nonfiction books Mrs. Burnette read-aloud, I selected eight dialogic read-aloud clips of eight different nonfiction books to analyze further based on the complexity of the discussion and the multimodal communication of the children during these clips. A list of the books that sparked these dialogic learning moments can be found in Appendix B.

4. Once the dialogic read-aloud moments had been identified, I uploaded the 16 video clips (eight focused on the teacher and eight focused on the students) to my Transana Qualitative Software. This software was instrumental in allowing me to focus on interactions because it allowed me to synchronize the two different camera angles so that I could see the teacher's and student's movements simultaneously. I transcribed each of the eight dialogic events, including language spoken and actions of the teacher and children, thus creating my multimodal transcripts of the interactions that occurred during dialogic read-alouds of nonfiction books.

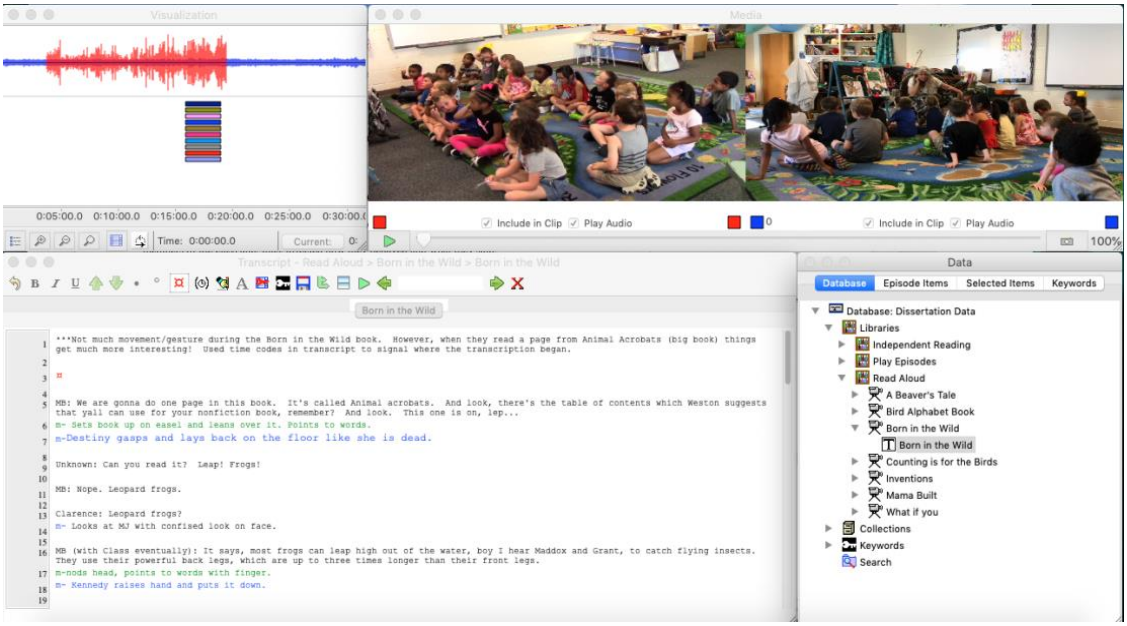

Figure 3.4: Transana Coding Excerpt

5. Finally, I coded each video inductively and deductively. I selected the most frequently documented utterance strands of the teacher and focal children from Step 1 as a priori codes. I also coded these transcripts in vivo, as the microanalyses allowed me to gain new insights about what occurred during the read-alouds. Coding both ways allowed me to look across the eight dialogic read-alouds and get a sense of what occurred most consistently in all of the dialogic events, rather than focusing on each individual read-aloud.

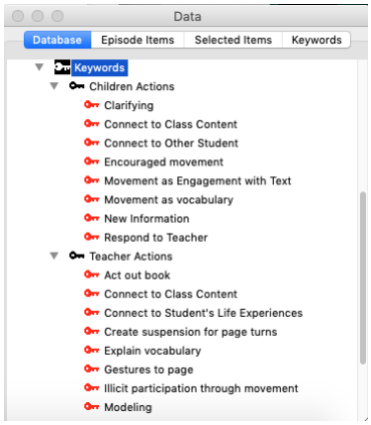

Figure 3.5: Transana Utterance Strand Codes

6. Lastly, I collapsed the a priori utterance strands and in vivo codes I created into larger themes, which I present in Chapter Four.

Question Three Analysis

I used a similar process to answer question three, *How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?*, as I outlined above, but because the playful events were more sporadic and unstructured, I highlighted 22 moments of play that occurred with the class throughout the school day to focus on due to their more obvious connections with nonfiction books and content. Greeter (2016) focused on "critical moments" in

her dissertation of multimodal responses to picturebooks that she identified through her observation notes and individual activity logs she kept of each individual video recording she took (p. 76). Instead of using this term, I will call these dialogic moments, as they required the child in play to negotiate the variety of discourses around them, either verbally or physically. For example, when I video recorded Jason playfully reading about violins instead of doing writer's workshop for 17 minutes in February, he verbally connected to information he knew about violins by making comments such, "This is a bow but it's not a hair bow," and he connected his reading to other children around him, "Destiny look! A ballerina!" Although he was technically playing by himself, Jason's multimodal actions showed the information he was bringing to the text and the ways he was connecting this to the classroom. These dialogic moments represented the play of any child who agreed to participate in this research that connected with the nonfiction read-alouds I also documented in some way so as to get a larger sense of play as a way to make meaning in the Kindergarten classroom. I also included video recordings I captured during independent reading time, as usually, there were multiple children reading together to make sense of a text in a playful way. My analysis process for the playful dialogic moments was as follows:

1. I went through each of the 53 moments of play and shared reading I recorded and connected these moments with the written observation notes I took for context. I identified 22 of these moments that occurred from February-May as being moments of dialogic negotiations.
2. I wrote a description of the context for each of these vignettes that included the time of year and nonfiction books the class was reading together at the time, what occurred earlier in the day, and where the child was when these moments of play occurred.

3. Using Transana again, I created multimodal transcriptions of the moments of play. In the instances of long video recordings (e.g., 35 minutes), I focused on the aspects of the play that connected with nonfiction read-alouds and class content most closely. These transcriptions focused on the utterances and utterance strands and followed the same transcription protocol as the read-aloud videos.
4. After combining the written vignette and transcription of the play event in Transana, I coded the multimodal transcripts inductively and collapsed the codes into larger categories that became my findings.

Methodological Concerns and Limitations

My personal relationship with teachers, parents, and administration afforded me a certain level of trust that provided me with a more complicated insider/outsider status. Although I am an outsider to the school, my previous experiences as an intern at the school, the intimate relationships I have developed over time with many of the school personnel, and my experiences with certain families at the school afforded me some insider knowledge and rapport that many researchers often take years to establish. However, I was lucky this year in that I did not have any siblings of children I previously taught and all of the families in this Kindergarten class were new to me, which positioned me more as an outsider than I was initially anticipating.

Despite my well-developed relationship with Mrs. Burnette over the years, she often seemed worried that I would be critical of what they were doing in her class. Thus, I often reassured here that I was in her classroom to focus on my research questions and reminded her that every classroom has challenges and issues that arise. This tension made me wonder, at times, if Mrs. Burnette would read certain books on days she knew I would be in school, however, it was evident to me that the children were very comfortable engaging in nonfiction

read-alouds and there were days where she would say, “Oh I wish you had been here to see _____.” Despite her awareness of being observed, Mrs. Burnette was gracious enough to let me spend hours in the classroom and was more than willing to participate in interviews. The children, on the other hand, seemed quite comfortable with me and while they would sometimes ask, “Why do you always carry that camera around?” (Written Observation, February). They also seemed quite comfortable to engage in conversations, tell me about their lives, and encourage me to see what they were doing throughout the school day.

An unintended methodological consideration I discovered throughout the study was the lack of award-winning nonfiction books in the Kindergarten class. As my goal was not to impart any interventions into the classroom, I did not ask Mrs. Burnette to include any specific nonfiction books or provide suggestions for any of the books she read. My goal was to document what was already happening, rather than imposing new or different methods. I assumed that having a literacy specialist on-staff that provided teachers with current, high-quality nonfiction picturebooks meant that I would see more of those books in the classroom, but this wound up not to be the case. Instead, Mrs. Burnette primarily used books she had previous experiences with or authors that she had connected with through professional development. She did regularly use nonfiction books, but they were not usually newly published or award-winning, which contradicted some of my reasons for choosing this school and affected the way nonfiction books were constructed for the members of this classroom. These books still incorporated features and elements of contemporary award-winning nonfiction children’s literature, but these elements were not as frequent as they might have been with more recently published books (Smith & Robertson, 2019). Still, I was able to see nonfiction read-alouds daily and children engaged in play in meaningful ways regularly, which were essential to my research. The lack of

award-winning nonfiction did not detract from my ability to witness, document, and analyze the meaning making young children were doing surrounding the books, but it was a surprising noticing in my data collection.

Limitations

In addition to my position as both an outsider collecting data about the class, but also an integral member of the classroom with my presence and relationships to the children, video data inherently has some methodological limitations. First, the person collecting video data must make decisions about where to point the camera and is limited by the field of vision possible through the camera lens. Throughout this study, I focused on video recording children reading, writing, and exploring books that I considered to be nonfiction picturebooks, but defining nonfiction proved to be challenging at times. As my literature review cited, nonfiction is often presented as hybrid texts (Smolkin & Donovan, 2003) so sometimes children would read books and I was unsure if it was nonfiction, or the book would begin like a nonfiction text about space and then switch to a story about talking aliens looking for food. Also, defining picturebook was difficult, as the children would read all different kinds of texts, including early paper readers that had been printed off a computer and stapled together, field guides from the Audubon society, big books, and everything in between. Because my only specification was that I would focus on nonfiction picturebooks, and these terms were nebulous at times, I found myself collecting video data of a wide variety of texts. Afterward, I was able to sort through and determine if a book was actually nonfiction or a picturebook, but these other books were still part of my data collection and took away from moments I potentially could have been focused on.

Similarly, I collected any moment of play I thought could connect to the nonfiction read-alouds the class had been experiencing, but this proved to be challenging because there is not a

distinct difference between knowledge accrued from books and knowledge gained from other classroom experiences. I captured moments that seemed most pertinent to what the class had been studying, recognizing that the read-alouds were an integral component of the curriculum of the classroom. Also, as I am only one researcher, there are undoubtedly moments I missed or was unable to capture because I could not be everywhere at once. In reviewing the play episodes I captured, I found myself asking questions, making comments, or pulling children out of their play. Rather than observe, I found in reviewing the data that I interjected too often to better "understand" what the children were doing as they played. For example, many of the recordings I took outside included me asking questions of the children in the hopes of better understanding what they were playing. As I did not feel I could video record the entire recess every day (it was challenging to keep up with the children on such a large playground and there were children from other classes), often moments would happen while I was not filming and I would have to turn on the camera, ask the child to repeat themselves again, and the experience was far less spontaneous and organic. Usually, the children knew they were being filmed and either took it as an opportunity to perform something they thought was cute or run away. Although I was asking questions to better understand the work children were doing, it ultimately impeded upon their play and often interrupted the thinking that was taking place.

Also, the children's responses to my camera, at times, seemed to stifle their movements. Despite my efforts to normalize my use of video in the classroom before data collection formally began, the presence of the camera was distracting for the children and often signaled to them that someone was watching. Destiny was notorious for waving when she noticed me filming her. Also, even though I worked hard not to reprimand the children and I never gave them consequences for their actions, I was still an adult in the classroom and my authority signaled

that children needed to "behave." For example, when Callie and Jason were reading the Mickey Mouse book and re-enacting famous Mickey Mouse scenes in Chapter Five, Elizabeth sat nearby with a big smile. When she noticed my camera on them, she straightened up a bit, stopped smiling, and looked back at her book. Despite my efforts to document the children as they played without intruding, Elizabeth saw my position as an authority and followed the authoritative discourses of what makes a "good reader."

Third, although analyses of video data can explain what or how something occurs, it cannot explain why. This is one of the main criticisms of using video data in qualitative research (Goodwin, 2000). Still, the ample amount of time I spent in the classroom did allow me to make connections or allowed me certain understandings that would not have been as apparent if I had not been embedded in the classroom so frequently. The more time I spent with the children, the more connections I was able to make between the children's conversations and play and the content of the curriculum. Norris (2019) reminds readers, "Actors perceive the world, objects and others through their bodies as they are acting and interacting. Body, mind, and world are not separated, even though they may be perceived as separated by the individual actor" (p. 28). Thus, although studying gestures and other modes of communication will never be able to fully explain why someone chooses to act, they are an integral component of communication that have commonly been overlooked (Katz, 2013).

Despite my efforts to be transparent, ethical, and methodical in this research study, every research design also has limitations. This study employed a case study design of a specific Kindergarten classroom, thus, the findings are not replicable. Each member of the classroom's unique responses occurred as a result of the confluence of these specific individuals with these lived experiences situated within these particular moments in time. Even if the same group of

individuals were to engage in a read-aloud with the same book today, their responses would be different. I engaged in this research because my hope was to emphasize the powerful meaning making that occurs in everyday classrooms but is often overlooked. Although just a "normal" Kindergarten classroom, Mrs. Burnette was a well-established and competent teacher who had the support and trust of her administration to do what she felt was best for the children. Thus, this case was a unique example of what is possible in early childhood classrooms but is not representative of all classes.

Lastly, collecting data of an entire classroom at once was a similar experience to teaching an entire classroom; I focused my attention always on who was reading, discussing, or using nonfiction books, but it was impossible to collect the movements, thoughts, and interactions of every child in the class at all times. My research questions inherently focused my attention on children who used more exaggerated and playful actions throughout the semester and while I tried to focus on every child equally, some children's reading preferences and visually multimodal responses resulted in more of my attention focusing on them rather than others.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDINGS AND MULTIMODAL READ-ALOUDS

My findings in this chapter seek to answer the questions: *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?* and *What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?* Although I collected video data examining the multimodal transactions and resources of both the teachers and children and examined the reciprocal and dialogic give and take between the members of the classroom in my analysis, I begin my discussion with a more in-depth look at the transactions of the teacher and the students, respectively, for organizational purposes. I share Mrs. Burnette's multimodal transactions first because although she worked to create a dialogic space in her classroom, ultimately, her decision making guided the whole group read-alouds of nonfiction books. Although Mrs. Jones also conducted read-alouds daily, she did so during the "rest" portion of the school day, so the children were primarily laying down on a blanket they brought from home and listening, not engaging in interactive read-alouds like the class participated in during the Morning Meeting time with Mrs. Burnette. Thus, this chapter has been divided into three parts: multimodal transactions of the teacher, multimodal transactions of the children, and collective multimodal transactions.

Mrs. Burnette's Multimodal Transactions with Nonfiction

Bakhtin (1934/1981) and Rosenblatt (1978/1994) both theorized that individuals communicate, read, and make meaning about their worlds in different ways, depending on their

role and purpose in a given time and situation. Mrs. Burnette's position as a Kindergarten teacher conducting whole group read-alouds greatly affected her transactions with texts and how she responds. As such, this section highlights what Mrs. Burnette did *as a teacher* when she conducted whole group read-alouds using nonfiction picturebooks. Inherently, this includes the stance she has towards nonfiction, her own heteroglossia and experiences with the world, and what she hopes students will take away from these experiences. When asked why she conducted read-alouds daily, Mrs. Burnette said, "Well, I am teaching readers. So the ultimate absolute best thing that I can do for readers is to read" (Initial Interview). To her, modeling for young children what the reading process looks like and immersing them in the act of reading was the best way she felt to teach young children. She further discussed how important read- alouds were for the students to share and hear what others think, not necessarily her personal thoughts. While she was aware of the State Standards and had a rough idea of the content she wanted to teach in each read-aloud, she continued to emphasize how the children's interests guided the curriculum of their classroom, and thus she never knew what was going to happen. Throughout the read-alouds I witnessed, this tension between wanting to show certain information to the children and trying to incorporate the unexpected conversations and connections that inevitably arose was evident in Mrs. Burnette's instruction. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss these tensions in more detail.

In her final interview, she stated, "I believe that the kids and I create the curriculum together. I'm an inquirer, and learner, and researcher right alongside the kids." She used her extensive personal collection of fiction and nonfiction books (last she counted was over 3,000) that she acquired over her 20+ years of teaching to conduct read-alouds. Thinking about nonfiction specifically, Mrs. Burnette shared that with the new trends in nonfiction she found

herself connecting with more contemporary nonfiction authors and illustrators at conferences and via social media such as Sandra Markle, Steve Jenkins, and Kate Mesmer, but she also relied on some of her "tried and true" nonfiction books like Jerry Pallotta's ABC books. Even though Mrs. Burnette named award-winning nonfiction authors and illustrators in her interview, out of the 22 read-aloud sessions I recorded of 14 different nonfiction books, I only witnessed her read-aloud one book written by Sandra Markle and one illustrated by Steve Jenkins (See Appendix B). As a result, many of the books Mrs. Burnette read-aloud to the students were not award-winning, per se, but included what she believed would stimulate meaningful conversations and share important information.

During the whole group read-alouds, Mrs. Burnette worked hard to make connections between the students' lived experiences, their questions about the world, and across different content areas in a variety of ways. In the following section, I lay out some of the ways Mrs. Burnette's multimodal transactions during whole group read-alouds focused on the children and their noticings, emphasized different possibilities for answers, and modeled reading for students through movement.

Centering Children in Curriculum

Although Mrs. Burnette used a variety of comprehension strategies in her teaching including thinking aloud, making predictions, and re-reading for clarification, she most frequently emphasized connections she was making as a reader between the book's content and different students, classroom experiences, and by emphasizing interdisciplinary connections. These connections prioritized the needs or questions of the students. For example, when reading *Born in the Wild: Baby Animals and Their Parents* by Lita Judge (2015) in late March, she began the read-aloud by explaining, "This book is going to answer Sally's question about penguins!"

Earlier in the month, Sally wondered how long the male penguins had to keep their eggs on their feet in order for them to hatch. Although Mrs. Burnette admitted afterward that she was already planning to read that book as a part of their animal unit, by framing the read-aloud as a way to answer Sally's question, she hypothesized that students would be more engaged in the content. Also, she admitted, "Sally is one of my more quiet students. I like to make sure students who are not as vocal feel that their questions are heard" (Written Observation, March). Mrs. Burnette repeated Sally's question to the entire class when she got to the page about penguins and asked Sally after reading the page, "Can you believe that Sally? Were you surprised?" (Video, March). Many of the children turned around on the rug to look at Sally, who was sitting near the back. Although Sally did not verbalize her response, her face turned a red color, she smiled with a giant grin and nodded her head up and down.

Other times, questions were answered during read-alouds that Mrs. Burnette was not expecting. Mrs. Burnette began most units of study by having the students think about the wonderings they had. In early February, when the class was listing the questions they had about birds, Clarence wondered what was in birdseed. He said, "I know there is lots of colors. But what is it?" Also, in March, as the class was reading the book *Counting Is for the Birds* by Frank Mazzola, Jr. (1997), the book listed different seeds and nuts that black-capped chickadees liked to eat. Mrs. Burnette took the opportunity to highlight this answer to the class. She said, "Who was wondering what birdseed was made out of? Was it Clarence?" Clarence, who was sitting in the front row, nods his head up and down slightly. She repeated, "Did you hear that, Clarence? Sunflower seeds and peanuts! That's what birdseed for black-capped chickadees is made of. That just answered your question." By centering the student's questions in the curriculum, the whole group read-alouds became more about learning together, rather than Mrs. Burnette

providing information. Their read-alouds served the purpose of answering questions the students had about the world, and Mrs. Burnette used the questions she heard students verbalize to guide the class conversations to nonfiction books.

In addition, Mrs. Burnette consistently used multiple modes to focus the attention of the class on one of their peers. Specifically, she would lean her body over, make eye contact, and typically point at the child she was making the connection to in order to really draw the attention of the class to others. In Figure 4.1, you can see her pointing to Callie, who shared a comment during a read-aloud, attempting to direct the children to physically turn or look at Callie. Connor is one of the first to do so.

Figure 4.1: Mrs. Burnette pointing toward Callie

Of course, not all of the children looked toward Callie or were even focused on Mrs. Burnette at times throughout the read alouds, but those that were tended to respond by looking at the child who was speaking or occasionally stepping up in front of the class to look closer at the book or point out what they were noticing to the whole group. This, of course, depended upon

which children chose to raise their hands and speak up. Mrs. Burnette admitted that she purposefully tried to select from a wide variety of kids as she called on students, but she especially called upon those that did not often raise their hands because she wanted the class to hear their thoughts. Although Mrs. Burnette was specific in her intentions about who was called upon, her gestures seemed to have less intention behind them. She admitted she was usually so caught up in what the children were saying and trying to keep the group's attention that she rarely thought about these gestures. "I do think the children gravitate towards more exciting read-alouds," she admitted, "but I have been doing this for so long, I don't really plan these [hand gestures] in advance" (Written Observation, February). Still, these gestures were everyday movements for Mrs. Burnette. She showed students what it meant to listen and gather information from a book and each other through verbal and multimodal resources, which the children mirrored.

Mrs. Burnette also positioned the students as experts during read-alouds. For example, when reading a different page in *Counting Is for the Birds* (Mazzola, 1997) in late March, Mrs. Burnette asked, "Does anyone know what this bird is?" Grant, a usually shy boy in the class, piped up right away, "Titmouse!" (Figure 4.2). Before Mrs. Burnette continued to read from the book, she allowed Grant to share his knowledge with the class first and then connected the book's information to what he shared. She even replicated the hand motions he made (Number 5) to make them more visible for the class and connected back to his comments again (Number 11) once she began to read the page of the book and it validated what Grant had shared. Although Mrs. Burnette had read the book many times before and knew about titmouse birds herself, she positioned Grant's knowledge at the center of the read-aloud, followed his movements, and focused on the children being the experts in the classroom.

Figure 4.2: Grant Describing Titmouse to the Class

Another time this occurred in the classroom was during a discussion of Atlantic puffins in early February. Kingston raised his hand and shared that Atlantic puffins' beaks change colors from grey to orange depending on the time of year. Mrs. Burnette asked, "How do you know that?" Kingston replied, "I saw it on Wild Kratts!" Mrs. Burnette said, "That's really neat.

Thanks for sharing that. We will have to see if we can find any more information about that." Kingston nodded his head up and down. Later that day, after looking through some other bird books that included the Atlantic puffin, Mrs. Burnette got the attention of the class as they were in the middle of doing Explorations and said, "Y'all. I have been reading more about the Atlantic puffin and Kingston was right! Listen to this." She then proceeded to read the page about Atlantic puffins to the entire class, which confirmed that puffins' beaks change color depending on the time of year and their diet. When she finished, she said, "I am so glad you taught us that Kingston! I never knew that" (Video, February). By expecting students to engage in classroom discussions, following their lead when they provide new information, and having students share what they know about the world, Mrs. Burnette signaled to students that they have things to teach everyone as well. Her transactions with nonfiction texts, then, focused more on the responses of those around her and making connections explicit for the students, rather than on her own understandings or knowledge. The children picked this up as well, which I describe in more detail later in this chapter.

Affirming Multiple Answers/Ideas

In addition to centering the students in the classroom curriculum by hearing and responding to their inquiries in a social setting, Mrs. Burnette strongly encouraged discussions around books and included the thinking of multiple children. Mrs. Burnette recognized that students all have different understandings of texts based on their experiences with the world and she regularly invited these understandings into the whole group read-alouds, regardless of the genre of the book. Because it was important for everyone's voice to be heard, it was common for the class to spend fifteen or twenty minutes discussing two pages of a nonfiction book, and thus almost every nonfiction book they read took several days to read. Mrs. Burnette would take

the comments of several students before reading the page of the book to actually find out what the author wanted to share.

Despite the length of time these read-alouds took, Mrs. Burnette valued hearing the individual thoughts of the students in her class and accepted their interpretations, rather than disrupting them in the moment. However, she did occasionally jump in and make corrections when she felt it was really necessary. For example, in April, students were reading about the indigo bunting. The illustration in the book included the image of two birds in a nest, one that was yellow and one that was blue. The students had multiple hypotheses about why the two birds in the image were different colors. Some students, like Callie, thought they were different colors because "the blue one is the boy and blue is a boy color." Mrs. Burnette, presumably uncomfortable with this assertion, interjected and reminded the class that blue is for everybody, not just for boys.

Children internalize the discourses around them and often repeat strong authoritative discourses surrounding gender construction (Davies, 1989; Walkerdine, 1998). Mrs. Burnette chose to interject after this comment and provided an alternative to the gender construction Callie presented the class and the children in the class followed suit. Other students picked up Mrs. Burnette's comment and built upon the idea that the birds were two different genders, but weren't sure which was which. Destiny said, "Well, they are two different colors so you know the mommies are girls and the daddies are boys. But the blue one is a lot prettier so maybe she's the girl." Kingston replied to her comment, "If one was big and one was small, then we would know which was the mommy and which was the daddy." Although Kingston did not assert how the size of the bird would help anyone determine if it was a "mommy or a daddy," his comment illuminates how he has processed Callie's initial thinking about the bird, Mrs. Burnette's

disruption about colors equating to gender, and presents another option for how the differences of these birds could signal gender. His comment emphasized how he is processing the information of the book and the comments of those around him, within the context of attempting to understand gender differences and norms, heteronormativity, and ultimately, how gender is constructed within his socio-cultural context and the content of this classroom. This comment was not interrupted by Mrs. Burnette and the children moved to other opinions about the possible differences in color of the indigo bunting.

Gavin wondered if perhaps the indigo bunting eats fish and the blue colored bird needed to be blue as camouflage in the water. This comment harkened back to a previous read-aloud the class engaged in about penguins, as the children learned that the two-toned coloration of penguins helped them hide themselves in the water. Still, another child said that they were two different birds entirely, one was just visiting the other in their nest. Through this entire exchange of ideas, Mrs. Burnette smiled, repeated what the child who shared was thinking in a similar language, thanked the child for their response, and called on another child to share what their thoughts were. It was only after every child with their hand up got to share that they read the page and discovered that the female indigo buntings were yellow so they could remain hidden in the nest and protect the eggs. Students looked at each other with surprised faces and Connor suddenly shouted, "She's camouflaged!" Elizabeth's mouth dropped open and she covered her mouth with her hand in surprise. By providing time and space for all of the children to share their thinking with the class, Mrs. Burnette valued children's individual ideas and showed the students that everyone has different ideas that are worth listening to. Although she did interject and disrupt Callie's comment about colors only being for certain genders, by continuing to hear the responses of children and remaining patient with their thinking, even when incorrect, Mrs.

Burnette emphasized to students the plethora of ways their peers transact with books in different ways based on their understandings and beliefs about the world. Rather than shaming Callie or saying her information was incorrect, Mrs. Burnette made a small disruptive comment and allowed children to continue to process the information the book was giving them. Her disruption to the comment Callie made did not prevent the class from continuing to think about or make sense of the book. In doing this, Mrs. Burnette emphasized the polyphony of voices and discourses in the classroom and ultimately created a more complex and dialogic understanding of indigo buntings, but also of the world.

In addition to emphasizing multiple responses to nonfiction books, Mrs. Burnette gently tried to guide students into more acceptable understandings when they shared untrue thoughts, rather than shaming them or shutting them down completely. For example, in May, when reading the big book *Inventions* (Osbourne, 1999) from the National School Products' guided reading set, Mrs. Burnette asked the class to think about how wheels are used in their day to day lives. Children verbally listed things such as grocery carts, subways, tractors, and motorcycles that need wheels. Mrs. Burnette called on Kennedy and said:

Kennedy: A bicycle!

Mrs. Burnette: That needs two wheels, doesn't it?

Kennedy: Or one!

Mrs. Burnette: Ohh, one wheel!

Kennedy: Or Zero!

Mrs. Burnette: Zero?

Kennedy: Yeah! Like if you have training wheels.

Mrs. Burnette: Interesting! Keep thinking about what a bicycle with training wheels might look like and how many wheels it might have or might not have (Video, May).

Mrs. Burnette expects certain responses based on her own heteroglossia and the discourses she experiences as she moves through the world. She also has to negotiate the desire to teach students socially accepted understandings about the world and create an environment where students feel accepted and encouraged in their endeavors. Although she did make a comment that signaled to Kennedy that something was incorrect, Mrs. Burnette encouraged her to "keep thinking" about her comments.

This response signaled to the students in the class that we all have understandings about the world we might need to keep thinking about and normalized Kennedy's comment as something she can continue to consider and wonder about. This shifts the discourse in the class from right and wrong to things they know and things they are still thinking and wondering about, which continues to encourage the children to make comments about books, even if they are not "correct." In addition to saying encouraging words, Mrs. Burnette's body movements and facial expression remained positive. She actively made a point to look at each child when they were speaking, frequently while smiling and nodding her head up and down positively, to let the student know that she was listening to them. So even though her words have the message of correction within them, her physical response signals to students that their comments are welcome and valued.

Mrs. Burnette used positive comments, too, when students reported stories or ideas that were seemingly off-topic. Rather than saying, "Let's come back to the book" or "Is that what I asked about?" Mrs. Burnette would just say, "Thanks for sharing that with us" or "It is interesting that your brain had you think about that" before moving on to the next student. Even

when she taught something to students and they did not accept her explanation, she would say, "But remember what we just read?" or "I think we need to keep doing research to better understand that." These responses to children's comments created a rich reading experience across the class that kept students engaged, as they got to hear what those around them were saying. It also encouraged students to speak up, even if their thinking might be deemed incorrect or wrong. Although she did share personal connections from time to time, "These birds are at my parent's bird feeder!" she primarily positioned herself as a learner alongside and a listener to the students. Mrs. Burnette's transactions, then, often had to do more with negotiating the comments and responses of the students than of her actual connections to the text. In her final interview, she admitted, "It's hard to negotiate the hand-raising. To ask enough kids and needing to move on, and all the things you have to sort through before they lose the ability to sit there." Still, Mrs. Burnette said, "I believe learning is social. They learn through the conversations," and her transactions continued to prioritize these learning moments over all others.

Enacting the Reading

Finally, Mrs. Burnette employed several strategies to model for students how they could read nonfiction books. This included strategies expected in reading nonfiction books such as rereading, think alouds, and working together to identify vocabulary, but also included multimodal teaching strategies such as focusing the attention of the class on different components of the book, using repetitive movements to identify vocabulary, and making abstract concepts concrete through actions.

In every read-aloud, Mrs. Burnette either used a pointer or used her finger to demonstrate for students where she was looking in the book. Occasionally she would use nonfiction big books where the words were large enough for students to see and, thus, set the expectation that

children were meant to read-aloud with her. By using her finger or a pointer, Mrs. Burnette was able to point out different features of nonfiction books, model for students where they should focus their attention as they read, and demonstrated for students that reading requires movement. For example, in April, when reading the big book *A Beaver's Tale* (Williams & Howe, 2007) Mrs. Burnette stopped the shared reading experience to draw the children's attention to the image on the page (Figure 4.3).

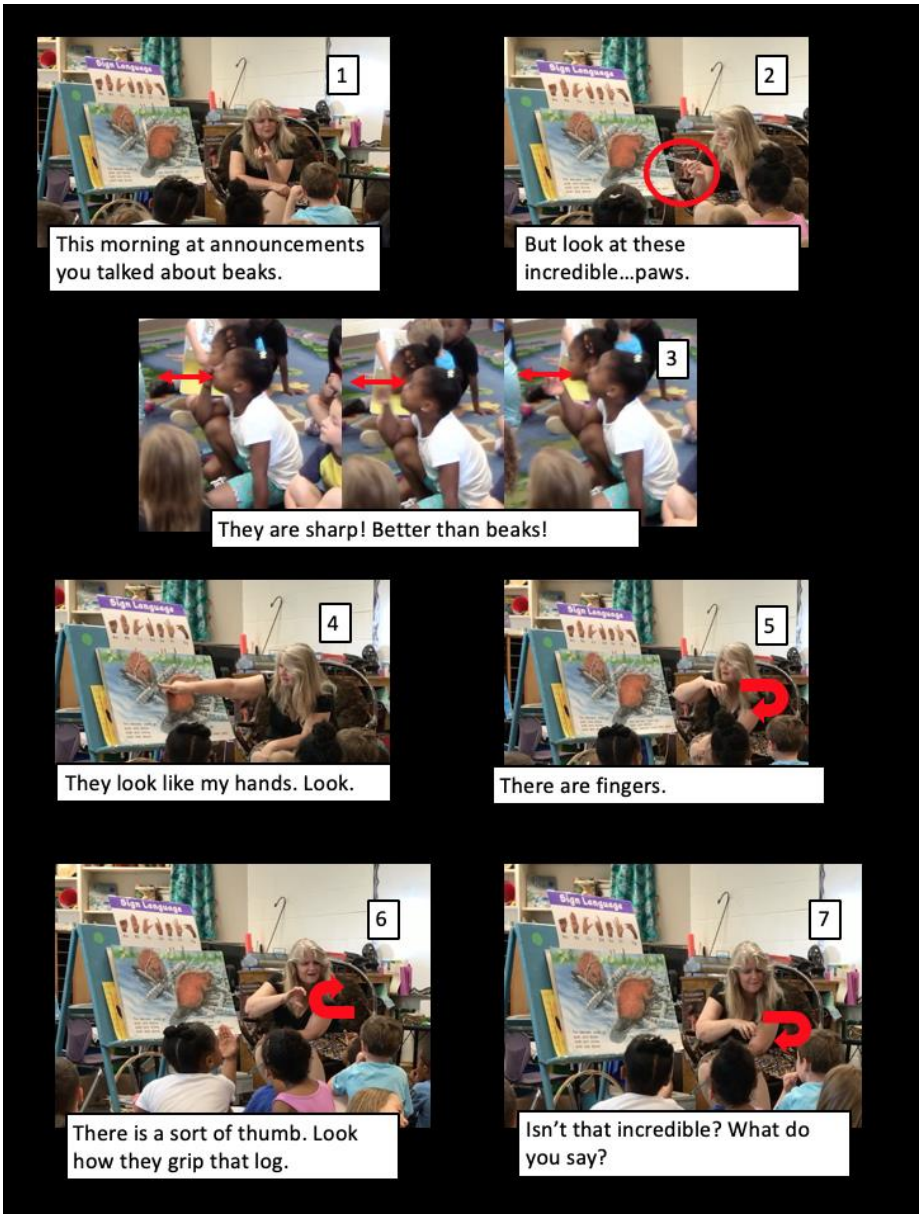

Figure 4.3: Examining Beaver Hands and a Group

Not only does Mrs. Burnette use the pointer (Number 2) to show students the words, she uses her own hand to replicate what she is noticing in the book and makes the image come to life for the students (Number 5-7). She identifies for students where they should be focusing their attention and shows them through her actions how to look more closely at images to gather information.

Mrs. Burnette was also consistent in having students repeat new vocabulary words three times. As the class came across new vocabulary words, Mrs. Burnette would repeat the word three times and then invite the class to do the same. In addition to saying the word, Mrs. Burnette would always use her fingers to "count" to three as she said the words. For example, in March, when reading the author's note in *Counting Is for the Birds* (Mazzola, 1997), the word ornithologist came up. Mrs. Burnette connected this with a comment Maddox had made that morning.

Mrs. Burnette: She said birds are so inventive, she says I have always been, Maddox, what did you say you wanted to be this morning?

Maddox: I want to be a birdwatcher.

Mrs. Burnette: He said he wants to be a bird watcher.

Gavin: And I want to be an Eagle!

Mrs. Burnette: And do you know what a scientist of birds is called?

Ariana: A scientist of birds!

Mrs. Burnette: Say ornithologist.

Class: Ornithologist.

Mrs. Burnette: Ornithologist, ornithologist, ornithologist. Guess what? An ornithologist is a scientist who studies birds (Video, March).

When I inquired about why Mrs. Burnette used this method of three repetitions, she admitted she wasn't really sure why she consistently does that, but she felt like the repetition helped students remember the term or at least recognize it later. The use of three in the United States is an authoritative discourse rooted in Christianity. Mrs. Burnette was a religious Christian, so it makes sense that she would perpetuate this repetition of three intentionally or unintentionally. Indeed, many children used vocabulary words such as diagonal, dominant, and camouflage in their discussions about books, which were all words the class had discussed and learned about together in previous read-alouds. Often children could be seen counting on their fingers as they repeated the vocabulary words three times during whole group read-alouds, similar to Mrs. Burnette.

Lastly, Mrs. Burnette frequently enacted abstract or complicated parts of the books they read-aloud. Sometimes, this involved showing students a unit of measurement for perspective, like in April when the class was reading *What if You Had Animal Hair?* (Markle & McWilliams, 2014) and she had students hold up how long a six-inch strand of hair would be with their hands (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Class Measuring Length of Polar Bear Hair

Often, though, these enactments covered abstract topics beyond mathematical concepts too, though, like when the class was reading *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014) in March and Mrs. Burnette acted out with her hands how hummingbird nests are designed to expand in size as the babies grow (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Mrs. Burnette, Callie, and Weston Act Out How Hummingbird Nests Grow

The children would repeat these movements as well, as seen by Callie and Weston, using their hands to mimic Mrs. Burnette's actions. More about the children's actions will be discussed later, but by acting these moments out for students, the children were able to better conceptualize the facts of the book and this shifted their transactions with the text.

Mrs. Burnette was consistent across read-alouds in using these strategies and modeled for students what readers of nonfiction *do* when they read. Although Mrs. Burnette did include anecdotes and make connections for students, she believed that children learn by doing, and thus primarily used these modeling opportunities as her direct teaching of nonfiction before expecting students to go do independent reading with their book boxes. As a result, these embodied reading strategies were a consistent model for students and, ultimately, how Mrs. Burnette taught students to read nonfiction books.

Children's Multimodal Transactions with Nonfiction

As briefly illustrated in my discussion of Mrs. Burnette's multimodal, meaning-making transactions while reading aloud to her class, the students were active members in the daily whole group read-alouds that occurred daily. While they did not often select the books, the Kindergartners' knew that they were expected to share the connections they were making, listen to the comments of those around them, and be active participants in the read-alouds. In examining the video recordings focused on the students of the read-aloud experiences, several expected behaviors from young children beyond what I have previously described were observed including off-task behavior, playing with body parts or distracting objects, and focusing on other classmates instead of engaging with the read-aloud. However, there were also behaviors that contributed to the dialogism of the classroom and emphasized the meaning making young children were experiencing, even if they were a bit untraditional in appearance. When looking at their multimodal responses to nonfiction read-alouds, I noticed that students frequently transact with each other's comments, they use gesture in place of developing vocabulary or descriptions of new words, and that many of the children physically enacted the books' content during the read-alouds.

Transacting with each other's comments

Scholars such as Cox and Many (1989), Eeds and Wells (1989), Many and Wiseman (1992), and Sipe (2008, 2010) have all described the ways reader's responses build upon one another during whole group read-alouds. This was true, too, during the nonfiction read-alouds in Mrs. Burnette's class, but using video data captured both the verbal and nonverbal responses of students. For example, when reading the dedication page in March for *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014), the illustrator, Steve Jenkins, dedicated his work "For Robin" (n. p.).

This provided a point of confusion for some of the students, who wondered if he was dedicating his artwork to a person, or a bird.

> *Mrs. Burnette: Mama built a little nest. For my parents Paul and Charlene, who created the best nest ever. And then, Steve Jenkins dedicated it for Robin. Ready?*
>
> *Jason: Who's Robin?*
>
> *Gavin: It's a bird!*
>
> *Weston: My neighbor's name is Robin.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: This was written in 2014. Wow!*
>
> *Jason: You can't dedicate it to a bird.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Look at this!*
>
> *Gavin: Well, sometimes. Like, Weston just said his neighbor's name was Robin* (Video, March).

Although Mrs. Burnette continues with the read-aloud and does not directly answer Jason's question, Weston and Gavin jump in to provide explanations for what or who Steve Jenkins might have been dedicating this book to. Together, the children responded to one another's thinking and used their personal experiences to shape the meanings of those around them. In this case, the boys' meaning making occurred without any teacher interjection or assistance.

In other cases, though, the children transacted with one another's comments during formal parts of the read-aloud, too. In late February when the class was reading from Jerry Pallotta and Edgar Stewart's (1989) *The Bird Alphabet Book*, which presents a different bird, illustration, and fact on each page, Mrs. Burnette asked the students why the illustrator, Edgar Stewart, drew six different hummingbirds on the page instead of just one. She asked,

Mrs. Burnette: Anna, why do you think this picture looks like this?

Anna: Because there, they are like waiting, because, to get some, because the other person is getting it.

Mrs. Burnette: Oh, so you're saying this is them all waiting in line to get that nectar? What do you think, Callie?

Callie: Um, I think they are fighting in line, pushing each other to get away.

Mrs. Burnette: You think they are fussing about who can get in there first? What do you think, Peyton?

Peyton: um, that they're trying to get their food and the other one is taking too long.

Mrs. Burnette: Do you think so? Um, what do you think, Maddox?

Maddox: Um, he's going too- he's going fast to get pollen (Video, February).

Anna's thinking included the fact from the book, which was that hummingbirds flew fast to drink nectar, but missed the piece about the hummingbird flying rapidly to eat. Callie's response included Anna's theory that they were in a line, but she hypothesized that they were fighting, perhaps based on her experiences waiting in line as a Kindergartner. Peyton, too, built upon the fact of the book, Anna's idea, and Callie's thinking, but took the idea one step further. It wasn't until Maddox, who had been interjecting through the entire page about how fast hummingbirds were, was able to speak and made the connection to the image being a blur that Mrs. Burnette decided to stop getting ideas from students and to show them how Edgar Stewart used multiple birds to make the image "like a cartoon."

Later in the read-aloud, when Mrs. Burnette called upon Joseph, he admitted, "Uh, uh, I think they are having a contest of who can get there faster." Mrs. Burnette replied, "You think there's more than one? But remember what I told you about nonfiction books sometimes, why

illustrators draw more than one to show you how they move." Despite Mrs. Burnette's teaching, Maddox's comment about how they move rapidly, and numerous children trying out how to see something as a "blur" with their bodies, Joseph still held onto the ideas of those first few commentators. Mrs. Burnette tried to correct his thinking, but his determinations about the book had already been established. Still, although Joseph did not ultimately take away the "real" reason why the illustrator drew the picture, he did transact with the text and used the knowledge of those around him to form his opinion. This exchange, among others, shows how student's transactions are always developing in situ and, in the case of whole group read-alouds, are built upon the ideas of those around them, regardless of the content or the genre of the book.

By video recording the read-alouds, I was able to identify moments where students were not responding verbally but were transacting with the movements and gestures of those around them. Sometimes, these moments of meaning making were a facial expression made by students that showed their responses to what was being read. Peyton[1], for example, did not usually speak without being called on during whole group read-alouds. When Mrs. Burnette was reading to the class about how long Emperor penguins had to keep an egg on its feet in order for it to hatch, you could see her mouth drop open and she covered her mouth with her hand. Grant, who was

[1] Even though Peyton was not a focal child, her proximity to Grant and reactions possibly altered the way he responded, too. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, the children's multimodal communication is always in response to and anticipation of those around them. Thus, it was impossible to focus only on the eight focal children without also considering who was around them and how they were acting.

sitting next to her, also reacted by smiling largely and then cringing as he continued to think through what it must feel like to hold an egg for two months.

Figure 4.6: Peyton and Grant's Reactions to Birds Eating Bugs

On another occasion, Peyton was seen reacting to the information that redheaded woodpeckers eat ladybugs and beetles. One of her peers said, "They eat ladybugs!" Peyton's face scrunched up, she pulled her knees into her chest, and wrapped her arms around her legs, as if she could protect herself from the bugs or the woodpecker. Although she never verbally interjected or expressed her discomfort, Peyton's actions showed that she was actively participating in the read-aloud and was having a visceral transaction with the information. This movement was never acknowledged by anyone but was evidence that she was processing the conversation and was incorporating these comments into her understanding of the text.

Similarly, Zuri was a very talkative student one-on-one in the classroom, but she rarely spoke up during the whole group read-alouds. Zuri went to speech therapy twice a week and Mrs. Burnette worried that her challenges with speech make Zuri feel self-conscious, so Mrs. Burnette often created time for Zuri to whisper what she was thinking during the read-aloud to her after the class moved on to their next task. In March, during the reading of *Mama Built a*

Little Nest (Ward & Jenkins, 2014), Zuri can be observed leaning in and whispering to Kennedy and pointing at the image on the book. Kennedy then looks up at the page of the book and drops her mouth open, presumably in surprise. After her mouth drops, she exclaimed, "Awww."

Figure 4.7: Kennedy and Zuri whispering

Although neither girl spoke out verbally loud enough for anyone else to hear them until Kennedy said "aw," it was evident that they were discussing the content of the book and transacting together about the page. Zuri knew Kennedy would be interested in the topic of the book and used this opportunity to connect with Kennedy. In reviewing the video recordings, it was common to witness students, particularly girls, whispering quietly to one another what they were thinking about. Although some classrooms might have discouraged this behavior, it is evident in the videos that the children are discussing concepts from the read-aloud, and thus transacting with the text and developing understandings. These "misbehaviors," in these instances, become subtle moments of reading as transactions when you notice what children are doing and re-frame children's actions.

Gesture as Vocabulary

In addition to responding to each other through movement, children often gestured when they used newer vocabulary words or were describing concepts that they were unable to describe. Since children between the ages of 5 and 6 have only learned about 5,000 words (Stahl, 1995), it makes sense that children would act out what they were describing to

communicate. This inherently made their responses to questions or to the book multimodal and required those around them to interpret a variety of modes to understand what each other was trying to communicate. Of course, some children were more expressive than others in their actions. Weston, for example, was subtle in his physical movements but often communicated his thoughts by moving his eyebrows up and down. Anna rarely showed emotion on her face, as she was usually playing with her hair and seemed distracted, but if you asked verbally what occurred she could repeat the conversation the class had almost verbatim. Lucas, who usually was also quiet and fairly still during whole group read-alouds unless the class was reading a big book together, pretended to be a woodpecker for three pages of *Counting Is for the Birds* (Mazzola, 1997) after Mrs. Burnette read about the redheaded woodpecker and how they build a cavity nest, or a nest that is inside of a tree. The idea of a cavity nest was new to the children, so Mrs. Burnette pointed to the page and explained what it meant. Lucas quickly leaned his head forward and moved it in small, staccato movements up and down, similar to a woodpecker might do to a tree to get inside.

Figure 4.8: Lucas Acting Like a Woodpecker and Creating a Cavity Nest

This act did not disrupt anyone around him or get recognized by anyone else in the class but showed he was paying attention and making sense of the text being read. A few days later, when they came across the word cavity again in another book, Jason and Lucas both exclaimed loudly, "Cavity!" when Mrs. Burnette asked if anyone remembered that word. Even though Lucas'

actions did not explicitly connect to his learning of the word cavity, as he was not usually a child that moved a lot on the carpet and he remembered the word later, it is possible that this movement as response allowed him to connect with the woodpecker and its cavity nest in useful ways.

Several children in the class expressed themselves physically in more pronounced and exaggerated ways. Maddox was frequently observed yelling out interjections and using his arms to draw attention to his comments. Jason often over-exaggerated his facial expressions, slapped his thighs, and even nudged the people around him into conversations during read-alouds. Kingston, too, would often show surprised facial expressions and say, "What?" in a loud and excited manner that showed he was paying attention, but was still slightly interruptive. However, the two children who communicated multimodally most often were Connor and Destiny. Destiny was an expressive girl during all parts of the school day, regardless of the content area. She was quite social and was the leader of the girls in the class, so she usually had an audience to perform her emotions for. Connor, on the other hand, had few friends in the class. He had difficulty speaking and went to speech therapy, but he also used a lot of unique words when he spoke, so the combination required him to act out his responses frequently for others around him to understand. For example, in February, while reading the H is for Hummingbird page in *The Bird Alphabet Book* (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989), Connor noticed the humming flying at a diagonal. Although the class had talked about this word before the Winter Break, they had moved on to studying measurement and I had not heard this word yet in the classroom. Connor raised his arm in front of his body at a 45-degree angle and said, "They're at a di-nag-nol." Mrs. Burnette asked, "They're at a what?" Connor replied while still holding his arm up, "A di-nag-nol!" Mrs. Burnette replied loudly, "They are at a diagonal!" Connor, unable to find the correct

pronunciation of the word but still knowing the vocabulary word he wanted to say, used his arms to help explain the word he was searching for, which allowed Mrs. Burnette to better understand him.

During the read-aloud of the big book *Inventions* (Osbourne, 1999) in May, the class began to have a discussion about cameras (Figure 4.9). Mrs. Burnette asked, "What do you know about cameras?" After a few comments from children talking about how I always had a camera and how much I liked to film them, Destiny raised her hand straight up in the air.

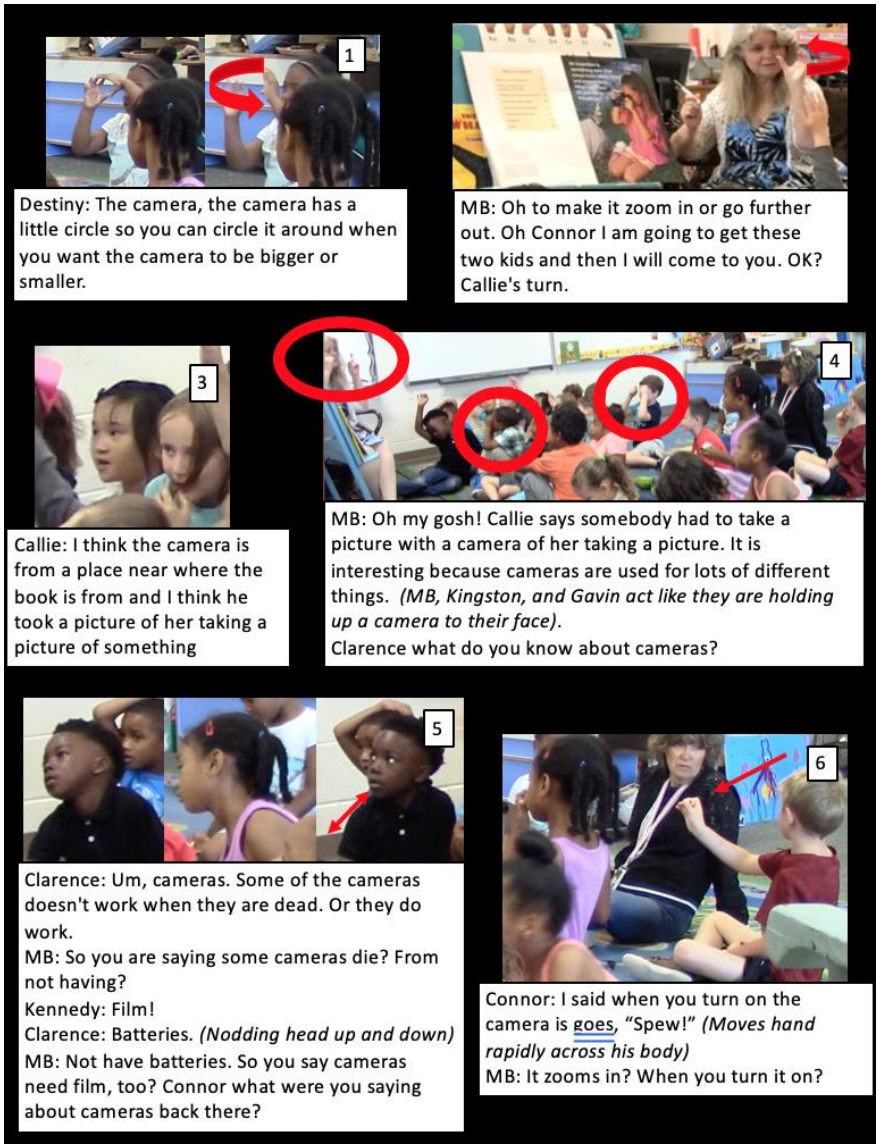

Figure 4.9: Showing How Cameras Work

As the children did not know the technical terms for some of the camera pieces, they acted them out to describe them to their peers (Destiny in Number 1, Connor in Number 6). Other children, such as Kennedy, Clarence, and Callie, shared the words they knew about cameras, and Mrs. Burnette did her best to provide words for the children, but there were still moments where it was clear what the children were describing was best communicated through action and sound. Through gestures and other multimodal communication, children were able to share their personal experiences and think about how to begin to describe events they have witnessed in the world. The class was able to have a more complete conversation through their use of gestures and create a more complex understanding with some of this new vocabulary.

Enacting Read-Alouds

Students frequently acted out parts of the book as Mrs. Burnette read or when their peers brought up different topics of discussion. Sometimes students were asked to act out parts of a book by Mrs. Burnette, like when she asked students to hold up how long six inches is with their hands (see Figure 4.4), but more often than not these were movements made by the children that connected to the read-aloud but were unsolicited.

When reading *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014) in March, Mrs. Burnette read to students about falcons and how they build scrape nests on the side of rocks. Destiny, who was struggling to sit on the carpet that day, had been asked to sit in a chair near the back so she could have some space to herself. This allowed Destiny to participate in the read-aloud, but separated her a bit and gave her a little more structure. As Mrs. Burnette began to read about scrapes, the nests' falcons and other mountain birds create, Destiny took both hands, made them into the shape of claws, and lightly scraped her thighs three times as Callie looked on (Figure

4.10). As Mrs. Burnette continued to read, she used the vocabulary word fledge. Immediately, Destiny begins to act out what fledge means.

Mrs. Burnette: On a high cliff edge. The mother and father may scrape away at the ledge creating a small indentation.

Kennedy: I've seen this!

Mrs. Burnette: That's how falcons are able to be on giant mountains and you're like, how in the world did they find a spot for that nest? They scraped it out. One more page. I have got to read this one more. Put your hands down.

Destiny waves arms up and down like she is flying (Video, March).

Figure 4.10: Destiny Fledging

Even though Destiny had been distracting on the carpet before, her reenactment of the book shows that she is participating, processing, and making sense of the material for herself. Her actions were not intended to distract any other students, but rather were her physical manifestation of the information she was obtaining.

In April, during *A Beaver's Tale* (Williams & Howe, 2007), Clarence, who was sitting at the back of the rug, began to act out what it must feel like to be a beaver with a giant tail (Figure 4.11). He got up on his knees, leaned forward on his hands, and wiggled both his head and his "tail" left and right with the rhythm of the pattern of the book for three pages.

Figure 4.11: Clarence Becoming a Beaver

Although not sitting crisscross with their hands in their laps, Clarence was never called out about these actions because he was near the back he was not blocking anyone's view and, in reviewing this data, his actions showed that he was making sense, indeed even acting out, what the book was about. Clarence was not trying to be disrespectful but rather was using his whole body to experience what it must be like to feel like a beaver and worked to move his body to the rhythm of the song while reading the words with the class.

On a different day, as the class was reading the big book *Inventions* (Osbourne, 1999) in early May, Mrs. Burnette turned to a page that showed how inventions often come from nature or things people witness in their daily lives. The students, seeing an eagle with his full wingspan, excitedly began to act out the part of the book, too. Suddenly, multiple students put both arms out to their sides, yelled the words, "Eagle! It's an eagle" and began to pretend like they were flying. This excitement was probably a result of the two-week study the class just conducted on eagles, where they read several books, observed real eagles on the smartboard, and read about how they build giant nests. In seeing this animal in a book they were not expecting, one about

inventions instead of about birds, the children's emotional and physical reactions show the passion and delight young children have as they transact and make connections across nonfiction books. Due to the class' recent study on birds, which the children spent eight weeks observing and reading about, the movements of birds were clearly at the forefront of their minds and, thus, they often used this material to act out. Studying animals made the children want to replicate their movements, but I also witnessed children acting out nonfiction concepts such a distance, how cameras work, how to create artistic masterpieces, traveling to space, and being the Statue of Liberty. Because of the timing of my data collection and the content the Kindergarten class was studying, I witnessed many multimodal responses to nonfiction books about birds and other animals, but I also witnessed children respond to read-alouds in multimodal ways regardless of the content of the book.

Ultimately, the children of this Kindergarten class transacted with nonfiction books using all of their modal resources, including but not limited to gesture, gaze, voice inflection, facial expressions, and other physical movements. Their responses were often clearly linked to the content of the book or what Mrs. Burnette said, but more often than not, were in response to comments their peers made. By exploring the content of the books together, children were able to use the information of those around them to shape their own understandings, and their comments and movements reflected this. Additionally, children often communicated with one another, not just verbally but physically as well. Sometimes this was as subtle as leaning towards another child or giving them a look, but other times children could be witnessed having full-on conversations with one another quietly so that other members of the class could not hear. When words could not accurately describe what the children were trying to explain, they used their bodies in place of vocabulary or description words that they are still developing. Finally,

though children seemed “squirmy” or unable to sit still on the carpet, a request that teachers often make of their students during whole group lessons, the video footage showed that students were often acting out parts of the book that they were processing or thinking about and these enactments often required physical space. At times, these movements were small, but demonstrate that even students who may appear to be off-task, in fact, could be processing information and transacting with texts in physical ways.

Collective Multimodal Transactions with Nonfiction

Multimodal interaction analysis is a way of trying to capture and relay the complex multimodal communication that exists as members of a classroom work together to create understandings of nonfiction picturebooks. Although I attempted to isolate the multimodal transactions of Mrs. Burnette and a few Kindergartners previously in this chapter, the meaning making process of an entire class is impossible to fully capture and relay, despite my best efforts. Each member of the read-aloud experience is filtering through countless resources, transacting with and through those around them, and anticipating how the conversation might go so that they may respond based on their experiences with members of the class and with their worlds (Bakhtin, 1934/1981; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). What I share in this last portion of the chapter is an approximation of the learning that took place in the classroom and the ways in which members of the class collectively transacted with these books. In looking across the read-alouds, three findings were consistent: the discursive process of learning, how movement was deeply connected to meaning making, and the tensions between the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses that the class had to negotiate. The following sections describe each of these in more detail.

Reading Nonfiction is Discursive

In all of the read-alouds, children would bring up stories from their experiences, connect back to work the class did earlier in the year, and even bring up facts or topics that seemed random at times. While these stories sometimes felt off-topic or distracted from making sense of the actual book, Mrs. Burnette recognized that these seemingly disconnected ideas or concepts were connected to the student's understandings, just in a way the child was not communicating well yet. These random interjections or facts then spurred other conversations or wonderings and, eventually, the class would get back to the book or at least get closer to the original goal of the lesson. This was just a part of the learning process Mrs. Burnette said, "You have to trust that they [the students] will bring it back full circle. They may not get it today, or even two months from now, but eventually, it will click" (Final interview). Sometimes, this took place during the whole group discussions. In February, when the class was trying to guess which birds would be the "H bird" in *The Bird Alphabet Book* (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989), for example, there were several comments which connected to previous discussions about this same book. Multiple children had already predicted that the bird would be a hummingbird, but children still had their hands raised with comments.

Mrs. Burnette: A hummingbird? What else would you have Hudson?

Hudson: It could be like a hippo.

Mrs. Burnette: A what?

Hudson: If it was like an animal it could be a hippo or like, or it would be a hippo-bird.

Mrs. Burnette: Well, we did have a crocodile bird that helped crocodiles. Yeah, so I could see why you are thinking like that. Grant.

Grant: A hummingbird baby.

Mrs. Burnette: Ok. A baby hummingbird. I am going to go to Zuri. You have an H bird a different one?

Zuri: {Silence}.

Mrs. Burnette: A different word than a hummingbird.

Hudson: It has to be a bird!

Mrs. Burnette: Yeah, it does have to be a bird because this is the a to z bird book. Can you think of an H bird? Some of this is hard, isn't it? (Video, February).

Hudson used the previous knowledge of animals to help him think of what kind of bird it could be. He knew that there probably wasn't a hippo bird, but earlier in the book there was a crocodile bird, so he put that forth as his prediction. Grant, too, used his knowledge about the book to help inform his suggestion for the H bird. On the previous page, multiple children in the class guessed it would be a goose and struggled to come up with other G birds that the author could choose. The G bird wound up being a gosling, or a baby goose, so Grant applied this thought process to his response here. Finally, when Zuri is trying to think of an H animal, Hudson gives her the reminder of the mistake he made, "It has to be a bird!" to help guide her. Through this interaction, we can see the children's previous experiences with the book informing their thought processes about the current page of the book. Also, you can see how they worked together to think through what the possible bird choices could be. This process was not linear, and many observers may not have noticed the complex decisions of the students or the ways in which their responses demonstrate the understandings they have developed from this book, but it shows the cyclical and recursive process of learning and how transactions can occur collectively.

The class often focused on the images of the nonfiction books as a part of their meaning making process. This was definitely a focus for Mrs. Burnette in her teaching, but the children

equally noticed details in pictures that they used in their meaning making. For example, children often focused on images or parts of images that were not the focus of the book. Sometimes these seemed random, like when Destiny argued several times that one of the beavers in *A Beaver's Tale* (Williams & Howe, 2007) was actually the grandpa, but these usually connected back to the content at hand. Returning back to the Hummingbird page in *The Bird Alphabet Book* (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989) in February, for example, Connor noticed that the bird was flying at a diagonal. After yelling out multiple times and having to wait his turn, he finally announced to the class, "I noticed they are at a di-nag-nol." Mrs. Burnette replied, "A what?" He clarified, "Them birds is at a di-nag-nol." Prior to this, the class had been exploring fractions, not geometry. Still, Connor connected their current readings to some of the mathematical terms they learned previously in the schoolyear when the class was studying art masterpieces a few months back. Although Connor's connection seemed a bit random at the time, his sharing exposed this connection for his peers and emphasized the connections he was making across units of study in the classroom.

In addition to examining the images of the books closely for information, students continued to ask questions of the text and search for the answers to their questions as the class read. This was encouraged by Mrs. Burnette's language choice, "What are you thinking about?" as she called on students during the whole group read-alouds. Also, by establishing that nonfiction books can answer the children's questions about the world, the students resultantly expected to find their questions answered in the books, even if this did not connect with the classroom conversation. For example, in March, during *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014), Mrs. Burnette set up the page about penguins as answering Sally's question. The class engaged in a discussion about how long two months was and what it must feel like to hold

something on your feet for that length of time. Randomly, it seemed, Gavin raised his hand and asked,

> *Gavin: How do penguins, how do penguins fly with their wings? My question was last time. So maybe it is in this book.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Well, it's not because this is the penguin page and we gotta move on, but maybe we can use Grant's book, or some of these bird cards talk about how they move the best. How do you think they probably move the best?*
>
> *Gavin raised his shoulders up to his ears.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: How do you personally believe penguins would move the best? How do you think they get moving the fastest or best from place to place?*
>
> *Gavin: Um, they swim.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: You think they swim? Maddox, what is your question?*
>
> *Maddox: Um, penguins can't fly because they are too heavy. Their bodies can't really leave.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Yeah, that was a question that Gavin had.*
>
> *Maddox: It's really heavy.*
>
> *Lucas: And their bones!* (Video, March)

Gavin was glad to know that Sally's question was answered but then expected the book to tell him the answer to his question. Unfortunately, the book did not describe how or why penguins couldn't fly, but the children joined in on helping Gavin figure out the answer to his question. Gavin's seemingly off-topic question led the class to think about how they could use what they have studied about penguins so far (how well they swim, how they get around on land, what their

flippers are designed for, etc.) to work together to answer the question Gavin initially had, which was why can't penguins fly?

Still, some of these questions came spontaneously to the children as they participated in the read-alouds and were not always answered. During the class exploration of the indigo bunting from *The Bird Alphabet Book* (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989) in March, Destiny wondered out loud, "How does the daddy fit on the nest?" (Figure 4.12). Mrs. Jones encouraged Destiny to ask the question out loud when Mrs. Burnette called on her.

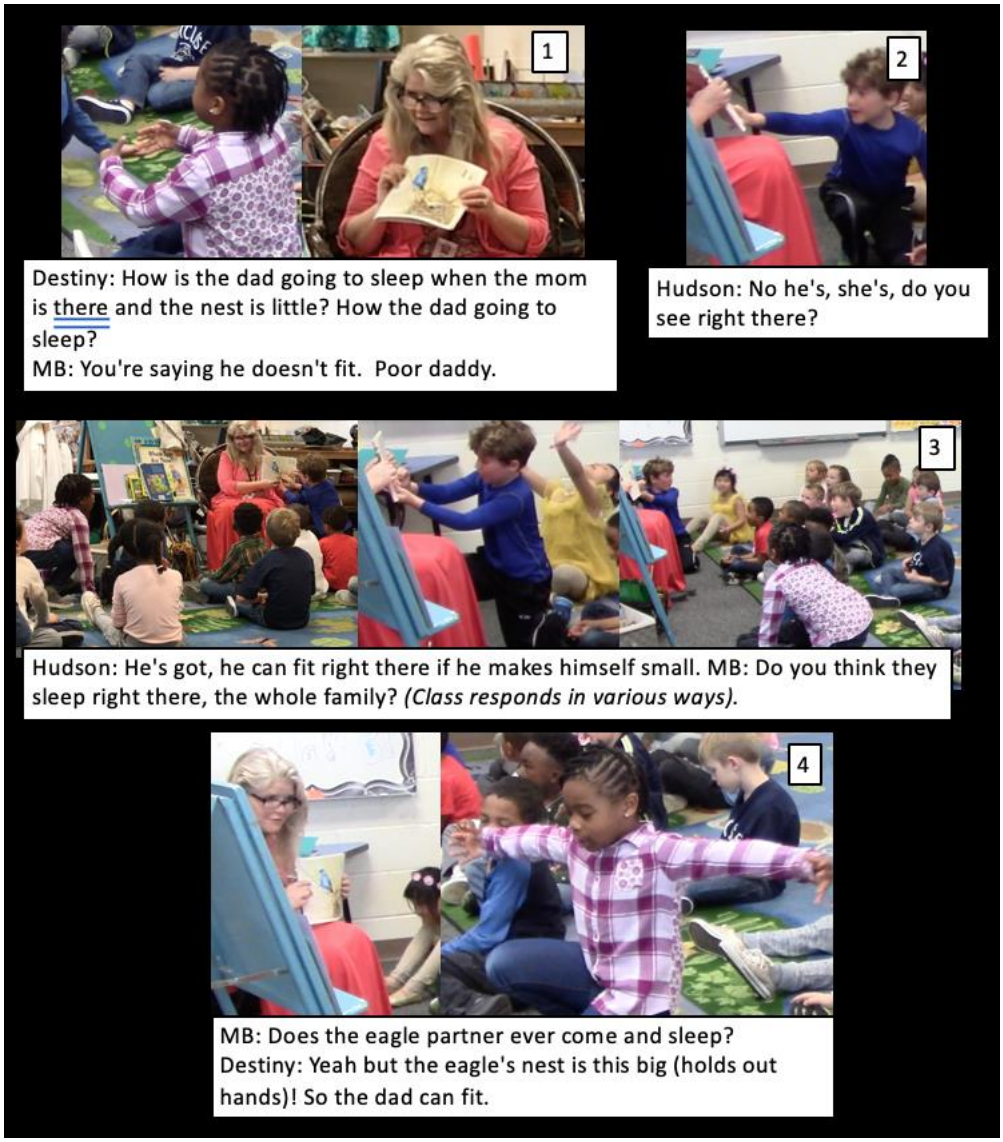

Figure 4.12: Determining How Birds Fit in the Nest

Even though the class was never able to find exactly how the indigo bunting slept or shared their nest, Destiny's question demonstrates how spontaneous questions were handled by the class. Although discussing how the birds' sleep was not a consideration of the book or included in Mrs. Burnette's goal for the read-aloud, Destiny's question shows how she has made sense of the information from the book and is thinking about other aspects of the bird's life beyond the author's scope. Her question shows how young children begin to assimilate new information into previous understandings of the world and what happens when the new information does not fit into the child's expectations.

Even though these conversations, questions, and collective understandings were not answerable by the books the children were reading, they highlight the seemingly discursive and non-linear process of learning. One child's question or seemingly unrelated comment enters into the conversation and shifts the thought processes of those around them. The transactions that the readers have with the texts, then, do not always reflect the nonfiction books exactly, but rather are reflective of the comments, thoughts, movements, and wonderings of those around them as well. These classroom conversations are not plannable, predictable, or the learning objective of the lesson, but emphasize the dynamic and fluid journey readers take when reading informational texts.

Movement as Meaning Making

Collectively, the readers of nonfiction picturebooks respond in a variety of ways using movement. Sometimes, movement helps readers turn abstract concepts into more concrete information. When Mrs. Burnette reads a fact in a book, it is easy to gloss over and continue to read. However, when the class stops to notice details in the book that the author or illustrator may be communicating, or when they decided to make this fact "real," more meaning is made.

Often, the impetus to make an abstract fact more visible stemmed from Mrs. Burnette, but occasionally the children noticed these concepts as well. For example, as the class was reading about hummingbirds in February, Grant noticed something he wanted to make visible to the class.

> *Grant: I have to get up to show you.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Ok, come up really quick and then I am going to see who is ready to pull this out.*
>
> *Grant: I recognize there's a pattern with the wings. Grant Gets up and points to the book.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Oh, look! Can you guys right here look this way?*
>
> *Grant: It goes up. Down.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: Kennedy, can you see? Look again. Grant stand right over here and show us again. I hope Ariana can see. Show us again, Grant.*
>
> *Grant: It goes up, down, up, down, up, down.*
>
> *Mrs. Burnette: He says there's a pattern to the wings beating. What a neat thing for you to notice, Grant!* (Video, February)

After Grant shared this noticing with the class, students could be seen imitating the images on the page by putting their arms out next to their body and waving them up and down slightly, in accordance with the picture. The concept of patterns is an abstract one for Kindergarteners and one Mrs. Burnette begins working on with children at the beginning of the school year because she knows how long it takes for students to grasp. For Grant to find a pattern in the image of the hummingbird's wing movements shows how Grant was taking the abstract concept of patterns and connecting this idea to other content areas and aspects of his life.

On another day in May, Mrs. Burnette was reading the big book *Animal Acrobats* (Drew, 1992) and was explaining how far the leopard frog can jump (Figure 4.13). After having the students notice the length discrepancies between the frog's front legs ("They're so small!") compared to its back legs ("They're so long!"), she translated for students the scale of which the frog can move. This fact was initially abstract for students, so she explained how far that would be if a human could jump like a leopard frog.

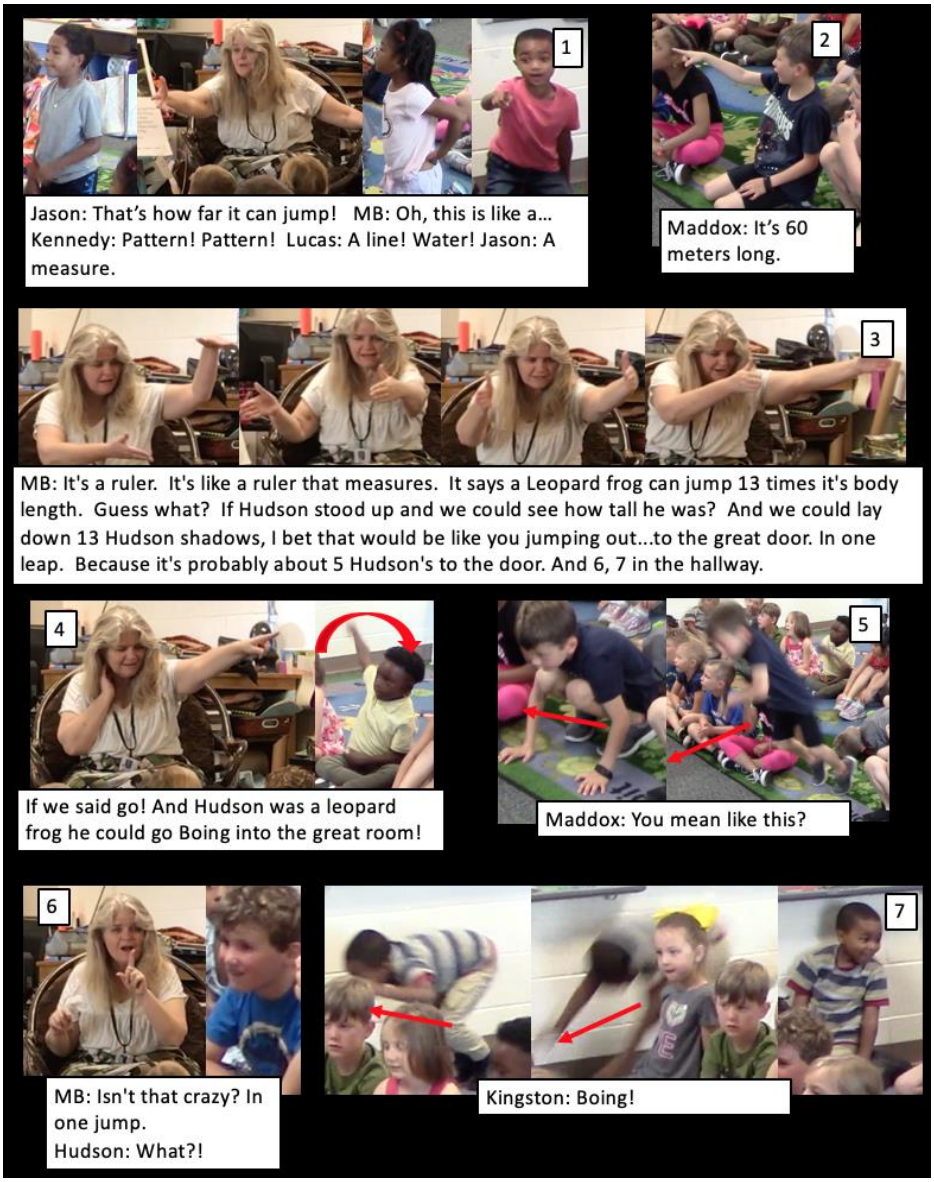

Figure 4.13: Maddox and Kingston Acting Like Leopard Frogs

Maddox had to see how far he could jump off the carpet to compare what he could do to what the leopard frog could do (Number 5 in Figure 4.13). Clarence was mirroring the movement the frog would make with his right hand moving back and forth in an arc (Number 4) and Kingston decided he had to try the jump as well (Number 7). Mrs. Burnette's teaching took the abstract concept of "thirteen times" its body length and made it more concrete for the students, but Maddox's response also showed his curiosity about how far humans can typically jump and shows the comparisons he was making in his own mind as he was processing this information. Throughout the read-alouds, movement was used to replace vocabulary words, to generate understandings of concepts, to show student engagement, and to emphasize what readers were focusing on as they read. But movement also provided an integral mode for students to explore abstract concepts in nonfiction books and to make the information of these books more concrete.

Finally, throughout the read-alouds, children often copied the movements and gestures of Mrs. Burnette or those around them. When one child would get up to point to the book, other children would copy and do the same thing until Mrs. Burnette insisted that they had to stay seated. While reading *Inventions* (Osbourne, 1999) when one child spread their arms like an eagle, the other children did as well. Also, when Maddox jumped forward to see if he could jump like the leopard frog, Kingston did as well. Similar to how language is borrowed and reused by humans (Bakhtin, 1934/1981), so too, are body movements (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015). Hayashi and Tobin name this as heterocorporeality and explain,

> Preschool children observe, cite, and sometimes parody the movements of their teachers and peers. Because bodily movements, like utterances, require not just models to cite but also the response of another to have meaning, preschool children must learn to enter into

> bodily dialogues, rather than monologues, and to answer the movements of the other (p. 83).

In the same ways that the video footage of this Kindergarten classroom demonstrates that in the same ways that teachers model language for students, so too do they model physical movements. But students do not just gather information about how to move through the world from their teacher, but also from their peers.

Citationality is the term Bakhtin used to describe how members of a social group will mirror, or cite, one another (Bakhtin, 1934/1981). Citationality is often used in social situations to show congruence or communicate alignment with those around us. While I shared some examples in the previous paragraphs, one of the best examples of citationality that occurred was during the shared reading of the big book, *A Beaver's Tale* (Williams & Howe, 2007), in April. This book is a nonfiction book about beavers, but it is written as a poem, so it rhymes and has multiple lines that repeat. This made the book relatively easy for early readers because it is easy to remember and uses a lot of repetition. During the read-aloud, multiple children on the carpet began to act out the words of the book. Some children did this more subtly than others. Jason, for example, simply slapped his thigh to the rhythm of the some as he read-aloud with the class. Others, though, followed Destiny's lead, who began acting out the parts of the book using her full body. Once the other students began to see how Destiny was acting out the book, they joined in and began to engage in heterocorporeal multimodal transactions with the text. Although Destiny started the pushing and shoving, which went along with the words in the book, quickly Kennedy, Joseph, Sally, Gavin, and even Callie begin to replicate similar movements, drawing parts of their bodies back and pushing them forward rapidly, too. The children used the

gestures of those around them to shape their understandings and began to enact the book in similar ways.

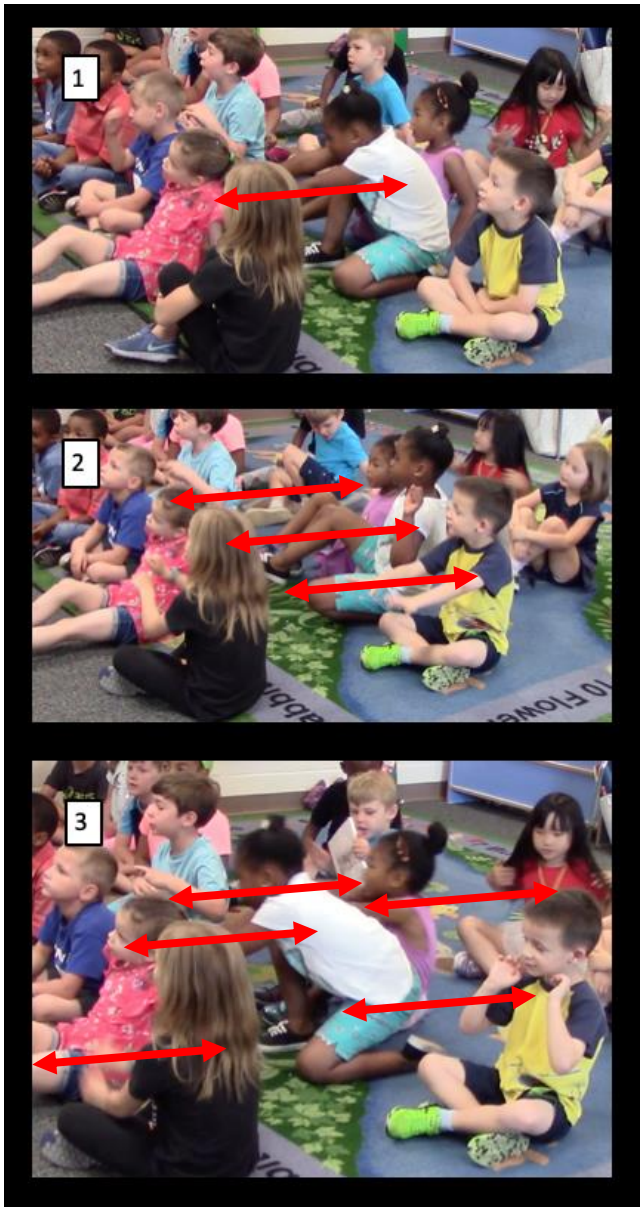

Figure 4.14: Hetereocorporeality as Children Act Out Push and Pull

Lastly, returning back to the *Animal Acrobats* (Drew, 1992) big book example from May, a conversation began about leopard frogs and how tiny their front legs are compared to their back legs. One child said, "My arms are shorter than my legs!" and stretched out their arms to show Mrs. Burnette. Mrs. Burnette agreed but said, "Yes, but they are not three times longer than your

arms." Within seconds, Lucas, Ariana, Maddox, Sally, and Weston stretched their arms and legs out on the carpet to see how long their legs were compared to their arms. They copied the body movements of their peer to conduct a measurement of their own and found that they were all pretty similar.

Figure 4.15: Sally, Weston, and Ariana Measure their Arms and Legs

Still, this shows how the comments, gestures, and transactions of one student greatly affects the comments, gestures, and ultimately, transactions, with others and magnifies how children learn from those around them in multimodal ways. When this Kindergarten class read nonfiction books together, it was clear they were making sense not only of the text, but how to respond to books and to those around them in meaningful or appropriate ways. This appropriateness was determined by the reactions of those around them, not just from the teachers but also from their peers. If a child would copy the movements and gestures of the student sitting next to them, that other child could shut them down with a mean facial expression and a "stop that!" or they could smile excitedly and continue to respond physically with the child. These decisions, connections with one another, and copying of movement was an additional layer of response and negotiation

the children were navigating throughout the read-alouds. Heterocorporeality meant that students cited one another not only through their verbal communication but also through other modal resources.

Tensions Between Authoritative Discourses and Internally Persuasive Discourses

Although this Kindergarten class encouraged children to make connections across content areas, provided time for students to engage with content in hands-on experiences, and strongly encouraged children to take the curriculum into their own hands, the school is in a public school district and there were inherent tensions between the school as a regulated institution of education and goals and desires of the children. As shared in Chapter One, Bakhtin (1934/1981) describes these influencing factors as authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses. Authoritative discourses come from places of power and "demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own," while internally persuasive discourses are "affirmed through assimilation" (p. 345), are "tightly interwoven with one's own word" (p. 345), and stems from the lived experiences of the members of the classroom. The negotiation between these opposing forces is called ideological becoming and is something people constantly wrestle back and forth with as they move through the world. Mrs. Burnette's interviews, in particular, were rife with these opposing forces. For example, when I asked about why she included play into her curriculum, she replied, "Now if you had asked me that about ten years ago, I would not have wanted to talk to you about that. Because it isn't valued" (Initial Interview). She went on to describe how many people do not recognize the value that play holds as a part of the learning process in early childhood classrooms, but that she saw the value in this. More about this tension between discourses is discussed in Chapter Five. Mrs. Burnette, however, was not the only member of the class who haggled between discourses. When looking at the class as a collective

group of learners, the most evident clashes of discourses occurred around issues of staying focused on the curriculum goals, time, and classroom behavior.

Curriculum goals. Although Mrs. Burnette encouraged a participatory approach to teaching, she was still held responsible for all of the assessments, standards, and curriculum materials of the school district and she experienced tensions between what she knew to be effective teaching and making sure students were being exposed to all of the content they were required to cover. When asked about how she handles differing goals for the children in an interview, she stated, "I believe I teach kids the work of being a learner. Sometimes it doesn't really matter as much what you learn, as how you do it." While she wanted to uphold the expectations and rules of her job, she explained that she was not a brand-new teacher and she knew she could defend her teaching philosophy and the content they covered in her classroom if she needed to. Still, she did incorporate the required components of the curriculum into the class and did her best to scaffold the mandated learning experiences for the children so that they could feel successful in completing some of the exercises.

During the last few weeks of class, for example, Mrs. Burnette knew that she was expected to send home a math workbook provided by the district for each child to work on with their families over the summer. Although the class regularly engaged with mathematics, they did not often complete worksheets in the way the booklets were designed. Thus, she took the time to explain to the children how they could do the worksheets, what they should fill out on the worksheets, and allowed the children to investigate the workbooks before they were expected to take them home. This allowed the students to feel more comfortable with the workbooks and understand how they work before they took them home. This is one of many examples that

showed how Mrs. Burnette navigated the differing discourses she was being held accountable for.

In a similar, but different example, people often came to visit the school and Mrs. Burnette would have to adjust her curriculum goals accordingly. Sometimes these were invited parents, like when a father who was a professional musician came in to show students his violin, but others were people who spoke to the whole school. One week, author Michael Shoulders was coming to speak with the school. Although Mrs. Burnette tried to find a book from this author that would fit into their current unit of study on inventions and design, only one book, *D is for Dump Truck: A Construction Alphabet* (Shoulders & Culotta, 2016), seemed to remotely connect with what the class was studying. She conducted a read-aloud over two days because she wanted students to be familiar with a book written by this author, but admitted that it might not have been a book she would choose to read-aloud otherwise. The author was engaging and fun for the students but was ultimately something Mrs. Burnette had to "fit into" their school day to try and accommodate.

Time. In addition to negotiating differing curriculum goals, time was a constant challenge throughout the school day. Many of the topics students wanted to research required a deep and intense study of a particular topic or subject, which takes time. Although the read-alouds were beneficial for students, most of the teaching occurred through whole group discussion, which meant that the class spent significant amounts of time discussing one or two pages of the book. The read-alouds usually took place between 8:45-9:30 a.m., when children were awake and focused on the content. But they had Special Areas at 9:30 sharp, and so at times stimulating conversations had to be tabled or returned to after Specials when students had moved onto other concepts, subject areas, and parts of their day. Mrs. Jones was usually

responsible for keeping the class on schedule and she would often say, “Mrs. Burnette, you can take one more comment before we *have* to go to Music!”

The children, too, felt constricted by time. Studies have shown that it takes students a full twenty minutes to establish the scenarios for their play, and thus need time to plan and enact what they plan (Christie, Johnsen, & Peckover, 1988). Students were provided forty-five minutes for their Explorations, where they often re-enacted or played with concepts discussed during the nonfiction read-alouds, but clean-up was included in the forty-five minutes and thus children usually only had thirty-five minutes to play. Some children also complained about the lack of time during writing workshop and independent reading time, in particular. As excited as they were to move onto the next task, it required them to disrupt their current meaning making and, sometimes, they never found opportunities to return.

Behavior. Lastly, even though many of the movements, gestures, and interjections that students made during whole group read-alouds were connected directly or indirectly with the nonfiction books, behavioral expectations were a constant negotiation between Mrs. Burnette, Mrs. Jones, and the children. Although Mrs. Burnette wanted children making connections, having multimodal transactions with books, and sharing their thinking with the class, she also needed to maintain a reasonable amount of order in the classroom, and this was challenging at times. She frequently used nonverbal behaviors such as pointing, snapping her fingers, and at times clapping to either draw attention to herself or to ask children to refocus their attention. Mrs. Jones’ primary responsibility during read-alouds was to help children struggling with behavior issues, so she usually sat near the back and provided proximity for students who needed some extra attention.

The children, too, knew what they should do, but often got carried away with excitement, confusion, or other emotions, and being only five or six years old were still learning how to have self-control. These impulses, which usually signaled an excitement for learning, were constantly being negotiated by the children. Sometimes children would try to correct each other, either by saying no or just turning their bodies away from the child acting out, but other times they would get swept up in the excitement with those around them and mirror or contribute to the emotions. Although the children were aware of the authoritative discourses about their behavior, when those around them presented an alternative, and especially if those children were "getting away" with those behaviors, children were more inclined to use their internally persuasive discourses and join in. Even these internally persuasive discourses, though, generally stemmed from the work the class was doing together, and usually was constructive, albeit more playful than one might expect learning to be. The internally persuasive actions of the children showed how people learn from one another in playful ways, even within the confines of an authoritative space. Further descriptions of these playful moments are discussed in Chapter Five.

Mrs. Burnette recognized that usually the children yelling out had important things to stay, but still felt compelled to correct student's behavior or make them wait until they were called on to answer. For example, when Connor noticed something in a book, he usually would yell out as he raised his hand, "I noticed something! I noticed something!" Mrs. Burnette would say, "When you sit down and raise your hand quietly, I will call on you." Other times, she would tell the class what children were thinking, but would still require behavior adjustments from the children. When the class was talking about titmouse birds, Hudson, who was sitting on the front row, got up on his knees so he could put his finger directly on the page of the book said, "There's some green in there!" Mrs. Burnette responded by saying, "Ok, everyone Hudson is

going to sit back down now, but he wants you all to notice the greenish hue of the feathers." This recognized Hudson's contribution but still expected him to follow the same rules as everyone else. Occasionally children were asked to move places on the carpet as a redirection or, rarely, asked to sit in a chair near the back of the rug. This separated the children from the group, some, and provided structure that helped some children remain focused. They were still expected to contribute, though, and were participants in the read-alouds. Still, these moments were reminders to members of the classroom that there are expected behaviors in classrooms, particularly during read-alouds, and that there are consequences for not following those expected behaviors. Negotiating the authoritative discourses of expected behaviors while a teacher reads to them with the boisterous and dynamic comments and connections from the students required a constant negotiation of physical behaviors by all of the members of the classroom.

From Mrs. Burnette's perspective, she recognized the benefits of children being able to express themselves, of the positive contributions the excited outbursts of the children as they made connections were, but being in a school space requires some restraint on these outbursts. Teachers have expectations of being "in control" of the classroom and children's behaviors, and yet these outward expressions of meaning making and connections made by the children greatly contributed to the classes' overall understandings, shaped the direction of the classroom discussion, and ultimately, shaped much of the teaching Mrs. Burnette did. Leading a dialogic classroom requires as many voices to be heard, but authoritative discourses suggest that children should "be seen and not heard," so the teachers constantly had to negotiate this tension. Authoritative Discourses about what a "well-behaved" classroom should look like suggest that children should sit still and only speak when called upon, but these read-alouds suggest that children inherently learn and communicate through movement, which contradicts each other.

These conflicting discourses were negotiated by all members of the classroom together as they also worked through the meaning making and reading of nonfiction picturebooks.

Although the children generally obeyed the rules of the classroom and school and Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones had reasonable expectations for what was appropriate behavior in Kindergarten, all of the members of the classroom negotiated the influences of curricular mandates, statewide standards, school expectations, parental expectations, and the limits of time in educational institutions. All of the challenges and issues that any teacher and/or students experience occurred in this classroom, including students getting sent to the Principal for behavior issues, parents being upset about what the children were learning, and one student even needing to be held back in Kindergarten for another year. This classroom, despite its unique approach to reading aloud nonfiction texts and creating a participatory space for classrooms, was not immune to the authoritative discourses that occur in all schools and all classrooms. In fact, because of Mrs. Burnette's unique approaches to teaching, it is possible that this classroom experienced these tensions even more visibly than those that follow the authoritative discourses more than their internally persuasive discourses. However, Mrs. Burnette felt that what she was doing as a teacher mattered and was willing to embrace the ideological becoming as she continued to follow the children in their meaning making and developing understandings about the world.

In conclusion, the children's multimodal responses informed the curriculum of the classroom and the efferent responses other readers had about the books. Although the comments, movements, and sounds children made throughout the read-alouds seemed unrelated, the findings from these read-alouds demonstrate that often the children were processing the information the class was discussing or hearing about and the bodily movements of the children

were, in fact, a response worth considering. Although Mrs. Burnette worked to provide the state-mandated content to the children, she also recognized that the children cared more about each other's experiences, and thus she spent a lot of time guiding discussions amongst the children rather than providing direct instruction. Through these dialogic interactions between classroom members, children did not always take away the information Mrs. Burnette intended, but a more nuanced and complex understanding, filled with many voices, movements, and perspectives, was achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXAMINING PLAY AS RESPONSE

In this chapter, I examined the playful moments I documented to answer the questions: *How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?* As I followed the children between February and May, I noticed connections were made by students throughout all times of the day that connected back to subjects they studied as a class, that related to content they discussed or learned about in Special Areas, or that other classes had shared with the school. In the beginning, it was hard to know exactly how these events connected across the content areas, but as I spent more time with the class and observed more and more read-alouds using nonfiction books, the connections the children were making became more apparent to me.

Ultimately, I saw playful meaning making events occur across all of the content areas and in every space in and outside of the school. Since my focus for this chapter is on children's playful meaning making of nonfiction picturebooks without prompting from adults or figures of authority, I concentrated on videos, images, notes, and audio recordings that captured what occurred during Explorations (free center time), recess, and reading time in the class because these moments included five elements of play (Garvey,1977); play is "intrinsically motivated and self-initiated, process oriented, non-literal and pleasurable, exploratory and active, and rule-governed" (pp. 4-5). I continued to primarily focus on the eight focal children as a representative case study, but other children that playfully connected to nonfiction are also included to show

how these focal students were also responding to and anticipating those around them. I also witnessed numerous occasions where children responded to fiction books the class read together as well, but I did not include those as they were beyond the focus of this study.

Mrs. Burnette encouraged many connections across writing, math, and science, in particular. For example, during Math, Mrs. Burnette taught the class about wingspans and they measured together the wingspans of different species of birds. Later in the week, children were asked to measure their personal wingspans with nonstandard units of measurement, so the children worked with each other to measure how many Unifix cubes, markers, or buttons long their wingspan span. While this was a fun and exciting exercise that connected to the class read-aloud experiences, it was designed and encouraged by Mrs. Burnette, and thus did not qualify as play. I captured many other moments of connection to nonfiction books, but many of these tasks were designed as a part of the curriculum by Mrs. Burnette or stemmed from her suggestions, so I did not include them here.

Even though children were asked to read independently or with a partner as a part of the classroom curriculum, the nonfiction books children decided to read together, who they read with, and how they approached the reading process was entirely chosen by them and thus I considered them to be self-initiated. Additionally, although Mrs. Burnette worked to put out materials for children to play with during Explorations that connected with the content they were studying as a class, the children decided what they would play with on their own and determined how they would use these materials, so I also qualified these experiences as play. In the following section, I describe the different kinds of child-initiated play I observed throughout the semester and highlight major trends, including play as a social act, continual negotiations, and children's play blurring the continuum of real and imaginary.

Socially Motivated Moments of Extended Meaning Making

Throughout the entire school day, children were observed connecting to, talking about, or wondering audibly about topics that connected to the nonfiction class read alouds. Any time children were provided some freedom in their daily activities, such as walking to and from places in the school (transitions), playing on the playground, or engaging in free play during Explorations, I observed connections to read alouds and classroom content. The social nature of these moments of play illuminates how these interactions with one another required students to reconsider their understandings about the world or incorporate new information into their heteroglossia.

Dialogic Nature of Play and Learning

Over 95% of the playful moments I captured involved more than one child. Children were unlikely to play or read by themselves when given the opportunity to collaborate with others and it was far more difficult to see how children were making sense of a text without verbal modalities. Still, there were a few instances where I captured Lucas clearly playing by himself during the nonfiction read-alouds or Jason, who would often read alone and share out his thinking. I was surprised, though, to see how often children preferred to read with others instead of reading alone. A few children liked to read by themselves, like Grant (Initial Interview, February), but most echoed what Anna said in her interview, "My friends help me read. Plus, it's more fun!" (Initial Interview, February). Not surprisingly, then, much of the children's meaning making of nonfiction picturebooks evolved through social interactions with one another as they worked to make sense of books together.

Connecting to each other. One of the first things I noticed about the children as they read any book, but especially nonfiction, was how often they welcomed others to join them.

Some children, like Connor, would purposefully read loudly, laugh, make funny faces, and act out whatever the book was about because he wanted to entice other people to join him. Others were even more obvious in their preference for reading with a friend. For example, every child knew that Destiny loved owls, so every time an owl was mentioned in a book, fiction or nonfiction, they would run over to show her and frequently continue to read with her. While she seemed to enjoy this at first, eventually she began to grow weary of the endeavor. At one point, Lucas called her over to see his book and she preemptively stated, "I know! I know. Your book has an owl in it!" Lucas replied, "Actually, I wanted to show you this baby leopard." To which Destiny replied, "Awww" before going back to her book box to read (Video, March). This also happened when students found the names of someone in the class in a book. Clarence was reading independently in late April when he came across Connor's name. He ran over to Connor and said, "Connor! I found your name!" He pointed at Connor, then at his nonfiction book, then back and Connor. Connor got a huge grin on his face and said, "Really?" Clarence pointed to the name in the book and Connor followed his finger across the letters of his name. Connor, then, looked at the cover of the book, and said, "Cool!" before Clarence went back to read alone (Video, April).

Children who did not take the bus home were expected to sit together as a class to wait for their parents to pick them up from the carpool lane or for a teacher to take them to After Care. Although they were allowed to talk, they were not supposed to bring out toys or anything from their backpacks because several classes were sitting on the sidewalk near the road and objects made this time of day even more chaotic. Still, children could often be seen pulling out books to read that they brought from home, took from their classroom, or checked out from the library. On numerous occasions, children would use these opportunities to read nonfiction books

together. In Figure 5.1 below, Sally looks at a book about the history of Winnie the Pooh while Anna looks on and Jason has a nonfiction book about string instruments open while he looks at Connor writing in a journal.

Figure 5.1: Reading Nonfiction During Carpool

The introduction of nonfiction books during the carpool line inherently meant that other children would soon come over and want to read the book, too. These moments were not necessarily encouraged by the school staff that conducted carpool, but they also were not discouraged and children took advantage of them. Regardless, it was very typical to witness six kids from various classes and grade levels grouped together around a nonfiction book of their own volition.

Students also used topics from nonfiction read-alouds to initiate conversations with one another. After Jason spent much of the morning reading a book about the orchestra and violins, Zuri went up to him and said, "You know Jason, you should come to my house. My dad plays the trumpet and he keeps it in his office!" Jason smiled and replied, "He does? Was he in an orchestra?" Zuri, excitedly adds, "He used to be! You can come to my house and I can show it to you!" Jason said, "Ok! Let's ask my mom after school." Zuri put both hands up in the air and

shouted, “Alright!” Even though the children did not ask Jason’s mom at the end of the school day about getting together outside of school and to my knowledge Jason never went to Zuri’s house, this example illustrated how the interests and connections children made through nonfiction books permeated the social aspects of the classroom and contributed to their ability to make friends and otherwise develop the children’s relationships with one another. By connecting with each other about topics of interest, children introduced new books to each other, showed how they used knowledge of each other to inform their transactions with books, and even used nonfiction book interests as openings into social relationships and burgeoning friendships.

Another example occurred when I first entered the classroom in January. The children had been studying art masterpieces and famous paintings. They learned about artists’ tools and new vocabulary words such as *opaque*, *collage*, and *pastiche.* The walls of the classroom became covered with the student’s own versions of Van Gogh’s Sunflowers, tools to help children create art, and aprons/smocks for children to wear as they played. The class had created a class “Expert Project” based upon Heather Alexander and Meredith Hamilton’s (2014) book *A Children’s Introduction to Art: The World’s Greatest Paintings and Sculptures.* Mrs. Burnette had a deck of cards that displayed famous paintings that she put in the Atelier (the Art Center), along with a copy of the nonfiction picturebook for children to use as inspiration in their own art. During Explorations one February day, Sally found the cards and decided she wanted to play a game. She knew Jason was very interested in the Mona Lisa, so she told him, “Jason! Look! Mona Lisa!” Jason’s eyes widened and he gasped audibly. Jason said, “Let’s lay them all out and look at them!” Sally and Jason then spent around 18 minutes laying out all of the different Masterpiece cards (Figure 5.2), looking at all of the images and making noticings and laughing.

Figure 5.2: Sally and Jason Examining Art Masterpieces

As they played, Sally and Jason continued to look up at the book displayed in the Atelier and discuss which masterpieces they had studied before or not. Sarah said, "Remember this one? The night sky?" when pointing to Van Gogh's Starry Night. Jason also asked, "Have we seen this one before? I don't remember it." This was the only time during the entire semester I witnessed Sally and Jason play together. They were never mean to one another, but generally had different friend groups and rarely seemed to interact throughout the day. But both had information about these paintings to share with one another and they were motivated that day to use these understandings in their play. Although I never saw any other children play with the cards the way Sally and Jason did, this example showed how students created their own play with materials, regardless of the teacher's intent. It also demonstrated how students with relatively few common interests can create meaningful memories through the sharing of information gathered through nonfiction read-alouds. The experiences the class had together established a foundation that both children had in common as a part of their heteroglossia and, through play, were able to relive some of these experiences and connect with one another.

Connecting with families. In addition to connecting with their classmates, students incorporated their lives outside of the classroom with the work they were doing in school. Mrs. Burnette worked hard to keep families informed of what they were studying as a class by writing weekly in the classroom blog, talking with parents before and after class, and sending home a weekly family engagement journal in lieu of homework. Instead of providing worksheets, the family engagement journal included four tasks (one in reading, one in writing, one in math, and one in science/social studies) families could do together that connected with the work the class was doing. Here is an example from Elizabeth's journal.

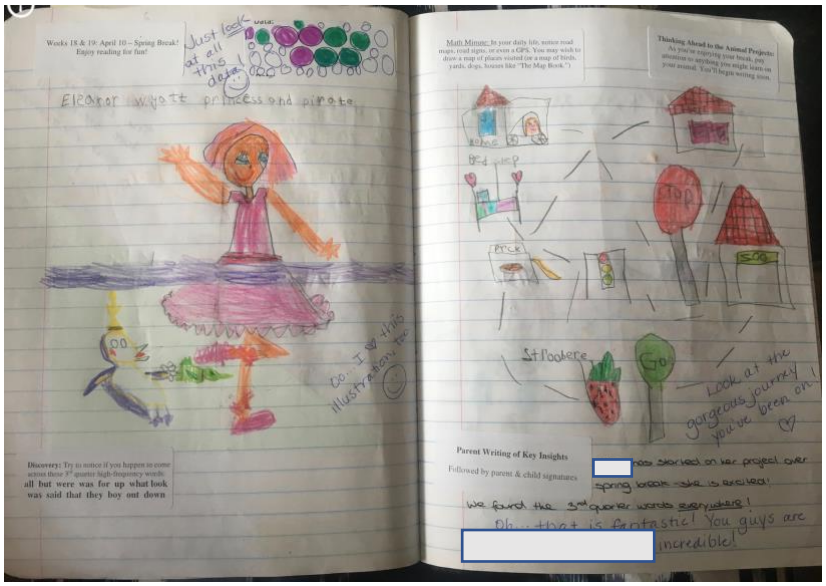

Figure 5.3: Excerpt from Elizabeth's Home Journal

More often than not, though, it was the children who drew their parents and families into their play. During a Curriculum Night, which was a Parent-Teacher Night that children were allowed to attend in March, Callie went to find *My Map Book* (Fanelli, 2001) that Mrs. Burnette had read to the class in February and began reading it with her dad. At the time, the children were meant to show their parents around the classroom and many children opted to play in the Housekeeping center, draw in the Atelier (the Art center), or look through the magnifying glasses in the Science

center with their parents. Instead of choosing these options, Callie went right to a book on the bookshelf to share with her dad during their free time.

Figure 5.4: Callie Playfully Reading with Dad

"This is my favorite page!" (Written Observation, March) she told him. Her dad got down on the carpet and began looking through the book with Callie, pointing out different parts, asking her questions, and talking about what would be in their family map. Although her dad did not engage in a playful reading, Callie was adding her own spin on the book by creating dialogue for certain characters, using her fingers as characters "running" throughout the map of a neighborhood, and even held the book up to pretend like it was her stomach when the page had a body on it. Callie's father looked on, smiled, and laughed, but did not engage in her playful examination of the book. Still, without any prompting, or really any connection to the content Curriculum Night was centered around, Callie found a playful way to share this nonfiction book with her dad.

Another way children incorporated their families into their play was by using technology to capture events from home to share with the class. Hudson, for example, noticed that the birds in his backyard got really loud and moved a lot right as the sun was setting. He asked his mom if she could video the birds in his backyard so he could "show his friends at school" (Written

Observation, March). Hudson's mom used her phone to record the birds chirping, flying around, and getting settled in their backyard one night, and Mrs. Burnette put the video up on the SmartBoard for Hudson to share. Hudson pointed out all of the different kinds of birds he could identify in his yard, including "cardinals, daddy bluejays, and titmouses!" The other children in the class watching began waving their arms up and down like birds, running around rapidly, and pretending to "hide in the bushes!" (Destiny, Written Observation, March) as the video played on the SmartBoard. Hudson chose to study the birds from his yard during his own free time, connected the experience with what he had learned about in class, and was showing the other students how he was making this connection. In turn, the students began to act like birds and created their own version of Hudson's backyard as the setting for their play.

Students also brought in nonfiction books from home by authors the class was studying. For example, when the class was reading *What if You Had Animal Hair?* (Markle & McWilliams, 2014) Grant brought in a book he owned from the series about ears. He shared it with the class during Morning Meeting, and then he, Peyton, and Clarence read the book together during independent reading time. Children also made their own nonfiction books at home for fun and would bring them to class to share. Elizabeth and Kennedy, both, for example, would often create books about their lives at home and bring them to show their friends, work on during Writer's Workshop, and even during Explorations.

Finally, the last way I saw children connecting their class curriculum, play, and families together came from Zuri on her birthday. Zuri's dad was the Room Parent, as he worked from home, and he wanted to do something special for her birthday. Zuri asked if her party could be about birds since that's what the class was studying. She wanted to give something to her friends

for her birthday, so her dad came up with a 3-D printed bird call designed in the shape of the bird (Figure 5.5) for each child in the class to have after her celebration.

Figure 5.5: Jason Playing With his Bird Call

Zuri and her family connected what the class had been learning about with something fun, new, and tangible that each child of the class could have and keep. The children immediately put water in their bird calls and spent several minutes playing around with the different sounds they could make. The children discovered that if they only covered one of the bird's eyes it sounded different than if they covered both eyes (See Figure 5.5). Without water in the middle, the bird would not make any noise. And children were also observed pretending to make these bird calls actually fly by holding them up and "buzzing" them around the room (Connor, Maddox, and Anna, Written Observation, April). Although Zuri's dad was more involved with the class due to his position as Room Parent, it was clear that many of the children's interests, excitement, and playful connections to the classroom content helped bridge the divide between school and home.

While Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones worked to include families in the classroom, the children also worked to incorporate their home lives into school and vice versa through play. Equally as important as sharing what the class was doing at home, though, was the children

sharing their homes with each other in the classroom. Students usually responded in playful ways to this content, either by re-enacting what occurred at home, taking up materials and making them their own, or responding and connecting to the bits of home life children shared with the class. This created a dialogic understanding amongst the children of what their lives looked like outside of school, shaped their understandings about how other children lived, and provided useful experiences for children to use as a connection to each other through play.

Learning from each other. Similar to how children asked questions and made comments during nonfiction read alouds, children would come up to their peers independently reading nonfiction books to listen, ask questions, and learn from one another. Weston was reading an A to Z book about construction equipment and vehicles. Although the entire class had read *D is for Dump Truck: A Construction Alphabet* (Shoulders & Culotta, 2016), which is a similar concept book, to my knowledge, they had not read the book Weston chose aloud as an entire class. Still, Weston employed a similar strategy for reading this book as Mrs. Burnette did during whole group read-alouds of A to Z books by trying to guess what the upcoming word would be based on the letter it started with and the content of the book. Weston was trying to figure out what the words could be when Clarence and Kennedy joined him. The three children pooled their knowledge about construction together to figure out the words.

Weston turns page to the letter J. Touches pointer finger to image of jackhammer on the page.

W: Now, that's a jackhammer!

Clarence (walks up): A jackhammer?

Weston flips page. Kennedy enters frame.

Kennedy: Oh! What about this laser thing? What is the laser thing?

Kennedy runs her finger horizontally along the laser line in the image. Weston touches the machine the laser is coming out of, runs his finger. Shrugs his shoulders up and down.

Weston: "I don't know!"

Clarence: Maybe, you have to touched it?

Weston flips page.

Kennedy: Oh! I know what this thing is called. It's called a light beam. It's a light so they can work at night.

Weston: No!

Kennedy: N is for nightlights. Oh! N is for night lights.

Weston flips page. Looks closely at page.

Weston: Oh, I know this! I know this yesterday!

Weston touches image of the tractor.

Clarence: What is it called?

Weston: They dump this in heat to make the road darker and smoother (Video, April).

Although Weston was initially reading the book alone, he was unphased by the appearance of Kennedy and Clarence. He also learned something from Kennedy and taught something else to both Kennedy and Clarence. The use of gestures and pointing to the images, similar to how Mrs. Burnette read books aloud, kept the children focused on the same content and aided in their overall understandings of the book. The multimodal and playful reading of this book and the ensuing collaborations benefitted all three children by enabling them to act out their understandings with one another, which contributed to their overall meaning making and vocabulary development.

Similarly, when Jason was reading Gail Gibbon's (1998) *Penguins* book during independent reading, he was asking questions and wonderings out loud. "The artic, it's the artic! When they're blue, it's the warm water. So penguins live in warm water. New zaaa, New jersey? I think sharks live in new jersey? Is their water warm in new jersey? I don't know!" (Video, February)

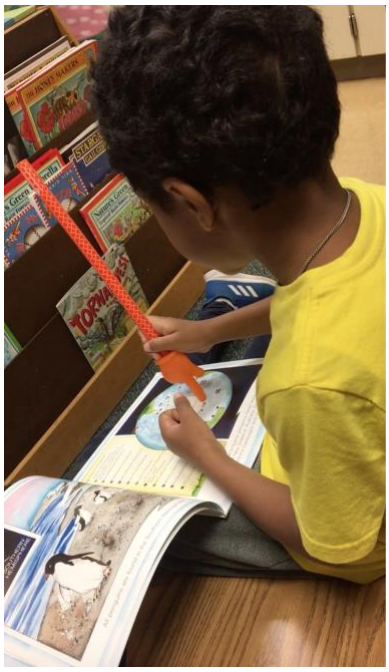

Figure 5.6: Jason Reading about Penguins

Hudson found another copy of the same book on the bookshelf and decided to sit down with Jason to explore the book as well, but they wound up just sharing the same book. Together, Jason and Hudson worked through some previously held misunderstandings about penguins by touching specific images on the pages, looking at one another for each other's response, and occasionally laughing. After trying to figure out the word New Zealand and coming up with New Jersey, Jason moved on to figure out the word Antarctica (See Figure 5.7). In the figure, Jason has been abbreviated to J and Hudson to H.

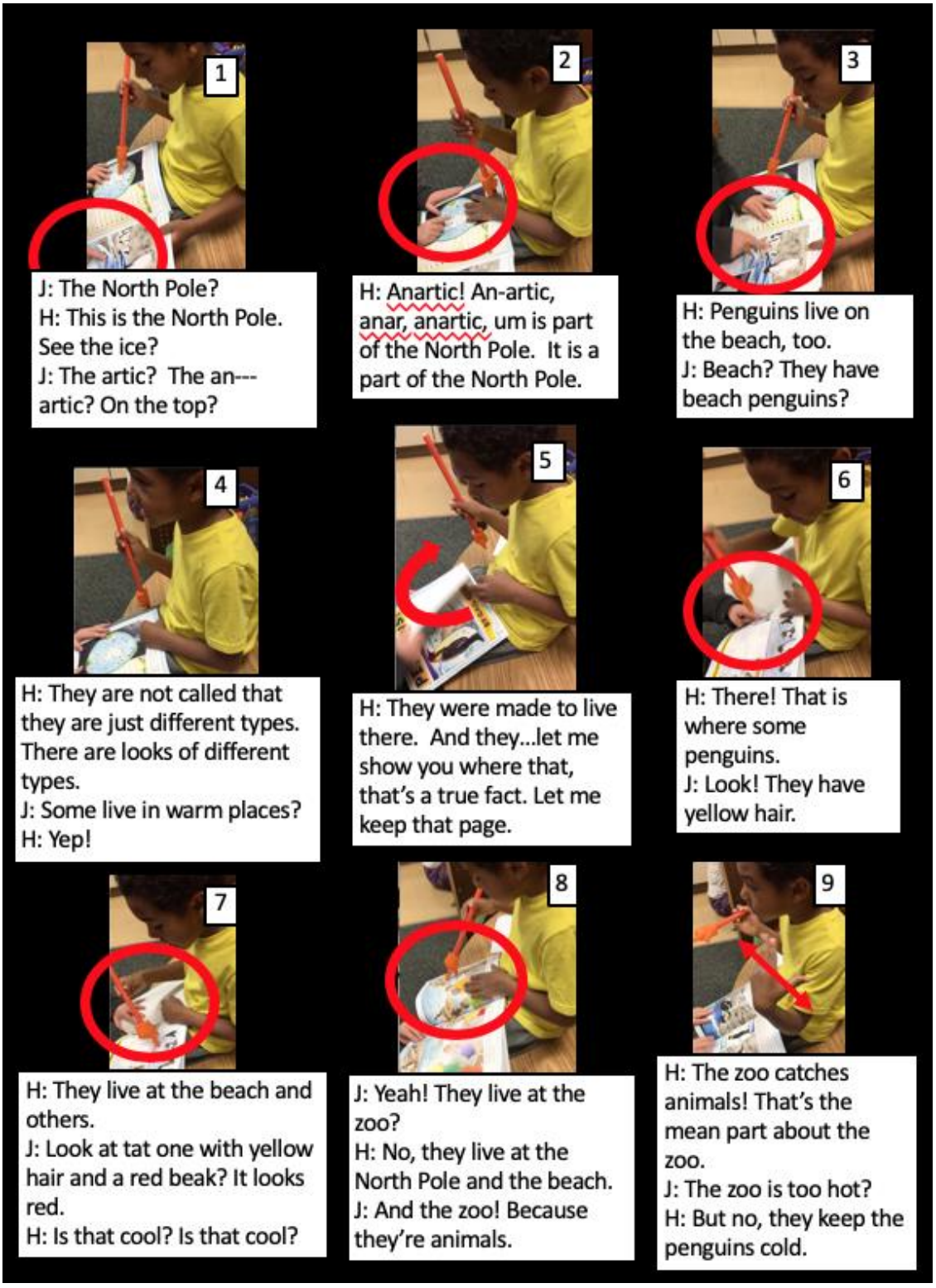

Figure 5.7: Jason and Hudson Reading about Penguins

Hudson is trying to share with Jason all that he knows about penguins (Numbers 3, 6, and 7), but Jason is far more interested in his own noticings (Numbers 7-8). Hudson wants Jason to understand that penguins live in hot and cold places, but Jason is more concerned with what different species of penguins look like and convinced that they could all just be at the zoo. By using the pointer as he reads (Numbers 6-7), Jason shows Hudson where he is focusing his attention, and together the two boys negotiate the different information and come to some shared understandings. Jason took away that some penguins have yellow beaks and red hair and presumably live at the zoo, while Hudson had some of his thinking about penguins living on beaches confirmed. Also, Jason's point about penguins living at the zoo forced Hudson to recognize that some penguins do not live in the places he was saying.

Jason physically acted out parts of the reading, like when he waved his hand up and down in front of his face when discussing the word hot (Number 9). Jason's misreading's of some words, like New Jersey instead of New Zealand, led to his thinking, "Sharks live in New Jersey" (See Figure 5.6), which both boys found to be quite hilarious. Hudson, on the other hand, remained focused on the information he wanted to share. Still, his responses show that Jason is playfully processing and thinking through what Hudson is trying to tell him, even if his thinking was in a less direct or serious manner.

In early May, Hudson was reading a conventional nonfiction book about sharks that had one page that contained cartoon-like illustrations of the sharks instead of photographs like the other pages in the book. Grant and Peyton, who were sitting nearby, jumped in to help make sense of the drawings on the page with Hudson. The content of the nonfiction book generally highlighted different shark species and interesting facts about them, but on this page, the facts were illustrated in humorous comics or vignettes. Many nonfiction books include a plethora of

text and image features (Bintz & Ciercierski, 2017; Graff & Shimek, 2020; Rohloff & May, 2017), and this book was no different. But rather than viewing this cartoon feature as a fun representation of what sharks do in the natural world, Hudson, Grant, and Peyton read these cartoons as real, which in turn shaped their understandings of sharks.

> *Hudson: And this one is good at hiding. This is a one-eyed and he moves fast. This one is good at eating.*
>
> *Peyton touches the image with her book.*
>
> *Peyton: You mean cooking?*
>
> *Hudson: I mean, good at cooking. This one is good at painting. And that one is good at winning.*
>
> *Peyton pulls up Hudson's book so she can see it better.*
>
> *Peyton: Look!*
>
> *Grant: That's his gums. That's his gums.*
>
> *Grant touches his gums with his finger. Hudson does the same thing.*
>
> *Hudson: Man, he lost a tooth! And he's going to become a zombie! Ahh!*
>
> *Shows the book to Grant and Peyton, who smile. All three kids look intently at the page.*
>
> *Hudson: He lost his tooth and it's going through his gums.*
>
> *All three lean in closer toward the book.*
>
> *Peyton: I wonder if it's a baby tooth. Just like when we lose a tooth.*
>
> *Grant: I already lost one tooth here and here.*
>
> *Grant touches his moth where he has lost teeth. Peyton looks at him and shows him her tooth* (Video, May).

Together, the children used the cartoons and each other's knowledge to make sense of what was happening in the book. Even though these misunderstandings led to some interesting thinking (i.e., Zombie sharks), the children ultimately connected this reading with their own personal experiences about losing teeth. Through a playful and social reading of this nonfiction text, the three children found themselves connecting to sharks, recognizing that they have shared experiences as Kindergartners. Grant was able to demonstrate for Peyton and Hudson his knowledge about sharks, and all three children relied upon their personal experiences of losing teeth to relate to the nonfiction book about sharks.

Continual Negotiations of Meaning

The Kindergartners used play episodes to negotiate new information they learned during the whole class read-alouds of nonfiction by acting out parts of these read alouds, learning by doing, and using one another's knowledge. Sometimes, these negotiations took place between the children and focused on how the play should go, but more often than not, children were using play to help combine their previous understandings with new takeaways and to explore different possibilities. These experiences were informed by knowing to expect a response from their audience, whoever that might be, discovering by doing, creating, and becoming, by navigating misunderstandings together and negotiating adult influences, all of which represent dialogic experiences within an heteroglossic environment.

Knowing your audience. Children learned to anticipate how those around them would respond in their play. Bakhtin (1934/1981) discussed how our speech is always in anticipation of those around us, and noticings from this study show a similar anticipatory process in children's play. Just like readers anticipate what is in the books they are reading, children learned to anticipate what their peers were going to say, how they would react to certain subject areas, and

what the children would want to engage with. One day in April, when Gavin was sitting next to Kennedy and Destiny reading, he decided to act out the pages of the book. Instead of saying the words in the animal book he was reading out loud, he decided to physically make the book act like whatever scary creature the page had on it. For example, when the book mentioned bats, Gavin split the book into two halves and made it "fly" by flapping the sides up and down into Kennedy and Destiny's faces. The girls would kick their feet, smile and laugh, and squeal with delight for a few seconds and then would say in unison, "Stop!" at which point Gavin would take the book, flip to a new page, and repeat this process with a new animal (Written Observation, April). He did this for several different creepy crawly creatures, including spiders, mice, and snakes. Each time, he would use the book almost like a puppet and make it "act" like the creature on the page. This playful interpretation of reading, which the girls acted like they did not want to be a part of but were clearly enjoying, showed how the children prompted each other to act and respond in specific ways. Gavin picked the creatures he expected would be "creepy" to the girls and would make them scream, but the girls also fed into this for a few seconds before disrupting Gavin's "reading." By doing these actions over and over again, Gavin anticipated the girls would react in the same way every time. When he tried to make the book act like a Tiger, Destiny interrupted, "Oh, I love tigers! Let me see!" Gavin, looking a bit surprised at Destiny's response, had to act accordingly and opened the book for them to look at the page together., putting an end to his playful actions as reading.

One afternoon in March, Joseph was busy pooling pine straw on the playground into a circle. He suddenly yelled out, "It's a nest!" and promptly laid down in the nest with his arms folded behind his head (See Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: Joseph in His Nest

Later, Destiny came up and pretended to be in the nest, too. When Joseph said, "This is my nest! You can't take it!" She explained, "I'm being a cowbird. They take nests from other birds, remember?" Joseph replied, "Ok. But you have to be a nice cowbird" and let her climb into the nest as well (Written Observation, March). The class has read *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014) and talked about the cowbird two weeks before, and although this exchange was brief, Destiny showed her takeaway from the read aloud by joining Joseph in the nest as a Cowbird. She used what they had read about in *Mama Built a Little Nest* to work to her advantage and forced Joseph to make sense of the book in similar ways through her play. She also anticipated that Joseph would remember this information from the read-aloud and, therefore, would let her play with him in this way. She was correct as Joseph let her join him in the nest, just like the read-aloud said.

Interruptions from adults. While children certainly engaged in social meaning making through play with each other and accommodated one another's actions, the role of the teacher in these scenarios seemed considered, yet overridden. For example, when Clarence and Jason were playing with the toy eagles, nests, and fish during Explorations one day, Mrs. Burnette was

sitting nearby and couldn't help interjecting some clarifying questions of both Clarence and Jason. When Jason began to incorporate a tiger into their play scenario, Mrs. Burnette jumped in.

Jason: It's a tiger! Help me! It's a tiger.

Clarence: Now I'm going to take this fish out. Now I'm going to take this fish out the nest.

Jason: He's after me!

Mrs. Burnette: Do you think a daddy owl, Jason. Do you think a daddy owl is afraid of a tiger?

Jason: No!

Mrs. Burnette: Why not?

Jason: Because he's a grown-up!

Mrs. Burnette: Yeah, you think grown-ups are not afraid of predators?

Clarence: Who. Who. Who.

Mrs. Burnette: Is your owl afraid of that tiger?

Clarence: No.

Mrs. Burnette: No? Why not?

Both Clarence and Jason are making who-ing sounds at the same time.

Mrs. Burnette: Are owls actually around tigers? Are they in the same places?

Jason makes squealing sounds and says, "help me!"

Clarence grabs tiger.

Clarence: Rooooar

Mrs. Burnette: Where do tigers usually live?

Jason: Forests.

Mrs. Burnette: Tigers live in the forest? Like around us?

Jason: Ahhh! (Makes a bunch of sounds.)

Clarence: Hey! Three-toed sloths live in the forest.

Mrs. Burnette: Huh?

Clarence: Three-toed sloths live in the forest.

Mrs. Burnette: Three-toed sloths live in the . . .

Clarence and Jason together: Rain forest!

Mrs. Burnette: Is that like our forest? Like could we find some here down the street?

Jason: No!

Mrs. Burnette: Why not?

Jason (laughs): Because they live in the RAIN forest.

Mrs. Burnette: The rain forest. It's a different forest (Video, May).

Clarence and Jason both exited their play scene to answer the questions of their teacher, then quickly jumped back in. While Mrs. Burnette was trying to provide an accurate reminder, the boys' world at the time consisted of that classroom and the animals available to them, not the real world, so they answered Mrs. Burnette's questions and provided responses, but were fairly dismissive about her comments and unwilling to change their play. Although their play began representing experiences the class had read about and "real" life, the expectations for reality in play was assumed by Mrs. Burnette, but clearly not for Jason or Clarence.

Mrs. Jones, too, in seeing Maddox, Lucas, and Weston building New York City as a part of their play, interrupted to ask the children what they were doing (See Figure 5.9).

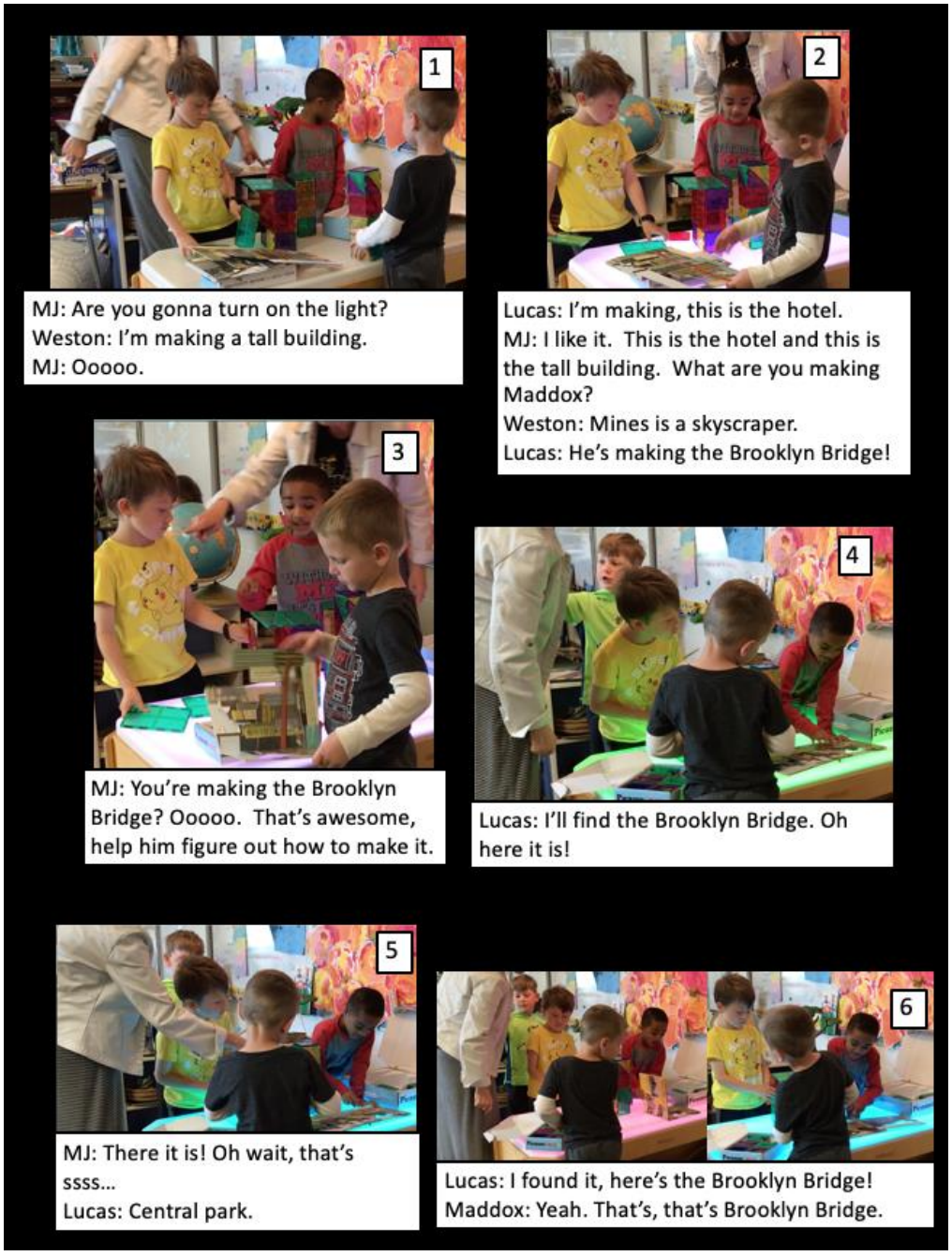

Figure 5.9: Mrs. Jones Adjusts Boys Playing New York City

Although Lucas recovered from his misinterpretation of a bridge in Central Park as the Brooklyn Bridge and proceeded to play with Maddox and Weston uninterrupted for the next 35 minutes, Mrs. Jones' correction set him back a few seconds as he had to search through the book again to find the real Brooklyn Bridge. More importantly, though, this action signaled to Lucas that there

is a right and wrong way of thinking about a nonfiction book. Lucas was able to recover, and the play moved to more fantastical ideas and situations after the boys had been left alone for a few minutes, but the message had been sent that play should indeed be accurate or real, especially if nonfiction books were involved.

While students developed many understandings from one another through social play set in fantastical settings or involving fantastical experiences, their play was sometimes at odds with Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Smith's understandings of what school "should be," which made them interrupt their play. The prevailing belief that nonfiction should be approached with an efferent stance, or that readers should take information away from a reading event, also likely informed their urges to interrupt students' play. Still, students seemed unphased by this and usually returned to their self-initiated play scenarios, but their meaning making was interrupted by the adults. Although adults were well-meaning in their roles as facilitators and teachers in the classroom, their efforts to remain in these roles throughout the play episodes of the children was at odds with the actions of the students and the purpose of their play.

Doing, Creating, Becoming. Children would often reenact parts of nonfiction read-alouds as a part of their play, which highlighted what the child had learned, but also showed what they were continuing to wonder about. For example, Joseph found a stuffed chicken on a shelf of the classroom and decided to "play chicken" during Explorations one day in late May. It had been several weeks since the class had studied birds, including Ruth Heller's (1981) *Chickens Aren't the Only Ones*, and the class had moved onto learn about other obscure animals and were beginning to explore inventions, but seeing the stuffed bird inspired Joseph. He spent the entire 30-minute long Explorations that day walking around the classroom with the chicken making "bawk-ing" sounds. As he walked around the room, Joseph continued to have the head

of the chicken touch the ground, and he tried to move the legs of the chicken, although the structure of the chicken would not let him do this. When a group of children had put a bunch of play fruit and vegetables into the center of the "restaurant" they built with the blocks, Joseph perceived this to look like a nest with eggs, and he promptly put the chicken on top of it. When the children became upset, Joseph explained, "It looks like a chicken nest!" (Video, May). The children agreed to provide Joseph with his own chicken coop (an unused dollhouse) and some apples and oranges because they were round, like chicken eggs. Although it was unclear if Joseph was directly connecting his actions to this book, specifically, it was evident that the children all had a collective understanding that they relied upon as Joseph played, perhaps as a result of the shared readings they experienced together as a group. Joseph pretended to be a chicken by imitating the chicken's body movements, sounds, and attempts to "sit on eggs," and his friends responded knowingly and even adapted their own play to accommodate his. Even though this connection was not explicit, the children shared a similar knowledge and continued to use that information as Joseph played and explored.

Similarly, when the children were studying eggs, nests, and birds in February and March, several objects were put out for students to explore during Explorations. When a parent with a child in Second Grade heard that the Kindergarteners were exploring birds, she brought in chicken eggs from seven different chickens the family owned. Each egg was a different color and size because it came from a different breed of chicken. These eggs were put out for children to carefully examine and study during Explorations. Explorations, such as this, offered students opportunities to play and explore in ways they could not as an entire class. In Figure 5.10, from left to right, you can see Jason smelling the yolk of the egg, Kennedy holding a crayon that she

was using to compare sizes of the eggs, Destiny practicing how to hold an egg gently, and Connor pretending that the basket of eggs was a nest.

Figure 5.10: Examining Eggs and Nests during Explorations

Each child approached the center in different ways based on their interests, what they wanted to better understand after engaging in whole group read-alouds, and what they thought would be fun. Through play during Explorations, the children were able to continue to develop their understandings of the classroom content but also determine their own learning in the classroom.

In March, Maddox decided to create his own hummingbird nest out of paper during Explorations (See Figure 5.11). He pointed out how the paper could spread apart to grow with the size of the baby birds, just like a real hummingbird nest, and was about to add moss to help make the nest look more realistic.

Figure 5.11: Maddox Creates a Hummingbird Nest

In choosing to spend his playtime creating this nest, Maddox demonstrated how he continued to process the efferent information from the *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward & Jenkins, 2014) read-aloud (See Figure 4.5) Mrs. Burnette conducted two weeks prior through an artistic and creative way. Although the class had made papier-mache nests, Maddox chose entirely different materials, without prompting, and recreated what he took away from the text through play when he said, "I'm going to make some algae on it and spider webs. I have to figure out how to make it grow" (Video, March). Maddox's nest shows how readers' transactions with nonfiction books extend beyond the immediate literacy event, exist in non-academic spaces, and emerge through children's play.

The Kindergartners also acted scenes out as they were reading with one another. In Figure 5.12, Jason was reading a nonfiction book about Walt Disney with Callie and Elizabeth one afternoon in February. Callie, perhaps relying on her knowledge of the older Mickey Mouse cartoons and perhaps using the image in the book as an example, stretched both hands out across the table as if she was holding onto the wheel of the boat, too. She said, "He is like, Ahh! I'm driving the boooat! I am going to fall off into the ocean!" (Video, February). Callie lifted both hands up off the table, waved them back and forth about four times while smiling, and then Jason

flipped the page as they continued to talk about and laugh at the book. Callie's response to the book not only shows her multimodal response and transaction, but it also highlights the playful nature of interpreting nonfiction books and the benefits of the body in young children's continual negotiations of reading.

Figure 5.12: Acting like Mickey Mouse

Navigating misunderstandings. In the same ways that children became certain creatures or acted out parts of books to help them negotiate the meanings of nonfiction books, the children relied on one another to shape and adapt their understandings of the topics they learned about as a class. During Explorations in April, as the children began to notice the differences in the shapes of the beaks of the different birds they were studying, Mrs. Burnette added several new science tools to the sand table to help replicate some of these beak shapes. She put a few nets, tweezers, spoons, brushes, and pipettes into the sand table along with food birds might eat such as toy fish, birdseed, toy bugs, nuts, etc. The children worked together to figure out how the different tools replicated birds' beaks. Jason said, "A brush. You can be a

brush. A brush drinks sap! What is this insect?" (Audio, April). Meanwhile, Zuri had been lining up ants and bird food onto logs using tweezers very carefully. Weston moved Zuri's ants without asking and put the seed into a bowl.

Zuri: Heyyy! I put those there.

Weston: They're supposed to be in there Zuri.

Weston points to the bowl in the sand table.

Zuri: That's for the ants.

Weston: Ants don't eat that! Ants don't eat that.

Jason: Yeah! Ants don't eat birdseed. Birds eat birdseed. Let's get the ants some grass (Audio, April).

Zuri decided to move the birdseed back into the bowls and began to collect grass with Jason to feed the ants, even though ants do not eat grass, either. Although Zuri had participated in the same read-alouds with everyone else and knew that some birds eat birdseed while others eat bugs, she wanted to provide food for the ants as a part of her play. However, the boys were not allowing it and required her to be more accurate, even though their suggestion was a misunderstanding, too. Zuri, who seemed unphased at this encounter, decided to collect bits of grass with Jason so that the ants could still have food.

Through play, children negotiated what was truer to what they had been learning and what they understood about the world, even though all of them were incorrect about what ants ate. This illustrated how dialogism (Bakhtin, 1929/1984) does not always result in a correct answer, but rather presents multiple alternatives and considerations for members of a group. Despite Zuri's attempts at just making sure all of the insects and animals had food, Weston and

Jason established the need to be a more accurate. Zuri was provided alternative information that she chose to accept, but was a misunderstanding, too.

Finally, it was evident that peers' sharing of knowledge was important amongst the children and taken seriously, even if the communication amongst the children was not always linear and direct. Although they did challenge and question one another, like the scene above with Zuri feeding ants, more often than not, the children absorbed the understandings of those around them and used these to shape their own. On one occasion, Destiny was trying to make sense of a nonfiction book she was reading independently. The book contained a fold-out page that had a ruler on one side that extended up to 48 inches. The page was intended to show the reader how tall baby giraffes are when they are born. However, looking at this measurement was not enough for Destiny. She decided to lay down next to the book to see how big/small the giraffe was compared to herself (See Figure 5.13). Connor noticed her doing this and decided to help her.

Destiny: I go all the way to the branch!

Connor: Put your head down.

Destiny: I'm all the way to the leaf.

Connor: No, put your head down again. Put your head down.

Destiny puts head in her hands to lay down next to the book.

Connor: You're all the way up to here.

Connor touches page of book with his foot.

Connor: 12. All the way up the 1200.

Destiny: I know.

Connor: The 1200 shark?

Destiny: Yes.

Connor: The elephant is 100 feet. This is 400 (Video, April).

Figure 5.13: Destiny and Connor Measuring Height

The book's extended page opening was designed to inspire a creative reading and meant to help readers more concretely understand the relative size of some animals. Destiny took on this opportunity but also wanted to know how she measured up against these same creatures. Connor's statement that 12 on the ruler becomes 1200 and Destiny's response, "I know" suggests that Connor has some misunderstandings about the information in the book, which Destiny presumably accepts. Even if she does not accept this understanding in her own mind, she signals to Connor that his understanding is agreed upon by them both by her comments.

Regardless, both Connor and Destiny are continuing to negotiate a variety of interactions with one another and relying on one another for information, even if this information is not particularly helpful for understanding the book. Although it is unclear what Connor and Destiny are actually taking away from this experience, it is clear that they value each other's thinking, they see each other as resources for learning, and it seems like they understand each other, or at the very least are saying what each other wants to hear as a way of supporting one another.

Even though the scene above illustrates some misunderstandings from nonfiction books, over time and by continuing to engage in these actions playfully, children try out different possibilities and pursue new actions. In trying these various possibilities and working together to make sense of what ants eat or how to properly read a measuring tape, they practice how to *do* things in a safe and acceptable environment. Each of these responses demonstrates children's attempts at making sense of nonfiction books and how children are connecting their understandings (or misunderstandings) with their world in tangible ways. Through play, children solidified some ideas, made conceptual adjustments for others, and worked through problems to move toward a more accurate, or at least academically acceptable, understanding of the world.

Blurring Real and Imaginary

As the children processed the nonfiction picturebooks, their play moved in and out of reality. For example, on the playground, Gavin was often seen playing "Eagle" as he flew around to visit other children and collect food to take back to his "nest," which was a half-dome jungle gym structure on the playground. One day in April, Gavin evolved the game to include zombies. The children liked to walk around "pretending" to be zombies with both arms outstretched and walking slowly. When I asked Mrs. Jones about the play, she said, "They started doing that around Halloween and never stopped. I don't care for it, but they aren't doing

anything wrong, so we usually let it go." (Written Observation, April). Gavin decided to combine the game he wanted to play (Eagles) with the game Elizabeth wanted to play (Zombies). When I asked him, he said,

> *Gavin: I'm sitting on a branch. And I'm going to fly down.*
>
> *Gavin waves his arms up and down as if he is flapping his wings as he goes to nest.*
>
> *Gavin: This is how we get it. This is actually just our backdoor.*
>
> *Moves arm in a triangle shape outlining one of the spaces on the play structure.*
>
> *Gavin: At night, there are zombies that come in an attack us!*
>
> *Ms. Courtney: Oh, my goodness!*
>
> *Gavin: But they always die because we always have that on there. So they can't really hurt us, because they die before they get to us. But those zombie angels, woah, they cannot die! So we have to feed them instead.*
>
> *Ms. Courtney: That sounds like a hard game.*
>
> *Gavin: I'm laser proof! I'm power proof. I was born the firstest. So I am just the power eagle. You know why I'm called the power eagle? Because it was my firstest. Every time people try to extroy [sic] me, destroy me, I never die. I just get more powers from them. I just it seems like they're being nice, but really they just get weak and weak and weaker* (Audio, April).

I was unable to capture video of this particular game because several students from another class on the playground also participated, but the Eagles (who were the children in the nest) used laser beams that came out of the palms of their hands to stop the Zombies (children outside of the nest) from coming into their home. Eagles would leave to go get food and supplies for the "baby eagles" and Zombies would chase them in a game of tag. This continued for about 20 minutes

before the children got called in to go inside. Although the game certainly included fictitious characters and information, Gavin used what he knew about eagles to design a game with his peers that several children delighted in playing.

Adapting new professions. One of the professions children tried to emulate in their play were those of trappers. After reading about how some scientists trap animals to do research on them in one of the National Geographic magazines Mrs. Burnette had in April, Hudson decided he was going to catch a bird outside. He was quickly followed by Jason and Maddox, with Weston following behind, saying, "I don't think this is going to work!" Weston was an avid hunter with his Dad and probably had the most background knowledge, though he did not share much of this with Hudson, Jason, or Maddox. Initially, Hudson stood in the middle of the garden outside of the classroom during Explorations with food in his hand. He told Jason, "I'm trying to stand really still!" (Audio, March). Jason decided that he didn't need to stand in the garden. He could just put out a bowl of birdseed and keep an eye on it when birds landed in it. After a few minutes, Hudson tried a new plan. He found a box and a stick and explained that he was going to prop the box upside down on top of the stick with birdseed under it. When a bird traveled into the box to get the birdseed, he would pull out the stick and the box would fall on the bird. After a few minutes, Jason gave up and went to play in the sand table. Hudson and Maddox, though, tried to "trap" a bird for the entire Explorations time. At the end of Explorations, Maddox admitted, "Being a trapper takes a lot of patience." The other boys nodded their heads in agreement (Written Observation, March).

In a similar but different way, Zuri spent numerous Explorations being a "birdwatcher." Although the students had learned about the word ornithologist and Maddox had admitted that he wanted to make that his career, Zuri said she didn't want to study birds, just to watch them. She

would spend her time outside in the garden with a set of binoculars around her neck, wandering around the areas with the most trees. One day, Zuri noticed a bird lurking in the big tree in the corner of the garden.

Zuri: Oh, my goodness! It's a red cardinal!

Ms. Courtney (Me): Gasp! I can hear him!

Zuri: He's a daddy!

Ms. Courtney: Yep, he's brightly colored, isn't he? Is there a nest? He seems angry at us.

Zuri: There's a nest up there!

Ms. Courtney: He's saying, 'Get away! My babies are here.'

Zuri runs to follow the bird.

Anna: There's a baby cardinal up there.

Zuri continues to follow the cardinal as it goes across the garden.

Ms. Courtney: Oh, there he goes! That was cool Zuri!

Zuri waves goodbye to the cardinal, turns around, and smiles (Video, April).

Zuri used her Explorations time to explore a new hobby and became the "expert" in class on which kinds of birds could be found in the garden. She applied information they had learned about the indigo bunting and how males are more brightly colored than the females (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989) to determine that the cardinal must be "the daddy! There must be a nest." Through her play and choices during Explorations, she was able to apply information the class had been learning about and practice how to be a birdwatcher.

Additionally, it was common for children to play school together during Explorations. One day in late May, I witnessed Clarence and Sally co-teaching Ariana and Anna about all things nonfiction. Sally read aloud the nonfiction big book by Denise Fleming (1991), *In the*

Tall, Tall Grass, which the class had read much earlier in the school year (Mrs. Burnette said in September). She pointed to the words, just like Mrs. Burnette does when she is teaching and even asked the children, "What do you notice?" which is a phrase Mrs. Burnette used a lot. Although Sally did not read this book traditionally, she engaged students in a discussion of what was taking place. Next was Clarence's turn to teach, and he decided to tell the class about the Big-Eared Bats. Clarence came across big-eared bats in *What if You Had Animal Ears?* (Markle & McWilliams, 2016). He immediately decided that he wanted to do his Expert Project on an unknown animal on the big-eared bat. As a part of his project, he built a habitat of what it looks like where the big-eared bat lives. Here, you can see him showing his habitat to Ariana and how surprised she is at some of the facts he is teaching her.

Figure 5.14: Sally and Clarence Being Teachers

Through this one afternoon of playing school, Sally and Clarence showed how students are absorbing and processing what it means to be a teacher. Clarence shared his hard work and learning with Sally and Ariana, while Sally emulated how to be a teacher through reading aloud a nonfiction big book and helped Clarence by holding open his habitat. Although the children

often did this with fiction books too, the addition of Clarence's project on bats was a thoughtful and very realistic action for a teacher. Through play, children are trying on new professions, sharing their experiences with those around them, and transacting with nonfiction books in a variety of ways.

Lastly, when local law enforcement came to Vehicle Day in late May to talk to students about their jobs and show the different kinds of transportation they used, multiple students pointed out how "They use 4-Wheelers just like Weston!" In January, when the children did Expert Projects on a passion of their choosing, Weston chose to do his project on 4-Wheelers. He brought in three different books he read about 4-Wheelers (two of which he features images from on his poster board), dressed up with the safety gear people on 4-Wheelers wear, and even had a video of his Dad driving around his neighborhood on a 4-Wheeler. In Figure 5.15, you can see copies of some of the nonfiction books about 4-Wheelers Weston read in preparation for his project.

Figure 5.15: Weston Sharing His 4-Wheeler Project

He brought these books into the classroom to share with the students in addition to sharing information with them through the presentation of his Expert Project.

When the children saw the 4-Wheeler several months later, they immediately connected it with Weston's project. Kingston said, "Theirs looks just like that one in the book you shared!" Weston, grinning, raised his eyebrows really high and said, "I know!" (Written Observation, May). Although this event was not documented formally by any of the teachers and no assessments asked questions about 4-Wheelers, this moment showed how students were constantly connecting their lived experiences to nonfiction books they had read or seen, and in turn how these books shaped each other's conversations and informed the experiences they had in the world. It also showed how real people used the information they were learning and had similar interests to the children in the class. At the end of the law enforcement visit, Maddox actually said, "I want to do that for my job!" and he pointed to the 4-Wheeler with a big smile on his face.

Going to pretend places. While the examples shared above show how students are processing facts and applying what they have learned, students would incorporate true things they had learned into their play, but also adapt their play to include non-real events and fictional elements. Paley (1990) stated, "Pretend" often confuses the adult, but it is the child's real and serious world, the stage upon which any identity is possible and secret thoughts can be safely revealed" (p. 7). Although students were incorporating information they had learned together in their play, and at times adults were uncomfortable or interrupted when their play traveled into the "pretend" places (See Authoritative Discourses below for more detail), the findings from this study show that the children were intentionally experimenting with the world, both real and unreal, through their play and this, in turn, affected how they made sense of what they learned together as a class.

When Maddox discovered he was going to New York City, he used the knowledge of Lucas and Weston to figure out what the city might be like, what he should expect, and what he would get to see. This begun by reading a nonfiction book together and extended into Explorations when the boys decided to build a replica of New York City on the light table. Lucas decided he wanted to read with Maddox because he was "going to New York City" as well. In reality, Lucas would be visiting his Dad for Spring Break, who did live in a major metropolitan area, but not New York City. Throughout the reading of the book *New York City,* written by Paula Hannigan and illustrated by Shannon Chandler (2012), and later during Explorations, Lucas continued to repeat over and over again, "Maddox and Me are going to New York City!" He even crafted a part of their play where "Maddox is getting there by plane. I am going by train!" Maddox told Lucas when he would be going so that Lucas could "Tell his Mom!" (Video, March). Later, however, when Weston tried to introduce a giant penguin into the city, Maddox and Lucas would not let him incorporate the stuffed animal because, "There aren't penguins in New York City!" Through reading nonfiction together and play the boys shared information about famous sights such as Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, and skyscrapers. They created a story about police officers looking for bad guys and all three boys helping the police, even though there were no police officers in the book they read. Together, children negotiated which facts they would consistently hold on to and which they would suspend, similar to how readers must determine for themselves what is real and what isn't as they negotiate books.

Lastly, early in February, I observed Callie and Elizabeth building a space ship out of Magna-tiles to go to space in. They had found a book in the hallway about Mae Jemison earlier in the week and wanted to play out what going to space might be like in their own way. The

challenge was, although the girls saw and talked about the book briefly (the class was coming from Computers back to class), they did not actually get to read the book. Still, Elizabeth actually said when they started, "Let's pretend like we are going to space!" Callie jumped on board, "Yes!" Although their spaceship was not accurate- it had a parking spot for cars and a hot tub- the girls' characters blasted off into space and explored other places that were "so cold!" and "everything is frozen!" (Video, February). In Figure 5.16, you can see Callie fixing the smaller rocket the girls designed to move more easily compared to their "Space house," which is the structure with the A-frame roof in the background near Callie.

Figure 5.16: Callie and Elizabeth Creating Outer Space

The girls did not have much information about what going to space entailed, but they incorporated this into their play and showed how students use play to help them create new possibilities, adapt to new scenarios, and imagine a new future for themselves. This example illustrated how children tried on new roles through play inspired by nonfiction books, even if their understandings of those roles and what they included were still being developed. Through play, these girls were able to collectively share knowledge and apply what they witnessed in nonfiction books into their own lives, both real and imagined.

Paley (2009) reminds us, "Play is the serious and necessary occupation for children…Play is, in fact, a complex occupation, requiring practice in dialogue, exposition, detailed imagery, social engineering, literary allusion, and abstract thinking" (pp. 122-123). These examples emphasize the seriousness of play for children as they "try on" new professions and travel to far off lands. Kindergartners continued to negotiate with those around them what these professions might entail or what it might be like to visit these places, both real and imaginary. The social engineering required of these scenarios and their connection with the whole class read-alouds highlight how discursive children's processing of the world is and how this processing can be visible in children's play.

Overarching Takeaways

When I asked children about the differences between reading books and playing, most children acknowledged that they were very different. Still, in both reading and in playing, students were seen transacting with texts in multimodal ways as they were using all of the information available to them to make sense of their worlds, and they were anticipating the responses and needs of those around them. Children communicated using the discourses of their heteroglossia and transacted based on the lived experiences they brought to a text; in play, both discourses and transactions converged. Additionally, through play, children learned to navigate and negotiate the heteroglossia and transactions of others. This negotiation, when privileged and encouraged, resulted in a dialogic, enjoyable experience that generated understanding. In the following sections, I highlight how the examples I have discussed throughout this chapter illuminate how the distinctions between reading and play were blurred in this Kindergarten classroom and how the children negotiated the available discourses to them amongst each other and within the larger educational institution of school. Finally, I discuss how the continual

tension between internally persuasive discourses and authoritative discourses was evident as children moved back and forth between what they "should" be doing during play, to what they actually wanted to do, and a negotiation of how members of the classroom could approach play in schools.

Play as Transactions with Nonfiction

I observed children looking at one another as they played to see how they would react to different scenarios that they came up with by making facial expressions, telling each other if things did not go as planned, usually with a "STOP!" (e.g., Destiny and Kennedy reading with Gavin) or by leaving the play scenario entirely. These anticipations occurred not only through language, but also through body posture, gestures, and eye contact in particular. Children also often connected aspects of their play to the whole group read-alouds of nonfiction books and to the course content. Since, "Children construct their own understandings as a result of opportunities to learn, they do not shy away from complexity, and they bring their unique stories of knowledge with them to school" (Doyle, 2013, p. 637), it was evident that children used their knowledge of the world, both real and perceived, to inform their design of play experiences, to connect socially with one another, and to continue to negotiate their understandings of the world. While the children's transactions were evident in the products they created as a part of the class, they also frequently appeared in conversations, in noticings as they looked through other books, or events during the school day that sparked a response, but often went unnoticed.

Play provided a space to observe children's heteroglossia without interruption, but also brought to light the dissonances that existed between children's understandings of the world. When the children pushed back against one another's thinking (e.g., Maddox and Lucas correcting Weston about New York City, Hudson correcting Jason about penguins), relied upon

someone else, or corrected someone, they shifted the thinking of those around them and themselves simultaneously. Throughout the semester, the students consistently showed that they were connected with nonfiction books through their play, often using play to help them sort through the information and to create new understandings, though not in a linear way. Sometimes the connection was clearer, like when Callie and Elizabeth became astronauts the same day they saw the Mae Jemison book, but other times were more speculative, like when Joseph decided to become a chicken two months after the bird study had ended. Rosenblatt (1938/1978) described, "A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in a relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols" (p. 18). If we consider transactions as activities in relationship to a text, much of the work the children did through their play could also be considered transactions.

Discussions, too, had in class from nonfiction books were woven throughout the day, sometimes with the prompting of the teachers, but more often than not without any prompting by adult figures. Just like readers continually seek to make sense of the symbols on the page (Dorn & Soffos, 2009), so, too, do children continually seek to understand the discourses they hear. These discussions and playful transactions, then, became a part of each individual's heteroglossia. The conversations and negotiations the children had with those around them added to their understandings of the world, and these understandings became information that they could connect to and use in future readings and in their play. The children's transactions with nonfiction books and play, then, mutually informed each other through a cyclical process. As the children would read nonfiction books and negotiate their understandings with one another, this information entered into their play scenarios. Within their play, children continued to refine understandings, absorb information from those around them, learn new vocabulary, and

physically experience movement that corresponded with the play. These multimodal transactions became a part of how the children understood the world and refined the information they obtained from reading nonfiction through play.

Authoritative Discourses in Play

Even in play, the tensions between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses were evident. Although Bakhtin does not discuss issues of "truth" in his work, he does describe a unifying discourse of language that is always "posited and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (p 270). Rather than emphasizing the varied and complex ways of thinking about the world, authoritative or unifying discourses seek to simplify and present one understanding. In this Kindergarten classroom, I identified these unifying discourses as being discourses of school, discourses of the role of the teacher, and discourses about what counts as reading and what is considered play.

Discourse of school. In schools, authoritative discourses are often provided as historical narratives that continue to be replicated, despite inaccuracies. These narratives are reproduced by curriculum requirements that emphasize the skills or experiences of students from certain backgrounds while ignoring or minoritizing other's strengths. Traditionally, teachers are assumed to provide information for students that make them "good citizens" of the world and indoctrinate children into the accepted ways of society (Althusser, 2006). The play of this classroom disrupted this discourse of school and learning, as there are no mandated standards that require that play is integrated into the school day of young children (Miller & Almon, 2009; Sherwood & Reifel, 2013), but authoritative discourses were still always present. When I asked Mrs. Burnette why she prioritizes play in the classroom, she said,

> People think it's just play, like sometimes people will come into evaluate and they're like, you're just reading a book. Well actually that some of the most important things we do and then we learn through everything. And so, um, so some play I do worry a little bit about and think, ah, that's just, but um, you know, most of it, you can see how the kids view the world in your understandings and the connections they make between one thing to the other and, and their interests that they go to (Initial Interview).

Although Mrs. Burnette had witnessed the many benefits of allowing children to experience play daily in her classroom (internally persuasive discourses), she admitted that she usually always does Explorations at the end of the school day because the children were not able to focus on anything more academic at that time of day and that she was hesitant to do so with visitors in her class (authoritative discourses), which shows how she has internalized these discourses. She also admitted that her acceptance of play in the classroom had only developed within the past ten years of her teaching. She said, "I used to think children weren't doing anything when they played except developing social skills. But now I notice so many things they are figuring out as they play" (Initial Interview). Despite the children clearly enjoying Explorations, winning teaching awards, and being a highly respected teacher, Mrs. Burnette still admitted to worrying about this time of day following the standards and being rigorous enough for the children, even in Kindergarten.

These opposing discourses warranted a constant negotiation from Mrs. Burnette of following what she had experienced compared to what she is told learning should look like in classrooms. Explorations was a loud time of day where children really took control of their own learning, and even though the teachers recognized the value of this for children, they admitted that it was not a traditional approach to schooling (for them). And yet, the findings of this

chapter show that even though the children were not provided instructions or a lot of oversight during Explorations they made connections to the content of the classroom, they transacted with numerous texts, and they used this time to continue to process their understandings of the world. Despite the authoritative discourses of school that say learning must look a certain way, the examples in this chapter show that children never stopped learning or negotiating meanings for themselves. These examples, then, demonstrate an internally persuasive discourse opposed to the discourse of schooling, which shows that children continue to read the world around them without standard curricula, worksheets, assessments, or even adult supervision.

Discourse of teacher. Similar to how Bakhtin (1929/1984) theorizes that our language always has both authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, the play that occurred in this Kindergarten classroom also reflected the simultaneous tensions between these discourses. Despite these authoritative discourses, though, the findings in this chapter demonstrate that children were still able to rely upon one another for meaning making and were engaged in multimodal transactions with nonfiction texts even when teachers were not watching. Often, teachers wound up interjecting into children's play, either correcting their thinking or asking questions that pulled the children out of their play (as shared on pp. 156-159). The tensions between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses in play were not unexpected but presented wonderings about what role teachers should have in children's play. Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones worked to provide interesting and relevant materials for children to engage with in the classroom, they allowed children the time and space to explore and play with these materials how they wanted, and they were far less rigorous about how children should move about the school which allowed for children to engage in conversations, play hopscotch, and connect with the birds they observed along the way. Still, when children engaged in play, it felt

like adults' interjections (a total of 7 out of the 53 moments of play I captured) took away from the play experience, rather than contributed to the scenario. Mrs. Burnette described this tension in an interview when she said, "The things they remember most is always the time they spend together. But it is hard because play is still looked down upon as not being 'real' learning" (Final Interview). Her comments demonstrate how Mrs. Burnette negotiated these tensions for herself, too, as she recognized the value play holds for children but also feels responsible for demonstrating "learning" to outsiders of the classroom.

Although the teachers (and myself) were well-meaning in our interruptions, my analysis of the play episodes emphasizes that leaving children to explore only the internally persuasive discourses amongst each other might be more productive for the children than trying to provide guidance or support from an authoritative figure. The comments of Mrs. Burnette, Mrs. Jones, and myself show how pervasive the authoritative discourses that learning must conform to societies' beliefs, which should be obtained through efferent readings of nonfiction. And yet, the desire of the children to play and learn from one another, to experience possibilities and discoveries together, and their willingness to explore options beyond the books, led to the children's understandings of nonfiction books and more. Just like language is rife with ideological becoming as one navigates various discourses, play and learning, then, also necessitates a negotiation of these discourses.

Discourse of reading and play. Lastly, authoritative discourses did not just come from teachers, but also from the children themselves. I observed many times when children used nonfiction books as an integral component of their play, whether it was laying a book out to measure themselves next to, using the book as a backdrop for the New York City scene they created, or where children physically turned the book into a puppet-like toy. However, when I

asked children if there were similarities between reading and play or books and toys, children vehemently said no. Hudson did admit, "Reading is like playing with your mind," which I found quite insightful, but every other child told me that playing involved toys without words and that with books you "just look at them" (Kennedy, Final Interview). This discourse about reading and books was in direct contradiction with what I witnessed in the classroom, but despite numerous observations of children incorporating books as a part of their play, for the children in this Kindergarten, the separation between reading and play and the discourses of each remained steadfast. The children were unwilling to disrupt the discourses of reading and play even in a classroom that encouraged and allowed them to do so.

In conclusion, the Kindergarten students of this classroom consistently responded to nonfiction texts in playful and multimodal ways without the prompting or supervision of adults. Together, children continued the dialogic and discursive process of making sense of these texts, and they negotiated new information between their internally persuasive discourses, the authoritative discourses they had been exposed to, and each other's heteroglossia. Play created a space where these discourses could be explored, where new possibilities could be imagined, and where students developed essential skills for reading. The multimodal communication and creation of life through play, together, shifted their previously held perspectives, at times, and afforded the children more nuanced understandings about the world. Thus, play, especially within the classroom structure of Explorations, was an essential site for young children's meaning making of nonfiction picturebooks.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END? OR THE BEGINNING

I entered into this research to help myself better understand the responses young children have to nonfiction picturebooks. I realized that, often, young children make sense of texts in ways that cannot be easily captured by standardized assessments and that play is often a vital component for children in making sense of the world. I approached this research thinking about Bakhtin's (1934/1981) notions of heteroglossia, which states that we borrow, regurgitate, and are shaped by the discourses we experience in the world. Additionally, I considered Bakhtin's dialogism, which emphasized that hearing many voices and discourses about a topic provides a more nuanced and well-rounded understanding of a topic and that we always communicate in response to and in anticipation of our context and those around us.

I also recognized that readers experience texts in complex ways that build upon their lived experiences in the world and shape the takeaways readers have about the texts (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Reader's approaches or stances to the books and the situations within which they read them also alters their understandings, so reading a nonfiction book because you are curious about a topic is different than reading a manual for a piece of furniture you are trying to build or a new piece of technology you are trying to use. Finally, I recognized that communication is never only verbal, but rather involves a variety of modal resources, including, but not limited to, facial expressions, hand movements, gazes, volume, etc. With all of these theories in mind, I entered this Kindergarten classroom in an attempt to better understand how young readers, collectively and individually, make sense of and respond to nonfiction picturebooks.

This case study of the meaning making that occurred in one Kindergarten class around nonfiction picturebooks was designed to help me answer the following overarching questions: *How do readers respond in multimodal ways to nonfiction children's literature, both individually and as a part of a collaborative learning experience, such as a whole group interactive read-aloud?*

1. *How do members of the classroom (children and teacher) transact with nonfiction picturebooks during whole group read-alouds to individually and collectively construct meaning?*
2. *What multimodal resources do readers (children and teacher) use to respond to and construct meaning from nonfiction picturebooks?*
3. *How do children's meaning making experiences with nonfiction picturebooks extend beyond the immediate read-aloud event, if they do? How might this meaning making occur during children's play?*

Through the use of audio recorded interviews of the teacher and students, video recordings of 24 whole group read alouds of nonfiction books, and by capturing photos and written observations, I began to see the ways in which the children's meaning making of nonfiction books was a social, discursive, and ongoing process. Children used what they knew about the world to share understandings with one another, to make connections, and to challenge each other with their thinking in the immediate, short-term context as well as the varied, long-term contexts in and out of the classroom when given the freedom to explore. The connections they made often took place days or weeks after the initial class read-aloud event occurred and were often not considered to be a part of any formal assessment.

Using Norris' (2019) approach to multimodal data analysis to help me select dialogic moments of nonfiction meaning making in the classroom, I transcribed these dialogic moments using Transana. As I coded the whole group read alouds and then the play episodes I had documented, I noticed several findings, including the social nature of reading, the connection between mind and body, the borrowing of each other's movements in addition to discourses, and new considerations for approaching nonfiction picturebooks. Within this final chapter, I revisit some of the findings of this research in relation to existing research. I also present implications for teachers, administrators, researchers, and readers and share aspirations for future research.

Discussion

In my discussion, I lay out some noticings that extend across my findings from both Chapters Four and Five.

Multimodal, Heteroglossic, and Dialogic Nature of Learning

My findings emphasize the dialogically multimodal nature of learning from all members of the classroom, but especially from the children learning from one another facilitated and modeled during the teacher's read-alouds. Throughout the study, children consistently chose to read with one another, they talked to one another throughout the whole group read alouds, and they played together in ways that continued their understandings. The examples I documented emphasize the dialogic relationships that exist in classrooms, sometimes aided by the design and structure of the teachers, but often instigated by the children themselves. Students, even those who said they preferred to read alone, were far more likely to read with a friend when given the option, and video analyses of these collective readings show how children were negotiating different meanings between each other and the nonfiction books, providing a polyphony of voices and discourses. Through these negotiations, children took away new information,

changed their perspectives at times, and better understood the complexities and variety of information available in the world. Ultimately, children were presented with numerous available discourses and made their own decisions about which discourses they chose to take up for themselves. Some work examining Bakhtin's concepts in classrooms has examined the ways teachers can create dialogic spaces in their classrooms (Fecho & Botzakis, 2011), but the findings from Chapter 4 and especially Chapter 5 emphasize how children created dialogic classroom spaces for themselves, too.

The heteroglossia of each member of the class (myself included) was apparent in every interaction that occurred in and out of the classroom. Although the influences of these heteroglossia, the volume of discourses present, and the ways they shift were not always verbalized, it was evident that children continued to process, edit, and re-understand the world as they engaged in reading nonfiction, in whole group read-alouds, and through play. Classrooms are unique spaces where a group of individuals continuously navigate ideological becoming (Fecho & Clifton, 2016), and my findings suggest that children engage in this work even when they are not prompted. Learning, growing, becoming is the task of readers and humans as they move through the world. This Kindergarten was a place where members brought their own understandings to share, but also considered the understandings of those around them and negotiated these various meanings for themselves as readers of nonfiction books.

Additionally, student's meaning making in this study showed a strong connection between the information they are processing and their physical movements or gestures in the classroom. Many scholars have cited the importance of the mind and body connection in learning (Braidotti, 2006; Grosz & Grosz, 1994; Minton, 2008), and yet, in reading education, we continue to emphasize the work children say or write, which overlooks the physical

movements children inherently do as a part of their reading process. Through movement, children make abstract concepts more real and understandable, they communicate with one another about new ideas they are still developing language for, and they enact the information they are receiving as a part of the meaning making process. They also use movement to anticipate what those around them will do, to show friendship or compatibility, and as a way to copy those around them as a part of their developing understandings. Mrs. Burnette used movement to model for children what they could do as readers, to direct children's attention to important components in the nonfiction books they read, to emphasize new vocabulary, and help children make sense of new concepts. The use of movement as a social tool for language, although not picked up by many scholars, aligns with Bakhtin's (1929/1984) notions of the actions of heroes in the novel, for he writes,

> Action is always highlighted by ideology, is always harnessed to the character's discourse (even if the discourse is as yet only a potential discourse), is associated with an ideological motif and occupies a definite ideological position. The action and individual act of a character in a novel are essential in order to expose- as well as to test- his ideological position, his discourse (p. 334).

Here, Bakhtin argues that we cannot only pay attention to the words individuals say but rather must also take into consideration their actions. In examining both action and discourses together, we can better understand someone's ideological becoming or negotiation of the world. The findings from this study support Hayashi and Tobin's (2015) contention that Bakhtin's theories should be applied to bodily techniques and emphasize the need for multimodal ways of thinking, teaching, and learning in the elementary classroom.

I began this dissertation by citing a poem from Elizabeth Herron that described how bodies are texts. The multimodal communication members of this classroom (the teachers, students, and me) support this belief and demonstrate the ways in which class members continually read each other's facial and body gestures as a part of their reading process. Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones read students' facial expressions, body movements, and gestures during whole group read alouds to gain a sense of what the children were processing and understanding, while simultaneously using these same resources to communicate themselves. Children read each other's bodies and anticipated their responses, similar to how readers examine texts and anticipate what is coming next. They also read the bodies of those around them to determine what was acceptable in certain contexts and to explore new possibilities for moving through the world. And, perhaps most important, the work children were doing through unprompted free play was dialogic, connected with numerous texts, and established new understandings for all of the children involved. Play allowed the Kindergartners to practice their reading of bodies as texts, and the result was a more dialogic response to the classroom content and each other.

Rethinking Nonfiction Reader Response

My findings suggest that reader response is not just verbal or written, but multimodal, and often occurs hours, days, even weeks after the reading event (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). Rosenblatt stated, "The reader of any text must actively draw upon past experience and call forth the 'meaning' from the coded symbols" (p. 22). If we consider reader's transactions with a text as extracting meaning from coded symbols, new understandings of how young readers, in particular, make sense of texts begin to emerge. Suddenly, Kennedy writing the phrase "A True Book" on the front cover of the book she wrote about her cousins does not just represent what Kennedy knows how to do as a writer, but also shows what she knows as a reader. She knows

that nonfiction picturebook creators put phrases like this on the front covers of books to signal to readers how they should respond to texts and consider the information they present in the book as real. When I asked Kennedy why she put this in her book, she said, "The readers need to know it's real! I want them to know these things happened. Other books do that, too" (Written Observation, April).

Responses to literature did not just occur during whole group read alouds or even during independent reading time, but also during classroom transitions, on the playground, in their writing, and during free play. These responses were sometimes caught by the teachers but often occurred when no adults were present or paying attention, and yet the children responded to these books thoughtfully. The Kindergarteners' responses to nonfiction books helped them connect with one another socially, they created spaces for children to learn from one another, and their ultimate takeaways of the nonfiction books were dependent upon the collective experience and heteroglossia of those around them. These findings are similar to those of other scholars that examine readers' collective responses to books (Adomat, 2005, 2009; Greeter, 2016, 2020; Sipe 1998, 2008), but have not been considered with nonfiction. Although Mrs. Burnette and Mrs. Jones influenced the way the children perceived and thought about the nonfiction books, so too did the responses of the children in the classroom.

Reading as play/play as reading. Throughout my data collection, I continually noticed similarities between the work children did during whole group read-alouds or during independent reading and their play. In both reading and play they made predictions, anticipated what was coming next, they determined what would make the most sense, and they took new information and negotiated it with their previous understandings of the world. Marie Clay (2001) defined a complex theory of literacy as,

> A message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced. It is complex because within the directional constraints of written language, verbal and perceptual behaviours are purposefully directed in some integrated way to the problem of extracting sequences of information from texts to yield meaningful and specific communications (p. 1).

Although the children were not directly dealing with books in their play unless they were reading together during independent reading time, if we think of reading as a message-getting, problem-solving activity there are similarities with the decisions children make as readers and decisions they must negotiate with each other through play. This finding extends the work of scholars such as Lee Galda and Anthony Pellegrini (1985), Deborah Rowe (1998), and Karen Wohlwend (2015) by demonstrating how engaging in play develops similar skills to literacy as a whole and more specifically, with regard to reading development. Both play and reading required similar processes children developed as they engaged in these tasks. When I asked Mrs. Burnette about her approaches to reading she said,

> Learning is social and I have come to believe that. It was not something that I was taught in my setting, but it's really true that kids whom we know if they're observing something and looking closely and talking. They're obviously learning things by the conversation. Reading is the same way (Final Interview).

While playing and reading are two different actions, my findings highlight the similarities between the two activities. Both reading and play required children to transact with texts, to read others and negotiate numerous understandings of the world, and to anticipate what would take place next. Chapter Four demonstrated how reading and transacting collectively always required dialogic and multimodal resources, while Chapter Five shows how children's play was perhaps

even more exaggerated with gestures, facial expressions, intonation changes, and energy. Both reading and playing were equally collective, discursive, and generative sites for meaning making, multimodal for the members of this classroom, and vital to the dialogic experiences that occurred throughout this research.

Aesthetic and efferent responses. The authoritative discourses about nonfiction books is that you read "true" facts in order to take away new information (Colman, 2007; Gewertz, 2012). Reader's responses to nonfiction should require an efferent stance (Galda & Liang, 2003), and many studies focus on readers navigating text structures (Belfatti, 2015; Bluestein, 2010; Chalpana, 2016) or conducting close readings (Cummins, 2013). Standardized tests require readers to answer questions about nonfiction texts, comprehension is determined by how well children can speak about a book after reading it, and teachers are meant to show children how to read nonfiction picturebooks with an efferent stance. Mrs. Burnette's focus during the dialogic read alouds continued to be efferent, even though the Kindergartners did not always approach nonfiction with this stance. Upon further reflection, it becomes clear that this, ultimately, is her job, as the standards require her to ensure that children "With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text" and "With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text" (CCSS, 2010).

However, throughout this study, the children continued to respond to these books in a plethora of ways and their responses included aesthetic as well as efferent stances towards the books. This was evident in their verbal responses such as cheering, gasping, or sighing, but was also in their gestures and facial expressions (e.g., Peyton cringed at the birds eating bugs (See Figure 4.6) or Clarence became a beaver (See Figure 4.11)) during the whole group read-alouds. Rosenblatt wrote, "I am not sure that all aesthetic reading excludes or is diametrically opposed to

an awareness of possible later usefulness or application" (p. 24), and yet, despite Rosenblatt's contention that every reader approaches a text on the continuum between aesthetic and efferent responses, it is evident that authoritative discourses privilege the efferent over the aesthetic when nonfiction books are involved.

Although authoritative discourses of schooling and how one reads nonfiction prioritize the efferent responses to nonfiction texts, the children did not assume that nonfiction meant their stance as reader should be efferent. While Mrs. Burnette often focused on efferent approaches to learning during her read-alouds and Explorations, she also accepted—if not encouraged—more aesthetic responses, too. As nonfiction picturebooks continue to evolve to include more formats (Smith & Robertson, 2019), a focus on the collective opinions of experts (Graff & Shimek, 2020), and more informational visuals (Rohloff & May, 2017), following the lead of the children and allowing transactions to exist on the continuum of efferent and aesthetic seems more important than ever.

Engaging in nonfiction read-alouds, too, creates an authoritative discourse about what books really mean or say, but evidence in Chapter Four suggests that children will still disrupt this belief. Even after Mrs. Burnette explained why the hummingbird was shown multiple times in *The Bird Alphabet Book* (Pallotta & Stewart, 1989), Joseph was unwilling to waver in his thinking about it being a bunch of birds "waiting in line." In play, children took charge of their own understandings and worked together to create social understandings that became the authoritative discourses, until someone else came along and challenged these. The reading of nonfiction, then, and indeed the learning process in general, is a continuation of questioning, refining, and reevaluating the authoritative discourses provided by school, teachers, adults, and even books.

Reconsidering Approaches to Teaching Nonfiction

Finally, my research questions the authoritative discourses of instructional practice that purport educators' facilitation of nonfiction texts with young children. Many scholars that examine nonfiction or informational texts emphasize the reader's need to examine text structures (Fisher & Frey, 2015; Kamberelis, 1999) and conduct close readings (Cummins, 2013) to fully understand a book, and usually recommend a linear process of: identify text structures, read headings, summarize main points of a paragraph, etc. But my findings suggest that understanding nonfiction books is not a linear process; instead, it is a process that requires readers to continually negotiate multiple sources of information over time and with the discourses and opinions of others. Although the information being read aloud to children was informative, the collective reading experience meant that children shared all information available to them, which included factual and fictional explanations for things. The children's ultimate takeaways from these read alouds were highly dependent upon the classroom conversations and often resulted in children responding to and listening to one another, even if their peers' suggestions were fantastical. Although Mrs. Burnette would disrupt the children's thinking occasionally, the children prioritized the meaning making that took place amongst their peers and, thus, often used their friends' understandings of the world to help them shape their own.

Mrs. Burnette, too, acknowledged how the children remembered and relied upon their experiences with each other, but this discourse opposes much of the research geared towards understanding how to teach nonfiction books to young readers (Bamford & Kristo, 2004; Galda & Liang, 2003), though is demonstrated by researchers of collective fiction reading (Adomat, 2009; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Sipe, 2008). While research continues to privilege how we learn to

extract information (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2009; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010), Mrs. Burnette recognized that the children each contributed understandings to the class and internalized the understandings of those around them. In this Kindergarten, reading any book- fiction or nonfiction- was a social act.

At times, children misunderstood the nonfiction books they read, but even these misunderstandings contributed to their overall learning and created a foundation of new vocabulary, of how to perform tasks (e.g., Destiny and Connor measuring), and how to obtain information from books. By engaging in the practice of asking questions, reading to answer their questions, and working together to solve misunderstandings, children were actively engaged in the reading and research process. Although they initially misunderstood the information in the nonfiction books, as they continued to engage in the reading and research cycle, it is possible that they would eventually refine their misunderstandings. Ultimately, it is the confluence of all of these understandings around a nonfiction book that creates a nuanced and complex understanding, and the children's responses reflect the polyphony of ideas and connections that existed in this classroom. Thus, this research adds to the field that highlights the social nature of responses to books, even nonfiction books (Greeter, 2016; Khieu, 2014).

Implications

Considering the overarching takeaways from this study, in the following sections I provide implications for teachers, administrators, and researchers.

Teachers

There are a variety of ways teachers could reconsider their practices based on this research. First, Mrs. Burnette shows how classrooms can remain student-centered and dialogic when reading nonfiction books in a whole group setting. Although the responses of the children

may not have been what Mrs. Burnette hoped for at times, she recognized that the evolving understandings of the books created spaces for children to continue to consider the efferent information over time and encouraged children to continue to make sense of these books as time continued. Teachers should encourage students to share their thinking with the whole class, respond positively to this thinking with comments such as, "it is so interesting you thought that" and "what do you notice?" Mrs. Burnette reminds teachers that "reading is social" (Final interview), and thus, we should continue to emphasize its social nature in our classrooms. She also reminds us that teaching is often about "trusting the process" and recognizing that every child comes to their own understandings in their own time. This belief is in conflict with the standardization of curricula and assessments but provides teachers with the knowledge that students are growing as readers, even if their growth cannot be directly quantified. Recognizing the learning children are doing beyond standardized assessments will require current or future teachers to reconsider what discourses they think of when they approach teaching nonfiction reading to children.

This research also demonstrates what happens when teachers broaden their understanding of reader response. If we consider reading to be a complex meaning making process and examine children closely as they go about their day (Owocki & Goodman, 2002), deep connections to books will appear. Additionally, teachers should think about what they examine as responses in their classrooms, and consider how readers' in the moment movements, gestures, and emotions can be meaningful responses to books of all kinds, even nonfiction. Instead of assessing a worksheet as an assessment for reading, teachers could document the work children are doing through weekly observations and use these observations as assessments. Noting what kinds of books children select, who they choose to read them with, what their body posture looks

like as they read, and how they acted as they read the book should be recorded as a part of these observations as well.

Also, teachers should not be afraid of incorporating nonfiction picturebooks into their classrooms or teaching, but rather should approach them in similar ways to their fiction texts. Nonfiction is engaging, aesthetically moving, and entertaining (Colman, 2007; Moss, 2003). Using it for read-alouds, encouraging children to come up with their own understandings, and engaging in meaningful whole-group discussions with nonfiction could be an essential component of every literacy block. Providing nonfiction in classroom libraries, in children's reading materials to take home, and as a way to find answers to children's questions is also important.

Finally, teachers should reconsider their approaches to behavior management in their classrooms and find ways to allow children to express themselves multimodally during whole group read alouds, even if this means that children may not be sitting or listening in the "correct" way. My findings in Chapter Four show how children use their bodies to help them make sense of texts and when we limit these or only allow certain kinds of movement, we limit the number of resources children can use to help them create new understandings of the world. Play, too, is necessary for any classroom, not only as a way for children to establish social relationships with one another but rather as a space children use to mediate their understandings about what the class is learning about and beyond. Teachers should create a space in their classroom schedules where children can explore free play with as little interruption from adults as possible, similar to Explorations. Although there were occasional arguments from children during their free play, for the most part, children learned to work together, they provided new information for one another, and they learned from those around them through the play scenarios they created about

the world. Lastly, teachers should record what children do during these playtimes to include in a child's assessments portfolio by taking photographs, video, and audio recording conversations. Children are engaged in deep thinking and responding to books during play; by recording these moments, teachers can demonstrate the complex meaning making children are engaged in without much interruption.

Administrators

Similar to the implications for teachers, administrators can advocate for and encourage teachers to approach reading aloud nonfiction texts in new ways by providing professional development, valuing the individual voices and connection of children and teachers even when they stray from conventional meaning making, and emphasizing the benefits of aesthetic and efferent responses to nonfiction. When administrators value the plethora of voices and ideas surrounding nonfiction, rather than purporting that there is one correct way of obtaining information, teachers can follow suit and create more dialogic classrooms spaces by allowing children to share their noticings and wonderings, even if they may not be what the teacher was expecting. Additionally, administrators need to recognize the valuable work children do through play and encourage play as an integral part of the school day (Louv, 2008; Paley, 1990, 2009; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

Administrators also need to recognize their own ideological becomings and negotiate for themselves the various discourses they are upholding. They are held to authoritative discourses of standardization, time management, and measurable progress (Egley & Jones, 2006; Foy, 2008), but they also have the option to follow their internally persuasive discourses and allow teachers the time and space to make their own decisions about curriculum, to follow the lead of the children, and to create fun and playful spaces for children to collaborate and learn from one

another, more authentic and complex learning can occur. With this is the need for administrators need to recognize the connections between the mind and body and encourage teachers to allow children to learn through movement in classrooms rather than focusing on children's actions as behavior problems. Although school needs to be a safe place for all children, when we limit children's actions to only sitting in certain ways, walking in certain ways, and playing in certain ways, we limit the meaning making abilities of children and the ability of children to process new information in necessary ways. Administrators need to recognize the educational benefits of having children respond physically to nonfiction books, but also to all other parts of the academic school day, and recognize children's actions as responses to learning, rather than as a distraction.

Researchers

The implications of this study for researchers are plentiful. First, scholars who use Bakhtin's (1934/1981) understandings of heteroglossia and dialogism should consider expanding their data to include the multimodal communications of their participants. Although research that explicitly examines verbal or written discourses is useful, a focus on heterocorporeality allows for a more complex understanding of human interactions. Second, although there is a long history of exploring the confluence of play and literacy, many of these studies emphasize play as a part of the writing process (Galda & Pellegrini, 1985; Rowe, 1998, 2019) but few explore how play connects with children's work as emergent readers (Wohlwend, 2008, 2015). In a world that continues to emphasize the failures of teachers to assist children in their development in reading (Cunningham, Peer, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004), highlighting the work children do as a part of their play that also connects to their reading development is paramount.

Finally, scholars of children's literature should reconsider previous approaches to nonfiction children's literature. These books are preferred by young children, are becoming increasingly engaging and dynamic, and require complex understandings and responses from readers (Gill, 2009; Graff & Shimek, 2020; Moss, 2003; Rohloff & May, 2017; Shimek, 2018). More work should be done to explore how young readers respond to nonfiction children's literature, and that helps update what traditionally is documented by researchers as reader responses, especially as we consider new literacies and multimodal ways of moving through the world. Readers are making brilliant connections to nonfiction texts every day, both through lived-in reading experiences and from information they take away from books. More research needs to be done that examines these complex stances toward nonfiction and pushes back against the authoritative discourses that currently exist around nonfiction picturebooks (Gill, 2009; Smith & Robertson, 2019; Yenika-Agbaw et al., 2019).

Future Research

This research is an exploration of the ways readers make sense of nonfiction books and the value of play in classrooms, as well as an opportunity to better understand the numerous ways children make sense of our world. However, like any research project, I am left with more questions than answers. This study highlights children's meaning making processes of nonfiction books, but as case studies are not directly generalizable (Stake, 1995), questions emerge about what this might look like in other classrooms, in other schools, in other cultural locations. In the future, I would like to continue to explore how nonfiction is used in other classrooms, both at the Kindergarten level and with older children. Because many of my participants were not reading conventionally and were still developing the discourses of schooling, they relied heavily upon each other for making sense of texts. In classrooms where

students are reading conventionally and/or have been more acculturated to the authoritative discourses of schooling, is this still the case? Additionally, I wonder about how readers respond to nonfiction after they have been exposed to the authoritative discourses of nonfiction and how it "should" be approached by readers. Will readers who have been exposed to this discourse more frequently still respond to nonfiction in aesthetic ways? What does their meaning making process look like?

As a former preschool teacher, I experienced some of the wonder and amazement children had during whole group nonfiction read alouds. I, too, noticed that children took these ideas into their play and used play to negotiate understandings with one another. I purposefully chose a classroom where Explorations (free play) was a regular part of the school day, but I am left wondering what this meaning making through play might look like in classrooms that do not encourage children to have these experiences. How do children create playful spaces for themselves within or against institutional discourses? What can these moments of play demonstrate about children's meaning making processes, and how might these discursive moments contribute to their academic development?

I also plan to study children's meaning making of books and reading through their play. For every documented response to nonfiction books through play I found, there were equal responses to fiction books throughout their play as well. For example, after Mrs. Jones read *The Boxcar Children* by Gertrude Chandler Warner (1942) aloud to the students, almost the entire class played "Boxcar children" on the playground and during Explorations. While I did not formally document this play because it did not revolve around nonfiction books, it does suggest that studying children's connections between play and reading are evident regardless of genre. I would like to conduct research that asks the questions: How are children responding and using

books of all kinds in their play? What does this play illuminate about children's meaning making process, and how does this support the work they do as readers?

Finally, I would like to continue to explore how young children process understandings of nonfiction for themselves through a variety of responses that are inherently multimodal. This study has emphasized for me the complex and meaningful responses children have to all kinds of texts, but especially to nonfiction. What can these responses show us, as teachers, as researchers, as teacher educators, about how we should encourage readers to approach nonfiction texts, and how can we move beyond strategies for close reading as examples of teaching with nonfiction? How can we re-conceptualize how we use nonfiction in our classrooms and what we accept as reader responses to nonfiction?

Mostly, as I continue upon this journey, I would like to continue to conduct research that privileges the work teachers and children are doing well and highlight the complex and nuanced natures of both teaching and learning, recognizing that everyone is both a learner and a teacher. Classrooms are unique places where individuals from a variety of walks of life with varied experiences come together to make sense of common texts. Clearly, the layers of meaning making for readers of all books, but especially of nonfiction, are complex. I plan to follow Mrs. Burnette's mantra of "trust in the process" to better understand and emphasize the complicated and intricate reading as meaning making process young readers engage in continually throughout their lives.

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APPENDIX A

Map of Classroom and Filming Position

APPENDIX B

Nonfiction Books Read-Aloud by Mrs. Burnette

(In alphabetical order)

* Connotes that these read-alouds were selected as inspiring dialogic events

Brown, M. (2016). *Lesser spotted animals*. Oxford, UK: David Fickling Books.

*Drew, D. (1992). *Animal acrobats*. Rigby Leveled Readers. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers.

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*Ward, J., & Jenkins, S. (2014). *Mama built a little nest*. San Diego, CA: Beach Lane Books.

*Williams, R., & Howe, P. (2007) *A beaver tale*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Publishing.

APPENDIX C

Teacher Interview Questions

Questions for Initial Teacher Interview
(Semi-structured interview. Approximately 90 minutes).

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me today! As you know, I am interested in the meaning making that occurs during whole group read alouds, particularly with nonfiction picturebooks. I am conducting this interview with you today to get a better sense of how you describe your teaching philosophy, how you plan out your lessons, how you teach reading, and finally how you incorporate nonfiction into student's daily lives.

1. Let's begin at the beginning. Will you tell me a bit about your teaching philosophy please and how you would describe your classroom to others?
2. How do you determine what you will teach each month? How do you determine what you will teach specific to reading each month?
3. What formal reading assessments are you required to give students and how often do you administer these?
4. How do you incorporate the State standards and the district mandates into your planning?

Thank you for telling me about some of the nuts and bolts of your classroom. Now I am curious about what you prefer to teach and why.

5. What would you say is your favorite subject area to teach? Why?
6. What is your favorite unit of study that you have done so far? Will you tell me a bit about what your class did for this unit? Why is this your favorite?
7. Which subject area do you prefer to teach most? Which subject area do you least prefer to teach? Why?

Now that I know about how you teach and what you prefer to teach most, I would like to know a bit more about how you conduct read alouds and select books for your classroom.

8. Why do you engage your students in whole group read alouds regularly?
9. What do you think about when you are conducting a whole group read aloud? Are there specific goals you are trying to focus on or things you want the students to learn?
    a. If so, how do you decide upon these goals?
10. How do you decide which books to read aloud to the whole class?
11. What kinds of books do you make sure you have available to students for every school year?
12. What kinds of books are you noticing this class in particular gravitating towards? Which books have they seemed to enjoy the most?

Finally, I had a few questions about how you incorporate nonfiction into your classroom.

13. Do you prefer the term nonfiction or informational? Which term do you use most in your classroom? Why?
14. What is your understanding of the term nonfiction? How do you determine if a picturebook is nonfiction?
    a. It would be helpful for me to have an example or two. Do you have any examples of nonfiction picturebooks easily accessible or know any titles off the top of your head?
15. How do you use nonfiction picturebooks in your classroom?
16. How often would you say you read aloud nonfiction picturebooks to your class, if you do?
17. (If teacher does read aloud nonfiction…) Do you approach reading aloud nonfiction picturebooks differently from fiction picturebooks? If so, how?
18. How do students respond when you read aloud nonfiction picturebooks?
19. What are some of the benefits you notice from reading aloud nonfiction picturebooks to your class? What are some of the challenges you notice from reading aloud nonfiction picturebooks?
20. Do you think these read alouds affect other parts of the school day? If so, how?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share with me on any of the topics we have discussed today?

Thank you so much again for your time. What you have shared today has been helpful. If you think of anything else related to this topic, please feel free to share it with me.

Questions for Post Teacher Interview:

(Semi-structured interview. Approximately 60 minutes)

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me again. I would like to begin by clarifying some of your read-aloud and teaching reading practices, specifically with regard to nonfiction.

1. What do you use to gauge children's understandings of your read alouds? When do you know you've been successful?
2. What is the most challenging part of teaching nonfiction? What is your goal for these readers with regard to nonfiction texts?
3. What do you notice young readers struggling with most when it comes to nonfiction books? How do you help them overcome this?
4. What do you wish other people knew about using/teaching nonfiction with young children?

Now I would like to focus our attention toward some of my noticings about the role of play in your classroom curriculum.

5. To me, it feels like I have observed the children often blurring the boundaries between play and reading. How do you see the separations between play and reading in general and in your classroom?
6. It feels as if a lot of the meaning making children do is not captured by the formal assessments you have to complete. Do you document what takes place during Explorations in any way? How do you reconcile the differences between what you observe regularly and the assessments you are required to conduct with the children?

7. How have you noticed the children's play evolved over the course of this school year?
8. What do you notice about the children's play in First grade as opposed to their play in Kindergarten?

There are a few other noticings I have about the classroom that I am wondering. These are broader in scope.

9. Families seem to be really involved in the children's learning in the classroom. Can you tell me about how you help families connect what they are doing with your curriculum? What benefits and challenges do you have with engaging families in the classroom?
10. I know you will be teaching these children again next year. How does your curriculum shift or alter? How do you balance the freedom you want to provide children with increased academics in First grade?
11. What are you goals for these students in First grade?

Lastly, I have just a few questions in general to ask about his project.

12. Do you think you have changed or altered anything about your teaching as a result of my presence in the classroom?
13. Have you noticed anything different about the children since I have become a part of the classroom?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about my dissertation, your literacy practices, or your teaching in general?

Again, thank you for allowing me to become a part of your classroom and to witness all of the wonderful learning that takes place in this space. If you think of anything else, will you please continue to reach out and share these with me?

APPENDIX D

Child Interview Questions

Initial Interview Questions for Student
(Semi-structured. Approximately 10 minutes.)

1. Tell me about yourself as a reader. What kind of books do you like to read?
2. Would you rather read to yourself or with others?
    a. Who do you like to read with most? Why?
3. Do you read books at home? (If so) What kind of books?

Go through book box with child. Record the book titles.

4. Tell me about the books you have in your book box right now.
5. How do you decide which books go in your book box?
6. What do you like to read that isn't in your book box?
7. I noticed you have (A lot, some, none) nonfiction books. Do you like reading nonfiction books? Why or why not?
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about reading?

Final Interview Questions for Student
(Sem-structured. 7-10 minutes.)

1. How do you know if a book is nonfiction or not? What do you look at in books to decide if it is nonfiction?
2. Do you read nonfiction books the same way you read fiction books or differently?
    a. If different, how so?
3. Does Mrs. Burnette read nonfiction books the same way she reads fiction books? How does she read them?
4. What do you do as a writer to help your readers decide if your book is nonfiction or not?
5. Do you ever play with books? Can you play with books?
6. Is there a difference between reading and playing? How do you know?
7. How are books similar to toys? How are they different?
8. Can you use a book like a toy? Can you use a toy like a book?