

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: EXAMINING THE LITERACY EXPERIENCES
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS DISPLACED BY
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The purpose of this study was to examine how five African American middle school students, who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represent their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement.

Specifically, the two research questions were: (a) What are the stories that these middle school students tell about their lives, before, during, and after their displacement, and (b) What do their stories reveal about their literacy experience before, during, and after their displacement?

Narrative Inquiry was the chosen methodology for the study, which allowed the participants to tell their experiences from a first-person perspective. It also encouraged the participants to reflect upon these experiences, in order to give meaning to their thoughts and emotions. Employing a critical lens and perspective, I constructed a narrative profile for each participant, which was then analyzed using these methods. Each narrative profile detailed the literacy experiences of the participants before Hurricane Katrina, during the transition period, and current literacy experiences now that the participants are resettled and attending school in the host city. These data were supplemented by archival data such as report cards, individual education plans (IEPs), and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores.

Data analysis of the five participants' literacy experiences revealed common themes. These participants have pleasant memories of school literacy before the storm

and mentioned “choice” as a component of those experiences. During the transition period, few or no literacy experiences took place. Hence, there were missed opportunities for the participants to use literacy experiences to make connections to their new world. Participants reported current classroom and school experiences were controlled environments that led to controlled literacy experiences. This compartmentalization of literacy experiences is not consistent with the critical literacy perspective adopted in this study. Their interviews suggested that they that they saw no connection between school literacy and their literacy experiences outside school.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast Region of the United States. The storm traveled north along the Louisiana-Mississippi border with winds over 140 mph and storm surges that measured from 20 to 30 feet (Picou & Marshall, 2007). Katrina brought catastrophic winds, record rainfall, and storm water damage, followed by the collapse of major canal floodwalls allowing water to fill “the bowl”--New Orleans-- in about 80% of the city (Colten, Kates, & Laska, 2008). These factors combined caused the levees, which protected the city of New Orleans, to break on August 31, 2005 (Hoff, 2005).

Hurricane Katrina has since been deemed the costliest natural disaster to hit the United States (U.S.) in history. Katrina’s economic impact may exceed \$300 billion dollars, far surpassing Hurricane Andrew’s \$35 billion dollars as the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history (Picou & Marshall, 2007). The catastrophic damage unleashed by Katrina caused flooding and/or structural damage to the homes of 2.5 million people (Gabe, Falk, McCarty, & Mason, 2005). As a result of Katrina, New Orleans lost almost half of its population to other geographic regions in the U.S. (Synder, 2007). The devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent breach of the levees in New Orleans has caused the largest migration of people in the United States since the Dust Bowl movement of the 1930s (Regan, 2007, p. 2). Six years later, more than a third of the city’s pre-Katrina population still has yet to return.

The real damage left by any disaster, however, is found in the disruption in the lives of those who endure it (Regan, 2007, p. 15). This devastating hurricane not only sent all of the citizens of New Orleans running for their lives, it also dispersed thousands

of school-aged children throughout the country. In fact, over 300,000 students were displaced and evacuees relocated throughout the U.S. (Picou & Marshall, 2007). The interruption in these children's lives has been extraordinary (Colten et al., 2008). All of their traditions, customs, and ways of doing things were suddenly disrupted, never to be experienced in the same way again. The stories of these children have not yet been fully documented.

In July 2005, a month prior to Katrina, New Orleans boasted a population of 454,000 (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, [NOAA], 2009). According to postal service data and utility service accounts, the city's population reached only 240,000 in July 2008 (NOAA, 2009). This staggering statistic suggests one question: Where are all of the people?

Many of the citizens of New Orleans who evacuated the city remain in the places where they scattered during the storm. Some wrestle with the question whether to return home--and to what. Others found a better quality of life outside the Crescent City. For example, in cities such as Atlanta, Birmingham, Houston, and Dallas, New Orleans residents found opportunities to enhance their livelihoods and lifestyles in communities with lower crime rates, healthier economies, and higher quality schools.

Though better in many ways, the city infrastructures in these new environments stand in stark contrast to their way of life back home, where the city was once called, "the murder capital of the country" and where much of the economy was based on tourism. This poses a crucial mismatch between these people who were displaced and their new environments, where lifelong literacy learning and professional occupations in the corporate world, based on advanced degrees and formal educational attainments were encouraged.

Statement of the Problem

While decades of research on natural and technological disasters may help us understand the short-term and potential long-term human impacts of Hurricane Katrina, aspects of this disaster, such as uncertain future, poverty, low literacy are unique (Picou & Marshall, 2007). First, in contrast to other recent natural disasters, many people displaced by Katrina were relocated for an indefinite period of time with no knowledge of when they could return home or if, in fact, they had a home to return to (Spence, Lachlan & Burke, 2007). Many of these were school-aged children. Hurricane Katrina resulted in the massive displacement of over 348,000 K-12 students and their families to school districts throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama (Picou & Marshall, 2007). Second, the plight of poor children was graphically exposed on the Gulf Coast during Hurricane Katrina (Ward & Shelley, 2008). Displacement can affect students in poverty even more profoundly than others (Ward & Shelley, 2008). The detrimental effects of relocation have been noted extensively; minority children and children in poverty were disproportionately represented among displaced students (Ward & Shelley, 2008). Third, widespread illiteracy and the general low performing schools in New Orleans contributed to the uniqueness of the Katrina situation. More than 40% of New Orleans' adults lack the formal literacy skills to comprehend basic government forms (Synder, 2007). To put this into perspective, it means they can locate an expiration date on medicine, but cannot fill out motor vehicle forms. They would typically not be using literacy for self-fulfillment or for social justice. Because jobs in the current economy and the demands of active citizenship involve increasingly complex reading and writing skills, illiteracy among these displaced people would be a significant disadvantage in their new communities. Even functional literacy levels would not be

enough to help these people build fulfilling lives as productive citizens in these new communities.

Many literacy educators argue that the goal of literacy education for everyone should be critical literacy. Critical literacy or literacy for social action highlights power relationships that exist in society and empowers literate people to challenge the status quo. This school of thought is based on the work of Freire (1970). From this perspective, we see literacy as a tool citizens may use to negotiate, navigate, and face challenges in their lives, attempting to make sense of their worlds through reading and writing. Because critical literacy enables us to question the status quo, reflect on present-day situations, and act in order to enhance our life experiences, it connects students to social and cultural realities. Therefore, it is of particular interest in the lives of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Published literature about Katrina evacuees is silent about the potential of literacy as a vehicle or tool for negotiating the transitions involved in this displacement. This study investigated what students, who were displaced because of Hurricane Katrina reported about their use of literacy. What will happen to these students after Katrina, having found themselves in a dramatically different community and school contexts? More specifically, what are their literacy experiences?

In a fast-moving global economy, where literacy is highly valued, literacy educators and other interested stakeholders need to understand the effects of the displacement on students throughout the world, including the reading and writing experiences of these students. In addition, those who are interested in the phenomenon of literacy and displacement need to understand what those who are displaced report about their literacy experiences. For these reasons, this study concentrated on African

American students who were residing in New Orleans prior to the storm, displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and who are now attending schools in host cities. Also important to the field of education, this study adds to the limited research on the influences of displacement on literacy experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine the literacy stories in the lives of students who left New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing floods. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine how five African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represent their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement.

In order to have a clearer picture of the literacy experiences of these students, particularly whether or not they have used or are using literacy as a vehicle or tool for negotiating the dramatic transitions they have experienced in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, this study examined the literacy narratives of these five participants. These stories yielded detailed descriptions of the students' literacy and related life experiences. Narrative research was chosen because this approach is effective in becoming intimate with and understanding the human experience by gaining insight into their lives, with respect to their individual experiences (Cole & Knowles, 2001). A more detailed explanation and rationale for the choice of narrative inquiry is included in Chapter 3.

Rationale for the Study

The destruction that occurred to the Gulf Coast region of the U.S. during Hurricane Katrina far surpasses the physical realm; however, most of the research studies related to Hurricane Katrina are coming from the physical, psychological and medical journals, not educational studies. This study is significant to educational researchers and practitioners for several reasons.

First, Katrina was one of the deadliest and most destructive hurricanes in U.S. history, with over 1,000 deaths and estimated damages ranging from \$100 billion to \$200 billion (Gotham, 2007). Second, the hurricane caused catastrophic property damage along the Gulf Coast with approximately 90,000 square miles of the region designated as federal disaster areas, an area almost as large as the United Kingdom (U.K.) (Gotham, 2007). Third, Katrina forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of residents from southern Louisiana and Mississippi including nearly everyone living in New Orleans and the surrounding suburbs (Gotham, 2007). In fact, over one million people including 372,000 school-aged children were displaced. This large number alone distinguishes this disaster from any other U.S. hurricane (Pfefferbaum, Houston, Wyche, Van Horn, Reyes, Slaughter, & North, 2008).

In the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season, the state of Texas, in particular, was inundated with students who were displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Texas absorbed about a quarter of a million evacuees in a matter of days (*The Lancet*, 2005). The school districts have reported 40,200 students have enrolled in Texas schools (*The Lancet*, 2005). In addition, as indicated on distributed surveys, many of the people who were displaced have no plans of returning to New Orleans (Regan, 2007, p. 20). The

stresses associated with a disaster are typically more severe and sustained for children who are forced to evacuate their homes (Ward & Shelley, 2008).

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

Critical theory was the conceptual framework for this study. This theory is based on the work of Freire, Giroux, McLaren, Shor, Luke and others. Among these theorists, a focus on literacy is common because literacy is such an important tool for democratic social action. Critical theorist Freire (1970) defines literacy as “not merely a technical skill to be acquired, but as a necessary foundation for cultural action for freedom; a central aspect of what it means to be a self and socially constituted agent.” Most importantly, literacy for Freire is inherently a political project in which men and women assert their right and responsibility not only to read, understand, and transform their own experiences, but also to reconstitute their relationship with the wider society. In this sense, literacy is fundamental to aggressively constructing one’s voice as part of a wider project of possibility and empowerment (Freire, 1970). Literacy for critical theorists is a counter hegemonic activity. It is active in the sense that it is also a freeing of one’s self from the unyielding grasp of dominant narratives (Morrell, 2003).

Typically, critical theorists view literacy as a socio-cultural practice. The socio-cultural approach to literacy teaching and learning defines literacy as a set of socially constructed practices that involve reading and writing and are shaped by wider social processes and are responsible for reproducing and replacing societal values, traditions, patterns of power found in our environment (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

Drawing both from critical literacy and the socio-cultural theory of literacy in this study, the following research questions guided this study in examining and

understanding the literacy practices of these young people displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

1. What are the stories that these middle school students tell about their lives, before, during, and after their displacement?
2. What do their stories reveal about their literacy experience before, during, and after their displacement?

Literacy Relative to the Word and the World

In this dissertation, there are shifting meanings for the heavily loaded term *literacy*. In this chapter and the next, my emphasis is on the notion of critical literacy—a concept based largely on the work of Freire (1970) and of others (e.g., Giroux 1983; 1989; Shor, 1987) who have furthered his claims about the power relations that underlie literate practices. Freire and Macedo (1987) wrote about the importance of “reading the world” as well as “reading the word” and argued that “reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 35). In Chapters 3 and 4 attention relevant to literacy is given largely to the students’ experiences related to the “word” itself, particularly their experiences in school and out of school before and after Katrina. In Chapter 5 I attempt to relate the students’ reading of the word to their reading of the world, thus returning to prior claims about the need to integrate the two and take a critical perspective.

Summary

Displaced people who have been thrust into new environments because of natural disasters not only have the responsibility of learning new ways of being and acting, but they must also learn how to make meaning from their new settings in order

to survive. The purpose of this study was to examine how five African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represented their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement. This chapter introduced the study, its significance, and the methodology utilized. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical underpinnings and the relevant scholarly literature of the study. Chapter 3 details the methodological plan. Chapters 4 and 5 present the research data and findings and a discussion about them; supplemental data from archived records supported data triangulation. Specifically, Chapter 5 deconstructs the research questions and themes in addition to offering implications and recommendations for further research based on the study's conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how five African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represent their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement.

In the scholarly literature, there is an under-representation of research focusing on displaced children, their literacy practices, and how they make sense of academic literacy once they resettled in a new place. This chapter presents an analysis of the literature; this analysis includes the academic arguments related to literacy and displacement.

This investigation of the literature was conducted in 2009-11. Locating, gathering, organizing, and analyzing related literature was a recursive process throughout the study. Search strategies included retrieving peer-reviewed journal articles from various Internet databases such as EBSCOhost® (<http://www.ebscohost.com>), dissertations from the database ProQuest® (<http://www.proquest.com>), and articles from search engines such as Google® (<http://www.google.com>). Articles, dissertations, and books from the University of North Texas (UNT) and Texas Woman's University (TWU) libraries were also reviewed and analyzed. The key terms used for gathering this information included Hurricane Katrina, literacy, displacement, critical literacy, middle school students, disaster research, literacy and natural disasters, disasters and teachers, children and trauma, literacy as a social act, literacy and identity, bibliotherapy, linguistics and disasters, traumas and schools, African American Diaspora, and literacy as empowerment.

This literature review is organized into three major sections: critical literacy, literacy as a cultural practice, and natural disasters, displacement and student achievement. An overview of critical literacy is followed by a discussion of the various theorists who have contributed to this perspective throughout history. This section closes with the reasons this study is grounded by this belief; next is a discussion of the literature supporting literacy as a cultural practice. In order to better understand this phenomenon, analyses of research studies addressing the various purposes of literacy are presented. Other discussions in this section include: language as a sign system, and the various roles of literacy in the lives of students. In the section regarding natural disasters, the focus is on systemic study of natural disasters with researchers examining the academic implications for students who now find themselves in new schools, with new teachers, new classmates and new ways of making sense of the world. The gap in the scholarly literature related to literacy and displacement is discussed thereafter, and concludes with a summary.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Literacy

Critical literacy falls under the umbrella of critical theory and critical pedagogy and is fundamentally and ultimately linked with the two (Morrell, 2003). With roots in critical social theory and interests in matters of race, gender and ethnicity, critical literacy shares the view that our society is in a constant state of flux, competing for the possession of knowledge and status (Morrell, 2003). It has been described as pedagogy of hope allowing persons to view text through a critical lens and analyzing the work as a living document with powers being exerted on it as well as one with several messages present. This refers to the larger systems of race, sex, and class that influence writers

and continue to influence their work. Critical literacy seeks to examine and expose those systems of racism, sexism, and economics and the influences they have on text (Luke, 1988; Shor, 1992). Who benefits from the text? Why was it written? Who sponsored the writing? All of these questions lead students to begin to think about the levels of power that exist on documents. The goal of critical literacy, then, is to reestablish the meaning of freedom based on human values, just social relations, and equality by illuminating the past and current social relations, documenting their consequences, and analyzing dialectically the society's contradictions as opportunities for change toward more just relations (Shannon, 1990).

However, in the literature we see a range of definitions of critical literacy. The theory has evolved from not only discussing the marriage between education and politics but including all aspects of literacy including silenced voices and technology. Beginning with the work of Freire in the 1970s, present day theorists who subscribe to this perspective build on his theory and even expand on the definition to address the new literacies of today.

Critical literacy focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action (Molden, 2006). According to McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004), "Critical literacy is defined as not only a teaching method but a way of thinking and a way of being that challenges texts and life, as we know it" (p. 35). From this perspective, readers are encouraged to read, to question, to reflect, to think, to challenge, and to dispute cultural and social relationships in their environments. Critical literacy also insists that participants question the status quo and think beyond the text in order to see power being exerted on readers through the printed word. Molden (2006) states: "Using critical literacy helps pull the power away from the author and makes it an

equal relationship between the author and the reader, by allowing us to see the text from all angles, not just believing what is written down” (p. 8).

Critical literacy involves understanding the ways in which language and literacy are used to accomplish social ends (Dozier, Johnston, & Rodgers, 2006). Using a qualitative research methodology investigating literacy and relocation, Powell (2007) found that critical literacy assumes three things: (1) Literature is never neutral but assumes a perspective or ideology (2) literacy supports a strong democratic system grounded in equity and shared-decision making; and 3) literacy can be empowering and ultimately lead to transformation. Furthermore, critical literacy advocates social justice through an examination of language systems and various literacies that exists in the world. A critical literacy framework brings conscious understanding of how words and grammatical structures shape images of the world and relationships within it (Shannon, 1990). In the end, critical literacy offers teachers and students a language of critique with which to demystify current social relations in order to determine their human essences and a language of hope with which to work toward individual freedom (Shannon, 1990).

Historical Perspective on Critical Literacy: From Dewey and the Progressives to Freire

Historically, a critical literacy perspective views literacy as political, socially constructed and views meaning as negotiated between the reader and the text (Luke, 1988; McDonald & Thorney, 2009; Norton, 2008). Critical literacy is grounded in a more general critical social theory as well as a critical perspective on teaching and learning (critical pedagogy). Critical theory is a term that has been around for the last 100 years.

First coined by the philosophers of the Frankfurt schools in the 1930s, critical theory challenges the biased nature of all knowledge, especially knowledge transmitted institutions such as schools, churches, and the media (Morrell, 2009). Critical literacy is also informed by the work of Dewey and the Progressive Movement (1919), particularly by Dewey's belief that educational experiences should be purposeful, not contrived (Regan, 2007, p. 36). Dewey was strongly critical of the philosophy of education that advocated "pushing" facts unto learners. Dewey believed that students are active participants in the learning process and should be valued as such. Freire (1970), McLaren (2002), Darder (1991), bell hooks (1994), and Giroux (2006) have ushered in a generation of scholars who have discussed the ways that educational institutions have served the dominant issues and have outlined powerful theories of teaching that help oppressed people learn literacy and civic engagement to ultimately transform these same institutions of power (Morrell, 2009).

Freire's work serves as the foundation for critical literacy. Born in Brazil and having suffered through the Great Depression of 1929, Freire developed an empathy and concern for the poor and illiterate. Consequently, his life's work is centered on assisting the oppressed and illiterate in Brazil. For Freire, literacy was not just learning how to master a set of skills. Instead, he viewed literacy as the process of becoming human and education as a practice of freedom. In his most influential work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire describes the practice of learning how to read as an individual seeking to fulfill their potential. According to Freire, in order to be truly free from oppression, individuals need to become literate. By doing this, they are then able to control their environment and their surroundings and hence be free. Working tirelessly in his native country of Brazil, Freire assisted poor farmers who were illiterate

learn to read and write in their world. He worked with the farmers by creating literature circles and notebooks where the farmers were allowed to encode their world; hence, they began to form a relationship with their environment. It is through the building of that relationship that freedom is acquired. According to Freire, this is the process of becoming a true self. Freire wrote to educators and urged them to seek out those opportunities that would allow students to critically “read the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Macedo, who worked with Freire, continued Freire’s work, helping to create the Paulo Freire Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. At the institute, there is a tribute to Freire and a place to learn about his methodology. The center is one of a few that are dedicated to Paulo and his mission of helping people become literate.

Giroux is another critical theorist who focuses on critical pedagogy and politics. His work in critical theory looks at analyzing political establishments. According to Giroux (2006), critical literacy is a tool used to decipher propaganda given by government and one that can be used to create critical analysis of such tools. In his work, *Stormy Weather: Katrina and the Politics of Disposability*, Giroux (2006) analyzes the governmental response to the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina. He talks about the aftermath of the storm and the lack of aid because in his theory, some persons are deemed “disposable” by the government. In this critical analysis, Giroux is calling all persons to hold accountable those elected officials by first becoming knowledgeable about what is going on politically, critically analyze the situation, and then offer reasonable solutions to problems.

An example of critical literacy research focusing on literacy stories is Victoria Purcell-Gates. Using a Freireian approach, Purcell-Gates helped an Appalachian

mother and son become literate by helping them first to encode their world and then to begin to read other writings. She documented this journey in her book, *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy*. In this two-year case study, Purcell-Gates (1995) discusses how literacy was not viewed as important in the world of the participants and therefore was not valued by them. She also noted how their lives were dictated by their environment, which consisted of hardly any printed materials. This book traces their literacy development and the meaningful relationship that the participants develop with printed materials. Following in Freire's tradition, this is deemed critical because Purcell-Gates encouraged the participants to encode their language first and then use those skills to read other people's words.

Other critical theorists who discuss literacy practices and formal schooling are Shor, Saltman, Luke and McLaren. In his work, Shor (1992) describes critical literacy as:

habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking, which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronunciations, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meanings, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (p. 129)

According to Shor (1999), critical literacy is the dream of a new society "against the power now in power" (pp 128-129). Shor described Freire's critical literacy as pedagogy that invites students to think critically by having them question the status quo when they are working with any content. Education is an inquiry into the social and personal consequences and contexts of that content where "critical thought.....is oppositional knowledge-making focused on self in society and oriented toward alternatives for change" (Shor, 1999). Through dialogue students confront

uncomfortable topics and relearn. This “can move people to wonderful new levels of knowledge; it can transform relations; it can change things” (Wink, 1997, p.3).

Luke is an educator, researcher, and critical theorist working in Queensland, University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Luke’s major contribution to critical pedagogy came in 1992 when he presented what he terms the Four Resources model in literacy education. This model states that in order for a person to be fully literate a person needs: coding competence or the ability to decode text, semantic competence or the ability to make meaning from texts, pragmatic competence or functional literacy skills for everyday living, and critical competence or the ability to examine and analyze texts. Luke insists that no one of these competencies is more important than the other, but instead they all work together and can be developed simultaneously. According to Luke (1988), no text is value free. He suggests that all written work contains powers that remain loyal to their agendas.

No matter if they are discussing critical literacy or critical pedagogy, critical researchers have a common thread to their work, and that is using a critical lens to filter through information in order to analyze text, and using text to shape our environments. As mentioned above, these theorists often use Freire’s work as foundational. These writers all agree that words and language are value-laden, and whether used or encountered, continually shape and reshape participants individually as well as collectively (Shor, 1999; McDonald & Thorney, 2009).

The critical perspective informs literacy research by providing a theoretical framework that is descriptive and at the same time analytical. It accomplishes this by stating whatever exists already; (e.g. policies, mandates, and cultural norms) analyzing them and then beginning the work of reshaping these systems so that all people can

prosper. Critical theorists have argued that schools are reflective of and support the principles of the dominant political and economic structure (Adler & Goodman, 1986). Critical literacy is based upon the assumption that literacy is constructed socially and institutions such as schools have created versions of literacy, which have disguised the ideological nature of tests and the power relations inherent in many of our literacy practices (Frye, 1997, p. 1). Critical perspectives are important because they balance attention to academic literacy development with concern about literacy development for active and engaged citizenship in this 21st century (Morrell, 2009). It is for these reasons that this study was grounded by critical literacy.

Roles of Literacy in the Lives of Students Both Inside and Outside Schools

Language is an integral part of any discussion regarding literacy. We begin then, with the premise that language is central to all aspects of our work--literacy, learning, and teaching; language both represents and constructs our understandings of the social world. In other words, language is social action, its meaning dependent on the context (Dozier et al., 2006). Researchers and teachers working from a critical perspective assume that language helps produce ideologies and identities; it positions learners in relation to others (Saltman, 2007).

Critical researchers and teachers also assume that literacy is a social practice (Vygotsky, 1962). It is a "social technology shaped via cultural artifice and knowledge, social activity and institutional power" (Luke, 1988, p. 28). James Gee (1996) argues that the traditional view of literacy as a process of reading and writing "rips the process apart from the socio-cultural context and treats it as a cognitive skill that has nothing to do with human relationships" (p. 33). Furthermore, Gee (1996) notes that in the

traditional view of literacy, literacy's connection to power, social identity, and to ideologies that serve the status quo are cloaked. This suggests that through specific practices and activities teachers impart their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions onto their students. These attitudes usually coincide with mainstream society.

This view is best exemplified in the setting of school environments where the "hidden curriculum" of many school districts is cultural reproduction; that is, a curriculum that is designed to sustain the mainstream culture and one that does not value other discourses. Instead, Gee argues that literacy is indeed a culture of its own. Gee (1996) notes that literacy is more than just mastering skills such as decoding words and phrases, and learning to write the alphabet. According to Gee (1996), literacy is part of a person's "discourse," or way of life, which is embedded in socio-cultural contexts. In order to successfully master a discourse, a person must participate in social activities where the discourse is a natural occurrence. This will allow for lots of practice and scaffolding.

Similarly, Ferdman (1990) asserts that literacy is culturally shaped and identified. This means that members of different cultures will view the process differently. He argues that in order for literacy instruction to be successful for all, this difference must be acknowledged and addressed. Literacy as a distinct type of culture is never more evident than in children who live in print rich environments. These children know early on that literacy is very important for basic survival. It is a part of their daily lives and is not seen as a chore. The culture of literacy is embedded in their developing discourses so that formal schooling is anticipated. It is looked upon as a place where the registry can be fine-tuned.

For example, Shirley Brice Heath (1983) found in her ethnographic study of

literacy use in three communities that literacy was valued when it was useful in the everyday lives of its residents, but that these everyday practices were not valued in school. Heath found that the two groups of children, one from Trackton, found the practices of the school different from those associated with their home cultures, hence they did not understand them. She observed that the school needed to bridge their literacy practices in order to make academic success and full citizenship accessible to these students. This critical, socio-cultural focus on the literacy practices both in school and at home is the lens through which I viewed literacy in the lives of these students.

In her case study focusing on literacy as social and cultural practice of a white, urban Appalachian mother and son, who were both nonliterate, Purcell-Gates (1995) states:

Children born into cultures that are low literate and/or restricted in their scope of literacy find themselves in an immigrant state. Learning to read and write is not as “natural” for them. The process requires much more attention, effort, and time. Their social and cultural lives do not support this effort but rather exist separately and often compete with it. (p.183)

Purcell-Gates (1995) describes the two-year case study that she conducted which traces the literacy development of a student who came from a non-literate home and who struggled in school. The book is the story of Jenny and Donny, mother and son, who live in a Midwestern city in the U.S. They are urban Appalachian who live in the central part of this city, which prides itself on low crime and economic prosperity. However, both Jenny and Donny are illiterate. Jenny dropped out of school in the seventh grade and Donny can't read anything except his own name. Incidentally, at the time of the intervention, he had just been promoted to the second grade. This case study describes the culture of urban Appalachians who have a different view of literacy for the mainstream view of literacy. In this culture, the oral tradition is prevalent and

most tasks are completed either by hands-on activities or by visual clues. Not surprisingly, this student viewed traditional reading and writing activities as laborious and often shunned at the thought of completing them. Purcell-Gates documents over the course of the study many moments in his literacy development when he simply acted as an outsider when engaged in these types of lessons.

In another example of a study that views literacy as social practice, the researchers addressed the problem of enhancing student reading at home in order to raise reading comprehension levels of students, Kelly-Vance and Schreck (2002) conducted an investigation in which parents were encouraged to read with their children at home, and the school provided reading materials, prizes, and special activities for the participants. A total of 28 students, 14 girls and 14 boys, and their families participated in the study.

Each of the writers in this section communicates that literacy and home are connected places and contexts for the literacy practices of individuals. This study takes that perspective.

Natural Disasters, Displacement, and Student Achievement

Hurricanes

Hurricane Katrina swept through four states, killed more than 1,800 people, depopulated a major American city and caused the displacement of more than 370,000 school children (Hardy, 2006). But technically, what is a *hurricane*? The 2005 Gulf Coast hurricane season produced 15 active hurricanes (NOAA, 2009). A hurricane, as defined by the National Weather Service, is a tropical cyclone that has sustained winds of up to 74 mph (NOAA, 2009). The term “hurricane” is used for tropical cyclones in the

Northern Hemisphere and east of the International Dateline, and the term “typhoon” is used when referring to tropical cyclones in the Pacific north of the equator and west of the International Dateline. Hurricanes are categorized according to the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale is a 1 to 5 categorization based on the hurricane's intensity at the indicated time. The scale provides examples of the type of damages and impacts in the U.S. associated with winds of the indicated intensity (NOAA, 2009). The maximum sustained surface wind speed is the determining factor in the scale.

The scale is as follows: Category 1 hurricanes have sustained winds at 74-95 mph, which will be damaging property and many areas will experience power outages. Category 2 hurricanes have sustained winds of 69-110 mph. With a category 2 hurricane, very strong winds will produce widespread damage to homes and businesses with large tree branches being broken. Category 3 hurricanes have sustained winds of 111-130 mph. These winds will cause extensive damage to areas. Power outages will be severe lasting from days to weeks and many trees will be snapped or uprooted. An example of a Category 3 hurricane at landfall is Hurricane Rita of 2005. Category 4 hurricanes have sustained winds of 131-155 mph, and have extremely dangerous winds and are expected to cause devastating damage. Some wall failures with some complete roof structure failures on houses will occur. Hurricane Hugo, which made landfall in South Carolina in 1989, is an example of a Category 4 storm. A Category 5 hurricane has sustained winds greater than 155 mph; catastrophic damage is expected along with complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures with small buildings blown over or away are likely. All signs are blown down (NOAA, 2009). Hurricane Camille and Hurricane Andrew are examples of

Category 5 hurricanes at landfall.

The U.S. is no stranger to the severe damage left as a result of a hurricane. In the past, citizens have had to relocate, rebuild, and reassess their communities. For example, in 1969 Hurricane Camille struck the Gulf Coast area, specifically Louisiana and Mississippi, with great intensity. Camille, a Category 5 hurricane, was the second-strongest recorded hurricane to directly strike the U. S. (Samuels, 2005). It caused 256 U. S. deaths and \$8.9 billion in damage to this region. Then, in 1989, Hurricane Hugo hit South Carolina, there were 21 deaths on the U. S. mainland; damages were estimated at \$12.3 billion. This hurricane caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to hundreds of schools in both of the Carolina's. It also forced more than 200,000 students to miss some school days. In 1992, Hurricane Andrew moved along the shores of the United States causing extensive damage. LaGreca, Verberg, Silverman, and Prinstein (1996) stated that at that time Hurricane Andrew was the one of the worst natural disasters to devastate the United States. Andrew's winds were more than 160 mph and they contributed to the damage of 125,000 properties. As a result, over 175,000 people were left homeless and without food. Then in 1999 Hurricane Floyd hit North Carolina. Floyd caused 56 U.S. deaths and damages of \$5.8 billion. Schools were closed as a result of substantial flooding (Samuels, 2005).

Even among all of these hurricanes, Katrina set a new precedent. The displacement from families, friends, homes, schools, and life caused by Katrina is permanent. The Katrina diaspora was of such epic proportions that it resulted in perhaps, one of the largest peacetime evacuations in history (Dowell, 2008 p. 138). Unlike the other listed disasters, where property was rebuilt, damages were repaired, and children returned to school; the aftermath of this hurricane was still being felt even

five years later. Because of this, a focus on addressing the academic and psychosocial needs of displaced students is warranted. Because Hurricane Katrina crippled entire infrastructures of cities, school systems, and people's lives and because of the lasting impact that this hurricane will have on its survivors, it is important to investigate its short and long-term effects.

Displacement and Student Achievement

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. has joined other nations in facing the global problem of displacement (Anonymous, 2005). Displacement by natural disaster and or conflict is a common happening in many other parts of the world. As noted, natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, tropical storms, dust storms, avalanches, mudslides, and hurricanes have plagued humanity since the beginning of time and continue today. Research shows that at least 22% of the general population will go through a natural disaster such as a hurricane, flood, tornado, or fire in their lifetime (Briere & Elliott, 2000).

Ward, Shelley, Kaase, and Pane (2008) note that "Children are extremely susceptible in such a large-scale disaster. Some of Katrina's children and youth may have experienced trauma directly or may have even seen others die; large scale disasters such as these can profoundly affect students and schools" (p. 298). In fact, "as a result of Hurricane Katrina, of the 126 public schools in New Orleans, all but 16 were destroyed" (Anonymous, 2005, p. 357). Most elected officials, government workers, and U.S. citizens would agree that the country was not prepared for the displacement that was a result of Hurricane Katrina. Although these losses often traumatize adults, they can have an even more profound impact on children and adolescents, who are often

unable to understand the event itself and are particularly helpless in its aftermath (Pane, McCaffrey, Tharpe-Taylor, Asmus, & Stokes, 2006). Many of the students affected by Hurricane Katrina not only missed schooling and transferred schools, but also lost their homes and communities, relocated several times, faced extreme familial stress and were in and out of school (Pane et al., 2006). In fact, of the more than 196,000 public school students in Louisiana who changed schools following hurricanes, many were out of school for over a month or longer (Pane, et al., 2006).

It is well documented that displacement has a negative effect on student achievement in school. Changing to a different school breaks up students' existing social relationships, and they face the challenge of forming new relationships in new peer groups (Pane et al., 2006). Moreover, research yields evidence that frequent relocations, particularly as a result of a catastrophe, can result in social, psychological, and academic difficulties for students (Hartman, 2006). For example, Shannon (1990) examined students' academic functioning pre and post Hurricane Hugo and found that students who experienced severe post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms had a greater decline in academic success than those students with fewer reactions to PTSD. Similarly, La Greca et al. (1996) investigated symptoms of PTSD stress in Grades 3-5 children during the school year following Hurricane Andrew and their school performance levels. They evaluated 442 children at several intervals -- 3, 7, and 10 months after Hurricane Andrew. Their research reported 12% of the children studied indicated severe to very severe levels of PTSD. These students continued to exhibit the symptoms of PTSD at school and many of the teachers who had not experienced the disaster were surprised that students would still be experiencing these levels of PTSD months after the disaster. This study revealed that even when the levels of PTSD were

being elevated, symptomatology was still being observed in some of the students who exhibited severe levels of PTSD. This had a negative impact on their school performance levels as well.

Pane et al. (2006) found that principals in Louisiana who had a large number of displaced students noted that these students were most likely to miss school, argue with other students, disrespect teachers, and fight with other students. On the other hand, these same students were less likely to participate in school activities that produced positive behaviors such as clubs, organizations, school performances, or sports teams.

The number of students who were enrolled in Texas schools because of Hurricane Katrina was astounding. For example, Dallas Independent School District enrolled over 2,400 displaced students, while Highland Park had roughly 53 students. Richardson ISD, a suburb of north Dallas enrolled almost 1,200 students and to date continues to serve roughly 800 students whose lives were disrupted by this disaster (Cook, 2006).

Displacement and Literacy

A review of the literature revealed an underrepresentation of studies that focus on displaced children and how they talk about their literacy practices in general, and how they make sense of academic literacy once they resettle in a new place and are expected to perform academically. This investigation brings to the forefront the discussion of displacement and literacy practices and adds to the body of scholarly literature on disasters and their ultimate impact on school achievement.

Gap in the Literature

While a growing collection of scholarship about Hurricane Katrina exists, displacement and literacy has yet to be investigated. Again, after reviewing the related literature, I found very little information regarding the role of literacy in the lives of these particular students.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of the theoretical underpinnings of the study and a review of the analysis of related literature information regarding critical literacy, Hurricane Katrina, the massive displacement that occurred as a result of this unique disaster, and the relationship between displacement and school achievement. As stated in Chapter 1, many literacy educators argue that the goal of literacy education for everyone should be critical literacy. From this perspective, we see literacy as a tool citizens may use to negotiate, navigate, and face challenges in their lives, attempting to make sense of their worlds through reading and writing. Because critical literacy enables people to question the status quo, reflect on present-day situations, and act in order to enhance our life experiences, it connects students to social and cultural realities. Therefore, it is of particular interest in the lives of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Because natural disasters such as hurricanes will continue to plague mankind and students will continue to be displaced, it is important to document students' stories of their literacy experiences with the goal of helping them build critically literate lives.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this study was to document the literacy experiences of African American middle school students who were residing in New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina, displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and are now residing in the Dallas area. The study utilized narrative inquiry as the methodology, which is a form of qualitative research. The qualitative approach to research is about understanding the human experience by gaining insight into individual lives with respect to the uniqueness and intricacy of the individual experiences (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Patton (1987) noted that qualitative research is best utilized when the researcher wants to understand individual outcomes.

By employing a qualitative approach, I was able to gather authentic data about students' lives and literacy experiences by using the participants' reports of actual experiences, insights, and thoughts relevant to their literacy experiences. Although this study is not an ethnographic study, it uses the ethnographic technique of semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol, which was the primary data collection tool in this study, allowed for a look at the research questions being investigated (Spradley, 1979). These interviews contributed to the construction of the narratives about each participant. Focusing on five participants allowed for an in-depth analysis of each case, and looking across their narratives provided an understanding of the patterns in their literacy experiences.

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the stories that these middle school students tell about their lives, before, during and after their displacement?
2. What do their stories reveal about their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement?

This chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, the research design is discussed. Next, the second section details the research site and the participants of the study. In the third section, the collection of data is discussed, including the data collection procedures. Data analysis is the focus of the fourth section. Finally, in the last section, trustworthiness is discussed, followed by a chapter summary.

Narrative Inquiry

To effectively investigate the phenomenon of literacy and displacement, narrative inquiry design was used for this study. This research method offers the greatest options for exploring, examining, and investigating the literacy experiences of the participants because it allows them to tell their stories in their own voices. Because of the enormity of the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and the diaspora that resulted, it is clear that individual experiences are unique and that generalizations across individuals are of limited usefulness. It is important to document individual cases in order to understand how individuals fared in this disaster.

Narrative inquiry embraces narrative as both the method and phenomena of study (Clandinin, 2007). Within the framework of narrative research, researchers use a number of research approaches, strategies, and methods (Lieblich, Mashiach-Tuval, & Zilber, 1998). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define the following field texts as narrative

data sources: stories, journals, field notes, autobiographies, letters, interviews, family stories, and life experiences.

Narrative inquiry is a specific form of qualitative research in which researchers collect and analyze stories or other data sources shared by participants about their lives and then investigators write the participants experiences as narratives (Creswell, 1998). According to Schwandt (1997), narrative research is concerned with generating data in the form of stories, means of interpreting that data, and means of representing it in narrative or storied form. Additionally, Lieblich et al. (1998) defined narrative research as a subset of qualitative research that refers to investigation that uses or analyzes narrative data.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argued that narrative research is the study of people's experiences contextually and temporally and that both participant and researcher share some of the same experiences. They make the case that people share common experiences and can relate to lived experiences in a universal manner. In this methodology, researchers are provided with rich data that documents how informants experience the world. In these types of investigations, researchers compile "field texts" from interviews or field notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once the narratives are constructed, they are then analyzed for possible themes that connect the multiple stories. Participants' lived experiences are recorded through interpretation and reconstruction of personal stories in an attempt to depict truth by exploring the context in which this construction takes place (Schwandt, 1997). This was an appropriate design because I wanted a deeper understanding of how these students represented their literacy experiences. I used narrative research to examine and document the literacy experiences of five African American middle school students who were

displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and now reside in the Dallas area and who attend school in that same area.

Research Site and Participants

This study took place mainly at a junior high school in the Dallas area. It is a public school in Texas that is accredited by the state education agency and the district covers approximately 38.5 square miles. The district as a whole received a Recognized rating from the state education agency during the year of the study. This was based on test scores, attendance and graduation rates. The district serves approximately 35,000 students who come from extremely diverse families. Currently in the district, there are 41 elementary schools, eight junior high schools, a freshman center, four high schools and one alternative learning center. The demographic make-up of the schools varies widely based on each school's location in the district. The setting for the interviews was a spacious classroom located in one of the schools in the district. The classroom was secluded, equipped with a digital recorder, and had windows with vertical blinds all around it. A more detailed description of the research site is included in Chapter 4, to provide a detailed context for the participants' narratives. Consistent with guidelines for narrative inquiry, the narrative about the school site introduces the participants' narratives.

The participants were enrolled in the school as students and were African American middle school students who are natives of New Orleans, Louisiana, and who were displaced from their town by Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005. The participants were residing in the host city. The participants were purposely selected because they were willing to share their literacy experiences before Hurricane Katrina, during their

transitions to new cities and schools, and now that they are resettled and attending school in the new city. Pseudonyms were used in order to preserve confidentiality of the participants' identities. In order to get a more focused view of the phenomena, five participants were studied. Table 1 depicts a condensed demographic chart of the study's individual participants. A detailed narrative about each participant is included in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Demographic Data of the Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Grade	Date Enrolled At Marvelle Junior High
Angela	Female	13	7 th	August, 2009
Sandra	Female	14	7 th	August, 2009
Kevin	Male	14	8 th	August, 2008
Calvin	Male	13	7 th	August, 2009
Delonda	Female	13	7 th	August, 2009

Gaining Access to Site and the Participants

Because I am the campus reading specialist at the site of this study, gaining access to participants was not a challenge. In fact, my principal had expressed concerns about meeting the needs of students from New Orleans who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina and students who had experienced other disastrous events. She also stated that she was aware that these students had different needs and that her staff was trying to accommodate these students in every way. After having preliminary conversations with my principal regarding my research project, she exhibited an interest

in my study. I assured her that parental consent would be obtained and that the participants would be informed of everything that would be written about them (Appendix A).

Timeline of the Study

This study began in August 2009 and ended in March 2011.

Research Planning	August - December 2009
Data Collection & Analysis	April- August 2010
Data Analysis & Report Writing	September 2010 - January 2011
Presentation/defense of final report	May 2011
Final Report Writing	June 2011

Data Collection Methods

As the only data collector, I used several methods of data collection in this study. These methods of data collection included: semi-structured, student notebooks, school documents, and artifacts. I also kept a researcher's journal throughout the study to record my thoughts, actions, and methods, which was analyzed for connections to the theoretical literature. In qualitative research, data collection methods form the core of the inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It is through these methods that I gathered enough data to inform the two research questions. The following discussion gives some details about each method employed in this study.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on semi-structured interviewing. It may be the overall strategy or only one of the several methods employed (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This method, in fact, is based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: The participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective) (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This account is a description of behavior, experience or belief in terms meaningful to the person and thus brings the participants voice to the center of the study.

In completing this study, I conducted three to five semi-structured interviews with each participant using guided conversations and open-ended questions (Appendix B) to encourage open communication and reflective responses. These interviews were done at the data collection and analysis stage of the project, and were also audio-taped using a digital recorder. Knowing that their words were being recorded, the respondents were afforded a level of confidence that their words were being treated with respect. I began collecting data using three one-hour interviews with each student and then scheduled other interviews as needed. The first interviews were conducted with individual students. Students were asked to discuss their literacy experiences in New Orleans, during Hurricane Katrina, in transition to the host city, their school experiences over the last five years, cultural differences in their new environment, and anything else they wanted to discuss regarding this experience. In addition to the audio recordings of these interviews, I took handwritten notes. These handwritten notes provided ancillary documentation in case the audio recordings were not available. Excerpts of the handwritten notes relevant to the research questions were transcribed.

There were also many informal interviews with staff and faculty members who were at the school during the time of this study. These informal conversations usually occurred in the school's hallways or in a staff member's office.

Reflective Notebooks

At the first interview, participants in the study were given a notebook in which they were asked to list and reflect daily on their literacy experiences in the classroom and at home. During the first interview, participants were encouraged to decorate their notebooks and use any means of communicating (e.g. drawing, writing, and list-making) via the reflective notebook. The participants were asked to bring the notebooks to subsequent interviews, to share what they had written and to trigger stories that they might tell about their experiences. Because of the traumatic experience of Hurricane Katrina, I believed that some of the participants used the notebook as a means of expressing their feelings and thoughts about this shared experience and about their literacy activities with both current and past experiences. This method was used primarily to triangulate the data gathered from the interviews, but these notebooks proved to be useful data sources for only two of the participants.

Artifacts

Documents and artifacts that were related to students' literacy experiences were analyzed in order to gather information on the background of the informants, and to synthesize information on the participants, daily events, and settings. Some of the artifacts that were analyzed in this study included school records, logs, and minutes of meetings, textbooks being used in class, and novels being taught in class, as well as

literacy artifacts provided by students themselves. By describing and interpreting the uses of these artifacts as evidence of literacy practices, I provided context for the individual case studies being presented. Often times, researchers supplement participant observation, interviewing, and observation with gathering analyzing documents produced in the course of everyday events or constructed specifically for the research at hand (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Table 2 illustrates the data sources, tools, and procedures utilized in this study. It gives the type of data source along with the ways in which I analyzed the source.

Table 2

Data Sources, Collection Tools, and Analysis Procedures

Data Source	Data Collection Tools	Data Analysis Procedure
Semi-Structured Interviews	Digital Recorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribed selected excerpts of digital files relevant to research questions • Member check of transcriptions • Narratives of each participants' experience were constructed • Analyzed for themes and patterns related to the data
Reflective Notebooks	Reflective notebooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classified and categorized for each student • Analyzed for themes and patterns related to the research questions
Documents and Artifacts	School Records Work Samples TAKS scores Textbooks Novels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classified and categorized for each student • Interpretation of documents as evidence of literacy experiences
Researcher's Reflections	Researcher's Journal/memos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classified and categorized for each student • Analyzed for connections to the theoretical literature

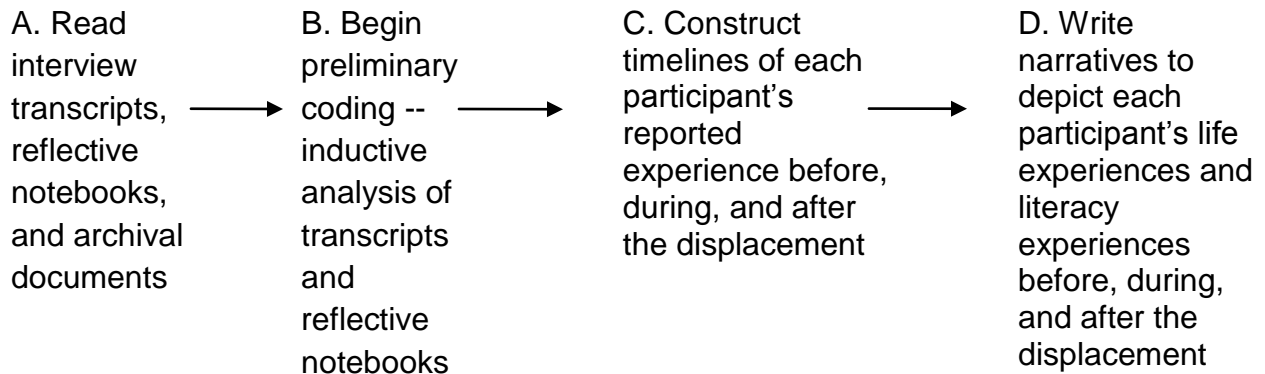
Data Analysis Procedures

In order to organize and protect the data, separate data folders were created and labeled for each participant. These folders contained all data collected over the span of the study. On the outside of the data folder the pseudonym for each participant was written and no other identifying information was on the folder. In the folders, the following data was included: selected interview transcripts, report cards, student reflection notebooks, individualized education plan (IEP) (if applicable), and most recent Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores. Data analysis was conducted in two phases.

During Phase I, each participant's narrative before, during, and after the displacement was developed. First I read the interview transcripts, narratives, the reflective notebooks, and the archival data. Next, I began preliminary coding of interview transcripts and participants' reflective notebooks. Then, I constructed timelines of participants' reported experiences before, during, and after the displacement. Finally, I developed participants' narratives to depict each of the participants' life experiences and literacy experiences before, during, and after the displacement developed.

During Phase II of data analysis, an inductive analysis of the interview transcripts and the reflective notebooks was conducted. A coding dictionary, with explanations and examples of each code was developed (Appendix C). Codes were categorized into themes relevant to the research question. Recurrent themes were identified across the coded data sources to illustrate the emergent themes. Data analysis was conducted from the beginning of the study, with member checks embedded in subsequent interviews. Figure 1 documents the two stages of data analysis and illustrates the progression of data collection to patterns that evolved.

Phase I: Develop each participant's narrative (before, during, and after the displacement), using the archival documents to provide context for the narrative.



Phase II: Conduct an inductive analysis (codes and categories) of the interview transcripts and the reflective notebooks.

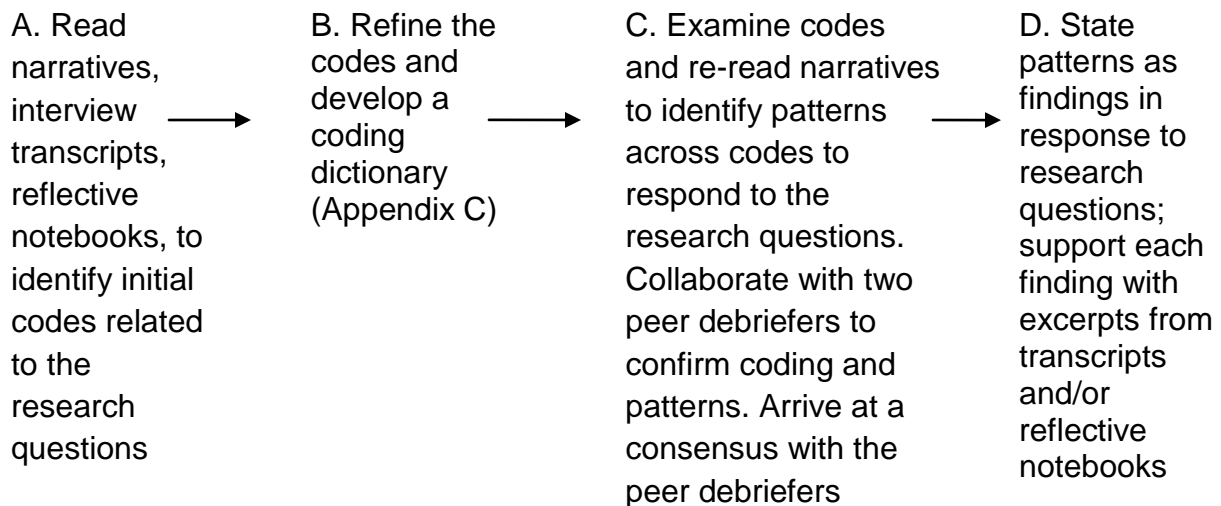


Figure 1. Phase I and II of data analysis.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure a rigorous, trustworthy study, this qualitative report employed several tools such as member check, peer debriefing, code-recode analysis, triangulation of data methods, and the authority of the researcher to make certain the accuracy of the findings. The member check strategy was used in order to represent the

participants' experiences. This strategy of revealing research materials to the informants ensures that the researcher accurately recorded the informants' viewpoints (Spradley, 1979). Peer debriefing is based on the same principle as member checks but involves the researcher's discussing the research process and findings with impartial colleagues who have experience with qualitative methods (Spradley, 1979). I met with at least three other colleagues (educators familiar with middle school students) to discuss the developing codes and themes resulting from the data analysis. When differences in interpretation arose, I revised my analyses until the four of us came to a consensus. This was one way I increased credibility of the study.

In order to increase dependability of the study, I used the code-recode strategy. After I coded a segment of the data, I waited at least two weeks and then returned and recoded the same data and compared the results (Spradley, 1979). These data were triangulated to provide a comprehensive analysis of literacy and displacement. Triangulation of data methods occurs when data collected by various means are compared (e. g., data from structured interviews and journals). I triangulated the data collection methods by comparing the data collected from the individual interviews, student journals, and artifacts. The authority of the researcher was established by informing participants of my background and experience as a New Orleans Public School District teacher for six years and as a New Orleans native.

In summary, all of the strategies noted in this section were used in order to ensure that the study was rigorous.

Researcher Biography

This section explains how my experiences as a teacher in New Orleans and my experiences during and after Hurricane Katrina have shaped my research interests. Reading *Savage Inequalities* by Kozol (1991) during my doctoral program was very difficult for me at times. In his work, he describes all that I know public education to be: overcrowded classrooms, falling buildings, and mediocre curricula. Somehow, I thought that with my move to Texas in 2002 I was leaving this behind. In New Orleans, when I would walk the halls to get to my classroom of 35-38 students, I would tremble. The lead-based paint on the walls was chipping, the water fountains did not work and some were filled with urine. The ceilings were molded and it was suspected that asbestos was pouring into the air at enormous rates. The school serviced four different housing projects and sometimes the students were exposed to horrid situations. There was very little parental involvement at the school. And it was the type of school that would either make or break a new teacher. Hence, the teacher turnover rate was extremely high.

Ironically, though, there were feelings of hopelessness and persistence that existed simultaneously in the school. The students continued to show up whether they had supplies or not, whether they were hungry or not, whether they had taken a bath or not, whether they were ready for school or not. For some of them, it was literally their safe haven, for others, their only haven. Because the physical environment was so horrendous, there was ample opportunity for animosity among the students to breed. Various neighborhood gangs and “beefs” infiltrated our classrooms daily. Instruction often competed with verbal arguments that many times led to physical altercations. The school’s faculty knew this type of environment would only lead to self-destruction.

On September 30, 2000, all of our fears came to fruition. After dismissing my class for their lunch period, I began preparing to meet my next group of students. After about 15 minutes into the lesson, a hurried knock on my classroom door sent my class into a fury. Apparently, two students were involved in a physical confrontation before school and one of them went home at lunchtime to get a gun. He returned from the projects with revenge in his heart and a gun in his hand. His strategy was to shoot at close range; right in the middle of the only piece of “normalcy” most of the students experienced. Needless to say, no one involved in this incident was ever the same after this event. How could this have happened? Where was everyone? After experiencing all of this, why would these children want to learn? As a new teacher, this was my introduction to the profession. Still, I remained there for six years. It goes without saying that my job was extremely hard and yet I feel honored to have been allowed to experience all that I did. Because of my experiences, I will never be the same person. It is because of this teaching experience that I subscribe to the critical perspective.

Some might take the position that if the students would just concentrate on their studies, they would succeed. This view is in direct contrast to what Paulo Freire teaches about literacy. Literacy, for Freire (1970) is part of the process of becoming an individual. He terms it “emancipatory literacy.” In his view, the students who exist in these areas, such as New Orleans and East St. Louis, not only should learn to read and write in order to better their conditions, but it is through literacy that they will be able to develop a relationship with their world. Acquiring knowledge is seen as developing a relationship with the world. In this view, literacy would be a tool to use for liberation and would not be tied to a particular place or space. It is not seen as something the experts have and students need to get.

Through my years of teaching all these experiences will never leave me, and now, after Hurricane Katrina and these students becoming displaced, even while in another city teaching I was still trying to discover ways in which to help these particular students. Thinking about the low value placed on academic literacy in New Orleans, and knowing that these students were resettled throughout the country, it became apparent that I should focus on their literacy experiences and displacement in my research efforts. It is because of these experiences and my quest to help my students that I chose to study participants who are Hurricane Katrina survivors. In fact, I dedicate my studies to them and to the never ending struggle that seems to define their lives. In the wake of current natural disasters and as mankind continues to experience more crises and displacement of school-aged children, it is imperative that we include in academic discourses these students' educational journeys and literacy experiences during transition periods and throughout the resettlement process by presenting their voices in the scholarly research.

Role of the Researcher

This study has great personal interest for me. First, I am a native New Orleanian who taught in the public school district of the city for six years. I personally witnessed many unethical and immoral acts with regard to the education of the students in the district. However, I was a caring teacher who tried to impart the love of learning to her students. Secondly, I personally witnessed several of my former students boarding helicopters and busses during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina knowing full well that these students were not able to read or fully comprehend what this move would mean for their lives. These experiences of working as an educator in New Orleans for six

years and being a native New Orleanian lent some biases in data collection and in the study's findings. Also, throughout the course of the study, I developed various relationships with the participants. Some participants would visit my office at times other than scheduled interviews and engage in informal chats and conversations, while others would only talk to me at arranged interview times. These practices lead to different levels of comfort and familiarity between the researcher and the participants. However, in order to acknowledge these biases and to mediate their influences on the findings, I used the tools and methods mentioned above in the section on "Trustworthiness."

Ethical and Political Considerations of the Study

In all research ethical issues will arise (Duke & Malette, 2004). Every effort to address ethical concerns was applied to this study. Several strategies were used to address these issues. Interviews were only conducted after the study was approved by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board (Appendix D). At the beginning of the study, all participants were made aware of the purpose and procedures of the investigation. I developed an informed consent form that each participant and parent was required to read and sign before any interviews were conducted. Parental consent was also obtained. Participants were assured of confidentiality of all data. To ensure anonymity, identities were separated from responses and pseudonyms were used instead of actual names, places, and events. In this study, participants were told they had the right to withdraw from the investigation at any time. In addition, if any issues or concerns arose during the course of the study, I was available to address those concerns. I had an open-door policy with all participants. All data were secured by me, stored in a locked cabinet in my office, and the participants' right to privacy was

respected. In addition, throughout the conduct of this study, I guaranteed that the ethical code for research was followed.

Summary

It has been six years since Hurricane Katrina and more than one third of the pre-Katrina population of the city has not returned to live in New Orleans, Louisiana. The city has slowly started to rebuild its infrastructure, but many parents have decided that going back to a tumultuous, mediocre school district is not a good enough reason to risk going back to the city to live. Much of the research about this section of the country focused on the typology of the area and the resettlement of the city. But this study asks, “What about the children’s stories?” Thousands of school-aged children have resettled across the U.S. and have entered school districts and are expected to adapt and move on with life.

This study used a qualitative methodology to develop the narratives of African American middle school students experiencing the resettlement and transition to new schools, with the purpose of examining their literacy experiences in New Orleans and in their new environment. Each narrative includes triangulated data gathered from individual interviews, archival data, and student reflective notebooks. The political considerations of the findings of this study include a deeper understanding of literacy and displacement and how these students who were displaced use literacy. This chapter presented the methodological plan that was used in this qualitative study. The methods described here were the best ones to gather authentic data that informed the two research questions. In addition the researcher’s role and efforts made to protect and secure the data were described.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how five African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represent their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement. This chapter presents the narratives of the school and the participants, and it also provides a comprehensive description and analysis of the themes related to these guiding questions.

The following research questions were designed to guide the research:

1. What are the stories that these middle school students tell about their lives, before, during and after their displacement?
2. What do their stories reveal about their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement?

Chapter 4 provides a thick description of the school context, as well as detailing the literacy narratives of these students by presenting their perspectives based on semi-structured interviews and students' reflective writing. The chapter includes findings from the following sources: interviews, reflective notebooks, field notes, and archival data such as report cards, individualized education plans (IEP), participants' progress reports and the researcher's journal. It is organized by describing the current instructional context (details about Marvelle Junior High School), followed by the school's official narrative about each student and then each participant narrative about his or her literacy experiences before, during, and after the Katrina experience. The final chapter includes a discussion and an interpretation of the findings.

The Instructional Context: Receiving and Supporting Katrina's Kids

Marvelle Junior High School is located in the Dallas area. It is a public school in Texas that is accredited by the state education agency. The school district it is located in covers approximately 38.5 square miles. The district serves approximately 35,000 students who come from extremely diverse families. Currently, the district is comprised of 41 elementary schools, eight junior high schools, a freshman center, four high schools and one alternative learning center. The demographic make-up of the schools varies widely based on each school's location in the district. The state education agency rated the school district "Recognized" during the year of the study, and in 2010 Marvelle Junior High was chosen as a National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education. Both of these ratings were based on student test scores, attendance rates, and the steady increase in achievement scores of minority students.

In 2009, Marvelle Junior High School celebrated its 50th anniversary. The school serves a community that is made up of mostly homeowners, but recently students who live in surrounding neighborhood apartments have been enrolling in the school. The campus consists of one main two-story brick building that houses 40 classrooms, support offices, a cafeteria, an auditorium, and two gymnasiums (a small gym that the girls use and a larger gym for boys' athletics as well as district games). The school also has an indoor elevator for handicap access in the building. Marvelle Junior High is beautifully landscaped with various colored flowers growing alongside the main building. Toward the front of the building, there are parking spaces for staff members and visitors. A large marquee on the front lawn of the school showcases the most up-to-date school information and keeps the community abreast of all school events. From the size of the school, a person would certainly not think that the school only had two grade

levels. Actually, Marvelle Junior High was a high school in the past. Behind the school sits a community track where neighborhood members often walk or run the track for exercise. Because physical education classes use the track for various sporting activities the track is closed to the public during school hours.

At the entrance of Marvelle Junior High School, there are two sets of large glass doors that invite visitors to enter the main office first before entering the school. The office area contains three administrative assistants, the school nurse, the two assistant principals' offices, and the on-duty security officer's office. There is also a large conference room for teachers, staff members, and parents to meet. The school itself is rectangular with classrooms lining each wing of the rectangle. There is a courtyard in the center of the main building. Each hall is devoted to specific content areas such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies with elective classes being offered on each hall. Seventh grade is housed upstairs and eighth grade is on the first floor. The gymnasium and the cafeteria are located on opposite halls of the school and both are on the first floor.

Marvelle's library is also housed on the second floor of the main building. It is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The library currently has 15 computers, a laser printer, a collection of videos and audio books that are available for students to check out for personal use or for class projects. It also boasts a collection of books that are pretty recent in age. In fact, at the time of the study, the librarian had been busy withdrawing books in order to bring the current collection to an age of less than 10 years old. When asked what type of resources the library holds for students who experience disastrous events, the librarian responded:

Currently, we don't have any books that would assist these students in making the necessary transition to our school environment. We have recently been getting some non-fiction books on hurricanes and other natural disasters. These books are more geared towards the science of these weather events and less on the human devastation that they leave behind. I would like to add some of these types of books to our collection though. They would be important because we have some students who not only have relocated to our school because of natural disasters but because of war-torn countries. The students come to us right out of refugee camps.

The school operates on two different bell schedules during the week. On Monday and Friday, there is a regular schedule beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 3:30 p.m. There are seven class periods that are 45 minutes each with 5 minutes in between classes for students to walk to their next class. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the school operates on an advisory schedule with an advisory class period after first period. Advisory class is used as a character building class and lasts 30 minutes; consequently, five minutes are taken from each other class period. The school is a Title I school and receives the extra resources that come from that federal funding which are primarily, extra funds for teacher and staff development and supplementary staff members such as a reading specialist, a science specialist, and a math specialist. Because of the Title I funds, each teacher is also given extra resources to use for learning such as a computer station including a projector and screen, a printer, and supplemental materials for their curriculum.

The staff demographics include approximately 50 teachers and staff members who are from diverse backgrounds, various levels of experience and hold various levels of degrees. Of the teaching staff members 25% are from minority groups and 10% of the instructional staff holds advanced degrees such as a master's of education. Since Hurricane Katrina, Marvelle Junior High has received and educated approximately 50-

70 students from the devastated Gulf Coast region. These students not only endured the trauma of the storm but were also hit with another tragedy.

In the 2005-06 academic school year, two students at Marvelle Junior High who were displaced from Hurricane Katrina and attending school at Marvelle and who were cousins were involved in an accidental shooting. One cousin was cleaning the gun and it accidentally went off and shot the other cousin in the head. The student died.

Teachers and students were instructed by the administration that they were not to discuss the incident nor did they receive any type of staff development regarding these concerns. In fact, the staff reported the only professional development they received regarding the students who were displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina was a 15-minute faculty meeting. During this meeting, the staff was told that they would be receiving some extra students as a result of the storm. In general, this middle school is typical of many in this area and across the state in that it tends to serve the needs of students in general, with little or no particular attention to the social or emotional needs unique to these displaced students.

The Language Arts/Reading Curriculum at Marvelle Junior High School

During the years of this study, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) implemented new Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for the state of Texas. The TEKS guides the scope and sequence of instruction for school districts in Texas. In essence, they are the goals of what all instruction should be. All curricula in Marvelle's school district are written by district teachers and central level district specialists. All lesson goals and objectives are written with differentiated learning activities included in them. In both the 7th and 8th grade ELA

curricula, teachers are given a scope and sequence to follow, but are also encouraged to be creative in how they deliver the learning activities. In addition, students are expected to read during the summer months and these mandatory readings are assessed in August once the new school year starts. During the first six weeks of the school year, students are expected to create independent projects such as a PowerPoint® (<http://www.microsoft.com>), blog, or electronic book talk based on a novel they read during the summer months.

In the 7th grade ELA curriculum there is an intentional focus on the writing process in preparation for the 7th grade state writing assessment. Students are engaged in literacy activities that include reading pieces of literature coupled with writing assignments that use the texts as springboards for discussions and writing prompts. The majority of the 8th grade English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is focused on reading and analyzing texts in preparation for more sophisticated pieces of literature students will encounter at the high school level. In Pre Advanced Placement English Language Arts (PreAP ELA) classes, students are expected to make personal connections with reading pieces as well as to analyze the author's meaning on a deeper level. The curriculum for these types of classes includes the Lay the Foundation program, which emphasizes higher level thinking activities. At Marvelle, reading classes are available to those students who fail the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) reading test and those students who the administration believes would benefit from more reading opportunities based on their previous assessment scores, and report cards.

In addition, many of the other content area classes do not emphasize reading and writing to deliver the material to students. Instead, lectures using PowerPoint notes

are the preferred method of instruction for areas such as science and social studies. Students are expected to be able to take class notes from a lecture, produce an interactive notebook, and study for tests and quizzes using this material. This description of the school provides the context for the following individual student narratives about Angela, Sandra, Kevin, Calvin, and Delonda. These individual narratives address Research Question 1: What are the stories that these middle school students tell about their lives, before, during, and after their displacement? The following narratives include both the “official” narrative gathered from the school documents and artifacts and the students’ stories, which were informed by the semi-structured interviews.

Angela: The Official Narrative

When Angela entered Marvelle Junior High School as a 7th-grade student in 2009, her mother enrolled her with all of her school records and important documents. According to the counselors at Marvelle, because of her stellar academic performance indicated on her report cards, when she enrolled at Marvelle Junior High, Angela was placed in pre-advanced placement (pre-AP) classes so that she would continue to be challenged in school. Her records indicated that she adapted well and that she that did was successful in her core courses and she participated in the extracurricular activities at school. Angela has passed all of the TAKS tests since enrolling in Texas schools. She even received a recommendation from her 6th grade teacher for her to join the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program and class. The AVID is a national program that recognizes minority students who are potentially college bound. The program stresses college readiness and organization skills. Students in the AVID

program are taught how to take notes, how to study for tests and exams, and how to interview for college admittance. They also receive extra support from their AVID teacher in all of their classes. Throughout the years, the program has produced thousands of successful minority college graduates.

Being nominated to the AVID program and class, Angela maintained her position as a student who can excel academically if given the chance. Angela was accepted to the program and subsequently enrolled in the AVID class.

Angela's Literacy Experiences: The Student's Narrative

Reading to me is a way to express myself. It's a way to escape everything around me. The main reason I like reading is because it is a way for me to expand my vocabulary and to talk to my friends without really talking.

When I began searching for the participants to complete this study, Angela was actually the first student suggested to me by our school counselors. The lead counselor knew that I was looking for African American students who attended school on our campus as a result of being displaced by Hurricane Katrina to participate in my dissertation study. She described Angela as a "smart, friendly, and outgoing young lady" who she knew would enjoy giving interviews where she could open up about her life experiences that included her literacy practices. I contacted Angela to explain the study to her and to give her the consent forms. She agreed to be a part of the study and her mother also gave her parental consent. On first meeting, Angela came off as the girl-next-door type. She quickly warmed up to friendly conversation and began to freely engage in conversation regarding her experiences. I interviewed her several times on her school campus, and I must say that I enjoyed all of our meetings.

Angela is a 13-year-old seventh grader from New Orleans, Louisiana, who presently resides in a northern suburb of Dallas, Texas. She is a popular girl at school and is involved in several clubs and organizations on campus such as the BETA club (a community service organization) and student council. Angela is the eldest child in her family having one brother who is three months old. Her family evacuated New Orleans two days before the storm hit, when Angela was in the 2nd grade.

When asked about the family's evacuation experience, Angela recounted, "We all piled up in my uncle's truck; me, my mama, my aunt, my uncle, and my mama's friend, to come to Texas" (personal communication, June 10, 2010). Angela remembered the other members of the extended family driving in different cars. She said, "Altogether, there were about six different cars following each other out of Louisiana." When the family arrived in Texas, all of the family members lived with a cousin in an apartment for two weeks. Angela reflected, "There was nowhere to sleep because it was so many of us." Eventually, her cousin located a hotel in the area that was sponsoring rooms for Katrina evacuees, and each separate family unit received a free hotel room. Angela recalled the experience. She said, "My cousin Lloyd came and said that there was a hotel down the street and they letting us stay 'til we get back on our feet. My mama and me were the first ones to go to the hotel." Angela and her mom lived in the hotel for two months before securing their own apartment in the area. At this time, they are still living in a government-subsidized apartment.

Angela's mother is 33 years old. Their extended family is large, with her mother being the only girl out of six children. All of the other family members currently reside in New Orleans, having moved back to Louisiana since the storm. Her mother completed the eighth grade-but did not attend high school. She is currently unemployed, but is

actively seeking employment on a daily basis. Angela has never mentioned her father. In order to make ends meet, the family receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families monetary benefits and food stamps. Angela also receives free lunch at school. Angela described how her mother encourages her to read and how her mother connects reading and writing with getting a good job and becoming successful. When asked how her mother feels about education in general, Angela revealed, “She thinks it is very important because she didn’t finish. She stopped school after junior high. I can’t bring anything under an 80 home on my report card or I get in trouble.” (personal communication, June 10, 2010)

Angela’s Literacy Experiences in New Orleans

In New Orleans, Angela’s family lived on the West bank side of the Mississippi River commonly referred to as the “Westbank.” She described the community there as, “Fun. I knew everybody. It was very hot, but still we had a lot of fun.” In fact, Mardi Gras is her favorite memory of New Orleans. She recalled that the community consisted of apartment buildings, a community park, chain stores, and car washes. Her entire family lived within a two- mile radius of each other, which meant they were together for most holidays and celebrations.

For elementary school, she went to the neighborhood school where her entire family had gone. As a result of this, all of the teachers knew her and she was a popular girl. She stated that the school campus was comprised of two buildings, one for academic classes, a gym for physical education classes, and two portable buildings, which sat behind the gym. Her classes were held outside in the two portables, which did not have air conditioning. Angela expressed that in these early grades, she loved school

and was earnestly involved in the learning process. She stated that reading was her favorite subject noting that her teacher would read to the class often. She described the students sitting in a circle on the floor while her teacher would read a picture book to the class. “Ms. Love was my favorite teacher. She would read to us all the time and throw candy to us when we got the right answers.” In fact, she stated that she enjoyed reading in New Orleans more than here in Texas because, “it wasn’t essential like it is in Texas; it was your choice.” “When it was time for reading, we didn’t use our books [textbooks].” Instead, Angela said that her teacher told the class that she didn’t like the reading textbook and she would let them choose things to read independently. Angela deemed that this practice of granting students the right to choose their own reading material made her enjoy reading more; she insisted that it provided extra motivation for her to read.

In reference to the literacy experiences she had in school in New Orleans, Angela detailed a learning environment of reading choice where students were allowed to choose a portion of the material, and books they read in and out of class, practice worksheets, and teacher modeling. She indicated that there was no test to take to go to the next grade, which made learning less stressful. In her reflective notebook, she noted that in New Orleans, she considered herself a good reader and writer and credits this to Ms. Love, her favorite teacher.

When discussing her literacy experiences at home in New Orleans, Angela disclosed that her family did not have many things to read and hardly wrote anything. “Sometimes, my mother would buy magazines and newspapers, but we really didn’t read or write at home except for my school work.” Ms. Love would give me books and I would bring them home and read them.” Angela recalled that her mother only read bills

or important information from the school, but rarely for pleasure. Of course, there was the *Bible* on the kitchen table. Angela contended that her mother would help her with her school work if she needed it, but that was rare because she was a good student. In fact, she indicated that she earned awards for perfect attendance, honor roll, and free pizza coupons for reading books in school. But because they did not take them when they evacuated, all of her awards were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Angela's Literacy Experiences during the Transition

Angela proposed that because none of the adults in the family anticipated when they would be returning to New Orleans, the children did not enroll in school during the transition period. In fact, they stayed out of school for two months. When describing the experience of living in the hotel, Angela stated,

We just stayed inside the [hotel] room and watched TV. We went swimming, but all of the other kids were at school during the daytime. We didn't have any books to read or any paper or pens [to use for writing]. The only thing we did was texting with cell phones [my momma]. But we were just texting from hotel room to hotel room. I missed my books. I wanted to bring them but my mama said to just get some clothes.

According to Angela, during the transition period, the adults obtained updates on New Orleans, jobs, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) subsidies, and other information by watching TV and by word of mouth from other evacuees. Her cousin also received information through his apartment complex manager and would pass along the information to the other adults living in the hotel. After leaving the hotel, Angela was enrolled in three different school districts but only stayed in each of those school districts for a couple of months. She explained that her mother was trying to secure permanent employment, which is why they moved around to different suburbs.

Angela's Current Literacy Experiences

Angela's literacy experiences with Dallas-area schools seem to be mixed. When asked, "What is reading?" Angela responded that reading is a way she escapes everything that is going on in her life. In addition, she defined reading in two ways: reading for school such as TAKS passages, and then reading that she does on her own. From her perspective, the "reading" that goes on in school is school reading and the "reading" she completes on her own is more personal to her. In fact, during one of our meetings, she brought a book that she was currently reading, *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer. According to Angela, that type of book would never be taught in school, but she enjoys the love story in the novel. She expressed her thoughts about her relationship with reading and writing by decorating her reflective notebook with different phrases that describe the relationship. For example, she wrote the following on the cover of her reflective notebook, "I love reading good books; I write books; exploring my mind; trying new things."

Angela commented that the transition to Texas schools has not been a difficult one for her. She acknowledged that even though she has transferred school districts three times since evacuating to Texas, she maintains good grades and carries a high academic average. In the seventh grade, she has been on the honor roll all six weeks at her current school, and anticipates receiving awards when the school year is over. She added that she is taking Pre-Advanced Placement language arts, science, and social studies classes and still performs well in her classes. She describes her current school "as big...it has a lot of students...." According to her teachers and counselors, Angela is a hard worker who completes her assignments and is very grade conscious. They reported that she is the type of student who is genuinely interested in her mistakes for

the sake of learning. When asked how her current teachers teach reading, Angela remarked, "We practice for our TAKS test a lot. The teachers tell us that reading is important and that we have to pass the test in order to go to the 8th grade. The only choice [in reading material] we have is summer reading books." Angela explained that at her school, students are mandated to read over the summer. The teachers give them a list of books that are acceptable reads and students must read one or two books (if the student is in preap language arts) during the summer months. The books are at the local library and available for check out or can be purchased at the neighborhood book stores. The library and the bookstores have a copy of the summer reading list. In fact, Angela used the words "mandatory" and "boring" to describe the literacy experiences she currently has in her new school.

Angela insisted that outside of school, she reads all the time and writes stories, and poems. In her own words, she admits that she enjoys learning new vocabulary while reading new material. She even states that learning new words is one of the motivating factors for her reading new texts. More recently, her mother has begun to bring her to the public library to get books. She said:

Now me and my mama read books together, but not the same books. We go to the library to get my outside reading books for school. My favorite book is *Because of Winn Dixie [by Kate DiCamillo]*. I like Opal and her dog. In a way, the book reminds me of New Orleans because me and my mama used to go to Winn Dixie a lot to make groceries.

In her reflective notebook, Angela concluded that despite the boring reading and writing experiences that she has in her Texas school, she is getting a better quality education because the school as a whole is a better learning environment.

Sandra: The Official Narrative

Sandra's complete and official enrollment at Marvelle did not happen in one day. Most of the documents such as housing verification, shot records, and previous report cards were brought to registration by her mother. The school, however, was waiting for Sandra's Individual Education Plan (IEP) to arrive from the last school she attended. When enrolling, however, her mother did explain to the counselor at Marvelle that Sandra had been receiving special education services for her reading disability and that she would need to be placed in SPED classes. Based on this information from her parents and after speaking with the counselors at her last school, Sandra was placed in resource language arts classes. For her other core classes, Sandra was placed in inclusion classes where her progress would be monitored by a special education teacher as well as the regular education teacher. Sandra needed the extra support of the Inclusion teacher in order to be successful. According to her previous school performance, reading was her weakest area.

Sandra's Literacy Experiences: The Student's Narrative

Reading is fun when you know the words and the characters in the story.

Sandra was referred to me by "Angela" because they were friends. Sandra is an outgoing 14-year-old seventh grader whose smile lights up the room when she enters. During our meetings, she would always show up to the room with a big smile, her reflective notebook in hand, and a willing attitude. She is quite the conversationalist who was willing to share her experiences openly at all of our meetings. In fact during the interviews, she spoke as if all of these events happened yesterday. Her mannerisms

and speech were quite polite, and I felt as if she already knew what she wanted people to know and learn from her experiences. She was born in New Orleans, but has lived in Houston and Dallas also. Right now, she lives with her mom, stepfather, three sisters, and one stepbrother in a northern suburb of Dallas. She is the youngest of all the siblings. Her family is living in a government subsidized home. In New Orleans, they lived in the lower 9th ward region of the city in a housing project and chose to stay home during Hurricane Katrina. According to Sandra, her family decided to stay home during the storm, but changed their minds after the levees broke. The family walked out of their house on August 30, 2005 with several inches of rising water invading their home. They lost one family member to Hurricane Katrina. Unfortunately, he (an older cousin) refused to leave his home when evacuated and he drowned. Sandra remembered,

We was scared. The water was all over our house and my daddy was trying to get all of us out. We didn't take anything with us. We was jus' trying to leave. I think my mama took some money, but that's it.

Sandra remembered her family making it to the Superdome in downtown New Orleans by getting a ride with a stranger who had a canoe and was going through the neighborhood looking for people to rescue. They were eventually transferred by an 18-wheeler truck to the Houston City Convention Center which was a shelter for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. All of their cars were destroyed by the storm. "In the Convention Center, there was a lot of crime. A little girl was raped in the bathroom, so my mama said we couldn't go the bathroom alone again." They stayed in Houston for several weeks. From the Houston Convention Center, some of the family members stole three trucks and they moved to Dallas.

Sandra is fortunate because currently both of her parents are working. Neither one of her parents graduated high school, but two of her four siblings did. According to

Sandra, her parents consider education to be important. She explains, “They want me to make good grades, but I don’t get in trouble if I don’t. I jus’ get fussed at.”

Sandra’s Literacy Experiences in New Orleans

Sandra discussed both positive and negative experiences in her community in New Orleans. When telling about her neighborhood in the lower 9th ward of New Orleans, Sandra used words such as “ghetto and violent.” She explained that her community “had a lot of crime and crack heads.” She mentioned that there was a park, several churches, corner stores, and of course the community school present in the area. Her family lived in a single-family government subsidized home (essentially a housing project) with several other Section 8 houses that were no stranger to violent crime and dilapidated homes. She explained that the neighbors were often the victims of violent crimes.

She attended the community school that was within walking distance from her house and it consisted of grades K-5. The school had three buildings: one building for the primary grades (K-2), another building for the upper elementary grades (3-5), and a gymnasium. It was an old school, but, according to Sandra, the teachers did their best to encourage and motivate students by providing educational incentives and motivational talks. There were several school assemblies and programs that the teachers initiated to get students excited about learning. Sandra describes her academic experiences in New Orleans’ school as “fun” and says that mathematics was her favorite subject at the time. In fact, classroom parties and recess were her two favorite things about elementary school. More specific to her literacy experiences in New Orleans, Sandra described her reading classes as “hard” and “confusing”.

I was in the reading class where the teacher came and got a group of us, took us to another classroom, and read the story to us. We had the books with a lot of pictures in them; and we use to go back to our other class after that. It was ok.

According to her school records, Sandra's reading difficulties surfaced in the second grade when the content became increasingly difficult to read and comprehend. It is well documented that in second grade, big colorful picture books that are used in the primary grades are replaced with basal reading texts and students are expected to read independently instead of listening to the teacher read to the class. Sandra was placed in special education classes for reading in the second grade and was also retained that year. She is currently receiving these services at her new school. Her IEP states that she has a disability in reading fluency and comprehension. Even though Sandra performed satisfactorily in mathematics and the other disciplines, her inability to read fluently and comprehend stories lead to a dismal attitude regarding school and in particular reading and writing. In New Orleans, she received a great deal of reading intervention and according to her it helped her understand stories better. She explained, "Sometimes, I get confused when I'm reading. Either I don't know the words or I can't remember what I just said when the teacher asks questions." Sandra offered the following perspective on her reading experiences, "I really don't like to read. I mean, I like some books, but not the kind they make us read in school. I really like to draw pictures." On her reflective notebook, Sandra drew pictures she described as symbols of New Orleans and the lower 9th ward - some examples of the symbols are "the lower 9" for her neighborhood and "504" which is the area code for the city of New Orleans.

Sandra remarked that there was hardly any reading material in the house. Her father read the newspaper sometimes and letters that would come home from the school or relatives that were in jail. She stated that the family either watched TV, talked

on the phone with friends or relatives, and at family gatherings they just told stories and played cards. She said that she rarely saw her parents writing anything except for a few letters to other family members. She would occasionally bring home worksheets that she did in school that had good grades on them so she could keep looking at them and remind herself of the good grade she had made.

Sandra's Literacy Experiences during the Transition

Sandra's family evacuated to the Houston Convention Center after leaving New Orleans. She recalled sleeping on a twin-sized cot with many thoughts going through her mind at night. She revealed that she didn't know if her family was particularly safe being at the Convention Center, but she knew that it couldn't be avoided. From there, the family headed to Dallas and stayed at the Reunion Arena. At this point since the storm, several months have passed by and Sandra and the rest of the children in the family had not been enrolled in school. According to Sandra, the adults in the family learned about updates on assistance for Katrina evacuees through the workers at the shelter and some flyers that the workers used to put on the bulletin board in the shelter. When asked what types of literacy experiences she had in the transition period, Sandra replied that she didn't read or write anything during that time period but she did draw pictures at night lying on the cot sometimes.

Sandra's Current Literacy Experiences

Sandra said that starting school in Texas was "scary at first because she didn't know anyone." She talked about how she thought the teachers and students would view "the New Orleans children" differently but soon found out they didn't. At her current

school, Sandra continues to receive special education services. In fact, according to her cumulative records, she is in a foundations level reading class and at the time of her interviews was reading at a 4th grade level. Her teacher asserted that she is a hard, determined worker and has made great progress this year. According to Ms. Albert, Sandra still struggles with comprehension and reading fluency but her winning spirit helps her while working. When asked to define reading, Sandra considers it as fun when you know the words and the characters in the story. She pointed out in her reflective journal that she likes to read cookbooks and books about science, such as books on hurricanes and tornadoes. She explained that her current teacher teaches reading by using workbooks, audiotapes, and movies of books they have read in class. She also talked about the constant TAKS practice throughout the school year such as reading benchmarks, and TAKS camps. Sandra admitted that lately she has been enjoying reading small novels at home. She talked about a novel study her teacher engaged the entire class in together. She said:

My teacher read a book with us called *The City of Ember* and then we watched the movie. I really liked it. So I went to the library at school and checked out the other book that goes with it. But I don't think there is a movie with this book.

Sandra asserted that she continues to draw pictures in school and home about certain things going on in her life. She spoke about texting her friends and family members who have chosen to return to New Orleans. According to Sandra, her family won't return to New Orleans because she is "going to a better school now". She believes that her parents are pleased with the education that she is receiving. As for her, she said that she is "o.k. staying in Dallas because she likes her school and she has made some friends around her house."

Kevin: The Official Narrative

When Kevin arrived at registration at Marvelle with his mother, he stood out. He was well-dressed and appeared to know everything about the school already. He told the counselors that he knew a couple of students who had attended Marvelle Junior High who lived in some apartments near his family. Kevin's mother had all of the documents needed to enroll him in school and informed the counselors that he received special education services in all of his previous schools. His mother also told the counselors that Kevin has an extremely difficult time reading. She mentioned that for all of his high stakes testing he has a teacher reading the test to him. She indicated that Kevin works extremely hard in school but reading is his worst subject. Kevin was placed in resource language arts classes and Inclusion classes for the rest of his core courses.

Kevin's Literacy Experiences: The Student's Narrative

Reading is how you make it in life. If you can't read, you won't be able to understand anything or get a good job.

The first boy I interviewed was "Kevin." His name was given to me directly by his teacher who said that he met the study's criteria and would be a good participant. Kevin agreed to complete the study. His parents, however, requested that I call them before they would give parental consent. I called and spoke with his mother and addressed her concerns and she agreed to allow him to be a participant in the investigation. He was very cooperative during our meetings and talked quite a bit about his experiences. Fourteen year-old Kevin's initial thoughts about Dallas, Texas were "that it is a big place and that it has a lot of people." He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and has only lived in New Orleans and Dallas. He is a stylish dresser, popular student, and has lots

of friends at his current school. Even though he is not involved in any extracurricular activities at school, Kevin admitted to attending school dances, sports functions, and band and choir performances religiously. He acknowledged that writing rap music lyrics and telling jokes with his friends are his favorite things to do in his free time. Kevin's family consists of his mother, father, two brothers and one sister. Kevin is the middle child. They evacuated New Orleans for Dallas, Texas the day before the storm hit the city to live with an aunt in her Dallas apartment. Kevin recalled his father's words and decisions regarding the family's evacuation from the city. He said,

My daddy said this storm was different. We usually just stay home when we are about to have a hurricane in New Orleans. But the people kept saying that it was going to be bad, so he said that we were leaving. He called his sister and told her we were coming. We just took a few clothes with us and left.

Kevin explained that they were able to use their own cars because it had not begun to rain yet when they left the city. However, all of their personal possessions that they left home were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. After three weeks of living with his aunt, Kevin's family received an apartment subsidized by FEMA. His family is living in that same apartment right now, but his parents are enrolled in a home buyer's course in hopes of purchasing their own home here in North Texas one day. Kevin declared,

I like Dallas. It is a lot cleaner than New Orleans, but I still miss home. Sometimes, it gets boring here. I miss my friends back home. I am going back to visit this summer to see my grandma and other cousins.

Both of his parents graduated from high school in New Orleans and his two older brothers graduated from high school too. According to Kevin, his parents are very concerned about his education and they hope that he goes on to pursue a college education. His mother and father are both employed and attend school functions such as Open House and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Back in New Orleans,

Kevin and his family lived in the 13th ward of the city, which is located in Uptown New Orleans. This area is notorious for homicides and other violent crimes, which is one reason why Kevin says he is glad to be in Dallas. In his reflective journal, Kevin disclosed that his neighborhood ““had a lot of killings”” because there were some people who sold drugs in the neighborhood. In addition, during our interviews, Kevin indicated that the elevated crime rate was his least favorite thing about living in New Orleans, whereas his favorite things about living in New Orleans were the different foods and fun.

Kevin’s Literacy Experiences in New Orleans

In essence, living in New Orleans provided enriching and exciting experiences for Kevin. Most of his family members lived in the city with a few distant relatives in Texas, Georgia, and Mississippi. “We all would get together for the holidays and have fun. They would all come to see us for Mardi Gras,” reflected Kevin. He described his community as tight-knit and even reflected that everybody knew each other. He explained that the good people “looked out for each other.” He said in the summertime all of the neighborhood children would play together and go to the swimming pool in the park.

For the primary grades, Kevin attended the school closest to his home. It was the traditional neighborhood school that had grades K-5. According to his school records, Kevin has been receiving special education services since second grade. At this time in his academic career, Kevin cited mathematics as his favorite subject, and reading as his least favorite subject. He described these early reading classes as confusing but says that it has gotten better since he is older. When referring to his literacy experiences in New Orleans, Kevin remembered that he was part of a pilot study that included phonics and worksheets. He commented that a “research lady would come and take me out of

class. She would buy me all kinds of things.” Further, Kevin recalled that his teacher in New Orleans would read to the class often and that he enjoyed that. He shared a story of one of his literacy experiences in New Orleans where he struggled to make meaning about the story and he tried to comply with the teacher’s directions. Kevin relayed the experience,

I remember one time my teacher was reading a book to the class and everybody was quiet listening to her read. She said she was going to give us a test after she read the book. I was trying to listen hard to what she was saying ‘cause I knew that if not, I would fail the test. I had a hard time reading the words. I was embarrassed and scared when I was little. I knew I could get the questions right, if someone would read it to me, you know.

Kevin expressed that in New Orleans he had a lot of trouble following reading in the classroom. Consequently, he described how he would get into trouble in class. He said that even though he would try his best, he still had to work hard just to understand what was going on in class. At home, Kevin said that he didn’t read for pleasure because at that time in his life reading was difficult and more of a chore than pleasurable. He recalled that his parents would only read and write for “business and stuff.”

Kevin’s Literacy Experiences during the Transition

According to Kevin, once the family settled into his aunt’s apartment, they were really concerned about the issues surrounding the city. He felt that having to wonder about whether or not they could return home was the most important issue his parents were dealing with at that time. He said, “They really weren’t worried about putting me in school yet. We was watching the TV trying to see what happened to New Orleans and when can we go back.” In his reflective journal, Kevin wrote that this time of

“wondering” was the hardest part of going through Katrina; the not knowing what happened to the city and all of the people they knew. Kevin noted that two weeks after he and his family arrived in Dallas, they received subsidized housing from FEMA, and he enrolled in school. Since this time, Kevin has attended five different schools, but they were all in the same district. He went to three different elementary schools and two junior high schools. He noted that his parents were moving around town trying to find better housing for their family.

Kevin’s Current Literacy Experiences

Kevin has various emotions regarding attending Texas schools. He said that the school-work is harder in Texas, but there is more help from the teachers. He views his current school as a place where he learns a lot. More specifically, in reference to literacy experiences at his current school, Kevin believes that his teachers are strong advocates of reading and they think that reading is important. He said that currently they are using the *Journeys* textbook and small novels in class. He defined reading as “how you make it in life. If you can’t read, you won’t be able to understand anything or get a good job.” When asked whether or not he thinks he is currently a good reader and writer, Kevin replied, “Yes. I passed all of my TAKS tests.” He feels really proud of this accomplishment. In fact according to his reading teacher, Kevin increased his Lexile reading level by 300 points this year. She described him as a very hard worker who gives a tremendous amount of effort to complete his assignments and to understand what is going on in his classes. Yet, he expressed that reading is a still a bit of a struggle for him and for his state assessments he explained that a teacher still has to read the test to him. “This helps me understand better”, he said.

At home Kevin said that the types of reading and writing that he does outside of school is mostly writing raps, texting his friends, reading flyers left on the door of his house, and reading magazines in stores like Wal-Mart or Walgreens. Right now he claims that his favorite book is any book about animals. He stressed that he loves animals and that in the future he would like to be a veterinarian or work at a dog pound.

Calvin: The Official Narrative

Calvin enrolled at Marvelle a few days after regular registration had taken place. His mother had taken sick and his father was caring for her. However, when he was able to enroll, his mother had all of his documents ready for the counselors. Calvin's strength in reading was evident from his previous school records and he was placed in preap language arts. All of his other classes were regular classes, he had been successful on all of his TAKS tests in the past and his records indicated that school work had not been a challenge for Calvin.

Calvin's Literacy Experience: The Student's Narrative

Reading is how you learn about different places and things. I like to read certain things; it's ok.

When I first met Calvin, he was running through the hallways at school chasing another student. I stopped him immediately and he introduced himself to me. He told me he was from New Orleans by way of Hurricane Katrina and he had heard about the other students I interviewed. He inquired about the study and said that he wanted to be a part of the investigation. I then explained all the details of the study to him and I gave him a permission slip to bring home to his parents, which he did and we then proceeded

with his interviews. Calvin is a 13-year-old seventh grader whose personality is extremely lively, to say the least. He tells jokes, has lots of friends, and enjoys being the center of attention wherever he is. Academically, he is a B student who completes his assignments with ease and enjoys challenging his teachers in class. Currently, he is taking a preap language arts course. At school, he is very sociable and plays on the school basketball team. His family consists of his mother, his stepfather, a younger brother, and an older brother. He also has one stepbrother and a stepsister. However, Calvin revealed that the only children who were living in the house at the time of Hurricane Katrina were Calvin and his brothers. His step-siblings live with their mother. During our meetings, Calvin opened up with ease regarding his family and their experiences regarding living in New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina, and his reading and writing experiences.

In our first set of meetings, Calvin spoke about his family experience. He explained that in New Orleans the family lived in the infamous 9th ward area of the city in a family owned house. The house sat at the bottom of the 16th Street Levee. He added that the house had been destroyed by previous storms such as the May 3rd flood of 1998 and had since been rebuilt. During the May 3rd storm, Calvin's mother had to wade through the knee-high water in the house to get to the attic. She was then airlifted by the National Guard out of the house. Calvin said that the family has purchased a home in northern Texas suburb since the storm. According to Calvin, the family evacuated New Orleans a day before Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast area and has remained in northern Texas. They have returned to New Orleans only a few times to check on the family home and, more recently, to visit with other family members. The family drove to Texas in the family vehicle and stayed with a family friend for three

weeks until they were able to secure a FEMA apartment. Calvin described how his family watched the disaster on TV once they reached Texas. He said:

We watched it all on TV; like 24 hours of seeing New Orleans go underwater. I remember my mama started crying and talking about the house saying that she knew it would be destroyed again. She started crying. After a couple of days, she told my daddy to turn it off. She was tired of looking at it. But he didn't. He watched it over and over.

He stressed the fact that his parents are enjoying living in northern Texas noting that they often mention the comparison of Texas to New Orleans when speaking to other relatives who moved back home. He said they immediately highlight the positives of living in Texas versus living in New Orleans to these relatives. He said, "They say the schools are so much better than the schools in New Orleans and we have more opportunities here. Plus the crime is lower." Calvin insisted that his parents are huge proponents of education and the upward mobility associated with attaining a formal schooling. He added that his mother is college-educated and his stepfather is enrolled in a community college in the North Texas area. He is pursuing an associate's degree in Criminal Justice with the intent to transfer to a bachelor's degree program once he is finished. Calvin acknowledged that his parents have high expectations for his schooling and expect him to attend college once he is finished with high school. He stated that they emphasize this to him often.

Calvin's Literacy Experiences in New Orleans

Calvin pointed out that his life in New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina was really good. The majority of his family members lived in New Orleans, which meant that there were lots of cousins to play with at home. He said that most holidays and life events were celebrated together and family members often visited each other. The

family even pooled their money together and bought a Mardi Gras float on which they paraded every year on Mardi Gras Day. For two years in a row, they won the first place prize for the best decorated float in the parade. Calvin is very proud of this.

Calvin explained that back in New Orleans he attended a Montessori elementary school, which was a part of the Orleans Parish School District. He said that the school was a district-wide school that anyone in the district could apply to for their children to attend. He explained that because the school was considered one of the best public elementary schools in the city, parents often camped outside the school for days when there were openings in a particular grade level in order to secure a spot for their children. In fact, the school was one of the bright spots of the school district where students and teachers would often enjoy visits from politicians such as former President Bill Clinton and other elected officials and notables. Calvin said that the school buildings were in good condition and that he really enjoyed going to the school. He disclosed that the PTA was very active in the school by maintaining a large parental membership who served the school in many capacities. He mentioned that both of his parents were active in the PTA and that he remembered his mother always participating in school functions.

In reference to the literacy experiences he had in school in New Orleans, Calvin remembered that his teachers would mainly read to the class and students would respond to what the teachers would read. He also recalled often reading books independently. He noted that he enjoyed reading in elementary school but it wasn't his favorite subject. He preferred science to reading because of the different things they used to do in science. He shared a story of growing a plant in a cup at school and remembered that his plant grew the most out of all of his classmates and he was very proud of that. He described basal texts and worksheets on different reading skills that

he completed as part of his homework. He said that he visited the school library quite often and that his teachers encouraged that practice. According to his cumulative records, Calvin was reading above grade level in the elementary grades.

At home, Calvin described a house that had many things to read. He explained that his parents had books at the house for the children to read and they would purchase other things such as newspapers and magazines also.

Calvin's Literacy Experiences during the Transition

Calvin reported that during the transition period his family stayed with a family friend for two weeks before securing their own FEMA apartment. He described how nine people managed to fit into a one-bedroom apartment without getting tired of each other.

He said,

It was hard because there was so many of us in the apartment. I remember feelin' scared and wondering what was going to happen to us. Then all the children was glad cause we didn't go to school for two weeks. We didn't have anything with us; no clothes or nothing.

Calvin described his literacy experiences during this transitional period,

We read more than wrote things. My mama and daddy were reading applications and job stuff and the newspapers to find out what was going on in New Orleans. And when they enrolled us in school, they had to fill out all the papers.

In his reflective notebook, Calvin characterized the transitional period as "tough." He described this transient time as not very productive with regards to literacy experiences, but acknowledged that he missed school and being around his friends in New Orleans.

Calvin's Current Literacy Experiences

Calvin talked positively about his current literacy experiences. Calvin believes that he is receiving a good education at his current school and he admitted that the literacy experiences at his current school are a bit more challenging than in New Orleans. He said:

We read a lot in school. Sometimes, we read TAKS passages, but then other times we read novels in class and because I'm in preap language arts I have other books to read. We also do a lot of writing.

When asked to define literacy, Calvin said, "Reading is how you learn about different places and things. I like to read certain things; it's ok." He added that he enjoys reading and writing online on websites such as Facebook© and MySpace©. He mentioned that he texts his friends quite often to keep in touch as well as to find out what is going on in school and around the neighborhood. Calvin explained in his reflective journal that the types of books he enjoys reading are science fiction books such as *Artemis Fowl*.

Delonda: The Official Narrative

Delonda arrived at Marvelle Junior High with all of the necessary paperwork to enter the seventh grade. Her mother went to registration right after work and filled out the papers counselors provided her. According to her records, Delonda is an average student who maintained a "B" average in New Orleans and in school in Texas. From her previous report cards and state assessments, reading is her strongest subject area and mathematics is her weakest subject. Her schedule included preap language arts, a mathematics block class, "regular" science and social studies classes. In my opinion, she is a student that would need to participate in extra tutoring for support in her

mathematics class but with this extra effort, she would be successful. Her mother also told her counselors that she was very involved in her daughter's education and that she would make sure that Delonda was successful.

Delonda's Literacy Experiences: The Student's Narrative

Reading is kinda boring. I really don't like to read. I only do it for school and maybe texting my friends and writing on walls on Facebook©.

Of all of the students I interviewed, Delonda's meetings were the ones that are most memorable to me. I mean, being from New Orleans, I certainly had a connection with all of the participants, but she was different. The home from which she was evacuated was in the neighborhood where I grew up and the neighborhood my family returned to after Hurricane Katrina. The meetings with her brought out various emotions in me. For example, at our first meetings when I found out that she lived in my old neighborhood, I instantly became sad. I experienced a sense of hopelessness when she told me the story of how they left the city. The picture of my mother's house kept coming to mind during this initial interview.

Once again, she was referred to me by another participant in the study. She came to my office with a large smile on her face and a pen in her hand. I explained the study's criteria, risks, and benefits to her, and she agreed to participate in the investigation. She returned the parental slip, and we began meeting to talk about her literacy experiences. Her spirit and general willingness to talk made the meetings go smoothly.

Delonda is a 13-year-old seventh grader who resides in the northern region of the Dallas - Fort Worth (DFW) area. She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and has

lived in the two areas. She lives with her mother, her brother, who is six years old, and her sister, who is nine years old. Her mother is a single mom. Right now, she is employed, but is trying to find a better job, according to Delonda. Her mother completed high school, but never attended college. Instead, she completed a correspondence course in medical billing and is working in that field right now. The family relies on Delonda quite often to help take care of the younger children with getting ready for school and taking care of them after school. Delonda stated that “she cooks and makes snacks for her brother and sister and that they like her cooking.” The family evacuated to Dallas directly from New Orleans because her mother had a friend who lives in the area.

The family left New Orleans August 28, a day before the storm surge flooded the city, with her mother’s friend. Moving slowly in the long line of traffic that was seen on the TV, they were hoping and praying that the money they had would last them the road trip. Her mother was not a person who ever evacuated New Orleans before with the threat of a hurricane; therefore she believed that the family would be returning to New Orleans in a day or two. She did not bring any of the important papers she would need for the children to enroll in school such as shot records or report cards. They had a couple days worth of clothes. When asked how the family evacuated the city, Delonda responded:

My momma told us to get ready to go. The people on the news said this was serious and we should leave. She didn’t believe them, but my grandmother was screaming and hollering at her so she said ok. It was me and my cousins and stuff. One of my uncles followed us in his car. We came with my momma’s friend. I remember I was scared because everybody was leaving.

When they arrived in the DFW area, the family lived with her mother’s friend, but eventually received an apartment from FEMA. The children enrolled in school and her

mother was able to find a job as a waitress to bring in some money. Delonda reported that her mother really does not like living in Texas because she was always talking about going back home. Ironically, the house that they family was renting in New Orleans was destroyed but since the storm, the landlord has rebuilt it. Because the house is practically brand new, the rent for the house is currently \$900 a month. Delonda reported that her mother feels that “they don’t want poor people in New Orleans no more. All the rent is high.” In our subsequent meetings, Delonda hesitated to talk about the evacuation again. She always focused on her current literacy experiences and her current instructional setting.

Delonda’s Literacy Experiences in New Orleans

In describing her literacy experiences in New Orleans, Delonda stated that she enjoyed her elementary school. She attended the neighborhood school for grades K through 2nd grades before evacuating the city. School was always a joy to her because all of her friends went to the school too. She remembers her favorite teacher Mrs. Boutan. She recalled,

Mrs. Boutan was very nice to us. She would read to us all the time. I liked that. She also had a reading corner in her classroom that had a bathtub in it for students to lay back and read. Everybody always wanted to get in the tub and read. We did all kinds of reading in her room.

According to Delonda, her mother would visit the school often. She stated that “her mother would volunteer when she was not working.” When describing her literacy experiences in New Orleans, Delonda describes positive experiences that included some reading at home. She stated that “her mother had a few books at the house, but mostly she would get her reading materials from school.”

Delonda's Literacy Experiences during the Transition

After evacuating from New Orleans, Delonda and her family arrived at her mother's friend's house. They stayed there until they were able to get an apartment through the FEMA apartment program. Delonda reported that in terms of literacy experiences, little to none occurred in this transition period. Her mother could not believe what was happening to the city and basically was trying to find a way to get back home. She said that they watched TV a lot and called other relatives to find out if they were all right. She remembered that she and her cousins did not begin school for at least two months because her mother was insistent that they were going back to New Orleans. She expressed: "I missed my friends and other cousins a lot and I wanted to go to school, but my momma was trying to go back home. She hated here. She wasn't worried about school at all."

Delonda's Current Literacy Experiences

When describing her current literacy experiences, Delonda mentioned the word "boring" a few times to talk about the literacy activities at school. In fact, when asked to define reading she stated: "Reading, is kinda boring. I really don't like to read. I only do it for school and maybe texting my friends and writing on walls on Facebook®." Not all of her literacy experiences seem to bore her, however, because when talking about these other forms of literacy experiences, Delonda mentioned that she really enjoys texting, writing on her Facebook® page, and even reading a few novels. But she insisted, that none of the books she reads are taught in class. She said that these were not allowed in her school. She said that she was glad her teachers did make them do the TAKS reading in school because she knows that helps her pass the test every year.

Looking Across the Participants' Narratives: Their Literacy Experiences

Although these students are different in many ways, recurring patterns emerge from the stories they tell about their lives and literacy experiences before the storm, during the transition, and in the current school setting. The following discussion addresses Research Question 2: What do these students' stories reveal about their literacy experience before, during, and after their displacement?

The data analysis procedure, explained in Chapter 3 yields three patterns underlying the experiences of all the students: one before, one during, and one after the displacement. Before Hurricane Katrina, participants reported there were a wide variety of reading activities and opportunities to choose from in their New Orleans' schools, but they reported little to no literacy at home. During the transition period, as families were trying to survive, if the students participated in literacy experiences at all, they experienced brief encounters with functional literacy. In their current school settings, the students report controlled literacy experiences at school, which they do not seem to connect with their literacy experiences outside school. In other words, the students tend to compartmentalize their current literacy experiences, seeing little connection between in-school literacy with their literacy outside of schools.

Reading Variety and Student Choice in New Orleans

The participants all described reading choice in their literacy experiences in New Orleans. They identified teachers who provided various literacy activities that lead to rich, detailed lessons that ultimately lead to rich literacy experiences. Participants commented that adding this reading choice to their curriculum in the schools they attended in New Orleans enhanced reading instruction. They described lessons that

included drill and skill worksheets, whole group activities, guided reading lessons and teacher read-alouds. However, according to the participants, the most important factor in their literacy experiences in New Orleans was the fact that they were allowed to choose a portion of the reading material. Simply put, variety and student choice was a staple in the curriculum in the schools in New Orleans.

The teachers' willingness to let their students participate in choosing reading material seemed to help to develop positive literacy experiences at school. The students discussed how reading choice led to positive literacy experiences for them at school. For instance, Angela said that her favorite teacher, Ms. Love, would often allow the students to choose a book from the classroom library to read and allow students to bring that book home to share with family members. According to her, having this reading choice was an added motivation for her to read. Further, the participants' stated that reading choice was valuable to them.

During the Transition Period- Functional Literacy or No Little Experiences at All

In describing their literacy experiences during the transitional period, the participants discussed that they did not participate in literacy activities while they were being housed in shelters or living with other family members. Angela described a few opportunities to draw and write poems during this period but they were not substantive. The participants also reflected on this period noting that family members mostly used literacy experiences for functional activities such as filling out applications, seeking employment, and applying for other forms of social services. Although participants noted that texting, emailing, and reading online newspapers were other literacy

experiences that took place, these participants however did not consider these literacy forms as literacy experiences.

Current Literacy Experiences- Controlled Schooled Experiences/Compartmentalized Literacy

All participants included in their accounts of current literacy experiences a discussion about the preparing for the high stakes test, the TAKS test, in school. Participants even identified literacy experiences in school as preparing for the TAKS test. Calvin, for example, equates a good reader as someone who passes the TAKS test. When asked whether or not he thinks he is currently a good reader and writer, Kevin replied, “Yes. I passed all of my TAKS tests.”

Their accounts about current school-based literacy experiences revealed details about controlled literacy experiences where teachers and curricula writers mandate what students must read and focus their attention to in classrooms. This in turn, has led students to compartmentalize their literacy experiences and see their literacy experience as separate, disconnected events that are isolated, such as TAKS practice. Each participant’s narrative about their current literacy experiences reinforced the idea that students are being taught to have a narrow view of literacy that does not include specific forms of experiences such as texting, or blogging. For example, Delonda stated that other forms of literacy were not allowed in her school therefore she participated in these types of literacy experiences outside of school.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from this qualitative study in the form of narrative profiles for each participant. Data analysis revealed a narrative pattern with

these parts: one before, one during, and one after the displacement. Before Hurricane Katrina, participants reported there were a wide variety of reading activities and opportunities for them to choose from in their New Orleans' schools, but they reported little to no literacy at home. During the transition period, as families were trying to survive, if the students participated in literacy experiences at all, they experienced brief encounters with functional literacy. In their current school settings, the students reported controlled literacy experiences at school, but they do not seem to connect with their literacy experiences outside school.

In Chapter 5 the findings of the two research questions are discussed, and recommendations for further research and practice are presented.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative investigation was to examine how five African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina represent their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement, and who are now residing in the Dallas area. This final chapter presents a discussion of the findings and implications of the study, and concludes with recommendations for school districts, urban planners, community stakeholders and those interested in completing further research in the area of literacy and displacement.

Two research questions guided this study, and a summary of the principal findings is restated to offer a frame for this discussion. The students' narratives, which address Research Question 1 "What are the stories that these middle school students' tell about their lives, before, during, and after their displacement?" suggest that the students' life and literacy experiences were as varied as the students themselves. The one common event in all of their lives, their displacement, provided opportunities for new ways of thinking about life and literacy. However, these narratives highlight the missed opportunities that educators, parents, and other stakeholders did not use in order to assist these students with learning how to think about life and literacy in new ways.

As discussed in Chapter 4, data analysis focusing on Research Question 1 suggest three recurrent themes in the students' stories: 1) Before Hurricane Katrina, participants felt as though there were choices for them in their literacy experiences at the various schools in New Orleans and little to none at home; 2) during the transition,

participants discussed functional literacy experiences or none at all occurring in the various settings; and 3) current literacy experiences revealed controlled school literacy experiences and other compartmentalized literacy experiences. These data revealed experiences in the current school that focused mostly on high stakes state assessment practice where participants felt as if they did not have a voice in choosing the activities in school, and other forms of literacy outside of school were not considered forms of literacy.

Research Question 2 of the study was:

1. What do their stories reveal about their literacy experiences before, during, and after their displacement?

The five participants' narratives chronicled literacy experiences in New Orleans' schools that they considered to be fun, and productive. They all described engaging content, such as interactive teacher read-alouds, worksheets, and reading variety and choice. None of the participants described a print rich environment at home in New Orleans, and they all mentioned that literacy at home consisted mostly of functional literacy experiences. This implies that the participants had limited interactions that they considered as literacy activities. Participants compartmentalized their literacy experiences. Angela, for example, even made the distinction between separate categories of literacy as "reading for TAKS," and "reading I do on my own." The compartmentalization of literacy experiences were found in several of the participants' narratives and resulted in negative feelings towards school literacy in all of the participants.

Discussion of the Findings

In this study, participants' accounts revealed that in New Orleans, their teachers provided reading variety and choice and learning environments that were full of opportunities to engage in different activities. The perspectives of the participants' towards their literacy experiences in New Orleans were very favorable; however, it is possible that students were romanticizing their literacy experiences in New Orleans. The literature on displaced persons states that people who are displaced tend to embrace nostalgic feelings toward their home experiences. This finding suggests that if educators and other interested stakeholders were made aware of this fact, they would be more able to assist these students in moving past this emotional state, and, when appropriate develop a realistic perspective on their previous experiences. Such discussion might help focus their attention on learning how to begin to exist in a new environment.

The participants' narrative accounts presented in this study highlight missed opportunities during the transition period for students to embrace the emancipatory power of literacy. After experiencing such a traumatic event such as Hurricane Katrina, participants reported few or no literacy experiences during this time. According to them, most of the literacy experiences were focused on functional literacy skills such as completing paperwork, or applying for jobs and these experiences did not involve adolescents. It was also clear from the students' responses that they were focused on a rather narrow view of literacy as reading and writing. They seemed not to consider their drawing or the use of electronic media as "literacy." Not having the stability of a place to live and a school to attend, perhaps these adolescents could have benefitted from reading and learning about other people who have survived traumatic events

similar to the one they experienced. Perhaps they could have benefitted from reading about how to make meaning of the chaos going on around them by reading other displaced people's stories and how they survived in the wake of these events. Perhaps they could have used literacy more powerfully if they considered themselves active meaning- makers looking for tools to help them read both the world and the word.

In catastrophic events such as Hurricane Katrina, it is not uncommon for the media to take on the role of information giver. In this specific disaster where an entire city was uprooted and the city's infrastructure was destroyed, New Orleans' citizens relied heavily on the media to provide vital information about the city as well as the rebuilding efforts. In fact, all of the participants in the study mentioned that they received most of their updated information regarding New Orleans from the visual media, such as the local TV news, or CNN® www.cnn.com (Cable News Network). Even though the participants did not consider these visual literacy experiences as literacy activities, they all encountered media images via the television, magazines, or picture text messages being sent by other family members. In fact, Calvin mentioned that his mother collected many newspaper articles on Hurricane Katrina and made a scrapbook about the destruction. Again, what did not show up in the narratives is as important as what is present. The students did not mention the use of media or more traditional forms of literacy to "talk back" to the official stories of the storm and the flood that were being reported in the mainstream media. They did not talk about the policy-makers stance toward Katrina and its aftermath.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire states, "Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who we are so that we can more wisely build the future" (p. 45). In this manner, these displaced students could

have used literacy experiences during this transition period to assist them in understanding that traumatic events have occurred before, but through hard work and commitment people have managed to move forward with their lives. They could have used literacy to begin the process of negotiating meaning in their lives amidst the chaos. It is through literacy that we understand our world, and through critical literacy, students interact with the world through experience and observation naming and reflecting what they know and what they see (Wink, 1997).

Not only did the students not include many references to reading in their narratives about their lives outside school before, during, and after the storm, but neither did they talk about writing. Similarly, students could have benefitted from using writing as a negotiating tool during this transitional period. Only one participant, Sandra, mentioned in the interviews that she drew pictures during this time. According to Sandra she would draw while she was lying on her cot at night in the Houston Convention Center. Again, here is another missed opportunity for students to begin to filter through their experiences in order to make meaning of the events that are happening around them. This finding suggests that current discussions on school aged students who are displaced because of traumatic events or crises must include using literacy as an empowering and emancipatory tool in order for these students to begin making sense on about how to exist in two worlds and how to position themselves as agents as they move forward.

Participants reported that current classroom and school experiences were controlled environments that led to controlled literacy experiences. For example, this seemed to lead to the participants' compartmentalizing all of their literacy experiences. When discussing their current literacy experiences, all of the participants mentioned

high stakes testing preparation as the central focus of their classroom experiences. For two participants, Calvin and Angela, this high stakes testing preparation even defined literacy for them. For example, participant Calvin equated being a good reader with passing the TAKS test. Participant Angela defined reading as, “reading for the TAKS test, and reading I do on my own.” The literature is replete with studies that suggest if teachers have a narrow definition of literacy, students will begin to view literacy through one lens and not embrace the other roles that literacy should play in their lives. For example, Langer (1992) critically assessed narrow definitions of literacy, stating that “literacy as the act of reading and writing and literacy as ways of thinking” (p.13). She argued that the most important in the development of literacy is the culturally appropriate way of thinking than acts of reading and writing. She pointed out that different cultures think of literacy from different viewpoints. Langer (1992) does not believe that there is a right or wrong literacy; she does believe that schooling itself may have contributed to a narrow and rigid definition of literacy. Throughout the years, Street (1995) questioned the notion of school literacy as the defining form of reading and writing. Instead, literacy develops from real life settings and circumstances in which reading and writing are used to accomplish goals (Teale & Sulzby, 1989). It is for these reasons that educators must broaden their perspectives of literacy to include multiple literacies.

Again, in these data, we see missed opportunities for critical literacy in the current school setting—missed opportunities to invite and encourage these students to participate in empowering literacy experiences connecting to their lived experiences whether inside or outside of school.

Although these participants are performing satisfactorily in their current school setting according to the academic guidelines set by the school district, this compartmentalization of literacy experiences resulted in a negative attitude towards school literacy. These negative attitudes are not surprising, given the emphasis in this school setting on test preparation and given what critical theorists say about the potential effects of high stakes testing and accountability systems. For example, Giroux (2006) explained the detrimental effects of testing,

Public schools don't need standardized curricula and testing. On the contrary, they need curricular justice—forms of teaching that are inclusive, caring, respectful, economically equitable, and whose aim, in part, is to undermine those repressive modes of education that produce social hierarchies and legitimate inequality while simultaneously providing them with the knowledge and skill needed to become well-rounded critical actors and social agents. (p. 41)

Instead of teaching to a test, critical educators must remember to help give the students the tools to become critics, thinkers, visionaries, and leaders. Demonstrating competency on a test will not develop students into questioning agents or teach them to challenge the status quo. The findings of this study, however, suggest that an emphasis on testing may make students complacent and disengaged from their literacy experiences at school. Whether this compartmentalization is similar or different from the thinking of students who have not gone through displacement experiences is beyond the scope of this study. But these findings suggest that such compartmentalization again leads to missed opportunities to integrate a critical perspective into literacy practices.

The narratives of these five participants revealed compelling findings for any person who is interested in seeking ways to assist students who are displaced and who are trying to negotiate meaning in a new environment, and a new school. These

students had to learn how to make meaning amidst all of the chaos going on in their lives, through either very few literacy experiences or controlled ones that left some of them with an unfavorable feeling towards all literacy experiences and others with negative feelings about school literacy experiences.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because the focus of this study was African American middle school students in public schools, future studies should include the literacy narratives of other ethnic groups who have been displaced to other regions because of traumatic events or crises. Their stories should also be included in the ongoing dialogue on how to better address the needs of these types of students. There is also the need to study students who are attending private schools or other alternative forms of education in their native cities. This type of study would add to the literature on literacy and displacement, in that it would yield a more complete picture of every type of student we may need to service in host cities. The current study focused on students who were attending public schools.

Research tracking displaced or traumatized students throughout their academic careers would benefit the field. A longitudinal study of students' experiences, as well as external supports and constraints related to their use of literacy would yield pivotal information that could assist other students in similar circumstances; it could give researchers as well as practitioners the data needed to evaluate instructional programs already in place, as well as suggest new ones based on the research findings.

In addition, the findings of this study were constrained by the exclusive focus on data gathering in the school setting. Home visits and observations of literacy uses outside of school could be included as added methods of data collection in a future

study. These data collection tools would broaden the scope of the investigation by allowing researchers opportunities to analyze additional literacy experiences of participants, as well as the stories that the participants might tell outside of schools.

Recommendations for Practice

In this qualitative study, the research findings suggest several areas of implications for practice. First, and most important, the narratives presented in this research study unveiled missed opportunities for educators, parents, and “community workers” to use literacy as a tool for empowerment and identity in this time of trauma and crisis. All participants stated that during the transition period to their new host city they experienced little to no literacy experiences. They described how most of their time during the transition period was focused on day-to-day living and functional literacy, rather than literacy for empowerment. Self-selected reading would be one opportunity for students like these not only to gain information and perspectives to help them with the challenges that face them, but also simply to enjoy the literary experience. Teachers, caregivers, community workers, and social service workers need to be able to suggest books for students to read when they have experienced this type of traumatic event. This would mean adding these types of age appropriate books to our libraries in our schools and shelters. These books could also lead to literature circles being formed, with these students discussing their books and forming a bond with students who are choosing to read similar books.

Second, the research findings reflect the need for faculty, and staff members of a school community to receive professional development when receiving students who have been displaced because of a traumatic event or crisis. According to the teachers

and staff members on Marvelle's campus, they only received a 15-minute staff meeting on receiving and supporting Katrina's kids. The staff was not fully aware of how to interact with these students nor did they know the fullest extent of the students' experiences during the storm. According to the teachers and staff interviewed, they could have benefitted from professional training in this area. The data revealed that teachers were not fully prepared to serve the needs of these students, and the staff felt isolated in their attempts to assist these students in making the transition to schools in Texas. Coupled with these feelings, these faculty and staff members experienced an additional tragedy with the accidental shooting of a Katrina evacuee student who was a student at Marvelle. This was an added layer of despair that was felt on this campus. And again, no staff development or, in this case, grief counseling was provided to staff or students.

Third, educators and other professionals in schools need to talk with and listen to students. Simply put, educators don't typically ask students about their educational experiences in general or literacy experience in particular. Critical literacy educators focus on dialogue as a critical component in classrooms. For example, Shor (1992) claims that social and intellectual empowerment evolves replacing teacher talk and student silence. Students are the clientele served in schools. In school communities, school personnel choose the materials used to study subject areas, the methods used to study them, and the time when ideas/ideals are studied. Student voice is not included in the most important details of their educational experiences such as choosing reading material or other literacy experiences that occur in academic settings. According to Nieto (1994), critical inspection of school reform requires dialoguing with students to learn their perspectives. Who else would be better to describe the realities that exist in

our schools today than our students? Reforming how schools support traumatized and displaced students begins when educators listen to students.

Another interesting point about the participant narratives is that they lacked any mention of race, identity, or power with regards to their literacy experiences. Even though New Orleans was 65% African American pre-Hurricane Katrina and African Americans were the majority, coupled with the fact that these students resettled in a city where the population of African Americans deems them minority status, I wondered why students didn't mention anything regarding racial identities or power. Participants did not report on power and identity nor did they acknowledge that their choices in curricula were not valued.

As a teacher and researcher, this did not surprise me. I have seen that students are taught not to question instructional decisions; rather, just to accept them. Is it no wonder that some of our students are not able to critically analyze text and engage in higher order thinking when we don't include them in academic discussions about their own educational experiences? In the Freireian tradition and model, our students deserve to be active in encoding, decoding, and interacting with all of their environments and that includes academic settings, especially students who have experienced being displaced and resettled into a new environment where they are expected to participate as literate people.

Conclusion

These findings and conclusions point to missed opportunities for critical literacy in the lives of these students. As critical educators, we must kindle the power of literacy in our students. We must remind them that during life's traumatic events and hard

knocks we can get lost in a book, reflect in a journal, or draw pictures to express emotions. To avoid missing opportunities for critical literacy, we must listen to the voices of our students, they have a great deal to say about their educational experiences, and their voices should be included in conversations in our schools, as well as in published academic discussions. We must also seek opportunities to include literacy experiences in all activities that our students may encounter.

With natural disasters continuing to occur and people continuously becoming displaced, it is imperative that the literacy experiences of displaced students be included and affirmed in their new host schools. These findings suggest that “literacy and displacement” is a partnership that we haven’t thought a great deal about, but one that deserves to be investigated further with various participants and across time. Most important, this study emphasized that literacy must take on multiple perspectives in our lives. All forms of literacy should be recognized and valued for the roles they play in our lives. For it is through all of the roles of literacy, that we truly recognize and embrace its power. Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack (2004) suggest that literacy “be thought of as a moving target, continually changing its meaning depending on what society expects literate individuals to do” (p. 1584). This means that literacy is in a “becoming” state, constantly evolving, which is a paradigm shift in thinking about literacy as practiced in schools.

This study detailed significant recommendations for community workers, schools, policy makers, and urban planners to use when assisting students who are in transition to host schools. The participants’ narratives in this study bring to light the challenges these displaced students faced upon entering a new school community, and the findings suggest educators missed a whole series of opportunities to include critical literacy and

empowering literacies as tools to assist students in being successful as they attempt to rebuild their lives inside and outside of school.

APPENDIX A
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Tamica Pollard

Study: Missed Opportunities: Examining the literacy experiences of African American middle school students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina

Recruitment Script

Thank you for your interest in this study. One of your teachers or friends nominated you to participate in this project because of your experiences with Hurricane Katrina and moving from New Orleans. I am interested in learning more about your reading habits in school and away from school and would like to talk with students who came to _____ because of Hurricane Katrina to learn more about their experiences. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you choose to participate in the study, you will meet with me in an interview (3) times; and then we will meet as a group to discuss your experiences. I will be writing a dissertation report based on what each participants shares with me. In that report, code names will be used instead of your real names. If you are interested in participating in this study, I will be giving you a consent form to bring home to your parents for them to sign indicating their approval. There is also a place for you to sign your name stating that you will be willing to share your experiences with me. Once the report is completed, if you desire a copy of the paper, I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the study. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
AND STUDENT REFLECTIVE NOTEBOOKS

Guiding Questions for Interview Protocol and Student Reflective Notebooks

Purpose of African American student interview protocol: To learn about the literacy experiences of African American students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina and who now attend schools in host cities. Questions (A-F) are the main questions; the numbered questions are the probes to be used as appropriate.

- A. Biographical Information-Tell me about yourself.
 - 1. How old are you?
 - 2. Where were you born?
 - 3. What places have you lived?
- B. Tell me about your parents (guardians) and brothers and sisters.
 - 1. How was it growing up in your family?
 - 2. What kinds of jobs do they have?
 - 3. What is the highest level of education they have achieved?
 - 4. How do they feel about education? About reading in particular?
- C. Community-Tell me about your neighborhood in New Orleans.
 - 1. Describe the community environment in which you lived in New Orleans.
 - 2. What were your favorite things about your neighborhood? What did you not like?
 - 3. What was your least favorite thing about your neighborhood?
 - 4. What do you remember most about living in New Orleans?
- D. Elementary School-Tell me about the school(s) you attended in New Orleans.
 - 1. What was the name of the school you attended in New Orleans?
 - 2. Describe your school.
 - 3. Describe your classroom setting.
 - 4. What was your favorite subject? Explain.
 - 5. What did you like most about elementary school?
 - 6. What did you like least about elementary school?
 - 7. How was reading taught in your school? With readers? Did students read independently? Did you see your teachers read? Tell me about that.

8. Did teachers encourage students to read? The principal? If so, how?
 9. Did teachers seem to think reading was important? How could someone tell that was true?
 10. What did you write at school? What else?
 11. What was the best thing you ever wrote at school?
 12. Name a good writer at your school. Tell me what makes you know this person is a good writer.
 13. What was your favorite book? Tell me about it. What did you like about it?
 14. At that time, would you consider yourself a good writer? A good reader? Why or Why not?
 15. At that point, what did good reading and/or writing do for you? For your teachers? For the principal? For anyone else?
 16. Did you feel as though you were a good student?
 17. What did you read/write outside of school? For what purposes?
- E. Hurricane Katrina-Tell me about your experiences during Hurricane Katrina.
1. Describe your family's initial reaction to the threat of Hurricane Katrina.
 2. When did your family evacuate?
 3. What family members evacuated?
 4. To what city did your family evacuate?
 5. Did you live with out-of-town relatives? Friends? Hotel? Shelters?
 6. How did your family receive updates on the status of the city? home? Other family members? Letters? Emails? Text messages?
 7. How did the adults in your family find out about housing, jobs, or other resources in the new environment?
 8. Did you enroll in school in the evacuation city? If so, tell me about your experiences in the new school during this transition.
 9. Did you attend more than one school during the transition city? Tell me about that.
 10. Describe the school(s) and classroom setting in the transition city.
 11. How was reading being taught in this school? With readers? Did students read independently? Did your teachers read?

12. Did teachers encourage students to read? The principal? If so, how?
 13. Did teachers seem to think reading was important? How could someone tell that was true?
 14. What did you write at this school? What else?
 15. What was the best thing you ever wrote at school?
 16. In the transition city, what did you read/write outside of school? For what purposes?
- F. Current School-Tell me about the current school you attend now. Have you attended other schools since you left New Orleans?
1. What school are you attending now?
 2. Describe the school's setting.
 3. How is reading being taught in this school? With readers? Do students read independently? Do your teachers read to students?
 4. Do teachers encourage students to read? The principal? If so, how?
 5. Do teachers seem to think reading is important? How could someone tell that was true?
 6. What do you write at school? What else?
 7. What is the best thing you have written at school?
 8. Name a good writer at your school. Tell me what makes you know this person is a good writer.
 9. Do you consider yourself a good writer? A good reader? Why or Why not?
 10. What does good reading and/or writing do for you? For your teachers? For the principal? For anyone else?
 11. What is your favorite book now? Tell me about it. Why do you like this book?
 12. If you were going to tell me the story of how you use reading and writing in your life, what would you say?
 13. Are you a good student?
 14. What do you read/write outside of school? For what purposes?

APPENDIX C

DATA CODING DICTIONARY, CODES, AND EVIDENCE

Data Coding Dictionary

The following codes were developed in order to analyze the data for the dissertation study, *Missed Opportunities: Examining the Literacy Experiences of African American Students displaced by Hurricane Katrina*.

The data sources include: transcripts of participant interviews, reflective notebooks, researcher's memos, informal conversations, and school documents (IEPs, participants' cumulative folders, and TAKS scores).

1. Reading choice- this code refers to the participants being able to choose what they would like to read versus mandated reading material.
2. Survival skills- functional literacy skills i.e. reading flyers, filling out job applications, filling out forms for state assistance, and reading and filling out school documents.
3. Controlled literacy-school mandated literacy events such as TAKS practice, novel studies, or worksheets for skill practice.
4. Hard work- refers to the effort by participants to complete literacy assignments for school
5. Oral literacy- refers to literacy activities that are completed without text interaction; rapping, talking, storytelling etc...
6. Situational literacy- thinking about literacy in situational terms.
7. Stress- refers to the amount of pressure participants mention feeling when referring to events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and/or literacy events in or out of school.
8. Lacking literacy- refers to a period of time where participants said they did not engage in literacy events.
9. Progress- refers to participants' academic success in school particularly in literacy based activities.
10. Literacy for pleasure- refers to specific literacy events where participants expressed satisfaction in completing the activities or events they were engaged in at that time.

Evidence of Codes

Code	Evidence
Reading Choice	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “When it was time for reading, we didn’t use our books [textbooks].” Ms. Love let us get any book we wanted from the classroom.</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “...when the teacher came to get my group, she used to let us pick a book to read.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “When I was little, I only looked at the books I knew ‘cause I couldn’t read.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “Reading is ok. When I was little in New Orleans, I remember going to the library.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “[Ms. Boutan]...She also had a reading corner in her classroom that had a bathtub in it for students to lay back and read. Everyone wanted to get a book and get in that tub.”</p>
Survival Skills	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “My momma read the bills when she got home from work.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “My mama and them read the flyers put up in the apartment complex.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “...my momma and daddy are in a class to buy a house.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “Both of my parents read the newspaper all the time.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “....my momma don’t read that much...just important papers like bills and stuff.”</p>

Code	Evidence
Controlled Literacy	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “We practice for our TAKS test a lot. We have to pass the test in order to go to the 8th grade. That’s most of what we do in Language Arts class. It is kinda boring”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “In school, we have a benchmark like every month and it is a grade.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “The stories they give us to read in school are boring. They do it for practice.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “Most of the novels we read in class the teachers pick them.....”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “I like the fact that the teachers make us do TAKS practice.”</p>
Hard Work	<p><i>Kevin example:</i> “...sometimes reading stuff is hard. When I do the reading tests, my teachers read them to me.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “The work we do in Language Arts is not hard. I can do it all.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “Texas schools are not that hard. I passed all my stuff every year since I been here.”</p>
Oral Literacy	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “The work in my classes is a little harder because I’m in PreAp classes. They are harder.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “...when all of our cousins used to come by our house, my momma and them used to sit around and talk and the children used to be playing...”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “Me and my friends write a lot of raps. We rap about everything in them.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “my momma still be talking about New Orleans a lot. She might move back.”</p>

Code	<i>Evidence</i>
Situational Literacy	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “I read my book at home and if we have free time in our classes. Our teachers don’t care if we do that.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “On the weekends, me and my friends write song lyrics too.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “I draw a lot. I would rather draw sometimes than read.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “I like to text. Me and my friends text all day on the weekend and after we get home from school. We text about football and stuff...”</p>
Stress	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “My mama was scared. She wanted to leave New Orleans with the whole family together. That’s why we all got in the truck.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “We wanted to leave Houston but we didn’t have a way.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “We watched a lot of TV and was wondering what happened to city. I mean man, it looked so bad on TV. My daddy told us this was going to be different. It was crazy.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “My momma kept talking about the last storm when we was watching it on TV. She just kept crying and talking about she was wondering what happened to our house.”</p>
Lacking literacy	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “In the hotel, we didn’t do any school work at all.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “In Houston, we was just trying to see what was going on...they had a lot of people in there.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “We moved a lot. I wasn’t really reading anything.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “We didn’t do anything when we was waiting to enroll in school. I missed my friends at home.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “We didn’t read nothing when we first got here. We didn’t go to school for about 2 months.”</p>

Code	Evidence
Progress	<p><i>Angela example:</i> Angela has been accepted into the AVID program based on academics. She is scheduled to take all PreAp classes.</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “Sandra still struggles with comprehension, but her reading level has increased one Lexile measure.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> According to his records, Kevin has moved from resource Language Arts to the general education course in Language Arts.</p>
Literacy for pleasure	<p><i>Angela example:</i> “I read all the time. The books I read they don’t teach at my school.”</p> <p><i>Sandra example:</i> “yeah.....sometimes, when my class goes to the library, I get science books.”</p> <p><i>Kevin example:</i> “You know, I go online and get rap lyrics so I can know them by heart.”</p> <p><i>Calvin example:</i> “Mostly, I read books during the school year but in the summer I only read my page [Facebook©] and what my friends are posting.”</p> <p><i>Delonda example:</i> “I read in school, but any other time I just text.”</p>

Note: The data sources include: transcripts of participant interviews, reflective notebooks, researcher’s memos, informal conversations, and school documents (IEPs, participants’ cumulative folders, and TAKS scores).

APPENDIX D
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Research Services

March 5, 2010

Leslie Patterson
Department of Teacher Education
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 09520

Dear Dr. Patterson:

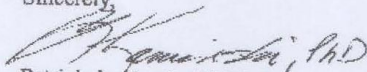
As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled "I'm Not from Here: Examining the Range of Literacy Experiences in a New Environment of African American Students who were Displaced by Hurricane Katrina." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. **Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, March 5, 2010 to March 4, 2011.**

Enclosed is the consent document with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and use **this form only** for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications.

Please contact Shelia Bourns, Research Compliance Administrator, or Boyd Herndon, Director of Research Compliance, at extension 3940, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,


Patricia L. Kaminski, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

PK:sh

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how some African American students who came to a new city from Hurricane Katrina are reading in school and in their new homes.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your child's individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Participant's real names are only being used to separate the responses given among subjects. The actual names of the participants will not be identified in the interviews, in the analysis, or in the written report. Only Dr. Leslie Patterson and Tamica Pollard, the researcher and the research assistant, will hear the tapes and have access to them. The tapes, and the paper copies of tape sayings, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Patterson's office at UNT, which will then be locked. The recordings and paper copies will be retained until 8/01/2013, which on that date, they will be destroyed by shredding the paper copies and deleting the tapes.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Patterson at telephone number 940-380-0444.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- You have read and understand the study and all of your questions have been answered. You have read the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child's participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child's participation in this study.
- You have received a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Office of Research Services
University of North Texas
Last Updated: August 9, 2007

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 3/5/10 TO 3/4/11
JB

Student Assent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by researchers from the University of North Texas Department Of Teacher Education.

This study involves examining the reading habits of students from New Orleans before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina who now live in new cities and go to school in the new city.

You will be asked to participate in (3) taped, one hour interviews and (1) taped one hour interview in which you will answer some questions about your reading habits in school and at home before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. The interviews will be taped so that your answers can be written down correctly.

These interviews will take place at your school in a reserved, locked classroom so that you will be able to express your true feelings and so that the interviews will not be interrupted. Some of the interview questions are: In New Orleans, what books did you read at home? At school? Did you enroll in school when your family first left New Orleans during Katrina? What do you read and write at school in your school now? Also, if you want to, you may write your answers in a journal and bring it to the researcher.

During the final one-hour interview, you will look at what the researcher has written down for you and check to see if it is written correctly.

If you decide to be part of this study, please remember you can stop participating any time you want to. No one will be upset if you decide you don't want to be interviewed.

If you would like to be part of this study, please sign your name below.

Printed Name of Student

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Research Assistant

Date

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRE
FROM 3/5/10 TO 3/4/11
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