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Maps, Movement, and Meaning: Children Restorying Thresholds with Heart Maps and Walking Tours as Acts of Spatial Reclamation

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines how children living in a public housing neighborhood engage in multimodal, embodied meaning-making to restory their community. Focusing on two participants and in partnership with The Kids Club, this paper explores children's spatial reclamation through embodied and spatialized literacies, complicating stories where children assert whose stories matter and why. Drawing on nexus analysis and narrative inquiry, this study conceptualizes the body as central to cognition and comprehension through texts in action. The sisters spatially reclaim neighborhood narratives via walking tours, heart maps, and photographs that function as multimodal action texts. These practices invite a rethinking of comprehension beyond traditional textual modes, illuminating how children navigate and transform literacy landscapes. This work contributes to conversations about equity in literacy environments and calls on educators and researchers to honor children's multimodal literacy practices as vital forms of critical comprehension, storytelling, and belonging.

Keywords: spatial reclamation; nexus analysis; narrative analysis; children's narratives; place-based education; community literacies

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> "If we address stories as archaeological sites, and dust through their layers with meticulous care, we find at some level there is always a doorway. A dividing point between here and there, us and them, mundane and magical. It is at the moments when the doors open, when things flow between the worlds, that stories happen." (Harrow, 2019).

This qualitative study examines how children in a public housing neighborhood engage in multimodal literacy practices through emplaced and embodied meaning-making to "restory" (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016) their community. This work draws attention to equity, spatial literacies, and critical engagement, which circulate historicized and archived neighborhood narratives. In this work, the functionality of "doors" acts as a threshold of connection, division, opportunities, beginnings, endings, or discovery (Harrow, 2019). This paper centers on two sisters, Aniyah and Aliyah, inviting educators and researchers to their home's threshold—the front door—to hear stories unknown to many but deeply lived and known by them. Their invitation to their front door solicits researchers to question the following: Who has access here? Who has the right to be here? What stories get to be told, and retold, about this place, about the people here? What do those stories mean? Doors bring us in and out of a social, cultural, and spatial context. Edward Soja (2010) argues that 'places' are never neutral and are always in relationship with and across materials,

people, and stories. On both sides of the door, "stories happen," but they do not happen without consequence, good or bad (Harrow, 2019, p. 2). While "stories happen", they are not accidental, but constructed, co-created, upheld, dismantled, agreeable, and contested.

The qualitative data presented here challenge dominant deficit stories about a public housing neighborhood in the Midwest United States. The town featured was divided in the 1800s into a 'right' (e.g., white and affluent) and a 'wrong' (e.g., non-white and low-socioeconomic-status) side of town, or the 'right' and 'wrong' side of the imagined door. This paper situates the power of restorying (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016) and spatial justice (Soja, 2010) with spatial reclamation (Walker & Pennington, 2024), as children write themselves into existence and bend historical narratives in ways that are agentive, representative, and partial to their lived experiences in contested places, like a public housing neighborhood. In the larger study, this project works with community children to decenter deficit-oriented, archived narratives toward more nuanced, complex, and rich stories. Through this lens, Aniyah and Aliyah restory and compose new meanings of place within their environment using digital tools (e.g., Samsung Tablet Cameras) to capture emplaced and in-the-moment stories. The findings suggest that by seriously considering learning ecologies, more specifically the environmental contexts of home, inquirers can better understand and validate how children's community contexts impact their literacy practices (e.g., storytelling) in and out of a school context (Moje, 2004). This ethnographic study takes place in The Kids Club (TKC), an after-school and summer program in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood, an affordable housing area on Hillsdale's west side in the Midwest. The study expands the definitions of literacy to include digital tools, such as cameras, not just for memory-keeping, but for fostering emplaced knowledge and storytelling. Through photography and storytelling in their environment, students engage in restorying (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016) and position themselves as community storykeepers, which affirms their lived experiences and empowers them as knowledge holders.

1. Conceptual Framework: Spatial Reclamation

In looking at community environments, like public housing neighborhoods, this paper employs spatial reclamation (Walker & Pennington, 2024), which "foregrounds issues of power" using both "restorying and spatial justice together" to better understand the ways in which children and youth reclaim spaces and stories and position themselves as storytellers and the storykeepers (p. 335). Spatial reclamation involves ethnographic and sensemaking practices that children take up to increase their visibility within social and community contexts. The concept of restorying is a declaration of representing the self when too often representations are flat or unidimensional (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016). Coupled with spatial justice, Soja (2010) posits that space is never neutral and is always interacting across times and histories; therefore, spatial reclamation becomes a means of unearthing how children write themselves into existence in dynamic, equitable, and just ways to position themselves within and across learning ecologies in literacy practices.

This ethnographic study explores how children spatially reclaim stories of place in their affordable housing neighborhood in powerful ways. Focusing on two sisters, Aniyah and Aliyah, this study examines children's spatial reclamation. The Limestone Quarry is a site of contested narratives, which are then re-examined through the (camera) lens of children's stories and their accompanying drawings. This work invites researchers and teacher-practitioners to not only listen to children, but also embrace their reclamation in ways that assert their identities, which cultivates a sense of belonging in and outside of the classroom. Through a walking tour and heart maps that elicit emplaced and embodied stories, I use nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) and narrative analysis (Kim, 2015) to uncover the ways in which the sisters disrupt the discourses in place (e.g., Limestone

Quarry as 'less than') to reposition and center their stories. Aniyah and Aliyah's spatial reclamation of their home showcases both imagined and real stories about this place.

Relevant Literature

In this literature review, I interweave embodied literacies, spatial literacies, and learning ecologies to position affordable housing communities as learning contexts. I also introduce the role of hegemonic discourses—particularly discourses in place—and their influence on how learning unfolds within these frameworks.

Perry and Medina's (2011) embodied literacies situate the body as a site of learning and experience that is dynamically and energetically working with, not separate from, cognition, as the body's meanings are pliable and emergent. To be in the body is to have real, visceral, and mundane experiences of knowing and becoming that are always in relationship with materiality. Perry and Medina (2011) pull from Pineau's (2002) performative pedagogy, which centers becoming as assemblages across and with bodies, materials, space, and time, to make meaning of the available scripts or tacit ways of engaging spaces. Embodied literacies situate the body as "is," which means that the body is already integrated into the world of materiality, interacting and altering with and across materials (Pineau, 2002; Ellsworth, 2005; Perry & Medina, 2011).

Pineau's (2002) performative pedagogy affords opportunities for youth to contest and rupture tacit or expected bodily performances. The pliability of embodied performances attends to what Scollon and Scollon (2004) refer to as "historical bodies," which become the ingrained and taken-for-granted actions that make up participation and inscribed bodily performances. Even though bodies are inscribed with meaning and taken-for-granted actions, Pineua's performative pedagogy affords plasticity and new ways of meaning-making within spaces and across bodies. For Pineau (2002), performative pedagogy "yields a repertoire of strategies for curriculum design and classroom instruction that can encourage students' active and critical participation within and beyond the classroom" (p. 42). This design and instruction must attend to what Pineau distinguishes as the two types of bodies in performative pedagogy: the "literal body," which refers to the physical body, and the "metaphorical body," which refers to modes of "experience and expression" (p. 44). For Pineua, the "ideological body begins with the acknowledgment that we enter our classrooms as embodied persons and that our bodies are differentially marked by cultural norms" (p. 46). Embodied literacies position the body as a central site in learning, knowing, doing, and being within spaces.

Spatial literacies look to how places are in relationship with and across materials, such as stories, people, histories, and time, to socially create meanings of/in a place (Tuan, 1977; Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Soja, 2010; K. Wohlwend, 2021). Spatial literacies contend that spaces are not specifically geographical nor fixed; instead, 'spatial' is both referent and relational. This relationship (re)produces fluctuations in meaning and power (Soja, 2010; Leander & Sheehy, 2004). Leander and Sheehy (2004) posit that "spatial research confronts the problem of how to explain political struggle in people's everyday lives" (p. 2). In working with space as a political struggle to extrapolate everyday lives, Leander and Sheehy (2004) argue that "space is not static"; more so, the meaning of space is ever evolving, as it is "dynamically relational" to bodies and other materiality (p. 1). In other words, spatial literacy scholars contend that space and place work with and across materials to (re)construct emerging and fluid identities referent to historical, political, educative, and classed narratives of locations (Tuan, 1977; Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Ellsworth, 2005; Massey, 2009; Dovey, 2009). Past references, including historical archives of place identity, speak to how bodies are constructed and inscribed within collective stories of places. Working across spatialized and embodied literacies, I argue that bodies, like spaces, are

also never ahistorical, nor are they stabilized. Embodied and spatial literacies converge as bodies and spaces are contested, pliable, and emergent with new meanings. In other words, I attempt to draw upon and make visible the ways in which the convergence of embodied and spatial literacies illuminates overlooked stories.

Specifically, the data analyzed attends to the embodied and socio-spatial relationships of two sisters: Aniyah and Aliyah, in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood of Hillsdale, which includes broader implications for stories of places in the Global North as nested concentric circles that attend to socio-political constructions of place such as the "national space, city space, community space, neighborhood space, home space, suburban space and virtual space" (Leander & Sheehy, 2004, p.7). For example, Moje (2004) examines how Latiné youth identities are relational to their fluid "becomings" (Perry & Medina, 2011) across spaces. Moje's work highlights the youth's fluid and hybrid identities, which are relational to concentric circles of power and place (e.g., virtual space, home space, neighborhood space, etc.). Moje's (2004) study working with Latiné youth across spaces (e.g., virtual, geographical, and dialogical) offers the ontological insight of considering spaces to be "shaped by the texts they consumed and produced, which in turn shaped the ways they chose to identify and were identified [by others]" (p. 30). She goes on to highlight that one participant, Pilar, finds that their identities are fluid, and not "discrete or isolated from one another, and thus, the youth's identities are not constructed or enacted as wholly separate identities" (Moje, 2004, p. 33). Borrowing from Moje's (2004) work, I turn to hegemonic discourses, more specifically, hegemonic discourses in place (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; Gee, 2015). Hegemonic discourses in place refer to the "big D" discourses and "little d" discourses, which highlight the ways in which people express, live, operate, and engage with participants and materials (Gee, 2015). The big 'D' discourse is "meant to capture how people enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities or 'kinds of people' through well-integrated combinations of language, actions, interactions, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values" (p. 1). In other words, big 'D' discourses are how people express themselves through their language, embodied practices, mediated tools, and beliefs. The "big D" discourses are broad, whereas "little d" discourses are how people express themselves in micro practices. Discourses in place address the specific norms, expectations, and social actions that a group is expected to adopt (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; K. Wohlwend, 2021). Children, like the youth in Moje's study, disrupt the existing discourses in place (e.g., broad discourses) as they move fluidly across their identities, dependent on place, space, and other participants.

Returning to Moje (2004) for this study, it is helpful to consider the varying identity narratives that the two sisters take up when it comes to their home and neighborhood. Their proximity to Limestone Quarry impacts their embodied and emplaced performances as both a disruption of the nexus, but also as an act of spatial reclamation, as they engage in digital and emplaced storytelling practices during the walking tours. Moje (2004) conceptualized space with power as nested concentric circles, which helps to illustrate how youths' lives are embodied and performed, not only in their local place, but also regarding their relational value to larger institutions (i.e., neighborhood boundaries and schools) that inscribe bodies with meaning and expectations of performance (Bourdieu, 1991; Luke, 1992). Considering our current political (e.g., racial and classed) climate in the Global North, it is important to consider how embodiment and spatial literacies converge as sites of learning, knowing, and becoming, for youths to see how their acts of spatial reclamation are not disruptions of a hegemonic nexus, but are instead repositioned as agentive restorying and storytelling, as the youth exists within political and historical places (Jones et al., 2016; Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2018). Moje et al. (2004) offer researchers valuable insights into how youths engage their everyday funds of knowledge and how these practices bridge institutional contexts

(e.g., schools) with youths' discourses (Gee, 2015) and then turn towards community as a context of learning (Peele-Eady & Moje, 2020).

In their work, Moje et al. (2004) find that the separation between content area knowledge and literacy skills is nearly indistinguishable; instead, they offer a reframing of how youths take up content area-specific literacy skills in secondary science, pulling from community-based knowledge, popular culture, school, home, and peer groups. They express that "a critical aspect of learning in any discipline involves learning to communicate through oral and written language, among other forms of representation, in that discipline" (p. 45). In other words, youths draw upon multiple resources to gain content area knowledge, such as literacy skills (e.g., encoding and decoding), discursive skills (e.g., ways of knowing, making, and using), and knowledge (e.g., word meanings and concepts). Working across and with varied domains (e.g., literacy skills, discursive skills, and knowledge) supports the learning of skilled content literacy practices. Their findings are pulled from six domains (e.g., information technologies, family, homes, community, peer groups, and popular culture) to locate the connections between science content literacy and the everyday skills of science or practices. They found that youths are "active creators of third space, of hybrid Discourse, in their everyday and school practices," which builds and strengthens youths' content knowledge (Moje et al., 2004, p. 65). In other words, school walls do not act as a barrier to the youth's life outside of them, instead, youths pull from historical, personal, popular, and community-based schema to take up content area literacy skills and practices. This interplay between youths' lived experiences and their engagement with literacy practices underscores the importance of viewing communities as rich, multifaceted contexts for learning. Building on this perspective, Peele-Eady and Moje (2020) emphasize the concept of "communities as contexts for learning," arguing that communities extend beyond social groups and localities to encompass emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions (p. 232).

Peele-Eady and Moje (2020) explain that "even the most 'real' community is also an image constructed by each member, an image that gets lived out in real ways in the real world but is nonetheless a construction" (p. 232). That is to say that the constructions of community are not static, but instead made and remade. Furthermore, they explicate that while there is a notion of "imagined communities" for community members (e.g., Anderson, 2006), they "also recognize that communities are real to the people who live and imagine them" (Peele-Eady & Moje, 2020, p. 240). They go on to explain that communities are developed within and across social relationships and time (e.g., historical and temporal), which materialize into the real and imagined meanings of community in the lives of the community members. The sisters, shaped by both their age and their experience of living in this neighborhood, may not be aware of the historical stories tied to the Limestone Quarry. However, their storytelling and imagination are deeply influenced by their unique connection to the place and their role within its contemporary context. This Special Issue invites scholars to consider digital learning ecologies (Moje, 2004) that work towards inclusive and equitable literacy learning in the early years for children. Keeping this in mind, embodied and spatial literacies showcase the various methods taken up by children to be visible within contested spaces. This paper posits that bodies and spaces are never ahistorical, nor are they stabilized; thus, this work examines embodied and spatial literacies that children engage through storytelling, in which narratives of place are contested, pliable, and emergent with new meanings, and the communities in which meanings are made supple, emergent, and heterogeneous.

2. Materials and Methods

Drawing on nexus analysis and narrative inquiry, this study situates the body and places as central to cognition and comprehension through "action texts" created through children's heart maps and photography (K. E. Wohlwend, 2018; K. Wohlwend, 2021). The analytic focus for this ethnographic study incorporates nexus analysis (NXA) (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) and narrative inquiry (Kim, 2015) to examine the ways in which Aniyah and Aliyah spatially reclaim their home in Limestone Quarry. The scope of this study investigates how children in an affordable housing community use emplaced and embodied restorying practices to complicate historical narratives. Drawing on spatial justice, nexus analysis, and narrative inquiry, this study explores how children's restorying practices reclaim space and resist spatial and historical stigma to contribute to a more nuanced and fluid storytelling within their context. To this end, the study seeks to understand the following:

In what ways do children embody agents of spatial reclamation within their communities as in-the-moment archivists?

What modes of comprehension emerge through children's embodied and emplaced spatial restorying?

2.1. Participants and Location

This paper draws on data from a larger qualitative study conducted in summer 2021 at The Kids Club (pseudonym), a nationally recognized after-school and summer program in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood, a public and affordable housing area in Hillsdale, Midwest, USA. The program serves the youth aged 5–17. The study participants ranged from ages 5 to 13 and represented diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including white, Asian, Black, Hispanic, and multiracial identities; nineteen females and eight males participated in the larger 8-week summer study. I worked as a volunteer at TKC, running a summer enrichment program for two months called Narrating Neighborhoods, focused on learning the stories that children carry with them. The club was the site of my dissertation research project. Twenty-seven kids joined the project. We met for 10 sessions over 8 weeks. Sessions 1–8 focused on walking tours, heart mapping, photography, interviews, and focus groups. In session 9, the children prepared for a public art gala to showcase their work, and session 10 was the art gala hosted by participants to share their restorying artifacts both with family and club members, held at The Kids Club. I met with two groups separated by age—Group 1 (aged 5–8) and Group 2 (aged 9–13)—for one hour each every week; whilst I spent two hours with the children each week, participants only spent one hour with me. Consent and assent were obtained from child participants and their caregivers. The number of participants fluctuated throughout the two months. During the sessions, participants engaged in walking tours (Trell & Van Hoven, 2010), heart maps (Heard, 2018), digital storytelling methods (e.g., photography), and photovoice (Wang, 1999), creating emplaced "action texts" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 252). An action text is a "mobile and momentary text conveyed with bodies and materials" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 252). Through embodied and spatialized practices, participants shared place-based stories that disrupted the dominant narratives and complicated the official archives. The children's maps, photos, and restorying narratives became anchors for composite, embodied stories that foreground raced, classed, and often-overlooked dimensions of belonging.

In this paper, I share a snippet of the data collected in Summer 2021 as a collaboration between the club and me to offer the return of in-person programming to the club since the 2020 lockdown. This paper focuses on two participants who are siblings, Aniyah (7) and Aliyah (8). The sisters identify as African American and live in a subsidized townhome in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood with their mom. The data sources for this

manuscript are heart maps (Heard, 2018), walking tours (Trell & Van Hoven, 2010), digital photography, and photovoice (Wang, 1999). The walking tours themselves were designed as an embodied methodological practice, drawing on Trell and Van Hoven's (2010) work. In this approach, participants became guides, leading the way through the environments they know intimately. By walking through the neighborhood, the sisters shared firsthand stories of home and belonging, rooted in lived experiences and emplaced knowledge. The heart maps activity, drawing on Georgia Heard's (2016, 2018) work, invites participants to explore their terra incognita, or the invisible territories of their lives and deeply held emplaced stories. The purpose of this activity was to help elicit the places that are important to the participants. Georgia Heard conceptualizes "heart maps" as a writing practice that supports the writer's most innate storytelling practices by getting to the heart of what matters to storytellers and writers. For this study, participants engage with heart mapping to illustrate the places that are important to them and how they come to conceptualize themselves in and across spaces and times. Using digital photography and art, Aniyah and Aliyha mapped beloved spaces, using storytelling to blur temporal and idealistic geographies. This exercise revealed the deeply personal narratives that often remain hidden beneath the surface of everyday life. This approach illuminates the spatial reclamation across temporal and ephemeral memories—or stories—using heart maps, photography, and walking tours that Aniyah and Aliyah make visible to outsiders. To better understand the stories shared, the sisters—along with other participants—engaged in photovoice methods (Wang, 1999) as a participatory action research strategy. Photovoice allowed us to view these images not just as records, but as in-the-moment and meaning-making stories—constructed and contested historical artifacts. Their acts of spatial reclamation revealed a layered truth: one that balanced the concrete evidence of photographs with emplaced stories and experiences of reclaimed spaces.

2.2. Analytic Focus

NXA attends to the action or unit under study, which privileges action rather than language, and to do this, NXA circulates three interconnected concepts: historical bodies (e.g., who is expected here?), interaction orders (e.g., how are people expected to act here?), and discourses in place (e.g., what's expected here?). Historical bodies represent ingrained cultural knowledge and automatic practices shaped by lived experience (K. Wohlwend, 2021)—the 'how' of action in specific contexts. Interaction orders, building on Goffman's (1983) work, address the social dynamics of a moment, illustrating how people gather and engage at a site (e.g., queuing at a coffee shop; K. Wohlwend, 2021). Discourses in place reflect the embedded expectations and mediations among people, materials, and design, revealing how these elements are performed and reinforced in situ (K. Wohlwend, 2021). Operating within the nexus, inquirers navigate it to "track practices in site to see how a nexus organizes meaning-making and participation in this place" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 258). In other words, NXA posits that as researchers, we cannot step outside of the unit under study, and that we are engaged in the nexus with participants (e.g., Aniyah, Aliyah, and me) and materials (e.g., Limestone Quarry neighborhood, heart maps, stories during and after walking tours, and photographs). Our engagement within the nexus affords the ability to track the nexus for moments of disruption.

Working with NXA, I turn to narrative inquiry to richly round out the data disruptions to position them as a "story" (Kim, 2015, p. 119). Coming to data as a "story," researchers play with/in stories of place that are told and retold by participants (Kim, 2015). Narrative inquiry explores the storytelling process across time, socio-cultural touchstones, and place, emphasizing the vigor of stories that participants experience both in memory and in place (Nasheeda et al., 2019; Kim, 2015; Trell & Van Hoven, 2010). While stories may emerge as

memories, the data here focuses on immediate, visceral, in-the-moment narratives shared before and during a heart mapping session at The Kids Club, which are later brought to life through a walking tour that takes their heart maps to the streets. The complex narratives shared by Aniyah and Aliyah invite me to engage with fluid stories that glide between the past, the present, the real, and the imagined. Using narrative inquiry and NXA highlights the elasticity of storied experiences and connections to materials (e.g., bodies, places, signs), as well as the disruptions of circulating (e.g., archived) discourses. The stories shared by Aniyah and Aliyah illuminate both the emplaced and storied spatial reclamation that they take up in the process.

In her TEDx talk, Georgia Heard describes heart maps as unique tools that illustrate "the stories, experiences, people we love that we have stored inside of our hearts throughout our lives." She further explains that heart maps are a "visual and emotional tool" used to "map what we care about and who we are" (Heard, 2018). By deliberately incorporating these methodological approaches, this study reveals the invisible and complex edges of spatial reclamation as experienced by children. While NXA focuses on actions, narrative inquiry emphasizes the stories told and retold, creating a complex yet complementary framework. To put this into practice, I engaged the nexus by identifying a potential disruption (e.g., the heart maps).

Children across the first three sessions were adamant that we walk past their homes. For example, in session 3, Donny—a child in the study—vehemently asked, "Can we-can we? Can we go to my home?" Then, Aliyah asks the same, and Donny replies, "Yeah, I've never seen her house. I wanna see her house." The children wanted us to visit their homes during the walking tours. I navigated the nexus by then "tracking practices in site to see how a nexus organizes meaning-making and participation" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 258). Historical archives and stories of Limestone Quarry excluded the experiences and stories of residential children. By listening to stories from both the town's archives and participants, particularly Aniyah and Aliyah, I examine how their narratives reclaim the nexus through their collaboration with place, other participants, and materials. This process makes invisible practices visible through mediated actions like walking tours, photographs, and heart maps (K. Wohlwend, 2021).

The data analysis proceeded over three overlapping phases, drawing on both narrative inquiry and NXA. First, I attended to narrative inquiry's storytelling practices, situated in temporality and storied experience (Kim, 2015). Second, guided by NXA's "engaging the nexus" (Scollon & Scollon, 2004; K. Wohlwend, 2021), I examined how children's storytelling practices revealed "the naturalized practices intertwined in modern literacies" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 254). For example, Aniyah and Aliyah build upon one another's memories to reclaim their townhome and neighborhood, illustrating how spatial reclamation and restorying function collaboratively as critical comprehension practices. Finally, layered with narrative inquiry's attention to temporality and experience with NXA's focus on embodied social action, how participants used walking tours and heart map sessions to engage with space, memory, and meaning-making was traced. This phase allowed me to track the dynamic interplay between space, bodies, and storytelling techniques taken up by participants collectively, and then attend to Aniyah and Aliyah's storytelling practices specifically.

In this ethnographic study, I situate my positionality at the intersection of literacy studies and spatial justice advocacy. As a white, middle-class, university-affiliated researcher with prior experience in gentrifying neighborhoods, I approach this study with both insider knowledge of housing inequities and the recognition that I am an outsider to the Limestone Quarry community, but a Hillsdale insider. By understanding the power dynamics at play, I have prioritized methods that center participants' voices, such as collaborative data

interpretation (e.g., narrativizing Aniyah and Aliyah's stories), to ensure that the discussion reflects their lived experiences and perspectives as strongly as possible. I do this in two ways: (1) providing historical stories and then (2) representing heart maps and interview snippets from Aniyah and Aliyah to showcase how they spatially reclaim their home and neighborhood in concrete and ephemeral ways.

3. Results

Discourses in place are the "unspoken expectations for interacting with materials and designs in an environment embedded in artifacts and the built environment" (K. Wohlwend, 2021, p. 254). The discourses in place, specifically in Limestone Quarry, may seem 'unspoken', but are certainly archived. I must learn the discourses in this place to deeply understand how children spatially reclaim Limestone Quarry. This section will reveal stories archived in the Hillsdale Historical Society that help to develop a story about this place. This storytelling process will then help to illuminate the ways in which Aniyah and Aliyah spatially reclaim home in powerful and pliable ways. The results presented in the following sections focus on Aniyah and Aliyah only. Their heart maps and stories elicited from the walking tours are embodied texts that rub against the historically hegemonic stories of Limestone Quarry. Their heart maps and stories are emplaced and embodied ways of knowing, offering powerful alternatives to archived historical narratives.

3.1. Hegemonic Stories of Limestone Quarry

Before the start of the larger qualitative study, I spent 60 h in the Hillsdale historical archives to obtain a sense of this place and the stories told. I began this archival trajectory after spending two years in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood for another project with colleagues, in which we learned how caregivers made decisions for their children's elementary school (Panos et al., 2021). Through that project, I learned from caregivers and community-colloquial historians about the early settlements of Hillsdale, particularly in the Limestone Quarry area. During this time between 2018 and 2020, I was a weekly volunteer in the neighborhood as both a TKC after-school volunteer as well as an invited guest council member on the Limestone Quarry Resident Council. My role was to support the resident council members in disseminating both (non-grocery and grocery) items to Limestone Quarry residents. As a volunteer with the resident council and in TKC, residents would share life stories with me that deeply expressed their connections to this neighborhood, their children, and their families.

Carrying shared stories from the council members and residents, I turned to the historical Hillsdale archives that span two centuries. Following the Emancipation Proclamation, newly freed men and women traveled by train from southern states to the North, with some settling near the railroad tracks in the area now known as Limestone Quarry. The settlements near the railroad track in Limestone Quarry were colloquially called 'shanty towns.' The historical significance of Limestone Quarry lies in its role in the development of Hillsdale during the late 1800s, when shanty towns emerged as a response to housing needs. Early residents took the initiative to create their system of affordable housing within the Limestone Quarry. In an archival document, a Hillsdale resident, not from the Limestone Quarry area, recalled that "...people came up from Tennessee to work in the factory then [late 1800s]. They worked for twenty-five cents an hour, and they were so poor that they couldn't afford homes. So, they built their homes out of whatever they could find—tin cans put together with nails, boards, cardboard, dirt floors" (Hillsdale Midwest History, 1979). It was not until the 1960s, with the expansion of federal funding for public housing, that formalized systems for supporting economically disenfranchised families began to take shape. As a result of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, urban renewal plans were set

in motion to meet the public need for federally funded, publicly subsidized housing to provide sustainable and quality housing for economically disenfranchised families. Nearly thirty years later, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) cabinetry, the descendent of President Roosevelt's 1937 U.S. Housing Act, endeavored to develop public housing options in many former tenements, and affordable housing neighborhoods (hud.gov), which was strengthened by Lyndon B. Johnson's Fair Housing Act (Rothstein, 2017).

The archival discourse around public and affordable housing frames these issues as conceptual problems. For instance, the archives reveal that Hillsdale residents shared stories about how the social, financial, and educational disparities experienced by families living in greater Limestone Quarry compared to those in greater Hillsdale were a result of poor life management. In another example, a Hillsdale geography professor explained that the residents in Limestone Quarry and their homes were in "dire need of government subsidies" and repair (Hillsdale Midwest History, 1979). From the time of settlement in the late 1800s, Limestone Quarry has been storied by outsiders as 'less than'. While the archives included voices from greater Hillsdale, it was challenging to locate a story about Limestone Quarry from a resident living in the neighborhood. However, I was able to locate one 1986 newspaper article, where a Limestone Quarry resident proclaims, "Sixteen years is long enough to tell whether it's [Limestone Quarry] good or bad. I have had no bad experiences here" (Hillsdale Newspaper, 1986).

The historical trajectory of Limestone Quarry's development materializes as the lived and worn stories of children who resided and played there in 2021. Just as Limestone Quarry was once a space shaped by necessity and community-driven innovation, it is now a site where children like Aniyah and Aliyah narrate their own stories, transforming the space into a living, learning ecology. Throughout the data presented in the following section, the embodied literacy practices that Aniyah and Aliyah take up across their photographs, walking tours, and heart maps illustrate the ways in which they spatially reclaim Limestone Quarry as the context of their learning ecology, and more specifically, their community as the context for learning (Moje, 2004; Peele-Eady & Moje, 2020). By listening to children and understanding how they spatially reclaim their stories within contested spaces, we can uncover the silenced or dismissed stories that children carry with them.

3.2. Sisters Spatially Reclaim Stories of Place: Heart Maps

The findings reveal how Aniyah and Aliyah engage in the practice of spatial reclamation through their art (e.g., heart maps), photographs (e.g., turned into line drawings), and the stories they share about their home during a walking tour. This work locates key moments of disruption in the nexus of practice, specifically in the ways their stories of home collide with narratives from historical archives. The findings emphasize the pliable literacy practices (e.g., storytelling and restorying) that children employ to spatially reclaim. For this section, the detangling of the findings into a separate discussion became untenable. This tension is supported by Bhattacharya's (2017) qualitative perspectives, which emphasize that researchers can never provide a true representation of the data. Specifically, she explains that she uses "re-presentations because the participants' stories are a re-presentation of what they told you [me] during the interviews" (p. 158). Through rich narrative and thick description, qualitative interpretations illuminate the ideas explored by the researcher. Within this rich description, the findings will be threaded with analysis as I work to create the truest "re-presentation of what they [Aniyah and Aliyah] told you [me] during the interviews. . .", as well as the stories shared on the walking tour (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 158). As such, I weave Aniyah's and Aliyah's acts of spatial reclamation with their heart maps and the stories they share prior to and on the walking tour. Because the data presented in this section focuses on 'space,' I have included a line drawing (see Figures 1 and 2) of the

sisters' home, based on a photo Aniyah snapped during a walking tour, for their privacy and to further anonymize them. Additionally, I include a line drawing of the tract homes in the Limestone Quarry neighborhood, sourced from the community's public housing website. To complement these anonymized line drawings, I offer a sensorial description of their home during our walking tour to provide additional context. Thematically, Aniyah and Aliyah spatially reclaim stories of place through love, relationships (e.g., friends and family), and sustenance (e.g., food and the kitchen). These themes act as the illustrative disruptions in the nexus, which then become stories of their spatial reclamation.

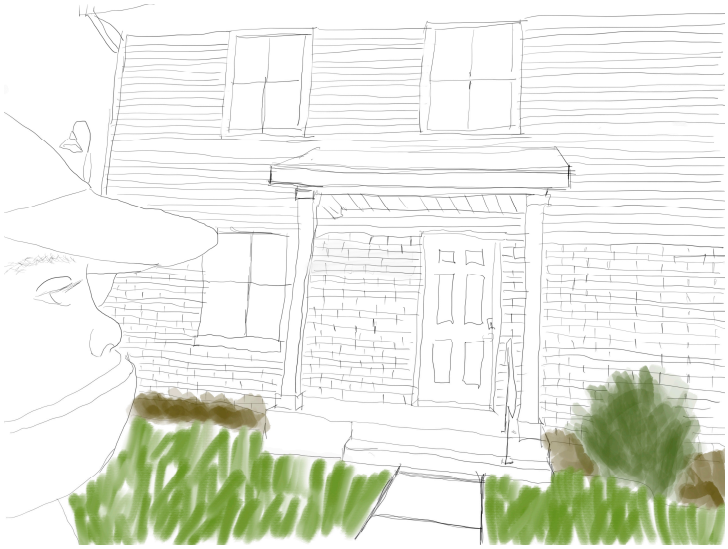

Figure 1. Sisters' home.



Figure 2. Limestone Quarry residential photograph.

3.3. Heart Maps

It was our second session of the study, and the kids poured into the industrial cafeteria at TKC with heavy feet and beet-red faces from our first walking tour. Outside, the midwestern summer sun showed no mercy, and 2021's infamous Cicada Brood X added another sticky layer to our walks. The ground was littered with cicadas' brittle carcasses—so thick beneath our shoes that they crunched like fallen leaves. As the kids bounded into the cafeteria, the air hummed with both heat-induced groans and squelched energy. Some kids immediately sought water, asking for something to wash their hands with or splash on their sticky faces. Others, like sisters Aniyah and Aliyah, were excitedly talking with

Donny—another participant—about where they wanted to take us "next time," on our Limestone Quarry walking tour. The sisters expressed a strong desire to "show off" their house on the next tour, explaining that it was only a little "bit away" from the club. As we talked through a game plan for the following session, I suggested we start with "heart maps" so that they could illustrate the places that are important to them (Heard, 2018).

Immediately, a wave of colorful construction paper fanned across the room, accompanied by a plastic bucket of worn, broken crayons. The kids settled into their seats, the earlier buzz softening into the quiet hum of crayons against paper. Aniyah and Aliyah, still brimming with excitement from their talk with Donny, furiously crafted their heart maps, their hands flying as they began to sketch their worlds (please see Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3. Aliyah's heart map.

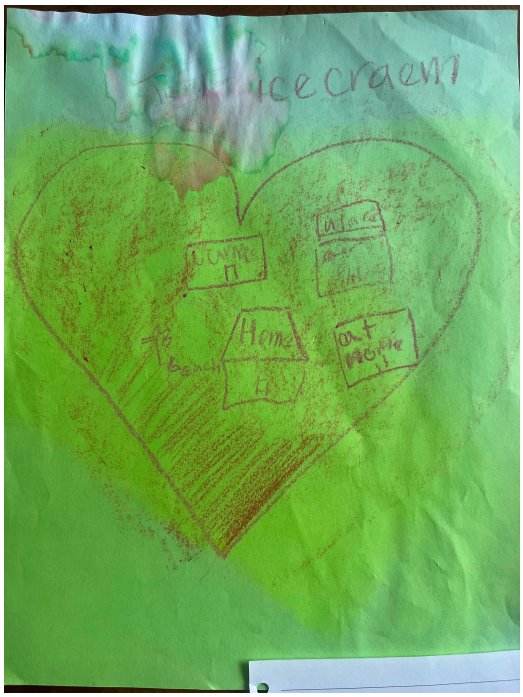

Figure 4. Aniyah's heart map.

With crayons on paper, heart maps visualize moments that are etched into their experiences and stories of place. As they drew, stories emerged, and their terra incognita elicited home, food, comfort, friends, and family. Children drew illustrations of home—some homes situated out of state, and others nestled in Limestone Quarry. Some participants illustrated the playgrounds, basketball courts, schools, and the local C-Mart. Others included fast food chains and ice cream shops. For others, like Aniyah and Aliyah, flattering architecture and bright colors emerged. Aliyah drew her home as if it were a castle, with three rotunda peaks adorning the roof. In her vision, the home has two large front-facing windows, with two high rotunda towers in vibrant pink and green. The most robust section of the home is punctuated with a green peaked roof. The home stands alone as if it is suspended in space. Her imagining of home has a heart circling the structure—home is centered on and encased in love. Aniyah's home is suspended in space and time, so much so that her depiction stands alone. Like her sister's, Aliyah's home is also encased in a heart. However, home is not centralized, but in relationship with other local gems, such as the pool and ice cream shop. Her vision of home is not suspended in space, but instead, home is storied (e.g., illustrated) like a star in a community constellation. Aliyah's heart map includes a suspended neighborhood where the heart geographically encases four locations: her home, the bench near her home, the ice cream shop, TKC, and the playground.

Aniyah and Aliyah's heart maps disrupt discourses in place, as their maps situate and center the felt experience of home. In their maps, the sisters capture love, relationships, and belonging. The concept of 'love' for Aniyah came up in her storytelling, too. For example, in the first session, I asked the kids to draw their superhero power on an index card to introduce ourselves. As markers flew and crayons broke, we came together in a circle to listen to everyone's superhero power. We went around the room and children shared their superpowers, such as "flying", "invisibility", or "pinching." It was Aniyah's turn to share, and she shyly squeaked the word "love". After a few moments and nudges from her sister, she said with bravado that "love is my [her] superpower." Later in that first session, the kids were asked to pick a spot on the cafeteria tile floor for our next activity of collaborative illustrations. I asked them to draw "the first thing that comes to mind when I say, 'Limestone Quarry Neighborhood', what do you see? Now draw it!" Some children drew, and then shouted their associations, such as "nature", "fish", or "animals," but when I turned to Aniyah, she explained that she drew her "kitchen," and when asked why, she added "because it's happy!". Aniyah's recollection of home and the neighborhood was attributed to the relationships and experiences she carries with her.

Their maps, though different from one another's vision, disrupt the discourses in place that situate public housing in its uniformity as the sturdy tract housing photograph posted on the Limestone Quarry's public-facing website. Tract housing units are built for efficiency (e.g., cost savings for the builder), and these developments require quick and scalable units (Hunt, 2009). For Aniyah, home is imagined and illustrated as regal, standing alone, and suspended in time and space, whereas in Aliyah's heart map, home is relational and situated with other sites of importance. Their heart maps illustrate real and imagined cartography, as it is experienced through their personal histories that collide with archived stories. For example, the Limestone Quarry neighborhood, shaped by the legacy of tar paper shacks and the federally developed housing units of the 1960s, continues to bear the burden of deficit-laden reputations. Like many impoverished communities, its story is too often told by outsiders—those who do not live within the geographic boundaries of public housing. These external narratives unfairly portray residents as 'uneducated' and 'lazy', equating poverty with personal failure (Anyon, 1980; Halpern, 2003; Jones & Vagle, 2013), where such harmful stereotypes erase the complexity and resilience of residents, perpetuating stigma and reinforcing systemic inequities. The sisters' spatial

reclamation challenges discourses in place and shows how children co-construct meanings of bodies and spaces. Aniyah and Aliyah collectively and individually reclaim the meaning and dynamic stories of place. The sisters' heart maps act as a restorying trajectory that resists and reclaims historically documented deficit-laden narratives. Their heart maps and storytelling position Limestone Quarry as a place that flows across and within fairytales, royalty, community, and connection.

3.4. Walking Tour: Aniyah and Aliyah Reclaim Home Through Stories

In our third session, there were six kids present: Donny, Dwyane, Marcus, Naomi, Aniyah, and Aliyah (all pseudonyms). The kids were excited to go on their second walking tour and to take us to their homes, but due to club staffing restraints, we had to break the kids up into two groups. The girls—Naomi, Aniyah, and Aliyah—wanted to go together, so the groups were split by gender for this walking tour. Prior to us going out on walking tours, I asked the kids to help me make up a list of their favorite places in or near Limestone Quarry. I asked them, "Where should I take an out-of-town relative in this area?" To my surprise, they began shouting fast food restaurants so quickly that I could barely keep pace. Donny yelled, "DQ!" and Marcus said "Take them to Taco Bell!", as Donny interrupted with "I know-I know! We got Chick-fil-a!". Lastly, I heard "McDonald's or Burger King!". Fast food names were ablaze, and it became clear that food and chain restaurants were important places for the kids to take a visiting relative. After the fast-food barrage, the boys stayed at the club to make promotional posters—the study was hosting an art hour where the kids showcased their art to community members—while the three girls took me on a walking tour.

Aniyah and Aliyah acted as our guides as we took the sidewalks towards their townhome in Limestone Quarry. As we arrived near the parking lot, Aniyah groaned that her "mom's car is gone" and that she wanted "to show it off". Her sister retorted, "That's why we're at the club today; Mom's working". This exchange made room for a story Aniyah shared about their family car. She explained that while their dad lives in the city an hour away, he often returns to help their mother, especially when it comes to the car. She explained that one time, their dad was at work, but had to be called down to their home because the car would not start because the "key broke." She remarked about how he is "always there". Additionally, Aliyah built on the story, expressing another time that the car keys were missing, which meant that their dad, once again, came to the rescue and made a new key for their mother's car. By this time, we had rounded the corner from the parking lot to see their townhome. Their townhome is a beige square box with a dark shingled roof. The home is adorned with five windows. The windows are centered on each floor, with one directly above the front door portico. Two windows are at the top, which indicate the bedrooms; one window atop the front door and two windows on the downstairs level, which designate the living room from the kitchen. Two steps lead to the front door with a sturdy yet inelegant handrail. The porch is barren, accompanied by a dark, maroon-colored door, off-center. The lower half of the unit is burnt red brick; the upper half of the home is beige aluminum siding. In this moment, the contrast between their maps and architectural materials reveals both the utility of the homes (e.g., quick and affordable housing) and the sisters' emplaced memories. This moment is the rupture in the nexus of practice, as their drawings and storytelling-centered family and relationships are animated through care. Their heart maps do not deny the geographical realities of their townhome and neighborhood; instead, they reclaim what counts in this place: family, friendship, relationships, and home.

In their heart maps, Aniyah and Aliyah disrupt the discourse of place by creating their versions of home: a royal castle suspended in space and time, as well as a boxed

home, relational and connected to hotspots in town. Their heart maps push against deficit-oriented, archived narratives about Limestone Quarry. Both sisters tell stories about the ways in which home (e.g., their townhome and neighborhood) centers relational value. Through their maps, storytelling, and the walking tour, they both take up their practices of storytelling and spatial reclamation. For example, after we spent time at the front of their townhome, the sisters, Naomi and I, wanted to make a trip to the newly opened neighborhood playground. While we walked, we passed by the community's mailboxes and bus stop, along with other homes. I asked the participants, "What do you like about your neighborhood?" Naomi responded with "My neighborhood's great!" and Aniyah shared that she has "two friends here", and one of them is "younger", and she has "good snacks". However, she remarked that her friend's parent is a "little-a little mean in the house", so they play and eat snacks outside. Her construction of friendship in the neighborhood situated within "good snacks" harkens to the start of the session, where all six of the kids expressed all their favorite fast-food restaurants that I should take an outsider to in order to illustrate the best of what their neighborhood has to offer.

4. Discussion

By interrogating and listening to the children's stories, I can locate moments of disruption that then change the function of the discourses in a place. Through this, I have located both commonalities and divergences in the ways Aniyah and Aliyah co-construct stories of space that uncover the ways in which they reclaim emplaced stories and position themselves as in-the-moment local historians through their storytelling, map-making, and walking.

At the time when this study was conducted, 2021, there were no historical documents in the Hillsdale Historical Society that included stories or interviews with children who resided in Limestone Quarry, nor were there any present documents that included the experiences of children and youth in Hillsdale writ large. This study investigates how children's cartography and story heart maps can collaboratively restory experiences and perspectives about place, reclaiming space for and by children. With their maps and interviews, Aniyah and Aliyah resist deficit perspectives of public housing and instead share their neighborhood: rich, magical, and relational. The dynamism that the sisters capture in their heart maps positions them as experts and archivists of Limestone Quarry. Their work not only showcases, but also reclaims personal narratives that speak back to broader spatial and temporal contexts. By crafting heart maps, the sisters engage in a form of storytelling that challenges dominant, deficit-based narratives about Limestone Quarry. Their heart maps and stories reflect the role of narrative in shaping and reshaping understandings of place. Their archival relationship across stories, walking tours, and mappings positions them as spatial reclaimers and historical storytellers. These stories of relationships, across geographical distances, illustrate both the fairytale (e.g., Aliyah's heart map) and the community connection (e.g., Aniyah's heart map) that they experience in Limestone Quarry. Through their maps, Aniyah and Aliyah counter negative stories, but also disrupt the discourses of place that have historically positioned Limestone Quarry as in need of "repair", and instead offer stories highlighting its vibrancy, value, and relational significance.

This work interrogates bodies, space, power, and stories—collectively narrated by children and youth—that challenge dominant ways of thinking about space as constructed within adult-centered lenses. The data presented here intentionally pushes against adult-centered history and framing to center youths' and children's stories and collective restorying about places like their home. They embody and restore the public housing neighborhood and nearby locations as desirable. This work also seeks to answer recent calls in

research for new directions in the field of critical literacy that call for place-based practices (Vasquez et al., 2019). Foregrounding space and embodiment theory in this study highlights the importance of spatial narrative analysis, historical trajectories, embodiment theory, and how space, participants, and materials co-construct meaning, even when collective meanings are in tension with historical narratives.

5. Conclusions

Sharing the sisters' spatial reclamation practices through artwork, like their heart maps, serves as a reckoning of research methodologies and approaches to learning spaces inside and outside the classroom to challenge traditional approaches to education research. They offer us opportunities to reflect upon our practices in the classroom and in out-of-school contexts, to not only consider bodies, power, and spaces, but to conduct "better research [that] matters for places and lives lived in places" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, p. 151). This work seeks to answer urgent calls for new directions in critical literacy that attend to embodiment and spatiality as dialectic intra-acting with materialities, including historical trajectories, bodies, spaces, and power in centering children's and youths' reclamations and narratives. Working with embodied and spatialized literacies in spatial reclamation illustrates that stories are "socially changed, made into something better than they were through collective action" and collective restorying (Soja in Leander & Sheehy, 2004). This study highlights the opportunity for educational researchers and practitioners to broaden definitions of literacy to include spatial and embodied meaning-making practices, particularly for children in historically marginalized communities. This study invites educators and researchers to situate spatial and embodied literacy practices into the curriculum by recognizing the dynamic power of walking, mapping, and storytelling within places as legitimate forms of comprehension and expression. Aniyah and Aliyah call in educators and researchers to include place-based and multimodal literacy practices through mapping, photography, and walking tours to promote equity by valuing the cultural and spatial knowledge from their communities and homes.

This expansive approach to literacy will require educators and education researchers to work across history to develop culturally responsive teaching both in and outside of the classroom. This work also helps to prepare teachers to expand conceptualizations and assumptions of literacy to include bodies, places, histories, and power by complicating assumptions about children and the youth to disrupt discourses in place that too often center single stories about communities and people (Adichie, 2009). Aniyah and Aliyah reclaim their space and position themselves as archivists and storytellers—they are here, and their stories matter. Aniyah's and Aliyah's heart maps, storytelling, and walking tours illuminate the importance of their home while positioning them as Limestone Quarry real-time storykeepers and archivists that reflect the depth and multiplicity of lived experiences within space.

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