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Geographies of Hope:

A Study of Urban Landscapes, Digital Media,
and Children's Representations of Place

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Traveling from the University of California, Berkeley to the adjacent community of West Oakland, one cannot help but observe a changing landscape, from leafy green to grey concrete, from relative affluence to an urban poverty that is stark. Several years ago we founded a community technology center in the heart of this urban neighborhood that is just a local bus ride from the university campus, yet light years distant in terms of its residents' educational and economic prospects and social futures. Our university-community partnership called DUSTY—Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth[i]—brings University of California undergraduate and graduate students together with youth from the West Oakland community. There they work, play, and create, using digital multi-modal, multi-media literacies to cross geographic, racial, cultural, socio-economic, and semiotic divides. In this essay we reflect on our work from the vantage point of five years of collaboration to develop and sustain DUSTY, make it responsive to community partners and participants, document its activities, and assess its role. In particular, taking inspiration from recent scholarship in the field of cultural geography (e.g., Harvey, 2000; Mitchell, 2002; Soja, 1996;), we attempt here to think spatially as well as historically and socially about West Oakland as an urban neighorhood, and about the role that a community/university collaborative like DUSTY can play in reconstituting images of place and self. We begin by describing the policy and academic backdrops for DUSTY.

Over the last ten years there has been a renaissance of after-school programs in the US, designed to fill the gap between school turning out and parents returning home, motivated by reports which designate after-school hours as "at risk" time (cf. Halpern, 2002, 2003). Federal support for such programs has recently been reduced or withdrawn, yet the need for after-school programs outstrips their availability, and they remain noticeable players in today's educational arena (cf. National Institute on Out-of-School-Time, 2003). The programs are not, however, without their detractors, since controversial evaluations have recently demonstrated the difference that after-schools don't seem to make in children's safety and academic achievement (cf. Kane, 2004). From our experience a key ideological struggle around after-school programs today is determining their nature—whether they will be extensions of the school day, designed only or primarily to continue or assist with academic work, or whether they will focus on something different or something additional: cultural enrichment, arts education, youth development, or other activities that are not as constrained by the enormous current pressures on schools to improve tests scores or to march lock-step to a mandated textbook or curriculum standards (cf. Hull & Schultz, 2002) . The broad question, then, is what kind of space—materially, socially, and in terms of available symbolic resources—might we imagine for learning and relationships after-school?

Over fifteen years ago, Cole and his colleagues (1996) began to create after-school programs that were alternative spaces for learning, rather than replications of the school

day. This work paralleled the increased interest in after-school programs mentioned above, but Cole's work was distinctive in being driven by an interest in exploring the implications of cultural-historical activity theory for reconceptualizing learning. Such explorations, Cole and his colleagues found, could take place more effectively out-of-school than in formal classrooms, since constraints on curricula and participant structures in the former were fewer. Thus was born a set of after-school programs and a national and international consortium of collaborators who shared Cole's theoretical assumptions. Simply put, Cole and colleagues conceptualized after-school programs as "activity systems" that blurred boundaries between work and play, that provided a structure for participation allowing movement between expert and novice roles, and that took advantage of widely available computer technologies, such as e-mail and electronic games. Coles' conceptualization also linked the university and the community, bringing graduate students and undergraduates to the after-school program, and working collaboratively with community partners such as Boys' and Girls' clubs to establish the program. Called the 5th Dimension initially, this work later inspired a set of after-school programs affiliated with each of the eight University of California campuses (cf. Underwood, Welsh, Gauvain, & Duffy, 2000; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999). This later project, UCLinks, was a direct response to the dismantling of affirmative action within the University of California in 1996. The hope was that well-designed, theoretically-motivated after-school programs, such as UCLinks and the 5th Dimension, could increase the chances that children from low-income communities and beleagured schools, especially youth of color, would aspire to and be able to attend a college or university, thereby sustaining or even increasing diversity on campuses such as UC Berkeley.

DUSTY began as a UClinks site; it thereby shares some of the important features of Cole's and his colleagues' conceptualization, in particular the linkage between university students and youth from the community; the commitment to establish a collaboration that draws on the strengths and resources of both community and university partners; and an interest in fashioning a space for learning that contrasts what is offered during the school day. In our work at DUSTY, we have viewed the linkage between the university and the local community as reciprocal border crossing and space creation—as a movement back and forth across social, geographic, economic, cultural, and semiotic divides and the creation through this movement of a new space for learning, one that turns the periphery into the center. We have been attentive to the way in which such a traversal of borders has implications for how we conceptualize DUSTY and its role in the community. As the opening to this chapter suggests, the differences in physical space and material resources that characterize the University and the West Oakland community, noticeable at every entry and exit, have pushed us to be aware of this larger community context and the ways in which that context both influences and is modestly influenced by our community technology center and after-school programs.

As a university-community collaborative that organizes undergraduate students to work, play, and create with children and youth at a community center, DUSTY (and UCLinks) is also part of a movement in higher education called "service learning." Prompted by recent federal legislation, but rooted in long-held conceptions of "experiential learning" such as Dewey's (1938), service learning courses aim to position students to

serve their local community, as well as reflect on these experiences in the context of an academic course on a college campus. Thus, in the spirit of Dewey, such courses ideally connect the learning that students do in a formal classroom with participation and responsibility in the larger society. One especially vigorous and intellectually alive branch of service learning has developed within composition studies; teachers of writing in universities and colleges now regularly send their students to community-based organizations to assist with or perform writing activities or literacy-related tutoring (cf. Deans, 2000). As will be demonstrated in this essay, DUSTY also has as its centerpiece certain writing and literacy-related activities—in particular, multi-media, multi-modal composing; our undergraduates both learn these new kinds of composing themselves and support children and youth from the community in their use of new and old literacies. Another way that service learning scholarship within composition studies resonates with our work at DUSTY is its critical consciousness about what constitutes an ethical relationship between the university and the community. Early on important concerns were expressed about the very nature of "service," particularly the unhappy possibility that university students could approach their community work with a kind of missionary zeal that reduced community members to objects for salvation (Herzburg, 1994; cf. Boyle-Baise, 2002; Welsh, 2002; Himley, 2004). Frank and helpful explorations of sustainability have also been a prominent thread, as faculty confront their university's disinterest in service and engage in the balancing act that allows them to link their teaching and research with service to the community (Cushman, 2002).

To be sure, most of the scholarship on service learning in composition studies has tended to focus on the university end of the collaboration. While this perhaps shouldn't be surprising, the effect has often been, from our point of view, to relegate the communities served to the shadows, places where adults and youth are sometimes characterized only as needy and different or as leading marginal lives. Flower describes typical inquiry patterns of service learning this way: "The research on service-learning is indeed preoccupied with *our* expertise; with developing pedagogical agendas, interrogating our middle-class ideologies, producing satisfying academic dichotomies and incisive critiques" (2002, p. 184). Thus, the geography of service learning often becomes one of reconnaissance: forays to scout out a possibly unfriendly territory with the intent of returning to cover. For this reason, we have found especially compelling the service learning scholarship that is grounded in the community—projects involved in the creation and sustenance of community programs over time—and that explores the tensions and challenges of traversing and recharting community and university borders. We draw inspiration particularly from Flower and her colleagues (Flower, 2000; 2003; Long, Peck & Baskins, 2002; Peck, Flower, & Higgins, 1995), who have worked within the settlement house tradition in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to carry out long-term collaborations that blend university intellectual traditions with community interests and resources under the label of "intercultural inquiry." Such inquiry, as Flower and her colleagues have persuasively documented, involves challenges to the habits of mind of those in the academy as it simultaneously supports literate action among community members. One of the central metaphors that they use in their work has an important spatial dimension—the dinner table, around which participants draw their chairs both literally and symbolically, in order to

converse and engage in joint problem-solving and the important process that Flower terms the "negotiation of meaning."

Certainly a central theme of Flower, Peck, Long, and Baskins' joint work has been to enable participants to discover and enact their agency as individuals and community members, people operating within constraints of course, but actors increasingly aware of their ability to have an effect, especially through the deployment of strategic uses of language and literacy. The primary theoretical underpinning of DUSTY has likewise centered on identity formation, and especially the role of language and other semiotic systems in this process. We have written in detail about this framework elsewhere (Hull & Katz, under review), but in brief, we have described how all semiotic systems—language, writing, images, music, dance—give us a means of embodying and enacting a sense of self in relation to others. In the words of Urciuoli, "The creation of meaning is above all embedded in human relationships: people enact their selves to each other in words, movements, and other modes of actions" (1995, p. 189). Thus, at DUSTY we have aimed to position participants to tell their important stories about self and community, and to use those moments of narrative reconstruction to reflect on past events, present activities, and future goals. Our curriculum encourages participants to construct stories that position themselves as agents, as young people and adults able to articulate and act upon their own "wishes, desires, beliefs, and expectancies" (Bruner, 1994, p. 41) and as local and global community members able to remake their worlds (Freire, 1970). Further, we have provided a powerful mediational means for their storytelling (cf. Cole, 1996; Vygotsky,1934/1986, 1978). At this particular historical moment, which is characterized by a "pictoral turn"

(Mitchell, 1994; cf. Kress, 1997), we believe such means include the technical skills and social practices that constitute the version of multimedia composing that we refer to as "digital storytelling"(cf. Lambert, 2002). The variety of representational activities that occur at DUSTY—be they spoken word performances, written narratives, photo collections, storyboards, musical compositions, animations, or digital stories—we conceptualize as "identity texts," in order to call attention to the primacy given at DUSTY to fostering and enacting agentive and socially responsible identities through the use of a range of semiotic systems (cf. Leoni & Cohen, 2004; Leander, 2002).

In this chapter, we extend our theoretical lens to include ideas about space, place, and landscape drawn from the field of cultural geography and related disciplines. Recently, interest has grown within literacy studies around such ideas (see especially Leander, 2001; Leander & Sheehy, 2004), with researchers such as Moje (2004) investigating how youth enact different identities according to the different spaces that they occupy, as they martial the available resources, textual and material, that are associated with those spaces. Understanding how space, place, and landscape (terms that we will illustrate below) intersect with senses of self, community, and agency, is especially pivotal in our work and, we believe, relevant to service learning programs and other educational efforts that cross borders literally and symbolically. Edward Soja, a well-known critical geographer, has written persuasively about the "spatial turn" that is spreading fast among the human sciences. He argues that, whereas the historical and the social have long been accepted as important analytic dimensions, the spatial has been neglected. Yet he notes that, increasingly, we are coming to understand how the social, the historical, and the spatial are

interwoven and are in fact inseparable. Paraphrasing Henri Lefebvre (on whose influential

work he and many other critical geographers build), Soja observes that "all social relations

remain abstractions until they are concretized in space" (2004, p. xiv). It is noteworthy that

Soja and other theorists are fierce about not wanting to promote an orthodoxy in terms of

how to conceptualize spatiality. Instead, they urge that we hold open "our critical

geographical imagination" (Soja, p. 2) and resist rigid relations among terms such as space,

place, and landscape (Mitchell, 2002). In this essay, we accept Soja's and Mitchell's

invitation, as we attempt to use recent theorizing on spatiality to gain a fresh vantage point

on our community technology center, our activities there, and our university and

community collaboration.

Thus, in this essay, we use the terms space, place, and landscape to animate our

analysis of community relations and multi-media representational activities. In so doing we

follow Mitchell's (2002) helpful presentation of these terms as a "dialectical triad" (2002,

p. x). "If a place is a specific location," he writes, "a space is a 'practiced place,' a site

activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs, and a landscape is that site

encountered as image or 'sight'" (2002, p.x).[ii] To illustrate, our community technology

center, located in a renovated Victorian that used to be a convent, across the street from a

church and an elementary school, in the heart of the West Oakland neighborhood known as

the "lower bottoms," is a place. Our collective use of that place—through our curriculum

and our social relationships, our pedagogy and our participants and our vision of border

crossing and multi-media making—turns that place into a lived space. When our

participants describe and represent the community center, which they know as DUSTY, in

their multi-media stories, their written accounts, their oral narratives, and in relation to themselves, it becomes a landscape. We especially like Mitchell's point that there is no hierarchy or chronological ordering to these terms. While spatial activities can transform a place, a place can also of course afford or constrain activities in a social space. A landscape might itself have agency, predisposing viewers to conceptualize a place or engage in certain kinds of activities in a lived space.

In the sections that follow, we examine data collected through ethnographic methods over a period of four years, using some of the perspectives provided by critical geography, including Mitchell's distinctions among space, place, and landscape. Our data include photographs and other visual representations, as well as field notes, interviews, and long-term participant observation. Throughout we ask: How is the construction of identities, both individual and collective, influenced by and enacted through spatiality? And toward the end of this essay we consider how what we have learned might be of use to community-based and university educators and researchers in the after-school movement and in service learning efforts, especially in relation to the multi-modal version of literacy that we call digital stories. To offer a counterpoint to the service learning literature that emphasizes university participants' experiences, we foreground here the experiences and points of view of community participants.

The West Oakland Community: An Activist Past and an Uncertain Future[iii]

Once a mixed-use area of residences and industry, West Oakland, California, where

DUSTY is located, slipped into economic decline with the end of World War II, when

shipbuilding and defense-related industries were dramatically reduced. (cf. Noguera, 1996).

As its economic base declined, its European ethnic residents were replaced by African

Americans migrating from the South, and more recently by low-income Chicano/Latino

and Asian/Pacific Islander families. Currently, West Oakland consists of some 7,000

households representing approximately 20,000 people. Seventy-four percent of residents

are African American; 14% are Chicano/Latino; 10% are Asian/Pacific Islanders; 2% are

White; and 1% are American Indians or "other." This section of the city has been

designated a Federal Enhanced Enterprise Community, and is characterized by all of the

symptoms of intense urban poverty and the educational inequities that accompany it. The

neighborhood's income level and jobless rates in fact make its residents some of the most

disadvantaged in the San Francisco Bay Area and, indeed, the nation. Educational statistics

for West Oakland are similarly poor, with many students scoring far below state and

national averages. Low academic performance is a disturbing and long-term trend. At the

public elementary school located across the street from DUSTY, recent scores from the

California Standards Test showed that 67% of 5th graders did not score in the proficient

range in English Language Arts; 68% did not score in the proficient range for math. At a

Catholic middle school, also across the street from DUSTY, approximately 80% of

students perform below grade level. The main public high school in West Oakland recently

had an Academic Performance Index of 437, which places it in the state's lowest decile.[iv]

Today in West Oakland, there are few signs remaining of the community's rich history, which included a bustling economy mid-century when the city's dry docks, railroad system, and factories attracted immigrants from throughout the world and African Americans from the South. Its activist culture during the 1960s played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement and the establishment of the union of Sleeping Car Porters and the Black Panther Party (cf. Rhomberg, 2004; Ginwright, 2004). Yet, recovering and preserving that rich history, revitalizing the community, and empowering residents educationally and economically, are the aims of many private citizens, local businesses, schools, and non-profit agencies. Our DUSTY center for digital media and literacy, located in the heart of the community, is one small contribution to that effort. The revitalization of West Oakland is not, however, an uncontested process, and if the surface is just barely scratched, the tensions, competitions, contradictions, and struggles become visible, as we will begin to illustrate below.

Neighborhood Signage: A Window on Contested Identities

In a recent study of residential segregation between 1970 and 1990, Deskins and Bettinger (2002) came to the conclusion that, rather than decreasing during the decades after the Civil Rights movement, residential segregation among the "underclass" in the US has increased to such an extreme that, not only were the African American poor economically and geographically displaced, they had also been made separate as well in

terms of identities. That is, segregation in economic space seems also to have led to the

emergence of separate identities. As Deskins and Bettinger explain,

> Space…is an ideal means of creating and asserting racial identities. If a group is
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> isolated in where it lives, this has a measurable effect on its economic position. But it
>
> also creates a group that is thought of as a separate community, a separate culture, a
>
> separate identity. Those relegated to exist in a society's pariah areas become pariahs
>
> themselves... (p. 57).

And so it is, we would suggest, in West Oakland. Although the San Francisco Bay Area is

widely regarded as one of the most multi-cultural, multi-ethnic communities in the world,

there are pockets of segregation and isolation, and West Oakland is one of these. This is

not a neighborhood where many outsiders drive or visit or walk or shop. Indeed, there are

no national chains of grocery stores or restaurants, nor are there the usual commercial

establishments such as drugstores, banks, hospitals, or shops. There are liquor stores with

convenience stores attached, there are schools and a small public library, there is a senior

citizens' home, and there are many churches, often housed in repurposed buildings, but

there are none of the mainstream businesses usually associated with day-to-day living in an

urban area. It is no exaggeration to say that the vast majority of the thousands of people

who live a mile or two outside of West Oakland never cross its borders. We would argue,

following Deskins and Bettinger, that this kind of spatial and economic segregation can

result in the construction, by people outside the community, of residents' identities as

separate, different, even as deviant. Next we turn to a case of how this identity

construction both occurs and is resisted through signage—billboards that organizations put up in the community, and the homemade signs that residents display.

On the southern outer border of West Oakland, within plain view of the major freeway that skirts it, there appeared during the summer of 2004 a billboard (see Figure 1) picturing the face of a smiling brown-faced African American boy in a checkered shirt on a black background, juxtaposed to handwriting in white childish script, as if on a chalkboard: "My dad just got out of prison…." The "my dad" portion of the script was large, almost half as big as the child's image, while the remainder of the caption was much diminished though still readable. The line about prison was followed by another, this one written in orange, in conventional script, and less visible because of its reduced size: "With a job, a place to live & healthcare, he will make it." The bottom of the billboard returned to the childish, larger script with the exclamation, "Ex-prisoners are family too!" The lower righthand corner, almost out of sight, provided a web address for the social service agency responsible for the billboard, a group advocating for those recently released from prison. Written in orange, it linked with the previous orange script about the importance of jobs, housing, and healthcare. There were two other billboards in this series that appeared in West Oakland during the same time period, one picturing a Latino who welcomed his sister back from prison, and the other featuring a woman of undeterminable ethnicity (though not white), whose husband had similarly just been released.

Figure 1: Billboard Seen from Border of West Oakland

Oakland has a large number of parolees, and the billboards called attention to social services for recently released prisoners that were available but perhaps not widely known. However, other messages were communicated with this signage, some of which were pejorative, particularly from the point of view of community members. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for understanding the "grammar" of visual design, and reflecting as well on recent work on ethics in visual research (e.g., Hammond, 2004), we can suggest how such multimodal compositions work as meaning systems and explain with some precision why these billboards offended many residents. By virtue of their design, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, visual representations set up relationships between those who view them and the people who are portrayed in them. For example, when individuals are depicted close up, as in a head-shot, social distance is lessened and

an intimate connection suggested. Further, when a person is depicted as looking directly into the viewer's eyes and is also smiling, the viewer is positioned to form a bond or an affinity. The compositional patterns of images also prompt viewers to experience them in particular ways. For example, in Western semiotics, information that appears on the left tends to be "given," and information on the right, "new." Using this framework to conduct a brief semiotic analysis of the billboard in Figure 1—with its presentation of a large head-shot of a smiling child who looks directly into our eyes—it is clear that viewers are meant to feel an affinity with him, to read the image first by connecting with the child. Then the viewer can absorb the new information printed to the child's right— the perhaps startling fact that this child is smiling because his dad had just been released from prison—and by virtue of concern for the child, presumably be positioned to be concerned as well for the father.

Kress and van Leeuwan's framework is considerably more comprehensive and complex than this partial use of it suggests, but even so, our abbreviated analysis gives at least a sense of how to parse the design of the billboard and to understand its semiotic properties. [v] We want to go on to suggest, however, that it was this design that alienated some community members, and that their disapproval can be traced to issues of representational rights. Anthropologists have long been taken to task for presuming to represent the realities of the people they study, usually through a discursive presentation in ethnographic texts. Of late, however, these concerns have been extended to the photographic practices that are common in ethnography. The essence of these recent critiques can be found in Sontag's (1973) earlier argument that taking a photograph

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epitomizes taking something from someone. Hammond (2004) explains, "The authority

of the photographer in choosing the subject matter, the time to photograph, the angles,

focal length and so on encapsulate the essence of a traditional anthropological research

approach that placed the researcher in the position of greatest control" (p. 136).

Fieldworkers who employ photography are now attempting to address this power

differential in various ways—for example, by being sensitive to how people want to dress

or stand or otherwise compose themselves for portraits that will later be published or

otherwise used, or by giving cameras to the participants in research studies and making it

possible for them to choose and compose the representations of their world (cf.

Hammond, 2004; Papademas, 2004). In the case of billboard in Figure 1, a social service

agency assumed the right to present to a community a picture of one of its children and to

make that image and the message it carried available to the wider public, through the

placement of the billboard in broad view of a major freeway bordering the community. It

further assumed the right to present the child, in terms of his gaze and proximity, as an

intimate, and to have the smiling child share his happiness about his parent's release from

incarceration. In this urban community, the billboard's composition implies, it is normal

for children to welcome their fathers home from jail, so normal, in fact, that the public

should now understand that "ex-prisoners are family too."

We view this billboard series as a process of identity construction, on the part of

outsiders, about West Oakland residents and their community. In Kress and van

Leeuwen's (1996) terms, a relationship is established between those who view the images

and the people who are portrayed in them. Interestingly, signage is one way that the

people who don't ordinarily come inside a community nonetheless can inscribe it. That the people pictured and connected with incarceration were people of color certainly was based on demographic truth. But for such billboards to be placed within and bordering upon minority communities seemed to us to clearly racialize the neighborhood and its residents and further to associate certain ethnicities with the prison system. It was ironic that when we interviewed community members about the advertisement, no one we spoke with realized that the barely visible web address was meant to point to additional information and possible assistance, while all were disturbed by the depiction. In contrast, the social service agency's impression was that the billboards were both appealing and effective, though the agency had done no formal research on their impact.

Creating a billboard and erecting it within the community, to be read or ignored or appropriated or transformed, is an example, we want to suggest, of the creation of "lived space," in Mitchell's (2002) and LeFebvre's (1974) terms. A place, the corner of Goss and Wood Streets, was in this sense "narrativized," given a storyline for all to read. Because the billboard pictured in Figure 1 faced outward and was visible from a major freeway, its effect was also to create a landscape for outsiders to view from a distance, as is suggested by the backdrop of the photograph. Chain-link fencing, an old building, trash in the gutter, an older car on a mostly deserted street, and a billboard about a child being innocently joyful that his dad is coming home from prison: What more iconic representation of the ghetto, and the separateness of the people who live there, could one conjure?

To continue our study of signage in West Oakland, we photographed approximately fifty billboards and other signs during the summer and early fall of 2004, canvassing every street in West Oakland, and we examined our photographic archive for two previous years to determine whether it included photographs of signage. Ten additional photos were added to the pool from the archive. Then we categorized the

Figure 2: "Tough Love" Billboard on Side of Liquor Store

semantic content of the signs. We found that approximately 50% of the commercial billboards focused on social service issues: getting care for AIDS, finding funding to go to college, showing "tough love to one's children. The latter billboard pictured an African American woman, arms crossed, staring up into the camera, with a teenaged

African American boy standing behind her against a red red-lit sky; the caption: "The Enforcer. She doesn't love being tough. She's tough because she loves." (See Figure 2.) Our photograph of this billboard, with a liquor sign above it, and the paper of the billboard itself visibly torn, creates an ironic landscape of life in West Oakland.

The other half of the billboards was primarily advertisements, predominantly for mobile phones and automobiles, while one billboard requested applications for potential school-bus drivers. In contrast, the homemade signs were overwhelmingly driven by job-related issues, especially advertisements for services. For example, Figure 3 is a photograph of a hand-lettered advertisement for plumbing repair and related services taken during the summer of 2004. In our archives we found a similar sign, written in the same hand, but posted at a different location in the community. Given the cost of such repairs in the Bay Area and the difficulty of arranging for them, this kind of service is important in a community such as West Oakland. Another example of an economically-motivated sign was created by the owner of an empty lot who couldn't afford to build anything there. Instead he created a brightly colored mural on the fence encircling the lot; this mural depicted the kinds of shops and businesses he would like to put there, including a café and an African American bookstore. Other economically-oriented advertisements were less noticeable and more conventional. At a personal residence next door to DUSTY, a woman had created her own line of athletic clothing, designed and produced in her home; on the gate surrounding her yard she had posted a notice of this thriving enterprise, along with the emblems of the credit cards that she accepted.

The other major type of homemade signage that we observed served the purpose of political and social protest. Our archives revealed several signs displayed in windows or posted on walls protesting the Iraq war, while one hand-painted sign covered an expanse of wooden fence with the words "Stop the Violence." Parts of West Oakland and East Oakland are indeed dangerous places, and one sees there too often street shrines: arrangements of candles, balloons, teddy bears, flowers, and other remembrances, placed where someone was murdered. [vi] In September of 2004 one such shrine was erected for a 16-year-old girl the evening after she had been killed during a drive-by shooting as she stood in front of her West Oakland apartment.[vii] The next day the shrine was gone. One also sees the ubiquitous acronym "RIP", for "Rest in Peace," written on walls and sidewalks (see Figure 4).

Our study of signage in West Oakland showed unmistakable contrasts between outsiders' views of the community's needs and insiders' expressions of interests and desires. Billboards in this community are an interesting case of outsiders inscribing a place and creating a landscape that serves as an identity marker for the inner city, especially for outsiders' views of that community. Particularly prominent were depictions of the community as in need of social services and depictions of idealized community members with stereotypical identities and roles—the protective mother who exercises strict control over her children, for example, or the incarcerated dad who needs support to re-enter the community. This signage seemed to us to sit like unwanted tattoos upon the neighborhood. Yet, despite its prominence in terms of color, design, and

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Figure 3: Homemade Sign Advertising Plumbing Repair

Figure 4: "Rest in Peace" Messages Written on a Building to Mark the Place and

Commemorate the Death of a Teenager

placement, and despite its identity-laden messages, the signage seemed hardly to impact the workings of the neighborhood. Many people that we spoke with dismissed the billboards as propaganda or caricatures. Running parallel to them were residents' own public communications with each other, and we found these to be either economic in nature (advertisements for jobs, services, or desired economic opportunities), commemorative, or critical of economic and social conditions. In many cases residents' signs were less visible and more ephemeral, lasting only an evening in the case of the street altar, yet they represented the community's continual inscriptions upon the place of West Oakland, a very active effort to impact their material circumstances, to construct a space, and to harness the power of public representation in their community, the power of shaping a landscape.

The mismatch between the community's interests and those of outsiders as represented through signage alerted us to a variety of tensions over the construction of the neighborhood. Often those tensions had a very material base. There was a tug-of-war, for instance, over the use, ownership, and control of buildings and land. In patterns typical of gentrification, during the 1990's newcomers had steadily purchased old and dilapidated but once grand Victorian homes at very inflated prices that were far out of reach of old-time residents. As well, there have been recent major housing developments in West Oakland that feature newly constructed lofts and condominiums, some targeting low-income families or a range of income levels, but many catering primarily to middle-class buyers. One of the most controversial of these projects proposed the refurbishing of an old train station that had fallen into disrepair, but once was a major "end-of-the-line"

stop for migrants moving westward. The train station's history also intersected with the

formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first union for African

American workers in the US, some of whom were Oaklanders. The plan to build

extensive middle-income housing adjacent to the old station, and to turn the station into a

museum, was met with protests against what was termed by some "racist

redevelopment." (See Figure 5.) Residents of West Oakland expressed a desire to control

the train station themselves, as well as to have the new housing priced within the income

levels of the community. The frustration and anger that some community members felt

found an outlet in several public forums, including a book tour by the author of the first

history of the Sleeping Car Porters (Tye, 2004). One of the complaints voiced during this

event, which over-flowed the local library, was how the author, a white person who was

not from the community, could presume to tell this important account of African

American history.

Figure 5: Protest Rally Against Redevelopment in West Oakland

At its inception DUSTY operated out of a West Oakland community center, the Prescott Joseph Center for Community Enhancement, itself once a grand old Victorian home that later became a convent and just a few years ago was converted to a multi-purpose community center. Its three floors included parlors, offices for a range of non-profits, conference rooms, a kitchen, and our multi-media center in the basement, and it regularly hosted art shows, community meetings, plays, film screenings, suppers, and other events. We have noticed that most adults who visit the Prescott Center are impressed with its expanse and decor—high ceilings and moldings, religious icons that reflect its linkage to the Catholic Church, its myriad rooms, and the memory it evokes of an earlier time. Children, we have found, are sometimes taken aback by the building, wondering aloud if people actually lived in such a mansion and acting a little bit frightened by its size. Another striking response from groups of children on a few occasions has been to race through the center when it is open for public events, running from room to room, hiding in its many nooks and crannies until adults can find and expel them. This we see as an attempt on their part to occupy and lay claim to this space that sits in the heart of their community. Community members, we have realized, have sometimes been reluctant to enter into activities offered at the Prescott Center, perhaps having seen other organizations purported to serve the community come and go. They pass by but don't always feel interested in entering or that they are welcome in this place. Our desire over the years has been to create DUSTY as a lived space that is integrated into community life and that serves as a meeting ground and collaborative stage for West Oakland residents, people from the university, and the wider community. What we have

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not wanted to be, or to be viewed as, is just another social service billboard, come to name and mend a deficit.

Youth and Out-of-School Space and Time: Envisioning DUSTY

After-school programs in the US date from the late 1800's, when the need for child labor decreased, compulsory schooling began to be the norm, and youth thereby found themselves with time on their hands during out-of-school hours. Worried that youth would get into trouble during this newly unsupervised time, educators and reformers developed playground programs that eventually expanded to include indoor activities, too, the antecedents of today's after-school programs (Halpern, 2002). Like the youth of a century ago who took to the streets when given leisure from work and school, youth in Oakland and in many urban centers are nowadays often at loose ends, at once disengaged from school, lacking opportunities for work, and forced to do without social spaces and activities that could meaningfully fill their out-of-school hours. To illustrate, over the last few years in Oakland a battle of sorts has erupted between urban youth on the one hand and the police force and some residents on the other. Young people in effect took to and claimed the streets, usually during late evening hours, by holding "sideshows," or car-centered street rallies. At sideshows drivers blocked traffic, spun their cars in circles, doing "donuts," while other youth gathered, looked on, and played music. Sometimes these gatherings attracted upwards of 400 youth, and they quickly evoked concerns about safety, noise, and mischief.[viii]

We don't find it surprising that youth invent sideshows and engage in other borderline activities to spatially, bodily, and symbolically display their agency, and we think that an analysis of such activity has something important to teach us about marginalized youth. Designing and controlling space is an important means of constructing youth culture; as Massey (1998) notes, "From being able to have a room of one's own (at least in richer families) to hanging out on particular corners, to clubs where only your own age group goes, the construction of spatiality can be an important element in building a social identity" (p. 128). Valentine, Skelton, and Chambers (1998) point out that "the space of the street is often the only autonomous space that young people are able to carve out for themselves" (p. 7). One way, then, to understand sideshows and the community's response to them is to view them as young peoples' attempts to create spaces for themselves, and, at the same time, adults' age-old attempts, not without reason, to control youth's spaces and behaviors.

We began DUSTY to provide a safe space physically and socially for children and youth during the after-school and evening hours and during summertime. As we will illustrate in the next section, our programmatic work has centered on designing and offering programs for children and youth on creating digital stories, or multi-media, multi-modal narratives, as well as digital music[ix]. That is, we hoped to draw youth off the streets and into DUSTY through the appeal of media, music, and popular culture (Hull, 2003; Morrell, 2004), as we simultaneously pushed school-based definitions of literacy to include the visual and the performative (cf. Hull & Zacher, 2004; Hull, 2003). In addition, this focus would take us part of the distance in closing for the West Oakland

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community what is popularly called the "digital divide." While debate continues about the extent and nature of this divide that separates people who have access to empowering uses of cutting edge information technologies from those who don't (cf. Compaine, 2001), there is no doubt that youth from communities like West Oakland routinely lack such opportunities. Thus, as a lived space for learning, we wanted to provide youth with equitable access to cutting edge technologies for communication and creative expression. And as discussed earlier, through positioning youth to tell stories about self, family, and community through multiple media and modalities, we intended to help them to develop senses of self as powerful, capable, and successful communicators. By bringing university students to the West Oakland community, and by continually widening the vistas of university students and children through literal and symbolic movement across communities, we hoped to enable the youth to take steps toward and develop sensibilities for shaping their futures.[x]

Children's Vistas and Voices

It was a rainy day in March, and most of the children who had been attending our middle school DUSTY program had already gone home. A UC Berkeley undergraduate mentor stood outside the building with Stephen, one of the middle schoolers; the day darkened as they waited and waited longer still for Stephen's ride home to appear. Stella the undergraduate was worried about the twelve-year-old. They had worked together on homework and a digital music program. But that day he had seemed withdrawn and had finally mentioned to Stella, speaking quietly and tearfully, that his dad had just passed

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away. It was later, after Stella and Stephen had stood on the curb together, watching evening settle onto the neighborhood as youth loudly congregated on the street corner and cars zoomed past with their spinners and twenty-inch rims, that the young boy solemnly asked: "Do you really think kids in this neighborhood will go to college?"

The question was a poignant moment for Stella, who had been talking to the children about going to college, as was the DUSTY custom. Stephen in particular had been very interested in this topic, and was perhaps also inspired by a recent field trip to campus. [xi] There had been other outings away from West Oakland as well, including a concert by Alicia Keys, the rhythm and blues super star, at a venue on the other side of the city, complete with an autograph signing afterwards especially for DUSTY youth. Given all of this in conjunction with his dad's death, perhaps it is not surprising that Stephen might have been thinking about going places, maybe leaving the neighborhood, and hopefully attending college. Perhaps he visualized contrasts in landscape and especially sensed the constraints that one's locale could bring to bear on his and others' social futures.

There is a big scholarship on spatiality as it relates to the study of children. One tradition builds on Piaget's (1971) interest in how reasoning about the environment develops over time, including children's orientation in space and their mapping abilities (cf. Erickson, 1977; Matthews & Limb, 1999). Within geography there have been studies dating from the early seventies on the social inequalities that result from the "built environment" (Aitken, 2001), such as unjust geographical allocations of educational resources like play spaces (Bunge & Bordessa, 1975). More recent work in geography is

characterized by Aitken (2001) as "about the practices of young people, their communities, and the places and institutions that shape (and are shaped by) their lives"(p. 20). "Places are important for young people," he continued, "because these contexts play a large part in constructing and constraining dreams and practices" (p. 20). We too have been interested in charting how place, space, and landscape, as associated with the community of West Oakland, play a role in "constructing and constraining dreams and practices" of area youth. But equally as important, through out interventions at DUSTY, we have been committed to positioning youth, by providing access to potentially powerful representational tools and practices, to speak back to spatial constraints. Mitchell (2002) notes that "landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify" (p.vii). Hearing Mitchell, we are well warned concerning the subtleties that accompany the articulation of identities in relation to place and landscape. We nonetheless hope in the following section to demonstrate in an initial way some of the ideas and concerns that youth in our programs have expressed about their locales, as well as to suggest how our youth have seemed to enact identities in relation to space, place, and landscape through multi-modalities and multi-media.

In our archives are approximately 200 digital stories that have been created thus far by youth, children, and adults at DUSTY. Two to five minute movies, the stories usually begin with a written script that is eventually accompanied by images, photographs, artwork, or snippets of video; a musical soundtrack; and the narrator's voice reading or performing the script. The still visuals are stitched together with an editing program through fades or dissolves or checkerboards or a myriad other transitions, thus allowing

the illusion of movement. As a rough first cut at analyzing these stories, we developed a catalog of their major genres and purpose:

Genres: Autobiographical Narratives; Poems/Raps; Social Critique/Public Service Announcements; Reenactments or Extensions of Stories, Cartoons, and Movies; Animations; Reports; Biographies and Interviews

Purposes: Offer a tribute to Family Member(s), Friend(s); Recount/Interpret a Pivotal Moment/Key Event; Represent Place, Space, Community; Preserve History; Create Art/Artifact; Play/Fantasize; Heal/Grieve/Reflect; Reach/Inform/Influence Wider Audience

Of course, many authors had multiple purposes, and sometimes the digital stories blurred genres, as befits their dynamic and evolving nature; these categories yet provide a broad if unrefined sense of forms and uses. Our archives revealed a number of digital stories by children, youth, and adults whose centerpiece was the representation of place, space, and community, and in what follows we examine one of these in detail. At this stage in our work we don't make any claims about the relative frequency or stability of the categories. This is our first pass at developing an analytic system for understanding youth's representation of place, and self in relation to place, through multi-media/multi-modality.[xii]

As we reviewed the stories in our archives, we realized that, from the inception of the DUSTY program, children and youth had created a remarkable number stories that located themselves in relation to their neighborhoods. To suggest the flavor and the range of these compositions, here are some examples. One thirteen-year-old boy, interested in paying homage to his "posse," constructed a story that pictured each of his many friends and named them one by one, but he also carefully demarcated their neighborhood, taking photographs of street signs and domiciles, and distinguishing West Oakland from East Oakland. He announced his home turf as the best section of the city in which to live, far superior to other neighborhoods. A younger boy wrote a story about a trip to Alaska, contrasting its weather and other features with those of Oakland. Most interesting to us, though, was his inclusion in the Oakland portion of a photo of the local children's hospital, announcing that this was the place where he had been born. He was quite taken aback and not at all persuaded when his mother, upon viewing his digital story for the first time, told him that he hadn't been born at that particular hospital after all. A nine-year-old girl who had recently moved from another city contrasted her new home with her old one, and expressed considerable longing for a quieter, more pastoral space to live than West Oakland. This was, in fact, a theme that surfaced in other stories: the noise of the city and its lack of aesthetically appealing space. Another little girl developed her entire story around the pleasures of visiting a particular place, her auntie's house, where special privileges abounded.

Children choose to write about particular topics for many reasons, including the promptings of their teachers, the examples provided through previous students' work, their own interests and predilections, and the conventions that have developed and are typically promulgated in schools and other educational settings around what constitutes an appropriate storyline. While we accept all of these possibilities as possible and likely contributors and influences, what we wish to explore here is the importance for many children of locating themselves in a particular space—"this is my house, I'm a person from West Oakland, I was born here"—and also of professing or sometimes examining their relationship with a landscape and a locale—"I'm from East Oakland, and it is a cool place; I don't like my neighborhood because it's so noisy where I live." As Duncan and Duncan note, "people continually attempt to stabilize and establish secure identities and, more often than not, anchor them in place" (2004, p. 30)

Identification with a particular place is surely a usual part of children's development, but we believe that this process takes on a special salience in neighborhoods like West Oakland, which are segregated economically, socially, and ethnically, and where many children and youth regularly experience their immediate environs as unsafe places, and where almost continuously they encounter representations of their communities as violent and unhealthy and undesirable. The other part of our argument is that multi-media and multi-modality constitute especially fitting vehicles for children and youth to represent their lives spatially. Digital stories are relentlessly visual; no matter what words and music fill the air, the stories proceed and direct composers' and viewers' attention through images and video. Because place and landscape can be readily captured through

images, a digital story can provide an exceptional canvass for the exploration of the spatial. Finally, and this point is the most suggestive of all those we hope to make, we believe that forms of composing such as digital storytelling have the potential to afford children and youth the representational means to see themselves in relation to places, spaces, and landscapes in new ways.

We turn next to what strikes many viewers as an exceptionally powerful digital story about place, space, and landscape by a young author. Created by Jamal,[xiii] a nine-year-old boy who lived in East Oakland but attended DUSTY's summer program, the digital story is a minute and a half long, contains seventeen images, each linked to the other by a lively visual transition such as "opening doors" or "cartwheels" that blend one picture into the next. Entitled "My Neighborhood," it is narrated by Jamal, while the jazz of Miles Davis—a cut from "Sketches of Spain"—sounds an exceptionally plaintive backdrop. The story is based on a well-known writing assignment about the senses: "Compose a poem in first person that reveals what you hear, see, feel, smell, and taste." In preparation for writing, the children participated in several preparatory activities, including a walk about the neighborhood adjacent to DUSTY, where they took note of what was salient to them.

Here is the final version of the text of Jamal's poem:

I hear the sirens of an ambulance speeding by.
I hear the sound of a car skidding.

I hear kids laughing at the boy who fell down

I see kids running down the street to the ice cream truck.

I see a brotha selling drugs on the street.

I see Asians walking up the street.

I feel the strong warm breeze against my face.

I feel the rough wall of my house.

I feel my shirt sticking to my back.

I smell the nasty aroma of urine.

I smell chicken from inside my house

I smell BBQ sauce.

I taste the cinnamony, sugary churro.

I taste the soft chocolate milk in my mouth.

I taste the dry air on my tongue.

I hear a car speeding by.

I know that this is a bad neighborhood.

These lines, though wonderfully evocative, make up but the skeleton of Jamal's digital

story; next we attempt to give a sense of its body, its visual components. To be sure, it is

exceedingly difficult to describe multi-modality through the vehicle of book chapter, and in any case it is analytically challenging to capture what is powerful about successful multi-modal pieces. Their blending of words, images, voice, music, and motion creates meaning and an experience of meaning-making that differs from and exceeds what is possible through single or fewer modalities.[xiv] But to begin to suggest what is distinctive about Jamal's digital multi-modal composition, over and above the linguistic text of his poem, below we juxtapose the lines of the poem with a brief description of the image or images with which they are paired.[xv]

a. I hear the sound of a car skidding *(3 internet images: ambulance, car, skid marks on pavement)*

b. I hear kids laugh at the boy who fell down *(internet image of a group of children in a circle, laughing and looking down)*

c. I see kids running down the street to an ice cream truck *(internet image of an ice cream truck)*

d. I see a brother selling drugs on the street *(internet image of a dark-skinned man taking money from a white man with one hand and passing him something with the other)*

e. I see Asians walking up the street *(internet image of a smiling family posed for the camera, father holding one daughter, mother's hand on a second daughter's shoulder)*

f. I feel the strong warm breeze against my face *(photograph of Jamal's smiling face, cut out and superimposed on a internet image of a beach scene with palm trees)*

g. I feel the rough wall of my house *(same smiling photograph of Jamal, this one whole, his hand touching a wall behind him)*

h. I feel my shirt sticking to my back *(photograph of Jamal from behind, on his porch at night, leaning over the railing and looking downward, as if at a street below; see Figure 6 below)*

i. I smell the nasty smell of urine *(internet image of a bag of urine such as might be collected in a hospital)*

j. I smell chicken from inside my house *(internet image of a whole baked chicken, angle taken from above)*

k. I smell B-B-Q sauce *(internet image of a bottle of "Dr. Dan's BBQ Sauce")*

l. I taste the cinnamony sugary churro *(upclose internet image of fried pastry sticks)*

m. I taste the soft chocolate milk in my mouth *(internet image of a pint and a quart of chocolate milk)*

n. I taste the dry air on my tongue *(same photo as for the previous line)*

o. I hear a car speeding by *(internet image of a "muscle" car, the same as the first image)*

p. I know that this neighborhood is bad *(photograph of dilapidated houses juxtaposed to skyscrapers on Oakland's skyline)*

Bracketing the story was a black title screen with white writing and a list of rolling credits. The movie ended with the screen going black in splotches, as if paint were spattering onto the surface. The rolling credits screen, also white on black background, thanked the audience for watching the movie, and in a funny subversion of the usual

conventions for watching movies, advised that no applause was necessary and warned viewers not to come again! Jamal signed his movie with a fictional production company– "Mad Dog Productions," named after a cartoon character from the television show "Kim Possible"—and he listed an imaginary website for it.

As we will illustrate, the overall mood of Jamal's movie was serious. An ode on place with images that powerfully contextualized the words that Jamal spoke, and a jazz soundtrack that strongly evoked a melancholy mood, juxtaposing musical sophistication and world-weariness with a child's innocent voice, "My Neighborhood" could be seen as a young author's reflection on place in relation to himself. There are pleasant sensations described and positive images offered, to be sure: the smell of chicken cooking in the house, children running to the ice cream truck, the soft feel of chocolate milk in one's mouth. It is also the case that adult viewers can see the child behind his wise piece, and this indeed adds to this digital story's charm. For example, there is a child's aesthetic at work in selecting energetic transitions between images, his fondness for the "bells and whistles" that are easily produced via editing programs these days. In addition, in age-appropriate fashion, Jamal matched his images to his words literally; that is, his words indexed images instead of functioning more symbolically, to use Peirce's (1955) typology. Nonetheless, we would argue that it is also impossible to view Jamal's movie without recognizing a young mind in thoughtful dialogue about space, place, and landscape, or to escape the impression that important identity work is represented in this story.

To briefly present what we think Jamal's story signifies about spatiality in relation to identity, we draw below on our analysis of an interview with his DUSTY instructor about Jamal, his composition process, and the other children and their work in the program; a retrospective interview with Jamal himself in which he watched, commented upon, and answered questions about "My Neighborhood" with his instructor; conversations with his parents; and artifacts associated with Jamal's work (including a detailed lesson plan for the poetry/senses unit and additional poems, journal entries, and one other digital story that Jamal created during a previous DUSTY summer session).

Our first point is that, in writing his poem and selecting his images, Jamal drew actively on his sense of what was salient about his neighborhood in terms of both material places and lived spaces. This might be surmised by an analysis of the story itself, but was confirmed through our interviews and other data. He clearly recognized that in his neighborhood could be found danger, violence, poverty, and crime, and he thought these features important to represent. For example, in commenting on his choice of a skidding car and the ambulance pictured at the opening of his story (line a. above), Jamal volunteered that "almost everyday I hear an ambulance." These ambulances, he said, seemed always to be going in the same direction, to the same place, to pick up people who'd been fighting or in car accidents or had overdosed. Sometimes, he mentioned, he saw people smoking dope in his neighborhood when he went outside to ride his bike with one of his family members, and once he thought he saw a drug deal taking place down the hill from his house as he stood on his porch (consequently, line d. and the internet image of a "brotha" selling drugs).

Perhaps the most startling negative sense of place came with the line, "the nasty smell of urine," and the accompanying Internet image of a large bag of the same. Jamal giggled a little when asked how he had found that image ("I typed in 'urine'), and then went on to explain more solemnly how, twice, he had smelled urine when he walked in an alleyway near his house— experiences that seemed to have made a strong impression on him, given the detail he recalled about these and related discoveries. An unmistakable dimension, then, of Jamal's story is his negative contextualization of neighborhood. And lest there be any doubt about this, he chose to end his poem with what his DUSTY instructor had explained could be a sixth sense, a statement about what one knows: (line p) "I know that this neighborhood is bad." When queried regarding this claim about his community, Jamal stated twice, with emphasis, "Some parts of it *is* bad," and mentioned the littered streets and the presence of drugs. He also identified the exact location of the photo that he had paired with this last line, a picture of dilapidated old houses in West Oakland juxtaposed to the downtown city's modern skyline. When asked what part of the city this Internet photo represented, he replied "West Oakland and that's downtown Oakland behind it." When asked if he was sure, he replied with no hesitation, "I'm sure because I've been there before, and I've seen these buildings and these houses." In other parts of his interview Jamal additionally revealed his knowledge of local geography, distinguishing West and East Oakland, areas within the same city that nonetheless possessed separate identities, fostering a sometimes virulent territoriality. He clarified that, although some of his images depicted West Oakland, where DUSTY is located, he intended for his poem to represent the neighborhood where he lived, East Oakland.

However, he found both areas similar in containing neighborhoods that had parts that he deemed "bad."

At the same time that Jamal characterized his neighborhood and other parts of the city, he also revealed his understandings of how place intersects with racial and ethnic identity. Place and space, as many cultural geographers now make note, can make a difference in terms of "how racial and ethnic identities have come to be understood, expressed, and experienced" (Berry & Henderson, 2002, p. 6). As an African American child, and as revealed in his digital poem, Jamal had developed his own racially-sensitive geography, a map, if you will, on which were charted roles, situations, and activities as they were influenced by race and ethnicity. About the famous urine photo, for example, Jamal explained that it was a "black man" who had been urinating in the alleyway, although he confessed to not having seen him. He explained, however, that he had once seen a black man sleeping there and that "most of them [presumably people in general or black people in particular who sleep outside] don't have homes." Jamal was also aware of more conventional housing patterns that were racially influenced and that impacted relationships. Line (e) of his poem, "I see Asians walking up the street," was matched with a picture of a smiling Asian family, parents and children. In commenting on this part of his poem, Jamal observed that, although his neighborhood was "mixed," "down the street from me, most people on the block is Asian." When asked if he were friends with the Asian kids, Jamal said no, because he hadn't met them yet. His three African American friends in the neighborhood, he explained, all lived very near him, either across the street or down an

alleyway. [xvi] This made their friendships geographically possible and desirable in an urban environment. [xvii]

As mentioned earlier, Jamal's digital poem contained a number of positive associations related to neighborhood—for example, a smiling Asian family walking on the street, the ice cream truck seen in the distance, the taste of Mexican pastry, and the smell of a chicken roasting inside the house. These simple, often sensory pleasures, juxtaposed to the harsher world of the neighborhood that we have already detailed, perhaps serve to increase rather than decrease the somber feel of Jamal's poem, especially when combined with the mood set by Miles Davis's jazz. A devotee of jazz—he had many favorites but mentioned by name John Coltraine and Miles Davis ("he is my most favorite")—Jamal selected the background music by listening to all of the cuts on the album and choosing the one he felt was most suitable: "I like the way it goes with my movie," he explained simply. However, one sequence of lines and images seemed to signal a separation from the dangers and sadness of the street and the neighborhood—lines f through h, which are based on two photos that Jamal's mom took of him at home. In line f he depicts the feeling of a warm breeze on his face by transplanting his smiling image to a backdrop of palm trees and ocean. [xviii] In line g we see again Jamal's face from the previous screen, but this time it is in context, as he stands in front of a wall at his house, touching its rough surface with one hand. The third image his mom took from behind him, to suggest the feel of his shirt sticking to his back, as he stood on his porch at night, looking out and down as if to the street below (see Figure 6). Jamal mentioned several times that he could see things from his porch, like drug deals or ambulances. This series of images, offered in the middle of

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his poem, suggested to us Jamal's protected positionality in relation to his neighborhood; that is, he could choose to observe and contemplate in safety what was happening on the streets, staying connected but also remaining apart—a terrific geographic metaphor for growing up safely and healthily in an urban environment.

Figure 6: Photograph of Jamal Used in his Digital Poem

After watching his digital poem and discussing his claim and illustrations that his neighborhood was a bad place, but a bad place that also contained good things, Jamal's instructor asked him if he'd like to live elsewhere:

If you could live anywhere, where would you live? Have you seen other

neighborhoods you'd rather live in than yours?

No! *(as if shocked)*

Really? But I thought you said your neighborhood's bad!

It is! *(as if bewildered)*

But you still want to live there?

Right. *(as if convinced)*

The son of two caring parents who protected him and encouraged him to study; a boy who described himself as smart, looking toward college and imagining a career in technology (he told his instructor that he planned to be the DUSTY "technologist" when he grew up); an independent thinker and doer who could, if he needed, go against the grain (he refused to join a popular program where kids could make digital beats and rhymes because he preferred jazz to hip-hop)—Jamal's ability to create an accomplished digital poem and to think productively about surrounding place, space, and landscape had many deep roots. In addition, we believe that his considerable abilities were enabled by his journey each day to DUSTY, crossing from his East Oakland neighborhood to West Oakland; by the material space and resources that DUSTY offered around multi-modal technologies; and by the lived space that his instructors and mentors enacted, through assignments, fieldtrips, activities, and relationships, in service of enabling youth to create and learn.

In summary, we would argue that Jamal's place-based identity in relation to Oakland neighborhoods had dimensions of both identification and distancing, and these were depicted in his multi-modal digital poem with an impact that would be difficult to duplicate in a conventional linguistic text. In making his digital poem, Jamal created a landscape of West Oakland, his own complex representation of his neighborhoods, a multi-dimensional depiction that contrasts in its complexity the flatter, more stereotypical

portraits found on neighborhood billboards. And it is this representational power that is precisely what DUSTY hopes to offer its participants—the space, material and symbolic resources, relationships, and curricular direction that are needed in order to examine oneself in relation to present and imagined social worlds. Concluding his essay on place, space, and landscape, Mitchell wondered, "Do we make places, or do they make us?" and he acknowledged "the shifting valences of this question." (2002, p. xii) By creating a space that positions children, youth, and adults to construct representations of landscape and place in relation to themselves, we hope to foreground and foster human agentive potential.[xix]

Conclusion: Constructing Hopeful Spaces

We believe that service learning and after-school programs represent opportunities to help construct hopeful learning spaces for children and youth in our most neglected communities. We therefore urge a shift in the attention by those academics who are involved in this kind of work, from a focus primarily or solely on university perspectives and needs, to a joint focus on sustained, long-term participation in local communities. Doing so will involve finding ways to move beyond depictions of local neighborhoods that only romanticize or demonize, toward understandings that build on historical, social, and spatial analyses—somewhat in the way Jamal does in his digital poem. On the basis of our work at DUSTY and that of others elsewhere, we further believe that a strong case can be made for crafting after-school spaces that do more than replicate the school day. In the tradition of Cole (1996), we see much to be gained from experimenting with the "in-

between-ness" of school time and non-school time. As one of the children at DUSTY explained, a child who struggled deeply with the literacy requirements of schooling as well as with establishing friendships, DUSTY for him stood for something in the middle, "between school and fun," to use the words he used in his digital story. This child, especially through his relationships with undergraduate mentors, began to sort through some of his social and academic difficulties in the hybrid space of an after-school program (cf. Roche-Smith, 2004). We believe that the same has been true for many children, especially through the creation of "identity texts" like those that constitute the DUSTY version of digital storytelling.

A primary assumption underpinning DUSTY is the power of being able to represent— to depict one's own social reality in relation to another's, and to do so using the most current and potent mediational means. At this moment that powerful means is multi-media and multi-modality. For perhaps the first time in history, ordinary individuals can potentially wield some of communicational wizardry that used to be reserved for mass media and the elite—assuming, that is, that access is provided to material tools and supportive social practices. Regularly through DUSTY we show kids' and adults' stories on the big screen of a local theater or other public space, and we invite their friends and relatives and the wider community to view these multi-modal creations and have a conversation about what they represent. At one such event, a young girl's story about the noise and litter in West Oakland attracted the interest of a city councilwoman for the neighborhood who hoped to improve it aesthetically. Youth also exchange stories with children in other locales and other countries, conducting swaps of digital media, including

original beats and rhymes. Thereby we redraw the boundaries of place again, extending

our sense of community to include an inter-connectedness with others far removed in

physical distance. Being able to communicate compellingly with words, images, sound, and

movement, and being able to produce artifacts that can traverse geographical, social, and

semiotic boundaries, brings us close to a new definition of literacy (cf. Hull, 2003).

Examining children's compelling digital stories, and reflecting on the possibilities of

traversing boundaries, we are apt to forget the extreme challenges that accompany attempts

to sustain community and university partnerships. There is a danger, then, through

chapters such as this, of creating a fictionalized, idealized landscape of after-school. Thus,

we look forward to examining the up-hill battles that characterize our kind of work: for

example, the almost constant worry regarding sustainability; the evolving relationships

with local non-profits that can prove surprisingly combative (perhaps because of an

increased competition for a smaller and smaller pool of funding); the continual need to be

accountable to the local community in ways that one does not always foresee or sometimes

agree with; and a range of tensions inspired by the different realities of those who come

from the university and those who live in the West Oakland community.

Geographer David Harvey (2000), writing as the last century closed, and reflecting on

the world's vast inequalities and our failures in the US to create the kind of just society for

which many yearn, nonetheless concludes, as we do, with optimism: "I believe that in this

moment in our history we have something of great import to accomplish by exercising an

optimism of the intellect in order to open up ways of thinking that have for too long

remained foreclosed" (p. 17). And he sets about theorizing the decline and revitalization of

inner cities, using Baltimore as an example, and calls for a utopian imagining that would

afford the design of a more equitable future. He sharply critiques the degradation of urban

landscapes, and just as passionately, offers a utopian vision for what cities might become, if

we train ourselves to think outside existing structures and norms. The parallels between the

declining inner city of Baltimore, as described by Harvey, and similar sections of Oakland,

California where we live and work, are striking, and we take heart from his encouragement

to imagine alternatives. To be sure, after-school programs and service learning programs

are about as marginal as organizations can be in relation to the institutions of school and

university—hardly spaces from which to mount a challenge to inequalities and injustices.

But we believe, and we hope we have suggested in this chapter, that it is both crucial and

enlivening to choose marginality (cf. hooks, 1990), and there to create lived spaces where

hopeful projects and good work are freshly imagined and kept alive. We think of DUSTY

in this way at this moment, as providing the chance to construct a space that draws both on

the local neighborhood, its schools, and the university community but also transcends them,

recharting our geography as we traverse it, if you will, making possible some things that

are impossible in either setting alone.

Epilogue: Bill Smith and the Creation of Spaces for Learning
Glynda A. Hull

    Before I began graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh, I went to the library

and read everything that I could find that had been published by the faculty in my

department. On the day that classes began, I went to Bill Smith's office and introduced

myself, telling him I'd chosen his work to emulate and asking him to be my mentor.

Looking back, I'm startled that I had the chutzpah to do this, but what amazes me most

now and what astounded me then, was Bill's reaction. Rather than merely tolerate me or

tell me to return during office hours or hold himself professorially aloof, he sat and talked

and talked and talked with me. He listened, he engaged, he revealed how much he loved

his work and how much pleasure he took in being an academic. He made me think I had

interesting and valuable ideas. It was enlivening. I felt a part of something important, a

greater world of scholarship and colleagueship that Bill made palpable to me. At the end

of our conversation, Bill cleared a table in the corner of his office high in the Cathedral of

Learning, that grand gothic tower that dominates the Pittsburgh campus, and he invited

me to make that space my own. I did, all throughout graduate school. Anyone who knows

the symbolic value of real estate on a university campus, especially a private office, can

appreciate this splendid gesture. And so began a mentorship that transformed my years as

a graduate student and continues to influence in substantive ways my life as a professor.

Having a desk in Bill's office was a material sign of how he created a remarkable social

space for learning. The greatest joys I've had as a researcher have been collaborative

ones—joint work on worthy projects with like-minded students, colleagues, and friends,

work like that described in this chapter. This project, and all the ones that have come

before, and the ones yet to come, I trace to the example of generosity, bigness of spirit,

enthusiasm, accessibility, and intellectual curiosity that I experienced as a proud and

grateful student of William L. Smith.

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Notes

[ii] In offering these understandings of space, place, and landscape, Mitchell helpfully combined insights from Lefebre (1974) on perceived, conceived, and lived space, and de Certeau (1984), who juxtaposed place with space, which he conceptualized as "a practiced place" (p.117).

[iii] For a more detailed account of Oakland's history, we recommend Rhomberg (2004).

[iv] These data on schools and test scores came from the California State Department's web site, except for the statistics on the Catholic school, which was personal communication with the school's principal.

[v] We similarly recommend Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotic framework for analyzing texts, social interaction, and the material world.

[vi] The murder rate in Oakland, California, is the highest in the state—in 2003 there were 114 murders in the city—and most of these went unsolved (See "My Word," *Oakland Tribune*, 30 November, 2002; see also Oakland's Urban Strategies Council, which is conducting research to understand murder patterns in the city: www.urbanstrategies.org/programs/csj/oakmurderstudy.html.)

[vii] See "Hundreds Mourn," *Oakland Tribune*, October 1, 2004.

[viii] See www.indybay.org/print.php?id=1566613 for a photograph taken at a sideshow and a brief descriptions of these gatherings. After a young person was killed in a car accident

associated with one of the Oakland sideshows, the State mobilized, and a bill was passed outlawing and penalizing the gatherings.

[ix] Our discussion in this chapter will be primarily about digital storytelling and its intersection with the enactment of identities in relation to spatiality. But for an account of the deep connection between music-making and identity, see Hudak (1999).

[x] Although we won't in this chapter describing the curriculum and pedagogy that underpin DUSTY, a detailed account is provided in Roche-Smith (2004).

[xi] Our undergraduate mentors write field notes about their observations and interactions at DUSTY. Here are Stella's field notes about Stephen's many questions regarding college: "Stephen said he wanted to be an author, a lawyer, or the president. I asked him why he came to the tutoring sessions and he said he wanted to because it helped him with his work. He is very motivated to learn and he said he loved learning and really wanted to go to college. He then started asking me all these questions about college like how do you get in, where do you live, how do you pay for it. I told him some people get scholarships and a lot of people take out loans. I explained to him what loans were. He listened very intently and nodded after everything I said. He said he might want to go to law school and he mentioned Harvard. He was like, 'That's a really good school isn't it?' I replied, 'One of the best!' He asked how to get into law school and I told him how he needed to go to college first and get good grades and then take the LSAT's, and then write a personal statement. He was so interested and asked me so many questions."

[xii] To our knowledge, this is the first such study of this topic, either within literacy studies or within cultural geography.

[xiii] Jamal is a self-selected pseudonym; the names of other children and undergraduate participants have also been changed. To further protect Jamal's privacy, we have not made available his digital poem. However, to see examples of the kinds of stories children and adults at DUSTY create, please visit this website: www.oaklanddusty.org.

[xiv] Some of our recent research has focused on devising a framework for analyzing multi-modal digital stories (cf. Hull & Nelson, in press).

[xv] Jamal's digital story did not include the first line from his poem about hearing the sirens of ambulances. When he viewed his story and discussed it with us, he noted that this was a mistake and said he'd like for that line to be included or for the picture of an ambulance to be deleted.

[xvi] However, Jamal was not able to represent his friends as African Americans pictorially in his digital story. Because he couldn't find the images he wanted of African American children on the Internet. Line b, "I heard kids laugh at a boy who fell down," is therefore illustrated with an Internet photo of white children laughing and gazing downward. However, Jamal reported that this part of his poem was based on his own experience of

falling off his bike because of the cracks in the pavement, and his friends, who were African American, laughing at him. He had wanted these children to look like his real friends. The difficulty of finding images of African Americans through image searches on the Internet is a frequent complaint at our community technology center.

[xvii] We have documented many instances in which small local neighborhoods are divided geographically in ways that constrain participation in activities and the creation of relationships. For example, some parents would not allow their children to walk a small number of blocks to DUSTY, even during daylight hours, because they would thereby have to traverse borders associated with youth gangs. To give another instance, once when we sponsored a music event at another community center, an event which brought participants from the university and various neighborhood enclaves together, the man who controlled drug sales on that block stopped by to announce that this was his street, to inspect the event, and then give his blessing to the gathering.

[xviii] When we viewed his movie with Jamal, he objected to the screen on which he had cut out his face and superimposed it on a beach scene, since he said his face didn't look "real" in scale against the backdrop.

[xix] In this chapter we have analyzed only one kind of spatially-sensitive digital story, one whose most salient dimensions were identification and distancing. Additional categories not presented here include imaginary landscapes, territoriality, interconnectedness, and diasporas, and we hope to study and write about these in our subsequent work.