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Journal
Berkeley Review of Education, 8(1)

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Publication Date
2018

DOI
10.5070/B88134957

Peer reviewed

Available online at http://eScholarship.org/uc/ucbgse_bre

Students Taking Social Action: Critical Literacy Practices Through School-As-Museum Learning

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Abstract

Inspired by critical literacy practices, sixth-grade students at Carter Elementary designed, curated, and publicly displayed a museum exhibit to expose and confront issues of social justice. Through this case study of one display within the exhibit, we analyze the ideas and stances represented in each of its artifacts and investigate how, together, the data sources create a discursive chain in regard to social action. We call on critically oriented discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013) to interpret the densely multimodal artifacts, considering how ideas and stances are embodied and intertextual. Our findings reveal how student-created museum learning can stimulate transformative stances toward social action and serve as powerful mediums for youth activism. The study contributes important insights to the field of literacy studies, particularly how social action can be integrated into teaching and learning processes through multimodal public exhibits.

Keywords: critical literacy, transformative practice, social action, multimodality, social justice, equity

A group of sixth graders stands at the opening of their student-curated Social Justice Museum Exhibit featuring four thematic displays: (a) Bullying and Discrimination, (b) Environmental and Animal Abuse, (c) Health and Drug Abuse, and (d) Poverty in Systems. Janet, Gabby, Duncan, and Clayton[2] are the designers and creators of the Bullying and Discrimination Display. As docents, they introduce their exhibit to a small group of fourth graders from the same school:

Duncan: I am one of your tour guides today.

Gabby: I am Gabby.

Clayton: Clayton.

Janet: I am Janet.

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[2] All of the names and places in this paper are protected with pseudonyms.

Clayton: We are here to talk about the Discrimination and Bullying Exhibit.

Janet: And the rest of the exhibit. But we are going to focus on this for the first part. So this is social justice (*points to the opening display of the exhibit shown in Figure 1*). So what we are focusing on is superheroes and villains. And so the villains are the bad people, obviously, Poverty, Health and Drug Abuse, and Environment and Animal Abuse, and Bullying and Discrimination. Those are our villains. And then, we have superheroes that are saving the day and making things right, and not letting people do drugs, and all of this other stuff, and not have poverty happen. So that's what social justice is.

Duncan: Helping the world. So you guys want to read some, go ahead . . . (*points to Figure 1, the opening display*).

Figure 1. The opening panel to the Social Justice Museum Exhibit introducing student-created superheroes (Justice, Equity, Solidarity, Diversity, and Access) and super villains (BULLE, Environmental Abuse, Druggie, and Poverty).

Carter Elementary is a school organized around the metaphor "school-as-museum" (D'Acquisto, 2002), which means the school is a museum open to the public, and the students are considered museum curators and docents who create thematic exhibits based on their classroom learning and inquiry-based research. Twice per year, teachers at each grade level ask their students to choose a topic from their curricula and demonstrate their learning by constructing an elaborate exhibit. Students learn to conduct additional, collaborative research on their topics, curate artifacts, apply design theories, construct themed displays within the exhibit, and conduct docent-led tours of the exhibit for the public.

Genevieve Caffrey was the sixth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher at Carter Elementary, and Dr. Rebecca Rogers was a visiting guest at the school a few weeks prior to the opening of the sixth-grade Social Justice Museum Exhibit. As student docents led

Rebecca through the various displays, she was struck by the power of the school-as-museum model to stimulate deep and authentic learning about complex topics, such as discrimination, factory farming, drugs, and poverty. In addition to learning about social justice issues and topics, the students and teachers collaboratively used multimodal literacies that impacted their worlds. The project centralized critical approaches both in content and in representational methods.

Rebecca asked Genevieve if she would like to examine more closely how students represented their learning about social justice. Together, we generated the research question: In what ways do students exhibit representations of social action within the multiple literacy practices of the Bullying and Discrimination Display of the Social Justice Museum Exhibit?

Related Scholarship

There is a wealth of studies on the important role that museums play in student learning (e.g., Eakle & Chávez-Eakle, 2013; Pahl & Pollard, 2010). Some research has focused on the design and use of artifacts as tools for robust learning (e.g., Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007), whereas other scholars have analyzed student learning within museum exhibits and informal learning spaces (e.g., Lemke, Lecusay, Cole, & Michalchik, 2015; Rowe, 2011; Tzibazi, 2013). From these studies, we understand that social, emotional, and developmental learning outcomes are significant when youth are given opportunities to construct informal projects to be displayed for the public, and that their experiences are enriched when the issues that are explored in the museums reflect local needs. However, studies on student-curated museums in schools are rare, and critical approaches are often missing. Sharon (2012) has analyzed content knowledge impact through student-created museum exhibits, but not from a social justice perspective. Kelly, Bartlett, and Gordon's (2002) work with indigenous youth in the Australian National Museum has demonstrated a participatory approach, but the project limits youth engagement to traditional museums and did not consider the possibility of exhibit construction inside schools. D'Acquisto (2006) has offered examples of student-created museum exhibits in schools and has suggested how teachers can go about the museum-creation process with students. Nonetheless, she does not take a socially just, critical approach to understanding how non-traditional representations of learning—such as social action—may be characterized within the multi-literacy practices of museum construction.

Our description of the sixth-grade Social Justice Museum in this paper adds to this body of scholarship by focusing on a student-created museum exhibit produced in a school from a socially just, critical approach to literacy and learning. By *critical literacy* we mean the practice of using technologies—including oral, print, and digital technologies—to analyze, critique, and redesign structures that influence daily life (e.g., Janks, 2000, 2010). We interpret the critical literacy practices through a social justice perspective by exploring learning outcomes beyond content knowledge. We delve deeper into analyzing how, through critical literacy practices, youth express and take social action to improve society.

The museum exhibit presented in this paper took place within a public school that welcomes hundreds of visitors from the community every year. The significance of critical literacy practices through museum learning is the cultivation of students' relationship between knowledge, identity, and action. It is here that we connect with third-generation

activity theory, also known as Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT; Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2009; Stetsenko, 2016). CHAT builds on Vygotsky's conceptualization of human development as a relational project (Rieber, 1997): that is, through interactions, "individuals change the means and modes of their own behaviors, transform the natural pre-givens and functions, work out and create new forms of behavior—the specifically cultural ones" (p. 18). Vygotsky set the groundwork for a transformational ontology and epistemology, and CHAT expands this multi-perspectival thread to situate activity systems within culture, history, and community.

Stetsenko (2012, 2016) builds on this research tradition and theorizes a transformative activist stance. Stetsenko's theory posits that contributions to improving society and social action are fundamental to learning and development. As people take a stand or stance, they contribute to the social world through collaborative transformative practice. Each contribution to the activity system—such as jointly designing an artifact or giving a collaborative tour of the exhibit—is part of the accumulation of one's being (i.e., identity) in the world. At the core of the transformative activist stance is the idea that, through taking small and large actions, people learn, grow, and develop. At the same time, they are transforming the social world. Stetsenko (2016) writes:

> What is at stake here is the unique phenomenological richness of each and every human deed, of *each* and *every* act of being, knowing, and doing. When pulled together across the time scales, as they are, deeds form a seamless stream of one's life as an active project of *postupleine*—a "coming forward through doing." (p. 283, [emphasis in original])

These dynamics have obvious and significant curricular relevance, which we will see set in motion in this paper.

Because this project brought together students and the public, it was important to explore the varying definitions and implications of *public*. George and Mathieu (2010) claim that "the act of readers paying attention importantly begins at the creation of a public" (p. 253). In this sense, the public—in our work, the museum exhibit—is an ongoing space of encounters between and across the students as designers and tour guides, the museum, and the visitors. Rai (2010) argues that it is the promise of the public sphere that propels people forward:

> [I]t is the promised ideals reflected within the model [of the public sphere] that provide many with the courage and the power, along with the rhetorical toolkit, to continually dream up and work toward new worlds that are more just and less cruel; worlds that we hope might transcend the horrors, contradictions, and suffering found within our material circumstances. (p. 51)

Bruner (2010) claims, "the more we come to collectively understand the relationship between the ways we speak to the public and the kinds of worlds we live in, the more enlightened as a species we become" (p. 59). The students in this sixth-grade class were engaged in designing a museum exhibit for diverse publics (e.g., students, parents, and community members). To accomplish this, they called on critical literacy practices to collectively learn, design, curate, and interpret the exhibit.

Methodology

Curricular Context

Carter Elementary prepares teachers to design their own unit-based curricula through Understanding by Design professional development sessions (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Here, teachers learn to plan and structure curriculum, assessment and instruction themselves, which provides them with a significant amount of trust and autonomy. In designing the sixth-grade ELA curriculum, Genevieve sought to equip her students with the ability to use and interpret language and multimodal texts in an active, reflective manner to better understand power, inequality, and injustice through human relationships and institutional systems (e.g., Engeström, 2009; Janks, 2010). Moreover, she wanted her students to be able to identify examples in which fictional characters and real human beings, including themselves, overcome adversity and collectively fight for equality, respect, and justice. The appendix provides an overview of how Genevieve organized social justice-oriented literature, vocabulary, films, and writing activities into four thematic units to accomplish these goals over the school year.

During the first week of this particular school year, Genevieve prompted a series of conversations about issues in students' lives, schools, and communities that they would want to act on to change. During this dialogue, many students reported that bullying was a significant problem in fifth grade and that they wanted to find ways to stop it. Therefore, Genevieve intentionally themed her first quarter unit "Exploring Identity" and chose the book *Stargirl* (Spinelli, 2000) as an anchor text to read aloud to the whole class because it is about a unique middle school girl, Stargirl, who struggles to fit in. She experiences bullying but figures out creative ways to stay true to herself and inspire her community to embrace diversity and kindness. Through this first quarter unit, Genevieve provided opportunities for students to engage critically with the text—to compare and contrast it with informational articles exploring various types and effects of bullying and a documentary called *Bully* (Foudy, Hirsch, Lowen, & Waitt, 2011). She also gave students opportunities to write about their bullying, discrimination, and identity-formation experiences through personal narratives and poetry.

Toward the end of the year, Genevieve assigned the performance task to create a museum exhibit that critically reflected what they had learned that year. To facilitate students' own reflections on their learning, she introduced a systems-thinking activity called Connection Circles (Quaden, Ticotsky, Lyneis & Walker, 2008), which helps students understand complexity and generate ideas about changing conditions within a system. Students participated in a connection circle activity by writing down social problems they explored throughout the year (e.g., discrimination, incarceration, health problems, environmental abuse, depression, bullying, hunger, poverty) around a large circle. Genevieve asked them to dialogue with each other and draw connections between the problems in order to unearth cause-and-effect relationships. During this activity, two case study participants had the following exchange:

Duncan: Bullying leads to depression. Depression leads to drug abuse.

Janet: Drug abuse leads to incarceration.

Duncan: Incarceration leads to anger and abuse.

Janet: Anger and abuse leads to bullying.

Duncan: This is like a giant feedback loop.

Janet: Yeah, so if we can stop bullying, then we can stop all these other problems.

Duncan: And if we can stop these other problems, we can stop bullying.

By thinking and conversing in systems, students hypothesized innumerable connections and feedback loops. They categorized the complex social problems into four main themes, which became the titles of four displays for their exhibit: (a) Bullying and Discrimination, (b) Environmental and Animal Abuse, (c) Health and Drug Abuse, and (d) Poverty in Systems. Students voted on their preferred topics, and Genevieve correspondingly organized students into four groups that worked together for about one month.

Although the entire exhibit revealed abundant information worthy of study, we focused our case study here on the Bullying and Discrimination Display due to the students' specific request to confront bullying, and the powerful ways in which students demonstrated stances toward social action within this specific display. Through teacher-created, social justice-oriented curricula and a constructivist learning approach, the students developed new understandings and stances toward bullying and discrimination, which could be observed in the museum exhibit.

Participants

There were 70 students in the sixth-grade class, with about 18 students in four classes working on each of the four thematic displays. The class was 53% white, 39% African American, 3% Asian American, 3% Mixed Race, and 2% Hispanic (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, May 15, 2013). The case study focuses on the four students in the Bullying and Discrimination group who acted as docents to provide a tour for Rebecca and a group of fourth graders from the same school. The Bullying and Discrimination Display docents were Janet, Clayton, Gabby, and Duncan. Whereas other students contributed to the Bullying and Discrimination Display, we chose to focus on these students because we captured their tour on video.

Janet. Janet was a white female who struggled academically, particularly with reading, and presented herself alternatively, with colorful outfits and dyed hair. Despite her reading challenges, she became quite engaged in the book *Stargirl* (Spinelli, 2000), which was about a young girl who did not conform to most societal norms and was labeled "different" by her peers. Janet strongly identified with Stargirl and often vocally embraced the book's theme of championing diversity and uniqueness as a means of confronting bullying. Janet designed the Diversity Girl superhero and, for opening night, wore a homemade Diversity Girl dress to match her cape—both exploding with diverse colors and textures.

Gabby. Gabby was a white female in the Gifted and Talented Education program. She was a high-achieving student involved in multiple extracurricular activities, and an only child to two wealthy parents, but she struggled to fit in at times. She also identified with

Stargirl as she attempted to make friends, but struggled to do so, seemingly due to her overachieving personality. Among other responsibilities, Gabby collected digital narratives and arranged for them to be presented on iPads in the display. She created a "Call for Stories" flyer, posted copies of it throughout the school, scheduled interviews with students who responded, edited the interviews on GarageBand, and helped make them accessible on two iPads placed within the Bullying and Discrimination Display. Her story was one of the digital narratives, and she gave advice at the end about staying true to oneself.

Clayton. Clayton was a Black male from a low socioeconomic background who grew up with his grandmother and struggled academically and behaviorally. Clayton showed exceptional engagement when reading *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990), a fictional book set within a strictly segregated town—white people on the west side and Black people on the east side. He astutely compared the racial interactions in the book to contemporary racial interactions and was also the proud author of "I Am a Boy," the poem prominently presented in the Bullying and Discrimination Display.

Duncan. Duncan was a white male who was a strong student and quite popular socially. He grew up in France with his affluent family and spoke frequently of his travels around the world. He seemed shocked and confused by the tragedies surrounding migrant worker life revealed in *Esperanza Rising* (Muñoz-Ryan, 2002) and various news stories that the class read. He examined the text critically, frequently raising questions about the social position and linguistic rights of Mexican migrant workers in the United States. Ultimately, Duncan chose to be in the Bullying and Discrimination group because, while implementing the Connection Circle activity, he explained to the class that many other problems—such as the migrant farming crisis—could be stopped if bullying and discrimination could be stopped.

Case Study Design

We designed a case study of the Bullying and Discrimination Display within the Sixth-Grade Social Justice Museum Exhibit at Carter Elementary. Using a holistic, interpretive case study design (Stake, 1995), we sought to describe and interpret how students represented social action against bullying and discrimination through the museum exhibit. Further, we wanted to know how the exhibit's design invited visitors to challenge previous understandings about bullying and discrimination and take social action.

We used an interpretive case study design because our analysis of the display's artifacts rested upon our interactions—as teacher, researcher, and museum visitor—with the data sources themselves. Instead of interviewing the students about what they learned, we designed our case study to explain and interpret the unique ways in which student learning about social justice topics were represented through the Bullying and Discrimination Display. The unit of analysis is students' representations of their learning about bullying and discrimination.

Thus, in our case study, we focus on describing and interpreting three central components of the activity: (a) a social justice-oriented teacher-created curriculum, (b) students' collaborative transformative design of the exhibit, and (c) visitors' interactions with the exhibit and the designers. Within each of these cycles of activity, we emphasize artifacts of students' learning, which we describe through our data sources.

Data Sources

Artifacts within the museum exhibit. The students incorporated many different artifacts into their exhibit, including sculptures, objects, art, photos, images, capes, informational text panels, newspaper articles, poems, QR codes to websites, and auditory narratives told through iPads and headphones. Genevieve supported the students by conferring with students one-on-one and in small groups, and by conducting mini-lessons about artifact design and exhibit construction. Each student contributed a small informational panel elaborating on a specific artifact or aspect of their display, as well as a poem that they had written for a slam poetry unit three months prior. Students also collaborated to design, organize, and write materials for the display, which required immense cooperation amongst them.

Video recordings of docent-led tours. There was a community-wide opening for the museum exhibit, which attracted hundreds of parents, community members, educational leaders, university faculty, and college students. Following the opening, the students provided tours to each grade level within the school, arranging one small group at a time. Genevieve trained students in groups of four to five to be docents to lead visitors through the exhibit. These tours lasted, on average, 20 minutes and included stops at all four main displays. We video-recorded six tours for a total of 120 minutes of video-recorded data. We chose to analyze tours by those docents who designed the Bullying and Discrimination Display.

Fieldnotes and reflective memos. Both authors wrote fieldnotes and reflective memos about their experiences in the museum (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Genevieve wrote her reflective memos from her perspective as the teacher, including her observations of students during the process of developing the museum and leading the tours. Rebecca was at Carter Elementary for a conference-planning meeting a few weeks prior to the completion of the museum exhibit. Genevieve invited Rebecca to see the nearly completed exhibit while some students were working on it after school, which is when the research project was conceived. Rebecca returned once to observe a whole-class vocabulary activity and small-group literature circles. She returned again to observe students as they actively worked on the exhibit and another time to video-record the students as they gave tours through the completed exhibit. She wrote her fieldnotes and memos of these four visits from the perspective of a museum-goer and critical friend of the project.

Photos of the exhibit. Both authors took photos of the museum exhibit at several stages in the design process. Photos documented the students' brainstorming process, panel writing, display construction, superhero design, student-led tours, and the final museum exhibit product.

Interviews. To understand the work that went into this seven-month process of implementing a social justice-oriented ELA curriculum and creating the museum exhibit, Rebecca conducted several interviews with Genevieve. A few of the interviews were informal and occurred during school visits. One semi-structured interview lasted nearly three hours and focused on the exhibit as a whole, including the design and curation process, as well as complexities and challenges. Another semi-structured interview lasted 90 minutes and focused on each group's themed process. These interviews provided a different cross-sectional understanding of the student-generated museum exhibit.

Data Analysis

Our approach to data analysis combined a naturalistic, dialogic approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Naples, 2003), with constant comparative procedures (e.g., see Miles & Huberman, 1994), and critical approaches to discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013). Our analysis was theoretically informed by CHAT (e.g., Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2009; Stetsenko, 2016) and, in particular, emphasized collaborative transformative practice, social action, and expansive learning.

Procedurally, we read and reread the data set searching for how the students represented bullying and discrimination across the collaborative practice of designing and giving tours of the exhibit. Most obviously, their display exposed and critiqued bullying and discrimination. We developed a number of sub-themes, which, when coded and related back to the interviews, fieldnotes, and curricular documents, allowed us to organize our interpretations of the ways that social action was represented within students' multi-literacy practices. In general, we concentrated on analyzing the ways in which action was represented within and across the activity systems.

We created a table to document the display's features, which helped us identify the range of literacy practices that students employed. From here, we called on critical forms of discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013) combined with CHAT (e.g., Engeström, 2009; Stetsenko, 2016) to look more carefully at how ideas and stances were multimodally constructed in the activity systems that comprised the exhibit (e.g., designing the exhibit, representing the exhibit, and leading tours). It is important to emphasize that, in our analysis, we leaned on the idea that meanings are made across modes. For example, ideas about ending bullying can be communicated linguistically through lexical choices and also through images and layout that appeal to viewers. Similarly, stances are represented through modality (i.e., the aspect of grammar that expresses obligation) and appraisal (i.e., the aspect of grammar that demonstrates judgment)—both of which can be rendered through language or modes, such as proximity, time, use of color, layout, and images.

We searched for patterns and clusters of ideas and stances that were repeated within and across artifacts and across the activity systems associated with the museum. Different components of the activity system called for varying levels of attention to multimodality. The text panels, for example, included layout and design and were heavily print-based. We therefore created a transcript of the text panels that described different kinds of bullying and discrimination, and then conducted a line-by-line analysis of the ideas and stances that the students communicated in the text. At this level of analysis, we looked at how other modalities (e.g., use of photographs, layout, color, graphics) interacted with the print to communicate meanings about bullying. For example, in the informational panels, we closely analyzed obligation and commitment to ending bullying and discrimination across linguistic and visual modes. We descriptively analyzed the use of linguistic markers such as low (e.g., *might*), median (e.g., *should*), and high (e.g., *must*) levels of obligation, which are modalities referring to modal verbs that infer an ethical responsibility. We analyzed the images that students chose in terms of how they positioned the viewer. For example, we described whether the image included a child or adult, whether the gaze of the person photographed was aimed directly at the viewer or looking away, and whether the person had a sense of proximity to the viewer. All of these markers created a general feeling or

attitude in the exhibit. The superheroes, capes, and newspaper articles were all densely multimodal and required us to foreground layout, color scheme, perspective and gaze, and also consider how linguistic markers—including narratives—were called on to create meaning.

After conducting a descriptive analysis of each artifact in the display, we looked at the intertextual linkages across the museum exhibit. From a CHAT perspective, it was important that we situated our textual analysis within the broader context of the collaborative practice of designing the exhibit and leading groups of people through it. This involved considering the longer and context-specific histories relevant to bullying and discrimination. We recontextualized our analysis within our own experiences as a teacher in this community (i.e., Genevieve) and as a visitor to the museum and researcher (i.e., Rebecca), closely considering the reports of bullying from the previous school year and that students were designing and acting upon teaching that was responsive to their local needs.

Findings

Overview of the Bullying and Discrimination Display

After the systems-thinking activity—which organized the overall exhibit design—students spent about one month brainstorming, planning, negotiating, and constructing the Social Justice Museum Exhibit. The students presented the final exhibit, including the Bullying and Discrimination Display pictured in Figure 2, to the public in early May 2013.

Figure 2. The Bullying and Discrimination Display

The Bullying and Discrimination Display consisted of five life-sized drawings of superheroes—Diversity Girl, Change, Empathy, Happiness, and Pro-LGBOT ROBOT—and three life-sized drawings of super villains—BULLE, Discrimination, and Depression. Also included in the display were informational panels, iPads, newspaper articles, and life-size mannequins with student-authored poems affixed to their chests. These poems explored issues of identity, bullying, and discrimination. The students said that they

attached the poems to the shirts of the mannequins to remind readers that there was a real person behind each of these poems (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, April 28, 2013). Pairs of shoes were placed along the floor with a large title for the display: "Step Into Our Shoes . . . Listen to Our Stories, Tell Us Yours, DO what you can DO to STOP Bullying and Discrimination." Two iPads were placed on either side of the display. These iPads played three- to five-minute digital narratives of students from all grade levels sharing their own bullying and discrimination stories and providing advice about how to move on and combat bullying and discrimination. At the end of the display, visitors came across a table with piles of blank outlined feet. A sign invited visitors to write their experiences and advice regarding bullying and discrimination inside the feet. The directions asked visitors to cut out each foot and post them on the wall above, so other visitors could "walk in their shoes" for a moment.

Figure 3 shows how the students structured their researched information into three prominently displayed, large panels answering their essential questions: (a) "What is Bullying? What is Discrimination?" (b) "What are the Effects of Bullying?" and (c) "How Do We End Bullying and Discrimination?"

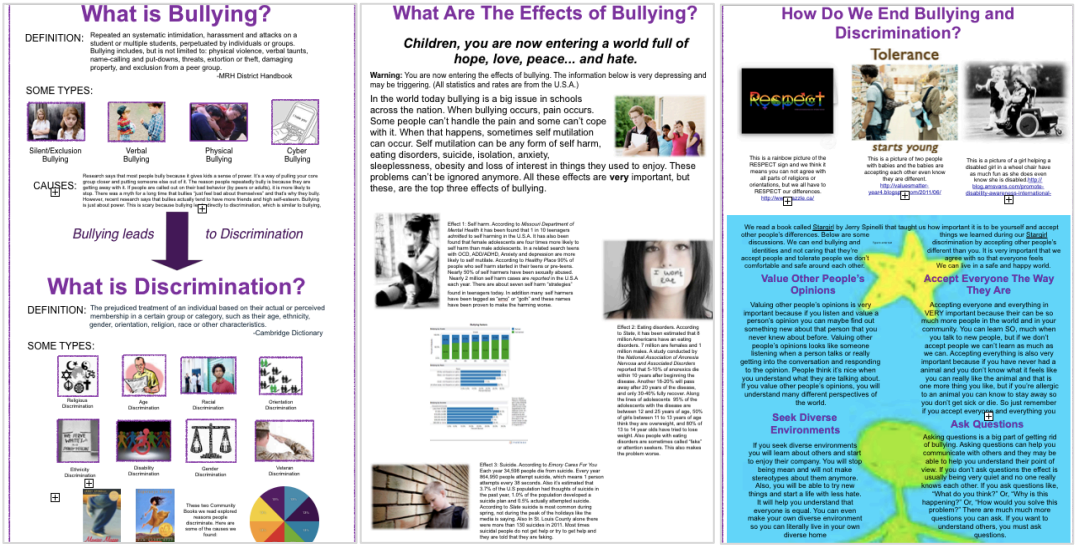

Figure 3. The central informational panels in the Bullying and Discrimination Display.

Figure 4 shows two of 16 small informational panels about different types of bullying (e.g., verbal, physical, silent, and cyber) and discrimination (e.g., racial, orientation, gender, religious, age, and disability). These small, purple panels hung around the large panels.

Figure 4. Two small informational panels.

Representations of Social Action

In the following sections, we identify how students represented action against bullying and discrimination. We found four distinct representations of social action that students used to express their agency in the display: (a) provoking through exposing, (b) storytelling, (c) dramatizing, and (d) organizing. Throughout each section below, we include examples of the ways in which students used social action to open interpretive possibilities for their audience. We include dialogue from our video of the focal participants leading fourth graders through the display, which illuminates their approaches to taking action.

Provoking through exposing. The sixth graders designed the display to open with definitions and examples of bullying and discrimination, exposing the problem and educating the public before providing opinions and recommendations. After the participants introduced the exhibit, they led their group of fourth graders through the start of the Bullying and Discrimination Display.

> Gabby: Over here is the, this is the bullying and discrimination part of the exhibit. We have multiple panels about bullying and discrimination, and these people represent people who might be getting bullied or discriminated against, and we have some poems that some of the kids made on their shirts, 'cause these could be what they are thinking.

The group paused as they looked at the informational panels that detailed different types of bullying and discrimination. Each panel included a definition, examples, and information about how to interrupt each form of bullying or discrimination. For example, after defining disability discrimination, the panel stated:

> Even though laws are passed, StopBullying.com reports that roughly 57% of people with disabilities are bullied. . . . Thirteen million people have reported having trouble finding jobs because of disabilities. People should all work together to respect the dignity of people with disabilities.

The panels were cohesive, each with the same color and layout. Taken together, the panels had the cumulative effect of exposing many kinds of bullying by using direct language and images to categorize bullying (e.g., verbal, physical, silent, and cyber). The students included images of photographed children who were seemingly making appeals for help. The question-and-answer format of the headings (e.g., "What is bullying?") invited active and engaged viewing. As appraisal theorists (e.g., Martin & Rose, 2011) remind us, designers need to draw on a range of resources to build solidarity with the complex audiences that are part of the public domain.

When a fourth grader stopped in front of a panel, the following dialogue ensued:

Fourth grader:	What's verbal bullying?
Duncan:	Verbal bullying is like calling people names and like saying things.
Gabby:	It's bullying with your words.
Duncan:	There are panels of the different types of bullying. What types of bullying do you think exist?
Fourth grader:	I have actually heard of cyber bullying.
Janet:	That's kind of bullying someone on the Internet or from the computer . . .
Gabby:	We can give you guys a couple of minutes to read the panels.

In the above dialogue, the sixth graders used the discourse practices of docents as they invited the group to explore various kinds of bullying and discrimination. After the discussion, the fourth graders' gaze and attention returned to the panels. Across the panels, the students balanced their descriptions and evidence with suggestions for combating bullying and discrimination. Taking in the entire display, readers were invited to learn about different forms of bullying and discrimination and identify with a stance promoting social justice. They were given the material necessary to decide for themselves if they wanted to be included in this shared community stance toward social action against bullying and discrimination. Visitors may have wondered, "Now that I know what bullying and discrimination are, what actions might I take to prevent or combat it?"

Each panel begins with a dispassionate and informative introduction and then moves into statements that challenge the reader with imperatives to disrupt complacency, or even cause the reader discomfort. For example, the Racial Discrimination panel stated:

> The world has become more tolerant and accepting since the Civil Rights Movement, however, racism still exists. Racial profiling (in which law

> enforcement makes decisions mainly because of race) is still reported often. African Americans are 13% of our country, but 40% of those incarcerated. Something is still wrong.

Through such strategies, the writers avoided what bell hooks (2010) describes as "the pressure to maintain a non-combative atmosphere," an atmosphere that "can actually work to silence discussion and/or completely eradicate the possibility of a dialectical exchange" (p. 86). The students were not afraid to make their audience uncomfortable, or say what the audience might not want to hear. For example, after giving examples and statistics about discrimination against elderly people, the Age Discrimination panel ended with:

> You can also be discriminated [against] for being too young. Kellogg Foundation at the University of Michigan reports that many adults discriminate [against] young people and cause youth to "question their legitimacy, doubt their ability to make a difference and perpetuate a culture of silence among young people." Some adults think kids shouldn't have a voice just because we're kids. That's definitely not true!

In other panels, students asked adults to join in their actions to end bullying. At the end of the Silent Bullying panel, a student wrote, "Silent bullying can be stopped pretty easily. Just stop giving people dirty looks or other rude gestures. It can also be stopped if adults took silent bullying more seriously, and making stricter punishments for silent bullying." Adults do not always want to hear these kinds of critical comments and requests, but the students voiced their frustration and challenged them anyway.

Beyond exposing the multilayered problems around bullying and discrimination, all the panels concluded with emotional claims in a variety of fonts that provoked visitors to take social action themselves. For example, the small Religious Discrimination panel ended with, "Now as you can see religious discrimination still happens today in horrible invisible ways. At school. At work. On the street. Anywhere. We need to stop it!" The Disability Discrimination panel concluded with "People should all work together to respect the dignity of people with disabilities!" Intersubjective strategies across the texts continued with median and high imperatives: what you *should* do, and what you *must* do. For example, the students wrote:

> Not agreeing with other people's beliefs is okay. Just like Jewish and Catholic people don't agree on all beliefs. However, it is NOT okay to be disrespectful and hateful. We are all unique with special identity traits. [Carter Elementary] is here to love and accept everyone the way we are!

Whereas the three panels varied sufficiently to make each of them unique, these circuitous strategies for reader engagement were common across the panels. Along with an imperative statement, the use of exclamation points provided emphasis, and all-caps font raised a directive to the highest level of emphasis of respecting diversity.

The informational panels also revealed that students deemed in-depth research to be a way to highlight injustice and provoke social action. Whereas Genevieve had instructed the students to cite sources within the panel text when necessary, they were not required to

include academic literature or other researched information. They took it upon themselves to examine different types of discrimination so they could provide their visitors with specific legal facts and figures. For example, on the Orientation Discrimination panel, the student wrote,

> According to *NOLO Law For All,* federal laws protect people from workplace discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, religion, gender, age, and disability, however, there is no federal law that specifically outlaws workplace discrimination on the basis of orientation. Nine states allow gay marriage: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia and two Native American tribes. However, this means gay marriage is illegal in forty-one states. Millions of gay people are being excluded from large groups of straight people that are able to get married wherever they want and denied privileges they *should* have.

After teaching visitors about the political implications of each type of discrimination (low modality), the students included additional sentences to provoke responses (high modality), a type of social action. The negative information was then paired with uplifting images: two people holding hands and a famous lesbian couple, Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi, smiling cheek to cheek. By pairing information intended to provoke positive imagery, students provided the audience with a vision of what could be, if only there was justice for all (medium modality).

The student author who produced the panel shown in Figure 5 intentionally tried to provoke the audience with jarring information and dramatic images about the effects of bullying and discrimination (high modality).

Figure 5. The second of three large panels in the Bullying and Discrimination Display.

The text of the panel began with:

> Children, you are now entering a world full of hope, love, peace . . . and hate. Warning: You are now entering the effects of bullying. The information below is very depressing and may be triggering. In the world today bullying is a big issue in schools across the nation. When bullying occurs, pain occurs. Some people can't handle the pain and some can't cope with it. When that happens, sometimes self-mutilation can occur. Self-mutilation can be any form of self-harm, eating disorders, suicide, isolation, anxiety, sleeplessness, obesity and loss of interest in things they used to enjoy. These problems can't be ignored anymore. All these effects are *very* important, but these are the top three effects of bullying.

The panel went on to list cited facts and statistics about three effects of bullying: (a) self-harm, (b) eating disorders, and (c) suicide, ending with a caption that read: "In all three of these cases most people are accused for wanting attention. I can tell you first hand that most of these people are *not* asking for attention." The first lines of the panel were written in a different font and had intertextual echoes to disclaimers found at the beginning of sensitive news stories or movies. The first image was a picture of a girl, who appears sad and alone, being laughed at by a group of peers. Next to the section about self-harm as an effect of bullying, there was a picture of a girl with large bracelets around her wrists covering up cuts. There was also a picture of a girl with the words "I won't eat" written on a piece of tape, which is placed over her mouth. These images attempted to expose the problem through shocking the reader into paying attention. This panel included imperatives with emotionally charged images and directives throughout the entire text, which provoked particularly disturbing feelings. The author of this panel hoped that visitors would feel the sadness, but then be inspired to do something about it (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, May 3, 2013).

The students did not simply define the types of bullying and discrimination; they exposed information as if they were experts in the field and simultaneously provoked the audience with emotional directives and images. This full range of low to high linguistic and visual directives confronted museum visitors with the complex nature of working for social justice.

Storytelling. A big panel across the Bullying and Discrimination Display read, "Step into our shoes, Listen to our stories, Tell us yours." Early in the academic year, Genevieve had introduced the idea that narratives hold the potential to transform human experience. Three of the books students read as a class discussed issues of discrimination through narratives of young children going through traumatic experiences involving bullying, racism, and poverty: *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990), *Stargirl* (Spinelli, 2000), and *Esperanza Rising* (Muñoz-Ryan, 2002). As they designed the content of their displays, they revisited these pieces of literature and looked to the characters' stories for inspiration on how to combat bullying and discrimination.

As the students learned about storytelling as a tool for healing and empowerment, they came up with the idea to interview students and teachers around the school about their experiences with bullying and discrimination. These stories were recorded and played through iPads placed within the display. Panels affixed to the iPads shown in Figure 6 explained:

> Story telling is a healing way to overcome emotional pain and a powerful way to empower others. Each story on the iPad tells about a bullying or discrimination experience. The stories also include positive messages about how to uplift yourself and others . . . and move on. If you would like to add your story, there is a table to the right of the display with paper on which you can write your story and positive message.

The museum became a multisensory experience as visitors not only read text and saw images, but were also given opportunities to listen and write. By providing this interactivity, the students made visiting the exhibit a social action in and of itself.

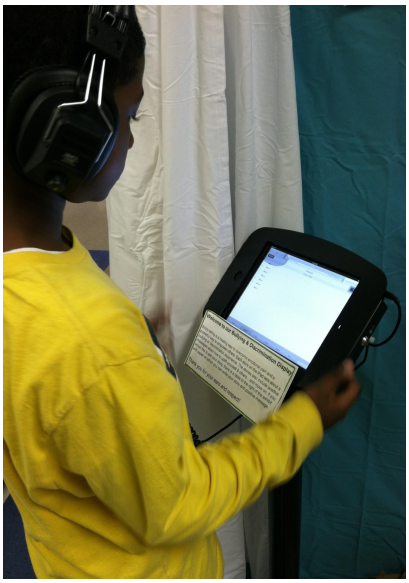

Figure 6. A museum visitor listening to bullying and discrimination stories on an iPad.

Originally, the students wanted visitors to step into actual shoes placed throughout the display, look into mirrors affixed to a life-sized mannequin, and listen to these stories. They thought interacting with the narratives in this way would provoke empathy. In so doing, the students would encourage the museum visitors to reconsider their roles vis-á-vis incidents of bullying and discrimination (i.e., as bystander, perpetrator, victim, or intervener). However, technical issues prevented them from securely affixing the iPads to the mannequins. Instead of integrating these narratives into the mannequins, students affixed their narrative poems to the mannequins for visitors to reflect on, shown in Figure 7.

These narrative poems were originally written during a slam poetry unit three months prior to the exhibit. They were inspired by students' stories about their personal experiences with bullying, discrimination, and advocacy. When fourth graders looked at the life-sized mannequins, one asked, "Are these people that you interviewed?"

Duncan: These are poems.

Gabby: These aren't specific people. They are people we've made to represent different races and ages and heights and genders, everything that makes up a person.

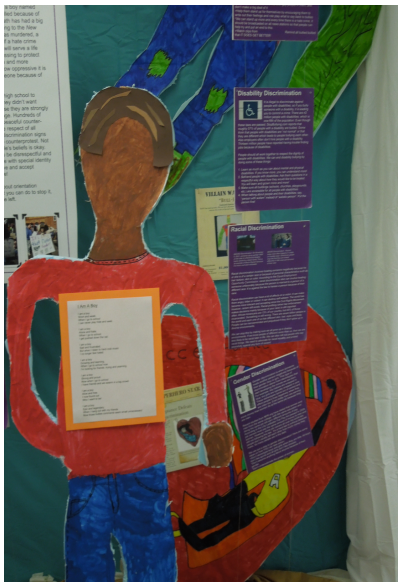

Figure 7. A narrative poem affixed to a life-sized mannequin in the display.

Duncan invited the fourth graders to stand in front of the life-sized mannequin and to read and reflect on the narrative poems. This invitation established an embodied connection between the person, the mannequin, and the poem. Clayton's poem was chosen for the exhibit due the way it demonstrated his transformative experience with bullying and discrimination:

I am a Boy
I am a boy
Short and weak,
When I go to school
I can never play hide and seek.

I am a boy
Alone and frail,
When I go to school
I get pushed down the rail.

I am a boy
Sad and frustrated,
But when I listen to hard rock music
I no longer feel hated.

I am a boy
Growing and learning,
When I go to school now
I'm looking for friends, trying and yearning.

I am a boy
Alive and free.
I now found out
Who I want to be!

I am a boy
Epic and legendary,
When I hang out with my friends
Now those bullies' comments seem small and unnecessary!

Clayton told Genevieve that he had joined the Bullying and Discrimination group because of his own experiences being bullied and singled out because of his race. The poem sparked many students and tour groups to pose questions, comments, and interpretations: "What happened to make the boy stronger?" "Yeah, that happened to me too," "I think he's saying we can't get rid of bullies, you just have to ignore them" (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, April 23, 2013). Thus, the narratives—created through both linguistic and visual texts—and meanings made by visitors were collaborative practices that contributed to what Stetsenko (2016) refers to as the continual chain of "acting-being-doing" (p. 36). She writes,

> it is this process of grappling and striving, of struggling and actively dealing with the given conditions and circumstances in efforts to transcend and transform them––rather than adapt to the status quo—that counts in and accounts for our coming into being and development. (p. 257)

In addition to the iPad narratives and poems, the students also embedded stories into the informational panels. For example, on the Racial Discrimination panel shown in Figure 4, a student described the difference between macro- and micro-discrimination, a concept that the students had learned about as part of a vocabulary lesson during the first quarter of the school year. Earlier that year, someone had vandalized the home of an African American student in the class by writing the letters "KKK" on the side of her house. With permission from this classmate, the student author of this panel found it important to tell this story as a painful and proximate example of macro-discrimination: "MACRO Discrimination: On November 5, 2012, someone spray-painted 'KKK' on the side of a [community] home owned by a black family. This is an example of Macro Racism because it is more overt and noticeable." The students also used an image to compliment and extend the meaning of the text. The photo was of the student's small, brick house with a green lawn. The familiarity of the neighborhood that one might feel when seeing this photo was shattered by the letters KKK painted on the side of the home. In response to this panel, many visitors stopped and recalled this incident—or story—that had happened in their own

community and appeared on the news. Adults made comments like, "I didn't know this was the home of a student in our school! Oh my gosh, how is that family doing?" Children asked questions like, "What does KKK mean? What's going to happen to the guys who did it?" Here, storytelling was not only used to educate or instruct the audience, but also to inspire dialogue and actions to promote racial justice.

Dramatizing. Genevieve required students to use at least two social justice vocabulary words within the text of each panel to demonstrate their understanding of the words. About halfway through exhibit construction, a small group of students were cutting and gluing their panels to foam board in the hallway with Genevieve when the Assistant Principal (AP) walked by. The following conversation ensued:

AP: Wow. These are some big words. What is discrimination?

Leela: It's a bad thing. It's like a super villain that wants to destroy the world.

AP: Wow, so if discrimination is a villain, then who is the superhero?

Leela: Like, diversity, equality, equity, advocacy.

AP: That's cool! So you're learning about superheroes and villains in ELA?

Leela: Yep! Hey! It would be cool if we could draw the superheroes and villains. We could draw what each word would look like if it was a superhero or a villain, and then put the superheroes and villains around the exhibit!

AP: That's a really good idea, Leela. (He winked and walked away.)

Leela: Can we do that, Genevieve? Can I go ask Eleanor if she will draw Discrimination and then put it in our exhibit? (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, April 6, 2013)

Students immediately started asking artistic friends to draw their vocabulary words embodied as superheroes and villains. When they began to argue about which ones were "theirs," Genevieve had each student sign up to design one superhero and one villain. The students put each sketch onto an overhead projector so they could be traced and transformed into life-sized superheroes and villains, glued onto foam board, and placed throughout the museum exhibit. Before long, students were asking to dress up as these social justice superheroes and dramatize them for the museum exhibit's opening night. Parents donated fabric so students could make superhero capes labeled with their vocabulary words. On opening night, each student embodied a social justice-oriented vocabulary word and dramatized characteristics of how each superhero might act as if they were embodied personalities actually fighting our world's biggest problems. Stetsenko (2014) has reminded us of the power of collaborative transformative practice to create social futures that are filled with hope. She writes, "these agendas centrally involve taking an activist stance grounded in a vision, or 'endpoint,' of how present community practices

ought to be changed, and thus, what kind of future ought to be created" (p. 192). The Carter School community watched in awe as the sixth-grade students took a collective activist stance against social injustice. Through dramatic representations for the public, they envisioned a hopeful future in which people who embrace diversity, equity, and justice are celebrated as superheroes who can eradicate villainous acts of bullying and discrimination.

The superheroes associated with the Bullying and Discrimination Display included Diversity Girl, Change, Empathy, Happiness, and Pro-LGBOT ROBOT (Pro Lesbian Gay Bisexual Or Transgender) Robot. Pro-LGBOT's creator, Annie, had been openly grappling with her sexual orientation throughout the year and eagerly signed up to write the Gender Discrimination panel. Although "Pro-LGBOT" was not a vocabulary word Genevieve explicitly taught, Annie asked if she could use the concept to create a superhero. On opening night, Annie's parents expressed appreciation that ELA class was a positive, therapeutic experience for Annie while she questioned her own orientation. Her mother told Genevieve, "Whether she is or not, she is clearly proud of and okay with the idea of being gay" (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, May 8, 2018).

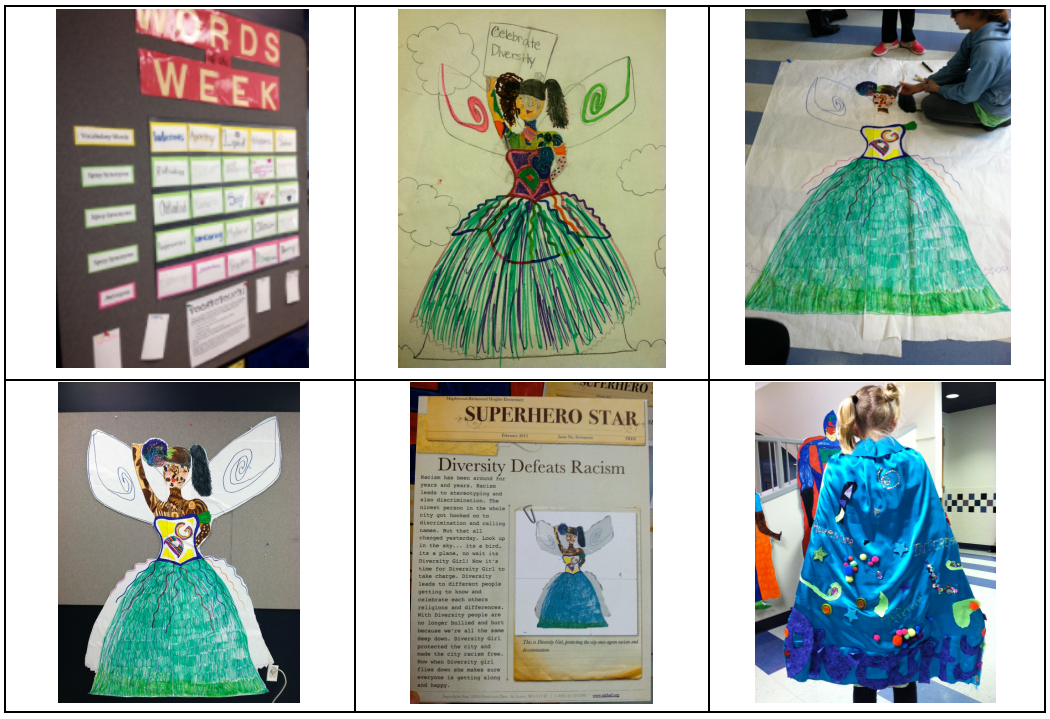

Figure 8. These pictures show the evolution of a vocabulary word from a "Word of the Day" to a dramatized superhero.

Figure 8 exemplifies how one vocabulary word evolved from a "Word of the Day" to a superhero to a dramatization to creating a costume. Diversity was a vocabulary word Genevieve explicitly taught as a "Word of the Day" and a concept regularly revisited as the students read social justice-oriented literature, particularly in *Stargirl* (Spinelli, 2000) and *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990). The first small sketch is of Diversity Girl (Figure 8),

designed by Janet from the Bullying and Discrimination group. Janet strongly advocated that Diversity Girl should be featured in their display as a multicolored person with a multicolored dress because "embracing the diversity of our colors is a way to fight the mean bullies and discrimination villains" (G. Caffrey fieldnotes, April 19, 2013). The original Diversity Girl sketch was then copied onto transparency paper, projected onto large butcher paper, traced to make her life-sized, and glued onto foam board so she could "fly" through the display on the wall. Janet wrote a newspaper article about how Diversity Girl defeated Racism. Finally, Janet dramatized Diversity Girl on opening night in front of her parents and the larger community, which is shown in the last picture of Figure 8.

The villains in the display included BULLE, Discrimination, and Depression. A writing project organically grew out of this superhero and villain concept. After students independently started making wanted posters for the villains, Genevieve asked students to write newspaper articles describing how each of the superheroes defeated their nemesis villain. The articles (Figures 9a, 9b, and 9c) were affixed next to their superheroes and villains accordingly throughout the exhibit.

Figures 9a, 9b, and 9c. Student-authored newspaper articles and a wanted poster.

We will now take a closer look at the newspaper article in Figure 9a, which dramatized how the social justice superhero, Diversity, defeated the oppressive villain, Racism. Diversity Girl and Racism were dramatized through the newspaper story:

> Racism has been around for years and years. Racism leads to stereotyping and also discrimination. The nicest person in the whole city got hooked on to discrimination and calling names. But that all changed yesterday. Look up in the sky . . . its a bird, its a plane, no wait its Diversity Girl! Now it's time for Diversity Girl to take charge. Diversity leads to different people getting to know and celebrate each other's religions and differences. With Diversity people are no longer bullied and hurt because we're all the same deep down. Diversity Girl protected the city and made the city racism free. Now when Diversity Girl flies down she makes sure everyone is happy and free.

The text was accompanied by an image of Diversity Girl, whose skin color was swirling with brown and peach colors. Her dress was many different bright colors and her fist was righteously raised in the air. The text and images in the newspaper article envisioned how racism could be "wiped off the face of the planet" if only people embraced diversity in every community. The students took social action against bullying and discrimination by dramatizing diversity and racism with creative writing and multicolored images.

A collective stance toward social action was particularly evident in Figure 9b. The newspaper article stated:

> Apathist had been laying on the couch eating apathy chips & drinking complacency for 25 years. With the support and perseverance of so many people in the [Carter] community, Activism (Apathist's Arch Nemesis) finally arrived to their call! Thank you Activist & [Carter] Community!"

Whereas collective action in the fight for social justice was celebrated, students also illustrated the ways that villains work together, particularly in their description of the villain, Oppression, shown in Figure 9c. The students revealed the dangers and complexities of oppression in the text on the wanted poster:

> Trademark Superpower: Her Intimidation Staff will push down & demoralize the most vulnerable . . . without them even knowing she was there! Criminal Nature: She wants power and money. She enjoys others' pain. She teams up with Fear, Violence, Discrimination & Poverty. Suspected in: Syrian Civil War, Payday Loan Businesses, Communist Countries, Nazi Germany.

The events and topics mentioned in this poster were discussed throughout the school year to deepen the meanings and histories of social justice vocabulary and were used to critically analyze the underlying messages behind the literature that students were reading. Although the text within the newspaper articles was important, the images were larger than the text, showing how the students relied on the creative dramatization of the social justice concepts to direct visitors' attention to the text.

What became clear as the students proudly shared their superhero capes during the tours and opening night was how they brought concepts such as diversity, equity, dignity, and pro-LGBT to life. Visitors viewing the exhibit were impressed with the representation of these ideals, exemplified by the large, colorful, vivid superheroes and capes. From personifying social justice vocabulary words to dressing up as radical archetypes of social justice, the students individually and collaboratively created spaces to dramatize and re-envision a world filled with diversity, empathy, and happiness.

Organizing. Through the panels, narratives, and newspapers, students advocated that visitors combat bullying and discrimination using primarily person-to-person approaches. However, nearing the end of the Bullying and Discrimination Display, the tour guides invited the visitors to engage with the idea of organizing groups of people to take collective social action. The students used their own participation in a protest to exemplify this concept.

Sexual orientation rights were an issue that had received district-wide support and attention during this particular school year. High school students had put on a production

of *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2000), a play based on the true story of Matthew Shepherd, who was beaten to death because he was gay. A radical Baptist church protested the play with signs that read "God hates fags" and "Matthew is burning in hell." About one-third of the sixth-grade class organized and encouraged one other to attend the play and participate in a counter-protest. During the days leading up to the counter-protest, students talked about how they had to convince their parents to attend. This incident was more than two years before the Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states, but the students were ahead of the curve. Many of them convinced their parents to let them attend and showed up in groups to proudly hold up their handmade signs and chant about love and equality alongside their superintendent.

This experience of organized action was presented in two panels. After detailing *The Laramie Project* play (Kaufman, 2000) and the effects of Shepherd's death, a student wrote:

> On September 25, 2013, the [Carter] School District passed a law that includes sexual orientation in their anti-discrimination policies. The [Carter] School Board wrote the following words to the City Council: *We, the [Carter] School District, would like to support your efforts to extend basic non-discrimination protections to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to employment, housing and public accommodation.* We are so proud!!!!!!!!!!!

Figure 10. A panel describing student involvement in a counter-protest for LGBT rights.

Another panel provided the story of the counter-protest through text and photographs (Figure 10). The panel described the counter-protest: "Hundreds of people from the [Carter] District held a peaceful counter-protest to advocate for the rights of LGBT people. We held up anti-discrimination signs and sang happy songs to counter-protest." The panel

revealed a strong transformative activist stance toward social action as it showed pictures of sixth-grade students holding signs at the counter-protest that said, "Love has no boundaries," "My heart has room for a rainbow," and "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Over the course of the school year, the sixth-grade students transformed from a class that reported high levels of bullying around gender identity issues to a class that eagerly and collectively organized for diversity, equity, and inclusion, particularly of the LGBT community.

In addition to the counter-protest organization, the students also suggested ideas for eliminating bullying and discrimination on their final panel. The introduction to the panel showed how the literature in their social justice-oriented curriculum guided them to organize for diversity, equity, and inclusion:

> We read a book called *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli that taught us how important it is to be yourself and accept other people's differences. Below are some things we learned during our *Stargirl* discussions. We can end bullying and discrimination by accepting other people's identities and not caring that they're different than you. It is very important that we accept people and tolerate people we don't agree with so that everyone feels comfortable and safe around each other. We can live in a safe and happy world.

The panel then contained four sections detailing how one could and should interact with people to combat bullying and discrimination: (a) "Value Other People's Opinions," (b) "Accept Everyone The Way They Are," (c) "Seek Diverse Environments," and (d) "Ask Questions." Some sections provided low to medium levels of modality in their language:

> If you seek diverse environments you will learn about others and start to enjoy their company. You will stop being mean and will not make stereotypes about them anymore. Also, you will be able to try new things and start a life with less hate. It will help you understand that everyone is equal. You can even make your own diverse environment so you can literally live in your own diverse home.

Other sections illustrated higher levels of modality:

> Accepting everyone and everything is VERY important because there can be so much more people in the world and in your community. You can learn SO much when you talk to new people, but if we don't ACCEPT people we can't learn as much as we can.

Determining ways to articulate how to combat bullying and discrimination based on lessons learned in literature requires a great deal of synthesis and organization. The students demonstrated their abilities to synthesize and organize information, combining lessons learned in the literature with independent research to articulate ways to combat bullying and discrimination. Through collective direct action and strong suggestions inspired by children's literature, the sixth-grade students led by example and sought to inspire social action through a variety of their own social actions embedded within and around the Bullying and Discrimination Display of their Social Justice Museum Exhibit.

Discussion

Through critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2005; Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013), we analyzed the ideas and stances presented in the Bullying and Discrimination Display to examine how student-created museum learning can represent and invite social action. We have illustrated the texts, interactions, and social practices that emerged from the display, while paying particular attention to how students centered activism in their display design. Social action was represented in various forms and dispositions. By exposing different types and examples of bullying and discrimination, and attempting to provoke action through the use of variable fonts and emotional claims, students demonstrated expert-oriented stances toward social action. Their storytelling revealed empathetic dispositions toward social action through narratives incorporated in the poetry, audio-recordings, and mini-stories within informational panels. Students' creative dramatization of superheroes and villains inspired by vocabulary words exposed their understanding that creativity and imagination can spark social action. The way students guided visitors to write about their own experiences, put on headphones to listen to stories, and stand face-to-face with diverse mannequins who also had narratives to tell demonstrated that the students viewed interaction as a powerful tool for social action. Further, their numerous efforts to organize for diversity and inclusion indicated a collective, transformative stance toward social action. From celebrating their school district's explicit acceptance of LGBT rights to providing strategies to combat bullying and discrimination to participating in direct action, the students substantiated that student-created museum learning can stimulate transformative stances toward social action and serve as powerful mediums for youth activism.

Central to the success of the transformative experience was the teacher-created, social justice-oriented curriculum (see Appendix). Interestingly, Genevieve noted that the students deconstructed bullying and discrimination with relative ease—that is, described bullying and discrimination and their harmful effects. When it came to proposing solutions to end bullying and discrimination, however, the students' social imaginations needed expansion. Genevieve reported that they had wanted to say "just be nice to people." At this point, she turned them back to the literature to examine the characters' actions to help them think more critically. By rereading various parts of the sixth-grade texts, students began to identify more specifically how these characters used their voices, asked questions, and actively challenged the mainstream to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, Maniac Magee finds ways to bring different kinds of people together so they can get to know each other, and Stargirl talks in creative metaphors so her classmates can understand her unique perspectives on individuality, kindness, and respect. The teacher-created, social justice-oriented curriculum was what allowed Genevieve to select these texts in the first place and intervene to ask students to revisit the texts as they thought about possible ways to stop bullying and discrimination.

There was abundant evidence throughout this case study that students attempted to invoke empathy from their audience, such as directly inviting their audience to "Step into our shoes." At 11 and 12 years old, students frequently proposed "shock-and-awe" approaches to their display designs. At times, Genevieve had to negotiate these extreme empathetic stances with the students. For example, one student wanted to show a picture of a dead teenager who had committed suicide allegedly due to bullying. Genevieve had to

remind the students that small children, who might be traumatized by such visuals, would be on the tour. She suggested that they could invoke empathy with unbiased information that would not so blatantly scare young children, and let audience members come to their own conclusions. The students managed to curb their enthusiasm, but they remained committed to creatively inspiring their audience to feel compassion for the marginalized, having courageous conversations about the texts that were causing discomfort, and becoming change agents themselves.

Although the museum exhibit was technically an assignment, the endeavor provided students with autonomy that revealed their authentic commitment to the topics at hand. For example, throughout the construction process, we often heard students say, "we decided to" rather than "we're supposed to." This underscores Stetsenko's (2012) point that social activism contributes to learning, growth, and development of personhood. Together, students exposed, listened, dramatized, and organized with the common goal of capturing their audience's attention to inspire social action. We see this transformation manifested in how students conceptualized social action at micro and macro levels within the display.

The students' grammatical choices, such as their use of modal verbs, embodied micro-level social actions that evoked a strong or weak commitment to social action. That is, telling someone they *should* do something with all caps, italics, and exclamation points instead of they *could* do something implies a stronger ethical stance. The bright colors, sizes of texts, materials, and naming and representations of superheroes were also multimodal choices representing their passionate commitment to ending bullying and discrimination. With such deliberate, creative choices around social justice themes, they invited an audience of all ages to become more aware and take action. The storytelling and protest organization represented macro levels of social action in the display. Social action was represented across modalities (e.g., images, words, objects), through student-selected discourse practices (e.g., storytelling and informational texts) and examples of interventions and social actions; leveraging these deliberate choices, the students invited the museum visitors to take part in interrupting bullying and discrimination.

The sixth-grade class at Carter Elementary experienced a transformation from students who reported frequent struggles with bullying to students who described themselves as authors and activists exposing injustices, telling stories, dramatizing vocabulary, and organizing social action to raise awareness about the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and many other social justice concepts. The collaborative transformative practice of designing this museum exhibit not only exposed a deep understanding of social justice, but also a solution-oriented mindset, a commitment to taking action, and an engagement with the public about pressing social problems of our time.

Conclusion

This museum display provides a counternarrative to the learned hesitation to engage in social issues. At a time when there has been, arguably, a global retreat into individualism as demonstrated by corporatism, standardization, school vouchers, and the diminishing of the public sphere, this museum display created a positive and powerful counternarrative that hinged on the mixing of publics, and pushed community members to engage in thought and dialogue around public-sphere issues. It is an example of how critical literacy practices can emerge from student-driven projects that are committed to making the world a better

place. Students were not just learning about antibullying and antidiscrimination practices; they were enacting them and inviting their audiences to do the same.

This case study adds to the scholarship supporting the transformative role that student-created, museum-based learning can have on creating more hopeful and positive social futures. It is a strong example of Stetsenko's (2012) transformative activist theory because students' collective contributions and social actions strengthened not only their learning, but also their sense of being in the world. If the students had only learned about bullying and discrimination within the four walls of the classroom, they would not have had the opportunity to let the interaction of the public sphere propel them forward (Rai, 2010), as it did here.

We have showcased how social action can be a central part of the teaching and learning process, rather than a dimension of critical pedagogy that is feared, silenced, or glossed over by teachers. An implication for educators is the importance of expansively theorizing social action to include ways of interacting, representing, and being that stem from authentic, relevant, and sustainable literacy pedagogies. Educators might also consider going public with their teaching and their students' learning—beyond traditional bulletin boards. As we saw here, the public reach of this pedagogical exercise can be immense. During the exhibit's final days, the audience grew even larger as portions of the exhibit were broken down and later displayed at the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, a museum under the St. Louis Arch. We hope that school administrators and curriculum coordinators see the vital importance of providing social justice-oriented literature and professional development that empowers teachers to create their own social justice-oriented units and give their students opportunities to bring their learning to the public. When a school district openly endorses social justice education, trusts teachers with autonomy, and empowers students to display their inquiry-based learning publicly, educators can inspire collaborative transformative practice that is aimed at community regeneration.

Author Biographies

Genevieve Caffrey *is a doctoral student at University of Missouri-Columbia specializing in justice-oriented literacy and social studies education. She was an elementary and middle school teacher for 12 years and is an active member of the grassroots educator network in St. Louis called Educators for Social Justice. She has recently published "Teaching Literacy and Social Studies as Complementary Subjects in the Elementary Classroom: A Book Review" in* The Journal of Social Studies Research *(2016) and a book chapter entitled "Issues of Equity in Dual Language Bilingual Education" in* Language and Social Justice: Case Studies on Communication and the Creation of Just Societies *(2018).*

Rebecca Rogers *is an educational researcher at the University of Missouri-St. Louis who specializes in literacy studies, teacher learning, and critical discourse studies. Her research focuses on the socio-political contexts of literacy and language education and situates critical discourse analysis within an ethnographic tradition. She has published seven books and over 75 articles and chapters in national and international journals on*

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Appendix

Table A1

Sixth-Grade ELA Curriculum Designed by Genevieve

Quarter and Unit Theme	**Whole Group Read Aloud Books**	**Small Group Book Clubs**	**Social Justice Vocabulary "Words of the Day"**	**Film**	**Writing Unit Genre**
1 Exploring Identity	***Stargirl**** (Spinelli, 2000) *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005) *The Sissy Duckling* (Fierstein & Cole, 2002) *Spoon* (Rosenthal, 2009)	*Yolonda's Genius* (Fenner, 1997) *Crash* (Spinelli, 1996) *Freak the Mighty* (Philbrick, 1993) *Tears of a Tiger* (Draper, 1994) *Scorpions* (Myers, 1988)	ally, alliance, bullying, derogatory, dignity, diversity, empathy, inclusive, prejudice, stereotype	*Bully* (Foudy et al., 2011)	Autobiography
2 Respecting Diversity	***Maniac Magee*** (Spinelli, 1990) *Bronx Masquerade* (Grimes, 2003) *The Sneetches* (Seuss, 1953)	*One Crazy Summer* (Williams-Garcia, 2010) *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* (Curtis, 1995) *Elijah of Buxton* (Curtis, 2007) *Hidden Roots (Bruchac, 2010)*	access, apathy, bias, civil rights, democracy, discrimination, equity vs. equality, ignorant, oppression, internalized oppression, privilege, profiling	*Remember the Titans* (Bruckheimer & Boaz, 2000)	Realistic Fiction

3 Overcoming Adversity	***Esperanza Rising*** (Muñoz-Ryan, 2002) *Out of the Dust* (Hesse, 1997)	*The House on Mango Street (Cisneros, 1991)* *Little Women* (Alcott, 1953) *The Circuit* (Jiminez, 1997)-*Dragonwings* (Yep, 1975) *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War* (Lobel, 1998)	activism, agency, classism, corruption, feminism, intolerance, poverty, sexism, tolerance	*The Harvest/ La Cosecha* (Romano, O'Connor, & Longoria, 2011) *Newsies* (Finnell & Ortega, 1992)	Slam Poetry
4 Advocating Justice	***World Without Fish*** (Kurlansky, 2011) *Si Se Puede!: Janitor Strike in LA* (Cohn & Delgado, 2005)	*Kids On Strike!* (Bartoletti, 1999) *Wringer* (Spinelli, 1997) *The People Could Fly* (Hamilton, 1993) *Clean Water* *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962)	advocate, demagogue, exploitation, human rights, integrity, over-consumption, power, service vs. social justice, social responsibility, sustainability	*Food Inc.* (Kenner & Perlstein, 2008) *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (Achbar, Litvinoff, & Bozzo, 2008)	Persuasive

Note. The bolded texts are chapter books that were read aloud and discussed with the whole class almost every day of the quarter. The other books in the same column were also read aloud and discussed with the whole class, but they are picture books that supplemented themes in the chapter books.