

Representing Family: Community Funds of Knowledge, Bilingualism, and Multimodality

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In this article, Elizabeth Marshall and Kelleen Toohey use critical discourse analysis to examine educators' efforts to incorporate funds of knowledge from the communities and families of Punjabi Sikh students in a Canadian elementary school. Using MP3 players, students first recorded and then translated their grandparents' stories of life in India into picture books to serve as cultural resources in their school community. In retelling their grandparents' stories, students drew on a multiplicity of ancestral, globalized, and Western discourses in their textual and pictorial illustrations. The authors examine what happens when the funds of knowledge that students bring to school contradict normative, Western understandings of what is appropriate for children and how school might appropriately respond to varying community perceptions of good and evil.

For decades, theorists and educators concerned with the schooling of cultural and linguistic minority children in North America, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have recommended that school instruction be more closely linked to the cultural and linguistic practices in those children's homes and communities (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Michaels, 1981; Muspratt, Luke, & Freebody, 1997; Orellana & Reynolds, 2008; Philips, 1982). Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (1992) argue that teachers and schools often have such minimal knowledge of the out-of-school lives of their students, particularly English language learners (ELLs), that they are unable to build on the "funds of knowledge" of children's homes and communities. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) insight that learning takes place in social practice, this perspective acknowledges that minority children, like their majority classmates, have participated

in social practices in their families and communities, and it urges schools and teachers to connect school learning to children's out-of-school learning. This work underscores the institutional violence of schooling in the form of literacy and language practices that often ignore, attempt to remediate, or devalue the lives and experiences of children and their families.

In this article, we describe an intergenerational, bilingual storytelling project explicitly designed to draw on a school community's funds of knowledge. This project took place in a classroom of nine- and ten-year-old ELLs, mainly Punjabi Sikh, on the west coast of Canada. We examine the theoretical foundations of this kind of work, offer a visual critical discourse analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008) of two representative stories, and make observations about how we think researchers and educators might better theorize and execute such projects for linguistically diverse children.

Funds of Knowledge: A Complex Concept

In the 1990s, Moll introduced the concept *funds of knowledge* as a way to describe and acknowledge the intellectual resources of minority language groups. For Moll and Greenberg (1990), funds of knowledge are "the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive" (p. 321). For Moll (1992), "[S]tudents' community represents a resource of enormous importance for educational change and improvement" (p. 21). Moll and Greenberg argue that the use of these funds in schools would provide ways for educators to build on what minority students already know. For example, Moll describes a classroom in which parents and other community members (who were commonly employed in the construction industry) contributed their intellectual resources to the children's study of construction.

Moll and his colleagues (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) have explicitly rejected essentializing discourses that might limit ideas about funds of knowledge to static, ahistorical conceptions of "heritage knowledge" or culture. As González (2005) points out, "Increasingly, the boundedness of cultures gave way to an idea of the interculturality and hybridity of cultural practices" (p. 37). Work in a variety of disciplines (e.g., anthropology, cultural studies, communication) has increasingly troubled the notion of unitary, bounded cultures and has theorized culture as the hybrid and dynamic social practices in which people engage. Anthropologists Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, and Cain (2001), for example, locate culture both in the particular circumstances in which individuals and groups find themselves and in the varied social practices that individuals and groups "improvise" by drawing on historical tradition. For them, culture is a continuous production as individuals and groups negotiate their worlds.

Further complicating the notion of funds of knowledge, Moll (2005) argues that individuals and groups in particular communities have differential access

to these funds and that this access is always “intricately related to broader issues of social class, ideology, and power” (p. 276). In addition, he recognizes that children often participate in social worlds that differ from those of their parents:

We have often assumed, and it may be untenable, that what we learn from adults may inform us about children. We have also known that adults engage children selectively around particular funds of knowledge but not others . . . But we also know that children create their own social worlds, with accompanying funds of knowledge, which may be independent of adults’ social life. (p. 279)

Dyson (1997, 2001) alerts us to the important role of media other than traditional written texts, such as music, film, comics, and television, and how young children often weave these resources from popular culture into the “official” writing they produce in school. Dyson (2001) shows children’s abilities to use a wide range of “available symbolic, textual, and cultural resources” (p. 13) for expressive and communicative purposes that weave together the comprehensive resources they bring from home, such as popular culture. Similarly, Kendrick and McKay (2002) argue that the drawings children produce have unrealized potential for helping teachers better understand children’s home worlds. Drawing on Vygotsky’s (1978) claim that drawing is a “graphic speech that conceptualizes an internal representation of story” (p. 46), they analyze how one student’s drawing, which would be prohibited in his classroom for depiction of violence, reveals the student’s complex relationships with his father and grandfather, and prohibiting such expression restricts his ability to display and draw on his multiple identities at school.

Blends of Old and New Literacies

Hull (2007), like many other literacy researchers, urges us to give attention to the new technologies of literacy and the ways in which these technologies mediate knowledge. As she puts it: “A culture and a time’s mediational means are intimately connected with our capacities to think, present and communicate. [We must] widen our definitions of literacy to include digital multimodality and connectivity as newly available means” (n.p.). Others have noted that many contemporary children and youth read, write, and use multiple sign systems (sound, image, movement, and so on) to construct meaning, and that facility with related technologies will become increasingly important in communication and representation in the future (Greenhow, Robella, & Hughes, 2009; Leu, O’Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry, & Everett-Cacopardo, 2009).

Luke (2003) points out the centrality of complex blends of old and new media in the everyday worlds of children; indeed, she claims that “these media(ted) texts constitute children’s first curriculum, often their initial entries into texts and textuality, and provide them with a common stock of cultural stories about social relations, power, gender and ethnic identities, and the worlds beyond

immediate neighborhoods and communities” (p. 398). Stein (2008) argues that schools commonly ignore the multimodality of learners’ lives, pointing out that classrooms rely largely on language as a representational tool for meaning-making while disregarding other tools that students use to make meaning outside the classroom. Such alternative tools include “images, speech, sound, writing, performance, action, movement, space and a range of materials and media: books, screens, oil paintings, artifacts, video, Web pages, booklets, photographs, film, and three-dimensional models” (p. 874).

Some researchers attend to this gap in curriculum and pedagogy and study how students’ knowledge of and interest in multimodal and digital technologies can be incorporated into classrooms (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Evans, 2005; Rogers, Winters, LaMonde, & Perry, 2010; Smythe & Toohey, 2009b). Looking at students’ use of and expertise in technologies such as digital games, blogs, video, and podcasts, these researchers open up new possibilities for linking out-of-school and school learning. Chow and Cummins (2003) and Cummins (2004) also point out how the creation of multilingual and multimodal texts in several sites aids students in appropriating academic discourse. A focus on “new” or multiple literacies is important because, as Lotherington (2008) suggests, children growing up in a globalized world will find that a facility with multilingual and multimodal literacies will increasingly be the marker of educated global citizens. In addition, these new literacies offer a vehicle for incorporating students’ funds of knowledge as well as multilingual competencies in classrooms. This new literacies research drew our attention to and framed our analysis of the multimodal stories produced by the children in our project.

Research Community

The project we discuss here is part of a larger study that examines how school literacy practices for ELLs could be brought more in line with practices in two highly different communities (Toohey, Neufeld, & Stooke, 2006). As part of that larger study, we first conducted “community scans” to determine, insofar as possible, community literacy practices and resources. Our scans were ethnographic investigations of housing, language use, and availability of services, such as transportation, in two communities. Our sources were Canadian census reports, interviews, document analysis, and field observations.

In the Punjabi Sikh community in which we conducted the family stories project, we came to see how the children had extensive experience with and considerable enthusiasm for a variety of media outside school (Smythe & Toohey, 2009a). Children in this community, like their parents, regularly watch television, videos, and movies and play video games and use the Internet. They engage with these various modalities in at least two languages: Punjabi and English. In this way, they are participants in a globalized popular culture that is itself a blend of a variety of communicative means.

Our community scan also revealed the importance of grandparents in the lives of many of these families, who often serve as primary caregivers when both parents work outside their homes. Even in families where grandparents are not co-resident, their influence in family affairs is often considerable.

The Family Stories Project

Our larger study (of which this is a project) was a teacher-researcher collaboration over three years in which particular classroom activities were jointly planned, observed, evaluated, and revised. Suzanne Reed,¹ an Anglo-Canadian teacher with twenty years of teaching experience, was a member of the collaborative research group and had integrated a variety of family stories projects into her curriculum in the past. For her social studies unit on immigration, she often has children collect parents' or grandparents' stories about their journeys to Canada—as so many of her Canadian students are relatively close to the immigration experience. In her school, in which the Punjabi Sikh children are a majority, Suzanne was aware that many of her students had been cared for as preschoolers by their grandparents and that grandparents continued to provide care during the day for their preschool siblings. Many grandparents walked kindergarten students to school, and the primary wing had for some years invited all caregivers into the school for a “noisy reading” period first thing in the morning so that caregivers could sit with their preschoolers and kindergarten children and read any of the many books.

Suzanne thought that this noisy reading period was a good idea, but she also knew that many of the grandparents did not speak or read English, and the English books provided by the school were not accessible to them. She wondered if this might be a reason that the grandparents were seemingly reluctant to come into the school. She wanted to do something to help the grandparents feel comfortable in the school and so decided, with the support of the larger research group, to do a multimedia intergenerational stories project with her grade four and five students. The research group supported her project, providing MP3 players, technical expertise, and research assistants to aid the children and document the process of the project.

She explained what she saw to her students and asked them to take home the MP3 players and “collect” grandparents' stories about when they were children in whatever language the grandparents felt comfortable telling the stories. The children at first thought that their grandparents didn't have any stories (as did some of the grandparents), but with encouragement, the children, little by little, brought in stories recorded in Punjabi, Malay, and Hindi.

The stories varied. Some elders told narratives about particular incidents in their young lives; others provided reminiscences that were not so easily translatable into a normative school notion of “story,” which included setting, characters, and plot. Initially, Suzanne asked the children to take some *part* of their grandparents' recording and translate that into English and then turn

that part into a *story*, with plot, setting, characters, and so on. Some of the children found it easy to select an incident from the raw recordings that translated into the kind of story Suzanne envisioned, but others found it difficult, as their grandparents' narratives were more in the form of memories than a linear life story.

Recognizing this, Suzanne drew the children's attention to picture books for young children, showing them how a small amount of text accompanied each picture. And as the children were translating their grandparents' recollections, she encouraged them to think about what text might go on which pages and what kind of illustrations might accompany the text. She also encouraged them to notice what the published texts were like: Did they use big words? Were the stories violent? As some of the children's grandparents had told stories about the Partition of India and Pakistan, a number of the stories were quite gritty. The class discussed these issues and, with Suzanne's guidance, decided that these stories might not be appropriate for the kindergarteners but were suitable for older children.

After the children had translated their stories into English and into school-appropriate picture-book stories, they set about producing the pages on the computer, leaving space for illustrations. At this point, the researchers were especially helpful to the children as they assisted them in editing and perfecting their English writing and word processing. This step took a good deal of time, but the children seemed particularly willing to spend time editing their stories. We speculate that this might have been a result of the fact that they were dealing with limited amounts of text on a page so the revisions were not overwhelming. But we also heard children talking about how important it was to get the stories "right," not only for their eventual audience but also for the grandparent-tellers of the stories.

Next they drew illustrations for their texts, and then the children decided to translate the stories back into their grandparents' first language. Only a few of the children were literate in Punjabi (and none in Hindi or Malay), so the translations were done in a variety of ways. The children who were literate wrote their own translations; the children who were not literate got handwritten translations from their parents or grandparents. Also, a research assistant hired for the project was literate in Punjabi and Hindi, and she helped some of the children. Some children took these handwritten translations and typed them on the computer; others decided to cut-and-paste the handwritten translations onto either facing pages of their English text or onto the English page itself. In the project as a whole, then, students used their knowledge of "old" (e.g., oral storytelling, handwriting, drawing) and "new" literacies (MP3 players, the Internet, word processing programs, Gurkhmukhi script found on the Internet). As a final step, children recorded their reading of the stories in English and in Punjabi and made these available on compact discs that were to be included with the written texts.

Children—and seemingly their families—were very proud of their productions, and a book launch held at the school drew family members for almost every child. The stories are now in the process of being mounted on a Web site that will include digital animations of their stories, the text in two languages, the illustrations, and audio recordings of the stories in English and in the first language (mainly Punjabi) in which the stories were told. In addition, the Web site will include directions for others wishing to upload their stories and audio recordings as well as instructions for animating illustrations, adding sound effects, word processing in a variety of languages, and effective reading of the stories in whatever languages. We and the Web site designers are hopeful that these texts will stimulate other ELLs to produce dual-language texts for themselves as well as for other children.

Methods: Critical Discourse Analysis

A range of examples of and approaches to critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be found in the field of literacy education. In their review of CDA studies in education, Rogers and colleagues (2005) point out that “more research is needed in primary grade classrooms” (p. 387). They also note that much CDA tends to rely primarily on theorists concerned with language and that “none of the studies that we reviewed drew on multi-modal analyses” (p. 386). Our project fills these gaps in research as we attend to the multimodal texts produced by primary grade children.

Van Leeuwen (2008) argues that “all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices” (p. 5). Maintaining the distinction between social practice (“doing it”) and representation (“talking about it”), he argues that the task of the critical discourse analyst is to uncover social practices that are recontextualized in representations. This recontextualization, he argues, is important because the location of a representation and its actors, its customary actions and resources, may be very different from the original context in which the social practice occurs. He suggests that the analyst must make explicit a variety of the features of representations, including who is represented, what actions are involved, how such action is to be performed, what time and space constraints bear on the action, and what resources are involved (pp. 7–12).

In our study, we collected nineteen stories of varying lengths; one story was eight pages and another forty-two pages in two chapters. The stories are multimodal texts, combining print and illustrations.² With respect to both our macroanalysis of the nineteen texts and our microanalysis of two texts, we analyzed the nineteen multimodal stories “for the way they draw on, and transform, social practices” of understanding and representing the world (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 5). We each read the children’s stories—text and images—and cre-

ated codes or categories that were apparent to us. Next, we asked a research assistant to create a descriptive categorization system. After considering this system as well as our own, we defined four broad categories that described the stories:

- Representing childhood
- Sharing traumatic memories
- Naturalizing gendered relationships
- Telling rags-to-riches stories

Articulating these themes is important for understanding the range of topics and the similarities and differences across the children's stories. This macro-analysis added a crucial context for our analysis that then allowed us to select and focus on two representative texts.

This general analysis of the stories as a corpus, however, obscures from view some of the specificities we saw in the stories. Specifically, the general themes did not capture the nuances of the stories. For instance, several students wrote about the experiences of their grandparents growing up in India; however, these coming-of-age experiences, as well as the ways of telling them, differed in significant ways. We therefore chose to closely examine two exemplary stories, one authored by a boy and the other by a girl, in which both recount stories of their grandfathers in times of violent conflict. Throughout our CDA of these children's multimodal stories, particularly their visual representations, we highlight the dynamic processes of children navigating the funds of knowledge they bring from home. Students draw on cultural knowledge, such as storytelling patterns and themes, and at the same time use knowledge as well as linguistic and visually symbolic resources from their own peer cultures.

Van Leeuwen (2008) asks two broad questions that guided our reading of these children's visual representations: "How are people depicted?" and "How are the depicted people related to the viewer?" (p. 137). To analyze the representation of people in the stories, we used van Leeuwen's analytic categories (pp. 141–145):

- Exclusion (Who is not there?)
- Roles (Are characters portrayed as agents or patients?)
- Specific and generic (Are people represented in specifics or as a generic "type"?)
- Individuals and groups (Are characters portrayed in ways that homogenize them or emphasize individual differences?)
- Categorization (Are social actors defined by cultural or biological markers?)

Van Leeuwen suggests that the analyst should examine not only the relationships between elements in a visual representation but also relationships between the viewer and the representation. To do this, he suggests using three

dimensions: social distance, social relation, and social interaction between the people and the viewer. We used these categories to examine this relationship as well.

The Books in General

Initially we saw the texts we analyzed as representations of childhood in the late 1940s and early 1950s, primarily in Punjab, northern India. However, these are more accurately hybrid texts that present the childhoods of family members as imagined by children (and remembered by those family members) in the 2000s. Thus, the children have created complex representations of time, place, and space. As we detail later, children's constructions of time, place, and space also represent certain social practices and ways of understanding the world. As van Leeuwen (2008) suggests, "the discursive construction of social space" is not straightforward (p. 93). The stories, for example, are written from a variety of perspectives; some are written in the first person, focalized through the grandparent, while others are written in the third person and begin with story conventions such as "Once upon a time." Visual representations of grandparents were filtered through students' imaginings of those childhoods, and many of the pictures portray children in clothes with Nike swooshes or other markers of contemporary North American childhood.

Interestingly, the majority of the stories center on what we define as traumatic, or at least frightening, experiences in India in the 1940s and 1950s. The children retold stories of run-ins with snakes, being hit by lightning, lying to a parent, fighting with friends, getting lost, being beaten by adults, and war—especially the Partition of India and Pakistan. In this way, the stories cannot be read as simple narratives, for they also reflect the tellers' ideas about what types of stories and, in turn, what funds of knowledge were considered appropriate for children. From this perspective, it becomes apparent that the social practices of child rearing and/or child psychology and of defining children in relationship to their innocence—a common practice in North American contexts—might not be shared by these grandparents (Cross, 2004; Jenkins, 1998). Thus, the stories draw on and challenge widespread discourses of childhood innocence prevalent in many North American contexts.

Representations of gendered social practices also emerge in all the stories. Each implicitly or explicitly relies on naturalized differences between girls/women and boys/men, especially in relation to schooling. For instance, one story focuses on how fees were charged for schooling and how parents in India in the grandparents' time educated only the boys. Another story mentions that there were "no girl teachers in the school." Girls are described as "beautiful" and do traditionally gendered kinds of work such as cooking, cleaning, and caretaking. The boys appear as soldiers and farmers, resourceful, brave, and hardworking. In several of the stories, women and girls are absent altogether.

Our final observation about the themes in the stories is that most of them represent rags-to-riches discourse—or at least rags-to-the-North-American-middle-class discourse. Many of the stories describe the very hard work the grandparents did as children and young adults in India, their relocation to Canada, and their relative comfort now. These stories do not focus at all on difficulties grandparents may have experienced in the present, such as the discussion prevalent in the local media about a variety of social problems facing this population and the somewhat different and often racialized characterization of community problems articulated by community service providers (Smythe & Toohey, 2009a), and they mostly end with a happily-ever-after. Given the absence of stories of hardships in Canada, we are left wondering whether the tellers did not think they had any hardships or if they did not think such observations were appropriate to make to children.

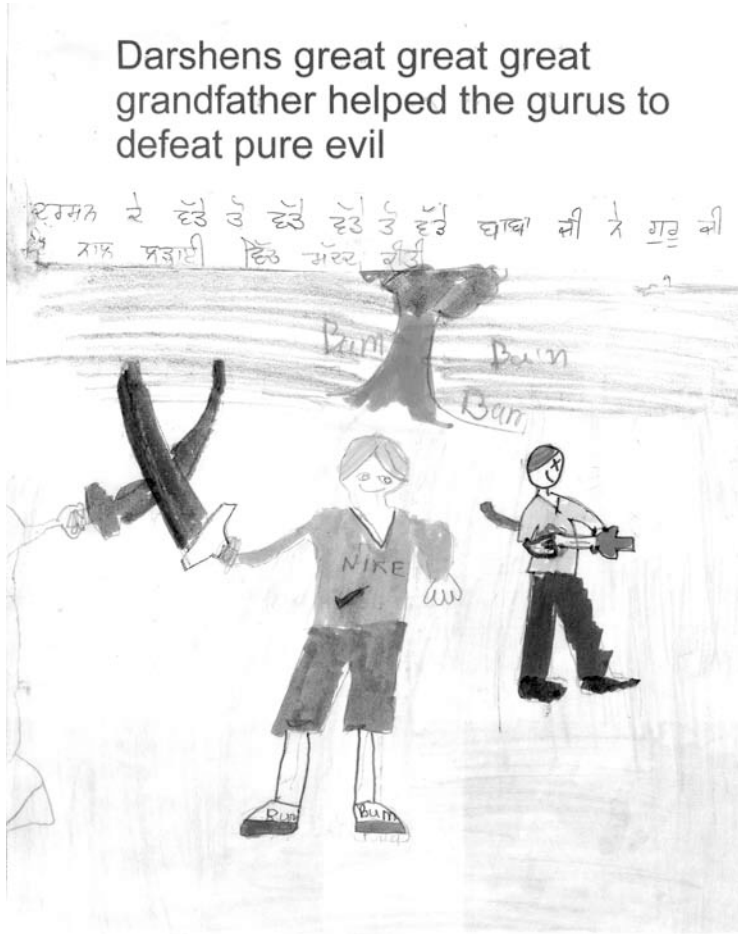
Two Exemplary Stories

Jushinpreet's Story

Jushinpreet's bilingual book is seven pages long, and each illustrated page features one or two short sentences. The plot consists of different heroic episodes in the life of his grandfather. Though Jushinpreet titled his book *Darshen as a Soldier*, he begins the story in his grandfather's childhood. The front cover includes a military vehicle and a drawing of a U.S. Navy Seal airplane. The narrative begins: "There was a boy named Darshen. He was walking and in his mind he was thinking of being a soldier [when] he grew up." A few pages later, Darshen eventually ends up as a "tank man." Coming from a long line of soldiers, Jushinpreet tells us that Darshen's great-great-great-grandfather "helped the gurus defeat pure evil," perhaps a reference to the beginnings of Sikhism in the 1600s, during which time the Sikhs fought many battles with the central Mughal government. Jushinpreet illustrated his narrative with a smiling man wearing a turban and a labeled Nike jersey in the foreground, with another smiling—but probably dead—man in profile in the background wearing a Champs jersey with a machete through his chest (Figure 1). The story then returns to Darshen and his life, ending with his travel to Canada and his retirement.

To apply van Leeuwen's (2008) question "How are the people depicted?" to this illustration, we first consider perspective. The figure in the foreground—presumably the hero and most likely Darshen's great-great-great-grandfather—faces the reader. The smiling dead man in the background is shown in profile. (We are not certain if he is a "good" guy or another form of "pure evil.") Even further in the background the author represents noise, "Bam, Bam!" Pure evil (the villain or enemy) is outside the picture frame and not identified with a human figure at all. Drawing on van Leeuwen's framework, we would say that the dead man, and possibly pure evil, in this drawing is objectivized, which van Leeuwen defines as "representing people as objects of our scrutiny,

FIGURE 1 *Jushinpreet's illustration of Darshen's great-great-great-grandfather defeating pure evil.*



rather than as subjects addressing the viewer with their gaze and symbolically engaging with the viewer in this way” (p. 141). Such objectification abstracts the story so that the tales of war in Jushinpreet’s story seem heroic, bloodless, and almost peopleless.

Darshen’s great-great-great-grandfather is the grammatical subject of the text on this page, and he is also the subject of the drawing. On another page with different text, perspective is ambiguous. In this drawing, Darshen, “a tank man,” is inside a tank and has shot a figure in the background, its face blacked out presumably to indicate he is dead, which also indicates that he is objectified. Jushinpreet’s drawing looks as though it might be an aerial shot and reminds us of the perspective in some video games.

Van Leeuwen (2008) encourages analysts to consider if figures are portrayed specifically or generically. On the “pure evil” page (Figure 1), Darshen’s great-great-great-grandfather is the agent, and the unspecified patient—the subject acted upon—is pure evil. In none of Jushinpreet’s illustrations is the villain moving, which suggests his lack of agency. In this story, the hero’s identity is specific, and we are invited throughout to identify with the heroism of the grandfather. The soldiers of pure evil are, however, an unseen and unspecified group.

Even though Jushinpreet lives in Canada and his grandfather lived in India, American militaristic images such as tanks, gun fights, Navy jets, and Navy Seal planes dominate the book. These images are complemented by illustrations of children—Darshen as a young boy and Jushinpreet’s self-representation on the “Author” page—wearing clothes with multinational corporate symbols on them. Jushinpreet’s narrative and images suggest the ways in which globalization and military intervention often go hand in hand. In addition, Jushinpreet transposes his own understanding of childhood—what kids wear, for instance—onto his grandfather as a child. The picture of his grandfather as a young boy and his own self-image are identical: both wear head coverings, Nike T-shirts, and brand-name sneakers. The ways in which Nike has become a global symbol that captures a “transnational children’s culture” (Grewal, 2006, p. 97) makes explicit the ways in which ideas about childhood as well as experiences of it shift across time and location.

It is also important in the case of bilingual texts to consider the written aspects of the story. Jushinpreet used Punjabi in his story as well as English. He word processed the story in English, and handwrote the Punjabi and superimposed it on the illustrations. There are many reasons why the Punjabi was not word processed, as explained earlier. Although van Leeuwen (2008) does not consider bilingual texts, we think the effect of word processing the English and superimposing the Punjabi is to point attention to the English text. As we will show, the second story handled its Punjabi text differently.

Overall, Jushinpreet’s story represents a heroic vision of the social practice of soldiering and a rather abstracted, almost peopleless vision of armed conflict. The story is presented in school, a place where depictions of machetes through chests would usually not be permitted. However, the books are recontextualized in school as something “special,” as grandparents’ stories, as a “project.” The attention given to the largely American technologies of war also presents a particular view of such conflict.

Gurvinder’s Story

Shangara’s Life Story, Gurvinder’s bilingual story about her grandfather, has two chapters comprised of twenty-one illustrated English pages and twenty-one illustrated Punjabi pages, which are direct translations of each other. It has a linear rather than an episodic plot, and each chapter has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Gurvinder also drew on the genre of comic books and

FIGURE 2 *Gurvinder's illustration of a Sikh man shooting a Muslim.*



included speech bubbles, which allowed her to add an additional layer to her narrative—part of the visual image rather than the text.

The first chapter concentrates on what happened to Gurvinder’s grandfather, Shangara, as a child during Partition. The grandfather tells a story about when he was twelve and in grade six. “In his hometown, people started killing each other and stealing things that didn’t belong to them.” Gurvinder goes on to explain that “Hindus and Sikhs were on one side and Muslims were on the other side.” One of her pages shows a Muslim boy who has stolen the toys of a Sikh boy, and the Sikh boy’s speech bubble says, “Give me my toys back.”

Another page shows a Sikh man with a spear apparently about to stab a Muslim man. Like Jushinpreet, Gurvinder incorporates images of violence and includes drawings of guns and knives. Oddly, the agents who inflict violence as well as those being attacked are represented as smiling. For example, in one picture a smiling Sikh man is shooting a smiling Muslim in the head with a spear; this picture includes a large bright sun in the upper left-hand corner (Figure 2). One interpretation is that Gurvinder's own experience with violence is secondhand, heard from stories rather than experienced directly. Also, she may draw on the conventions of mainstream Western picture book narratives, which feature smiling, happy children and in which everyone learns a lesson and things end happily.

Gurvinder notes that both sides suffered a great deal and that "when Muslims and Hindus moved to their new homes, it took them many years to settle down." Gurvinder ends the chapter with, "This bad incident happened in 1947. [Shangara] is 73 years old now, and this incident has bothered him for a long, long time."

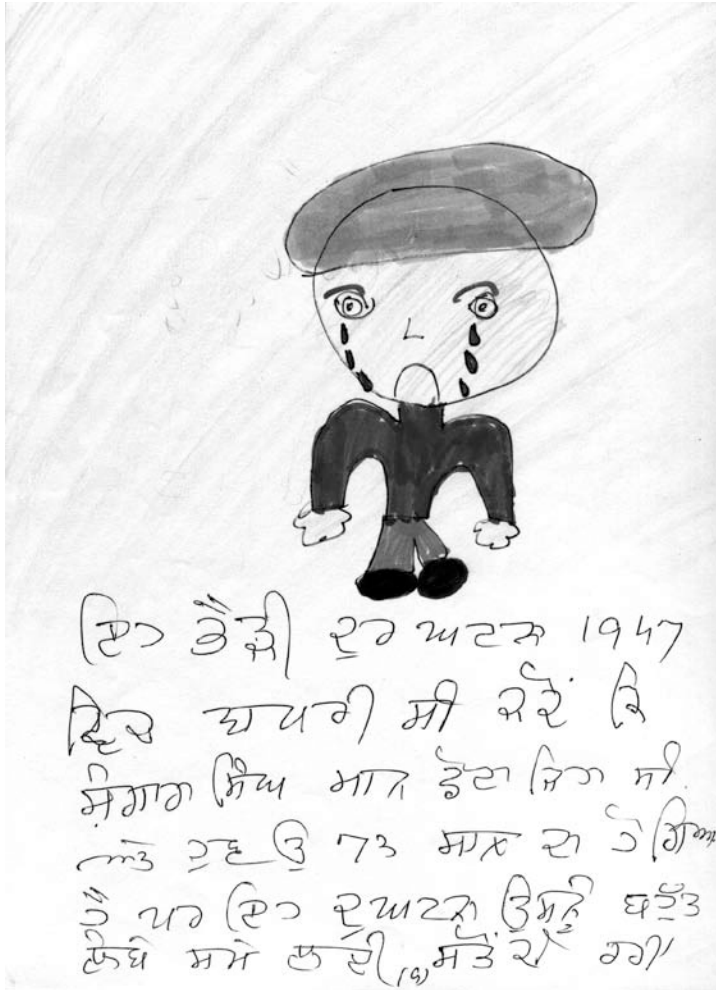
The question "How are the depicted people related to the viewer?" is relevant in analyzing Figure 2. The illustration is in the middle distance and asks the reader to consider the characters as "one of us" (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 138). Like all of the illustrations in this text, the characters look directly at the reader. The perspective of the illustrations in this story differs significantly from those in Jushinpreet's, where only one of the pages features a character who looks out at the viewer. Also, his illustrations feature characters that are either absent or very small in comparison to the military equipment that dominates his visuals. By contrast, in Gurvinder's illustrations, the characters face the reader. According to van Leeuwen (2008), if social actors

look at us, if they do address us directly with their look, the picture articulates a kind of visual "you" symbolic demand. The people in the picture want something from us—and what that something is, is then signified by other elements of the picture: by facial expressions, by gestures and also by angles. (p. 141)

In one illustration, Gurvinder's grandfather looks outward at the reader and cries (Figure 3). Tears run down his face, and the reader is confronted with the character's trauma and sadness; we are invited to side with the grandfather and empathize with his pain.

Girls and women are excluded from Gurvinder's images and text. The social world in this story is ordered around religious difference, which—given the absence of female characters—she presumably sees as the domain of men and boys. In terms of roles, the characters in the pictures are equal agents. With the exception of the depiction of the grandfather as a twelve-year-old at the beginning and the end of the story, Gurvinder's narrative represents social actors as generic rather than specific characters. For example, she uses religious signification to categorize people. In his framework for analyzing the representation of social actors, van Leeuwen (2008) points out that depic-

FIGURE 3 Gurvinder's illustration of her grandfather crying.



tions of social actors often rely on cultural categorization, describing this term as “signified by means of standard attributes, attributes commonly used to categorize these groups: items of dress or hairdo” (p. 144). In Gurvinder’s story, headwear distinguishes the two religious categories of Muslim and Sikh: Muslims wear pillbox hats and Sikhs wear topknots or turbans. Through her images, she constructs difference. In this way, we read the history of Partition as also being the history of the family, as it is difficult to separate her grandfather from a larger religious, social, cultural, and political context.

Overall, Gurvinder's story expresses a different moral attitude toward war than Jushinpreet's. Through her text and illustrations, she tells us that war is not good for anybody and that both sides suffer. Additionally, she gives equal billing to English and Punjabi, with each language receiving a page and an illustration, whereas Jushinpreet chose to represent each language differently through type and handwritten script.

These two stories exemplify the ways in which children draw on community funds of knowledge as well as popular cultural resources that represent their hybrid identities as grandchildren of Punjabi Sikh newcomers to Canada, as children growing up in twenty-first-century North America, and as elementary-age students attending public school.

Conclusion

García, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres-Guzmán (2006) ask, "How do we imagine schools that would build on and support the multiplicity of languages and literacies in our globalized world, and where people can 'use their native languages'?" (p. 4). While modest, this dual-language project, designed to draw on the funds of knowledge in a community, was successful on many levels. The children produced new hybrid semiotic resources for the school—dual-language books in a resolutely monolingual school—and they provided representations of the usually invisible and seldom talked about issues at school such as historical events in India and religious conflict. The project stimulated discussions among the children about why Punjabi was not taught in a school where 73 percent of the children came to school speaking the language and why there were not more dual-language resources in the school.³ These results are important and challenge dominant schooling practices. The books the children created also challenged normative ideas about public schooling by telling violent stories and talking explicitly about religious difference as well as creating and using multilingual texts not "approved" by curricular goals or a district committee for content.

This project supports previous research that demonstrates the richness of the funds of knowledge students bring from home (González et al., 2005) and the importance of tapping into understandings students bring to the classroom from individual experiences as well as from their peer groups and popular cultural contexts (Dyson, 2001). Our work also underscores the ways in which the use of multimodal technologies opens up classroom space for bilingualism. For instance, the MP3 players allowed the students to capture the stories of their grandparents in Punjabi, which could later be translated to print. In addition, the final storybooks, available on CD and in print, make evident the lack of engaging materials written in these students' first languages. Given the diversity of students and variety of languages spoken in any one classroom, the decision to limit instructional materials to English or French/English puts

in relief the politics of literacy and language instruction. Thus, it seems one strategy that deserves more attention is the creation—either by publishing houses or by children and their families—of engaging, culturally responsive stories that recognize the language competencies students bring to school.

But we are left with many questions. Although this project successfully invited children to bring their first language and their grandparents' knowledge to school, teachers, children, and parents saw it as "something special," as not really school. While the children engaged in a great deal of composing, editing, illustrating, and translating, they were not tested on their stories. Also, the project relied on the help of more adults than are usually in the classroom as well as on enhanced digital technologies such as MP3 players, computer recording, and CDs. Oddly enough, although the purpose of the stories was to augment the library for the kindergarteners and their grandparents, the bilingual books never actually made their way to the kindergarten classes but stayed in a box in the students' classroom.

Van Dijk (2001) points out that "members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the elites) have more or less exclusive access to, and control over one or more types of public discourse" (p. 356). The discourse represented/recontextualized in the grandparents' stories is not official school discourse, a discourse regulated by ministries of education through listings of acceptable texts for schools and publications of mandated curriculum. Why was this project seen as something extraordinary? Was it because the knowledge represented in the texts was not official knowledge, or because of the presence of so many adults other than teachers in the classroom, or because it involved the production of a potentially socially useful product, or because the project was not graded?

What happens when the funds of knowledge that children bring to school challenge the curricular and institutional practices of the classroom? Some of the knowledge the children shared through their grandparents' stories challenged school notions of appropriate conflict resolution, secularity, gender equity, cultural authenticity, and sunny childhoods. Pitt & Britzman (2006) argue that "difficult knowledge" might include "narratives of historical traumas such as genocide, slavery, and forms of social hatred and questions of equity, democracy and human rights," and they highlight "the problem of learning from social breakdowns in ways that might open teachers and students to their present ethical dilemmas" (p. 379). When the funds of knowledge of a community include difficult knowledge that cannot be spoken or that is unfamiliar to teachers, what can teachers do with it? We speculate that such knowledge might become the impetus—a "codification" (Freire, 1988, p. 14)—for productive dialogues among community members, children, and teachers about how these matters might become resources for children and teachers and community. Could community elders participate in conversations with children and teachers about, for example, what they have learned about

conflict or the purposes of religion or about gender (in)equities? Could the school take on these difficult knowledges, along with community members, and critically examine what life stories might teach?

Another complexity the children's stories illustrate is the diversity of views possible in a minority community about history, morality, justice, and conflict. For instance, Gurvinder's story offers a political commentary about religious differences and the harm that can come from intolerance. For her, war is not the answer. In contrast, in Jushinpreet's narrative, he foregrounds a battle between good and evil in which there is victory over bad guys and war is a form of justice. Having conversations knowing that a diverse range of opinions will be felt, if not expressed, will be no easy feat. We understand the challenge of being critical. As González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) write,

What is not evident is how practitioners, within the limits of their very real structural constraints, can realistically carry out emancipatory and liberatory pedagogies when they themselves are victims of disempowerment and their circumstances preclude full professional development. (p. 2)

As well, it is especially challenging to be critical when cultural differences are involved. However, Luke (2007) draws our attention to the fact that caregivers customarily engage in critical literacy instruction with very young children as they, for example, point out that advertisements may not be telling the whole truth about products or that you can't believe everything just because someone in authority said it or because it's in print. Luke claims that the kinds of conversations people have in their families as they encounter media and school messages and messages from other authoritative sources are often critical and that many children enter schools with healthy skepticism about what authorities tell them.

Bringing this critical consciousness into dialogue with others who might feel or think differently is what education is supposed to be about. It is important to try to create some kinds of critical pedagogies around these funds of knowledge projects. Otherwise, we run the risk of keeping the institutional violence of schooling in place through literacy and language practices that pay only lip service to the lives and experiences of children and their families.

Notes

1. Suzanne Reed is a pseudonym, as are the names of all the children in this study. While Ms. Reed was willing to publish her name, in the interest of confidentiality for the children, all names have been changed.
2. The books also include CDs of the children reading their stories, so they are even more multimodal than our analysis might suggest. Space precludes an analysis of these spoken media here, but we think such an analysis would add interesting and important information for researchers and educators to consider.
3. There is an approved provincial curriculum for teaching Punjabi for grades 4–12, but Punjabi is not taught at this school. The school's second language is French.

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