

Abstract

Narrative is the primary way human beings make meaning (Bruner, 1986). Students' active participation and agency in their own development and learning have been highlighted as critical components for their success in school (Tigani, 2017; Zhao, 2019; Wiggan & Watson, 2019; Usher & Pajares 2008; Hullerman & Baron, 2016). Yet learning experiences and school activities that are explicitly designed to focus on student narrative self-formation are rare. Students' narratives are shaped by, and in turn, shape their experiences (Holland, 1998). Based on Gubrium & Holstein's (2009) notion of 'reflexive interplay', photo-elicitation and narrative inquiry were used to examine how elementary school students develop their sense of self in their day-to-day neighborhood experiences. Making a photograph is an act (Sontag, 1977). The implications are that the photographing processes students create and share support students' self-formation as a critical democratic agenda for social justice and empowerment (Dewey, 1910; Rancière, 1991).

Keywords: students of color, Black, Latinx, self-formation, elementary school, social justice, poor urban neighborhoods, relational aesthetics, photography, narrative methodology, figured worlds, neoliberal education