Third Space and Learning: Critical Interactions in an

English Language Arts Classroom

by

Jake Jobe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree

of

Master of Education

Westminster College
Salt Lake City, Utah
April 2014
Abstract

The study analyzed the question: How is third space impacted by critical interaction between students, their peers, and the teacher in the classroom? Participants were 18 Latin@ 11th grade students in various content classrooms, although research observations centered around English Language Arts, at a high school in a small, cosmopolitan mountain resort town near a larger capital city. The collected research data came from video recording, teacher journaling, student focus group interviews, and student-teacher reflection over a four-month period. The study found critical interaction existed in three formats: Student-to-student interaction; Student-to-teacher interaction; and Student-to-Student Teacher Facilitated interaction. Latin@ student's third space leaned negative or positive depending on whether they could navigate the space within classroom interactions. Primarily, the study analyzed small groups interactions with four or fewer students and one-on-one teacher to Latin@ student interaction. Other themes were racism within the interactive third space and feelings of isolation termed “The Only Mexican”. The study showed links between Latin@ student’s third space and their learning in the classroom that was consistent regardless of academic success, language proficiency, or socio-cultural standing. Future implications include exploring post-colonial flows and hybridity that may help Latin@ students usurp the Neocolonial education system on large and small scales to promote negative third space.

Keywords: Third Space, Post-colonial Theory, Hybridity, Funds of Knowledge, Critical Interaction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Design and Methods</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Implications and Action Plan</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Third Space Continuum ........................................75
Appendix B: Model for Three-Part Third Space Development.......76
Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Document .................77
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Westminster College and the professors in the Education department. They inspired me to dive into this research. Thank you as well to my research colleagues. Their ideas and insights helped me through every chapter in the writing process. To the English department at my school, thank you for your support in the busiest times throughout this year. Thank you as well to the administration at my school. You provided me with the technological, pedagogical, and inspirational resources I needed to perform my research. To my friends and family who have supported me throughout the two-year process of late nights and hard work, thank you for your patience and guidance. Most importantly, thank you to my students. You are the inspiration for my work and the reason I love teaching. Thank you for being creative, exciting, daring, and brave in the classroom everyday.
Chapter 1: Introduction

At the staff meeting that early morning before school, the administration presented beautifully colored graphs delineating the progress made on SIOP® (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2012) for that school year. SIOP evaluation scores were up, an indication that teacher’s pedagogical practices improved from the year before. Congratulations were in order, and everyone felt pleased that they had developed better SIOP skills. I knew that many of the teachers were working hard to implement SIOP from observing their classroom and discussing their methods at meetings and lunches. The staff felt that their hard work was recognized by administration and was reflected in improved student achievement. I felt proud to be a part of a school that was actively pursuing SIOP perfection.

In my Content Link1 class that afternoon, I conducted mid-quarter interviews with my students to check on their grades and their overall progress in their content classes. After the morning meeting, I decided to ask my students if their personal experiences reciprocated the findings from administration. After all, if SIOP was working, the students should feel the effective pedagogy in the classroom. What I learned from my students was both enlightening and disheartening. They still felt alienated, marginalized, and othered in mainstream classrooms. They did not blame specific teachers or students, but it was painfully obvious that despite many

---

1 Content Link is a structured study hall reserved for English Language Learners and students who once qualified for ESL services. ELs receive extra instruction in core classes with the assistance of teachers who are certified in ESL. Non-ELs are not permitted to enroll in Content Link. The class structure will be highlighted further in the Methods chapter.
teachers’ best teaching efforts, the students still felt disenfranchised. The pedagogy was disconnected from the teacher-student relationships and the classroom culture. I recognized after those interviews that more work was necessary on the classroom culture elements that cannot be taught at professional development training. My students demonstrated that even with perfect SIOP, English Learners (ELs) would not reach their full potential without optimal third space (Moje, et al., 2005 in Rodriguez 2013). The problem was some classrooms at our school were not cultures of beneficial third space, despite the SIOP implementation. Thus, I focused my research on the development of third space.

Statement of Topic

English Learners face school environments dominated by a White, native English speaking culture. Even in schools where ELs are the majority, the education system is designed to meet the needs of native English speaking students. In the Western United States, a large portion of the ELs are Latin@² students. They exist in a separate culture at home with their family dichotomous to the school environment. Each day, ELs navigate a Neocolonial education system that has spent years marginalizing their identity in the classroom (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012, p. 3-7). When multiple cultures in the students’ lives meet, they create a “third space“, a place where students exist that is neither their home culture nor the dominant school culture. If third space is not positive, students usually struggle. Krashen’s

² Latin@ is used throughout the text to refer to both male and female students, rather than using other determiners such as “Latino and Latina” or “Latino/a” in order to shorten the writing. It is also more gender neutral, compared to “Latino” when referring to a group. When talking about a single student, I use either Latino or Latina depending on gender, for groups of both male and female I use Latin@.
(1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis helps to describe the impact of negative third space. Krashen cites three primary factors related to the affective filter: self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety. Decreasing self-confidence, declining motivation, and increasing anxiety are all directly related to negative third space. Although first applied to language acquisition, Krashen is also applicable to content and other learned material. In classrooms where the third space is undesirable, students have an increased affective filter, which inhibits learning. In positive third space classes, the affective filter decreases and learning improves (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). The development and facilitation of this third space in my classroom is the starting point for my research inquiry.

My study focused on the third space development for ELs, all Latin@ students, in a high school mainstream English Language Arts classroom. As a foundation for the observations and interviews, the class is grounded in student-to-student interaction. Students have to collaborate in groups and pairs in order to succeed in my classroom. Throughout our school, and due to SIOP implementation, group interaction to facilitate language production is not only encouraged, but is required, and students who cannot work in groups will struggle in most classrooms. A common quote from our administration is as follows: “Those doing the talking are doing the learning.” In my class that is an accurate portrayal of my participation and learning goals. Thus, the most important component pedagogically in my study was providing opportunities for my ELs to interact with all learners in the classroom, supported by positive interaction and beneficial third space.
The study’s primary focus was how third space could be improved in my own classroom during critical interaction through video observation and student interviews. However, the study grew to examine third space throughout the school community in various classrooms using the insights and reflections of the students in the ELA classroom as well as the Content Link and Latinos in Action courses. After the initial investigations, I examined how Post-Colonial Theory and Hybridity could help my students navigate their personal third space. I will elaborate on that theory and the implications on the classroom in the Literature Review and Action Plan.

Statement of Researcher

My interest in ELs started when I began my English as a Second Language Endorsement at Westminster College. While studying at Westminster, I developed a passion for working with ELs, which connected me to an ESL teaching position just outside Salt Lake City, Utah. In working with the ESL programs, I realized that although the district was cutting edge in its ESL philosophies and pedagogy, the personal and social connections that make for a beneficial third space were missing in many classrooms. Many students were not connecting with their lessons and their peers, even with extensive SIOP implementation. Teachers, despite their SIOP usage, were missing the consequences of negative third space in their own classrooms. Through informal interviews with my own students I realized that they lacked a nurturing third space in school and were usually identified by their deficits as students, rather than the strengths they bring with them to the classroom. In the mainstream many of them existed as the “other”, a minority group within the school
culture. Their social position molded by an oppressive third space inhibited their ability to learn. With this educational situation in mind, I aimed to answer these questions through research:

1. How is third space impacted by critical interaction between students, their peers, and the teacher in the classroom?

2. What are the social factors that impact third space during critical interaction?

3. In what ways can I encourage student-directed third space creation in my classroom so that the third space is positive, dynamic, and omnipresent?

One of my major emphases was on the students and teacher being colearners and coteachers in developing third space. Bruna (2008) warns that third space cannot be genuinely developed by the teacher (emphasis added) but instead must come from the students. Teacher-centered third space design is not third space at all. In fact, third space becomes artificial, a pedagogical technique discussed in textbooks and multicultural slideshows at in-service days. Only a student centered approach can be successful. To this point third space must be ever-changing as student’s interaction changes and adapts, and it must be omnipresent, meaning that it cannot be an environmental condition that can be turned on and off (Bruna 2008). However, the third space can be entirely teacher-facilitated and still be student-created and student-centered. The difference between creation and facilitation will be discussed later in the study and is critical to defining teacher’s roles in third space.
Significance and Limitations

I know from speaking with my students who are ELs that third space is not ideal in our school, despite the best intentions and practices of teachers working with SIOP. With this knowledge, the significance of my study was two-fold. First, to discover ways I could facilitate third space in my own classroom, thus improving my classroom culture and the academic success of the ELs and non-ELs in my English class. Second, I aimed to identify ways the school could improve third space so that ELs are succeeding in all classrooms and in all content areas. Ideally, other teachers will gradually adopt my findings to build third space awareness throughout the school. My study fits alongside other studies such as the Lipka, et al. (2007) study on Yup’ik geometry lessons in the specificity of the research group and how the studies are applied to a specific classroom. However, the study allowed for general application to other content areas. The students in the focus groups represent every level of academic performance in every content area, so their experiences are easily applied across my school and district.

I did not aim to find grand fixes across all educational settings for implementing third space. Realistically, best pedagogical practices in my classroom may not be best practices in another classroom with different contexts and cultural groups. Third space is inherently specific to each classroom. I also acknowledge Acculturation Theory (1986) that states that in any situation the dominant language group will dominate the third space, and there is no way to find true equality amongst different groups. However, even with this understanding, I believe teachers have the responsibility to actively pursue and facilitate third space, even in
a cultural setting that cannot be equal. Passive awareness without action is not a strong enough usurpation given the Neocolonial setting of a public school. Failure to facilitate third space pushes inequality in the classroom closer to the dominant language group. Personally, the study provided the most insight to my own classroom, allowing me to advance my practice and help ELs build a supportive third space for their learning.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

English Learners (ELs) often face school environments dominated by an White, English speaking values, history, and education practices. Even in schools where ELs are the majority, the education system is designed to meet the needs of dominant English speaking students (Nieto, 2005). Often, ELs exist in a culture at home different than the normed school environment. The school is also a piece of the community culture, a separate but equally important cog of third space. Each day, they come to school and bring identities from their home culture that are not recognized in most school settings (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2004). When these cultures in the student’s lives meet in the classroom, they create a “third space” (Fitts, 2009), a place where students exist that is neither their home culture nor the dominant school culture. While third space can happen on a macro-scale, such as throughout the entire school, it can also exist in microcosms, such as within small-group work during a classroom lesson. In that case, the students working within the group are building third space through their critical interactions with one another and the presence of the educator. The facilitation of this third space during student-to-student (S2S) and student-to-teacher (S2T) interaction is the starting point for my research inquiry. To begin, I will discuss the seminal historical-cultural definition of third space and Post-Colonial Theory, and how they connect to a classroom setting. Next, I will synthesize the current best research practices in third space pedagogy that facilitate third space for students in various classroom environments. Lastly, I will include my own personal framework for the study.

Historical Origins and Definition
Third space originates in the writings of Homi Bhabha (1994), who defined third space in a global-colonial context. When a colonizer encountered a colonized people, third space appeared as a summation of the two cultures. Bhabha iterated that the two cultures became reliant on one another once contact and colonization began, making them “mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture,” (as cited in Yazdiha, 2010, pp. 31-32). Admittedly, quantifying third space as one culture plus another equaling a third combined culture is an oversimplified model. Every individual involved in third space construction adds multiple viewpoints and cultural norms, so the final third space has infinitely many wrinkles that change as new individuals leave and enter the space. Bhabha’s macro-scale of cultural dependency is replicated in my classroom setting, as students from Latino backgrounds co-create third space with the White dominant group and school structure. The classroom often functions as a metaphor for colonialism with the White school structure dominating the identity of all other cultural groups. The connective dynamic of the school structure with any other minority group is a micro-cosm of Bhabha’s colonization ideas. Teacher’s awareness of third space and having strategies to improve third space improves the overall classroom culture (Bruna, 2009). The ELs third space is also the White culture’s third space. Aligning with Bhabha, I believe that the two are mutually dependent, so that learning will improve for both demographics when third space is positive for the ELs.

**Post-Colonial Theory**

Schools in the United States are the products of a system that is inherently Post-Colonialist in nature. This theory postulates that the colonial systems of the
past are still present and overpowering in the public systems of the culture that holds power. Schools, as bastions of Western Culture in the United States, are major purveyors of the dominant culture, going back hundreds of years of European Colonial history (Young, 2001). These colonial ideas are embedded in school culture. Gallagher-Geurtsen (2012) cites numerous examples in our school system, ranging from the dominance of Western-centric literature to the negative feelings towards students speaking other languages in the classroom. These leftover policies of colonialism on American education are further defined by Young (2001) as cultural neocolonialism. Cultural neocolonialism of the dominant group marginalizes and isolates students who do not identify with the culture in power, creating an superior-inferior binary and reinforcing deficit identification between groups of students. Through this theoretical lense, teacher-researchers can begin to hack the cultural neocolonialism status quo by viewing findings with an awareness that colonialism still impacts the learning of minority students.

**Post-Colonial and Neocolonial Flows**

Within Post-Colonial Theory, researchers and educators have identified ways that students navigate the cultural neocolonial education system in the United States. These strategies by students are further defined by Gallagher-Guertsen (2012):

*Given the legacy of colonialism in the form of neocolonialism in schooling, minoritized youth have discovered way to survive within a largely demeaning and narrow system. These survival strategies can be described as post-colonial flows (emphasis added), given the fact that they arise out of a*
neocolonial system. Indeed, post-colonial flows are a method of decolonization because their existence, or mindful performance, questions neocolonial flows and systems. (p. 10)

In my own classroom, these post-colonial flows offer ways to potentially empower students against the neocolonial system. The difficulty as a researcher and teacher is introspectively recognizing that I am an automatic piece of the neocolonial power structure. Ironically, that also gives me the opportunity to empower students with post-colonial flows that actively usurp the neocolonial suppression that they face every day. Hybridity is a sophisticated mix of many post-colonial flows and identities. Spanglish is one example of hybridity where Spanish speaking students are challenging the status quo of English-dominance by the way they produce language (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012). When I analyze hybridity with my students, I am asking them to actively consider how they navigate their own third space, and thus the neocolonial structure of school. The result of this reflection is Critical Interaction (CI), which will be a primary theme for my research findings. Hybridity, the molding and integrating of various identities with each student, is recognized by other researchers as a key piece to developing third space.

Interculture and Hybridity

Other terms assist and elaborate on the definition of third space. Interculture and hybridity are common synonyms that are interchanged with third space (Li & Girvan, 2004; Yazdiha, 2010). However, in this study, third space works as an all-encompassing idea above hybridity and interculture. The two other concepts help to define the characteristics of third space. As third space progresses,
it becomes difficult to discern how one culture is separate from another (Yazdiha, 2010). Groups use hybridity to navigate third space. When cultures synthesize, groups may work harder to define their cultural identities to separate themselves from the whole, leading to “othering” of groups who do not match that normed identity (Fine, 1994). Interculture describes the navigation of that new relationship.

I have seen interculture expressed in my classroom in multiple forms. Students engage in clique seating arrangements within their cultural cohort; they change their language usage from their first or second language depending on who they communicate with in class; and their outward behavior varies within small or large groups depending on the cultural norms of the group. As groups create third space, they become consciously aware of their position within the overall structure. The active awareness of a student’s place within group interaction is what I define as Critical Interaction (CI). Students are constantly reflecting on their role within the group based on social factors as they manipulate the content material. That reflective component creates CI. Awareness as the “other” is omnipresent for the minority group, and dictates how they act within the dominant norm. With interculture, there is a constant changing perspective of how each person or group fits in the system (Li & Girvan, 2004). The concept of interculture as omnipresent is paramount to understanding third space in the classroom. Educators cannot, therefore, artificially manufacture third space, because it already exists. Teachers must instead find ways to encourage the interculture to be positive, since it exists naturally in every classroom. My research around third space began with those
observations already in place, that third space is an umbrella term affected by Post-Colonial Theory and intercultural relationships.

In school, interculture and hybridity are directly linked with racism and cultural stereotypes. Because ELs and other minority populations are often compared to the norm of Euro-centric school culture, they are labeled in terms of their deficits in learning rather than their strengths. The cultural comparison of the two groups ensures that many teachers analyze ELs deficiencies and not their strengths (Moje, et al., 2005 in Rodriguez, 2013). Failing to acknowledge the differences in groups is building the stereotypes of race and racist beliefs, because the norms applied are not universal (Souto-Manning, 2010). The comparison leads to “othering,” which itemizes the students and makes them either insiders or outsiders to the learning. Beyond ambiguous theoretical impacts, my students were aware of their position within this system, and they reflected on racism through the unfair comparison of their own culture to the dominant White culture.

Unfortunately, the outsider role occurs most often in the classroom to the “othered” students. Othered students are more likely to struggle as they lack the insider knowledge of the dominant culture necessary to be successful (Souto-Manning, 2010). Delpit (1988) has also described this “insider knowledge” as the “Culture of Power”, the idea that school is a reflection of the dominant cultural group. Students who come from homes unreflective of that culture are not part of the “culture of power” and thus struggle to grasp content. Rather than aiming for sameness, teachers should instead recognize the students differences, and then facilitate ways students can apply them as strengths, reinforcing the entire classroom culture (Li &
Girvan, 2004). Awareness of difference and scaffolding interaction accordingly allows teachers to facilitate positive third space that avoids initial othering and marginalization in the classroom.

**Characteristics of Third Space**

Third space in the classroom has evolved with different meanings and definitions depending on the researcher and the context. However, the purpose of third space is virtually unchanged and agreed upon by researchers and teachers. I have noticed that there are certain non-negotiable aspects of third space that are always present in any third space atmosphere, especially in the classroom. The most important idea is that third space is both omnipresent and ever-changing in any setting. In the classroom especially, students are actively creating their own third space in conscious and subconscious ways (Bruna, 2009; Li & Girvan, 2004).

In my research, omnipresent third space is important because it underlies the second important idea, that third space must be student-centered. In order to authentically improve third space, the teacher must recognize that they are only the facilitator of third space (Bruna, 2009). The facilitator role can easily be described using a dinner party metaphor. The teacher hosts the dinner party, but the games, interactions, and stories shared amongst the party guests (students) are entirely brought by the party guests. The host (teacher) cannot create past experiences for the party goers. They must create the experience for themselves and then apply those experiences at the party. Some research has argued that students and teachers are co-learners and co-teachers, emphasizing the reflective nature of the learning. The teacher can still be the expert, but they ask the students for reflection
on how they can improve their learning (Benson, 2010). I agree that reflection must be a pillar of third space facilitation by the teacher and is a major cog of being a co-learner. However, I believe that teachers must be careful in how they act in their role as co-creator. I bring my own culture into the classroom with each lesson I teach. As a White male, I have privileges and understanding of the dominant culture that I apply to every third space, especially as the teacher with the tools to create the pedagogy and curriculum of the classroom. The educator holds more influence over the third space than any student due to their power role within the Neocolonial system. The problem with the definition as co-creator is that too much influence is placed on the teacher’s role. For third space to be authentic, the teacher can be facilitator and co-learner but not an equal co-creator. Based on early observation, the structures of school are already majority culture centric, and the teacher co-creating third space tips the alignment unfairly towards the dominant culture. To simplify, teachers must constantly reflect on how their influence is positively or negatively swaying the orientation of third space in the classroom.

Although third space must be omnipresent and student-centered, a few other characteristics are also important, as documented in third space classroom practice. First, third space is not a mono-entity. Positive third space is tiered and multi-layered. For example, Fitts (2009) trichotomized third space as bridging, navigational, and transformational third space, with each level more layered and beneficial to student learning than the previous level. The most important of the three levels, transformational third space, combines the student’s home, school, and community to promote innovation in learning. Without all three pieces, the third
space is limited in how beneficial it can be for students. I found this model to be helpful as I constructed my research protocols, because it provided a rubric for gauging third space effectiveness. Any third space not at the transformational level will not be as effective for the students.

Secondly, every teacher must be cautious of third space models created through binary relationships (Moje, et al 2004). Transformational third space is at least tri-modal because the school and home culture are also combined with the greater community culture. Since students are viewed through the lens of home versus school culture, third space is easily misidentified to be the third sum of two separate parts. However, because no student is exactly the same, teachers must remember that third space is the conglomeration of infinite student cultural experiences, all of which come together and are always evolving in the classroom. To limit third space to a binary set of two concrete cultural experiences is to fail to reach its potential (Moje, et al 2004). Third space, then, becomes a complicated definition. To be successful, third space must be omnipresent, student-centered, transformational, and multi-layered. The difficulty, then, is not describing what third space is, but rather how the teacher can use concrete methods to facilitate third space that reflects this definition. For my research, CI and reflecting on the success or failure of the CI was the concrete method to facilitate third space (Rodriguez, 2013).

**Applying Funds of Knowledge\(^3\) to Promote Third Space**

\(^3\) Funds of Knowledge is defined by Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez N. (1992) as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being.”
Third space has been analyzed with two major focal points. First, researchers have studied third space in highly specific contexts and individual ethnographic settings. In these situations, third space is modeled with projects or ideas for a specific classroom and subject using Funds of Knowledge (FoK) to direct the instruction. The primary example is the parka pattern mathematics unit for Yup’ik children that describes an elementary Yup’ik classroom where elders from the Yup’ik community used the winter parka patterns to aid the students in learning geometry (Lipka et al., 2007). While the unit demonstrates positive third space and using FoK, it does not provide general answers to third space inquiries. It is a specific classroom for an even more exclusive demographic. Within the literature, it provides hints at third space development, but cannot be applied perfectly to other classrooms and other subjects.

The second focal point uses observation as a means of describing instances where discourses and FoK could be used in a particular content area. For example, Moje et al. (2004) used observation in secondary science classrooms as the foundation for a discussion on FoK opportunities and third space development. FoK was broken into categories related to home culture and peer groups and then the third space is demonstrated using anecdotes from the observations. Lastly, the authors cite patterns in discourse usage and FoK implementation that they witnessed from students. Within these studies, the major emphases becomes identifying how students can build agency, engage power in the classroom, and implement their own FoK to better connect with the materials (DaSilva Iddings et al., 2007).
Too often, ELs are viewed in terms of their deficits within school settings. Due to this deficit reaction from the school community, they are seen as “students needing to be fixed...” instead of “experts who teachers may learn from,” (Moje, et al., 2004, p. 249). FoK provide that opportunity for students to be experts in the classroom where usually they are the outsiders. The issue is how to provide opportunities for students to be the expert based on the FoK they bring from their home culture. Finding those opportunities for ELs to be experts and apply their FoK will likely lead to positive third space and improved learning for them and for their classmates. Especially in cases where students are new immigrants, FoK is not simply recommended, but completely necessary to build third space. Without FoK, third space will not have an impact on student’s own learning compared to when FoK is utilized (Bruna, 2009; DaSilva Iddings & Katz, 2007). However, in my own research, I did not focus on FoK to develop third space. The interaction amongst the students, peer to peer, and the social implications of that interaction, was the focal point of my study. While FoK is important, it was not the critical component for my students, many of whom have lived in the U.S for almost their entire lives. FoK becomes important with content acquisition, especially for new immigrant students. For the students in my study, the problem was not content knowledge, but the academic implications of learning caused by negative third space via social interaction. The learning block happens within interaction between peers and teachers, FoK is secondary. I will pursue the significance of FoK to third in the Action Plan chapter later in the text, where I will consider how FoK will apply in my continuing study.
Conclusion and Aims

In my own classroom I used my experiences with students as well as the examples from the current research to find a foundation for assessing the third space perspectives of my students. Through reflections and observations of CI, I was able to promote S2S and S2T interactions that helped students navigate their third space. Personal agency then improved, and finally ELs could construct a third space that situated them as successful students who were equal members of my classroom. Long-term, the project has critical humanist and Post-Colonial Theory implications, emancipating ELs from their roles as “others” in the classroom to “insiders” and undermining the neocolonial status quo that exists in all interactions in a school setting. I will help students build third space positively in my classroom, which will increase their self-efficacy. As I continue my research, I aim to find tools through hybridity that the students can use in other classrooms and other life circumstances when faced with neocolonial structures. Through reflection and critical discussion with students I worked to create a more positive teaching environment in my classes for my ELs.
Chapter 3: Design and Methods

Overall Approach

The research for the study was especially important to me because I am passionate about the inclusion of ELs in my classroom. While I strive to teach all students, I was closest to my ELs because I interacted with them in a traditional classroom environment and an intimate one-on-one environment in a structured study hall, content link. In this way, the relationships I built were more meaningful with my ELs because I had them twice as many hours and in smaller less formal setting. This relationship allowed them to feel comfortable enough to honestly reflect on third space in my classroom. The methods I used, including individual and group interviews, required that my students trusted me. Without trustworthiness from my students, the data would not be reliable because I could not have depended on honest answers. I am confident, however, that the relationships I have already built allowed me to connect with the students and their third space.

Setting

The research occurred at a high school in a small mountain-town just outside Salt Lake City, Utah. The school included grades 10 through 12, and had a population of 1,108 students. Within the district, approximately 13 percent of students were classified as English Learners, and the high school is representational of this statistic. Students who self-identified as Latin@ made up 13 percent of the school’s population while White students made up 85 percent. Smaller student
minority groups included Asian (1%), Black (.06%), and Asian Pacific Islander (.004%). Latin@ students are the largest minority population in the school.

I taught 11th Grade English Language Arts (ELA) and Content Link\(^4\) (CL), and the data collection occurred with students in those classrooms plus students from our Latinos in Action\(^5\) program. In ELA, I had only 11th grade students who were not in Honors or AP English. The curriculum was based in American Literature, with an emphasis in the chronology of literature through history within the American experience. I had a majority of the ELs in the 11th grade in my ELA classes, and I had every 11th grader who was in Special Education (SPED) services in my ELA classes as well. Due to the high percentages of ELs and SPED students in my class, I paced the class at a slower rate than other traditional ELA classrooms. I also had six students who qualified as both ELs and SPED who were in one of my classes. There were three ELA class periods that were 90 minutes long every other school day. Most of the students in CL were also in my ELA classes and they were spread throughout the three class periods.

The class size varied between the three ELA and on CL course, ranging from 23-34 students in ELA to 18 students in CL. My Latinos were the minority in each

\(^4\) Content Link is a structured study hall for English Learners. The students in Content Link received ESL instruction at some time in their educational careers. However, even students have been transitioned out of ESL courses may still opt to enroll in Content Link. The class focuses on assisting with content coursework with the help of a teacher and teacher aide who are trained in ESL. In one day, the students may work on Math, English, Science, History, or any other content course where they need extra help, while also improving their English skills.

\(^5\) Latinos in Action is a program that aims to eliminate the negative stereotypes associated with the Latino population. Students in LIA must maintain a 2.5 GPA to be considered for enrollment. They perform community service like tutoring at the dual-immersion elementary school and assisting with Latino Parent Night at the high school.
ELA class, with the largest group in any one class being five ELs in the class of 34 students. Within that class, there were also six other Latin@ students who were not classified as ELs. CL is the only course where the entire class is Latin@, making them the majority population.

Participants

The participant group consisted of 18 eleventh grade Latin@ students who were in my ELA and CL courses, 7 boys and 11 girls. The student’s language proficiency based on the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) scores ranged from Level 2 Emerging to Level 6 Reaching English Language Proficiency, and they were all of Mexican ancestry. Some of the students were undocumented immigrants to the U.S., some were resident immigrants, and others were U.S citizens born in the United States to parents who emigrated from Mexico. All of the students had been classified as English Learners and benefited from English as a Second Language (ESL) services, but most of them had been removed from ESL classes and were enrolled in only mainstream coursework. I also interviewed students who were enrolled in our Latinos in Action Program, some of whom were also in my CL and ELA classrooms. Those students represented a slightly different population, because they scored higher academically than many of my other ELs, and their insight provided a different lens to view third space.

Data Gathering

For data gathering, I focused on three different strategies in order to triangulate my data. First, I used a LifeSize video recording system as a means of observing my classroom while I taught. Next, I conducted digital and personal
interviews with my ELs in my ELA classroom. Lastly, I used the videos to observe both general and specific behaviors while also recording any immediate reflections in a personal research journal. Along with these specific data gathering methods, I also worked directly with the other teachers in my department to build interview questions that most accurately and effectively engaged the students towards my research goals. One of my colleagues is Latina, and she assisted me by providing a Latina perspective to ensure that my research did not marginalize my students.

**Reflection.**

First, I used the LifeSize camera to observe my classroom each day, and I collected observations of the student’s behavior as it related to potential third space negotiation in my classroom. I recorded classes over the span of eight weeks. Initially, for general observation, I recorded all three of my ELA classrooms twice, for a total of 180 minutes each. After the initial general class taping I recorded specific pieces of group interaction within lessons and focused on individual and groups of students for the remaining weeks. The LifeSize camera allowed me to preset spaces within the classroom, so that I could record specific students, individual groups, or the whole classroom while I taught the whole class, remotely and discreetly. This strategy gave me the advantage of teaching in an authentic way and still being able to observe afterwards and take notes as if I were watching the class as an outsider. I could collect data in my own classroom and also reflect on how my practice affected the third space while actually teaching. During the interview process, one of my goals was to ask students questions that dealt specifically with various aspects of my classroom and particular lessons plans; then
I could cross-reference the lesson observation and reflection from the recording with their responses to assess how my teaching impacted their third space (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). I showed the students chunks of videos and asked them to explain how they interacted with their peers, why they interacted in certain ways, and how their third space was impacted by the structure of the lesson. These reflections became the foundation of my CI analysis, and I was able to implement student’s responses to the reflection in my teaching. The facilitation techniques I gathered from the interviews I immediately used in the classroom.

**Interviewing.**

Initially, I used an online survey through Google Forms to build baseline knowledge on the treatment of my students in the classroom related to third space. All students in our district have a school-provided Gmail account, and the survey was anonymous. The survey allowed the students to reflect on third space indirectly before interviewing, and it offered me a basis for structuring the live interview questions.

Next, I chose a limited number of students to participate in focus groups of four to six students as a way to compare responses and ideas with the initial individual student interviews. The students were chosen strategically to represent a wide array of student abilities, language proficiency levels, and social positions. I questioned them on perceived relationships with teachers and their White peers, as well as their perspective on third space in my classroom and within the school. The group interview encouraged students to give open responses that they may have been uncomfortable sharing in one-on-one sessions. I also chose one focus group of
students from our Latinos in Action program, some of whom were also in my ELA or CL courses. By interviewing them, I could track differences between the higher and lower academically inclined students to see if their third space perceptions differed in the school setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, pp. 189-190).

**Observation.**

For the observation, I used an ongoing journal with my general ideas about the classes with the help of the LifeSize camera recordings. These included my own reflections on how I facilitated third space as well as instances of third space from students. Many of my informal observations from the journal became critical components of my findings, especially as they related to racism. During the interview process, one of my goals was to ask students questions that addressed aspects of my classroom and particular lessons plans; then I could cross-reference the lesson observation and reflection from the recording with their responses to assess how my teaching impacted their third space (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

With these three strategies, I triangulated my findings and determined the legitimacy and differentiation between student groups. The interview process was based on reflection, coteaching, and colearning. I used interview questions that encouraged students to consider their own ideas and insights into how they thought I could adjust my teaching to promote their positive third space. The goal of these interviews was to improve my practice and document how students perceived their third space, which in turn improved their learning.

**Validity and Trustworthiness**
Because I conducted a qualitative teacher action research project in my own classroom, I could be a reflective observer and a teacher at the same time. By filming my classroom and cross-referencing with student perceptions, I could determine if my research findings were accurately portrayed by the research data, which was the primary component of validity. Validating my research further, I used two different interview processes and my recorded classroom observations and reflections to methodologically triangulate my data during analysis. Along with triangulation, this allowed me to member check my data, so that my participants were confirming or refuting the interpretation of my data (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Without the student reflection, the data could not be validated, because the purpose of my research was to confirm teacher practice with student perception and learning.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethically, my biggest concern was the confidentiality of my students. Due to the specificity of my student group, and because other students and teachers knew the students who attended my classes, I have been careful to not provide personal information that could divulge their identities. All of the students, teachers, and other content areas in the findings are pseudonyms. It would be easy for another student or teacher to identify students using the smallest piece of demographic knowledge. I was purposefully general with my description of the location of the school for the same reasons. The efforts I made to protect the anonymity of my students encouraged them to be as forthright as possible in their interviews and allowed them to trust me with sensitive information.
Another ethical consideration was the identity of students who were a part of the study because they were in my classroom, although they were not Latino and were not interviewed. Third space is a group-created entity and my White students’ actions had an impact on the third space perception of my Latino students. Whether the impact is negative or positive, I had to be careful to maintain my other students’ privacy while also providing accurate descriptions of how their culture affects the third space of the Latino students. I provided anonymity to them by not disclosing specific classrooms and being careful to share only the most basic information about them personally if their actions required a description in the study.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

The themes that emerged from my data collection could make for uncomfortable discussion within my school. Understandably, when racism and Latino versus White are the topics, people often become defensive. Most teachers wish that their classrooms were villages of diversity and acceptance, a cultural third space utopia. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, due to a variety of factors. However, the first step to improving third space is acknowledging that racism exists so that the discourse on the issues can begin and so that we can improve the third space for all students. Sherman Alexie, world-renowned Native American young adult author and guest speaker at our school, told our students and faculty that the first stage of racism is ignoring difference between groups of people. Research backed by Post-Colonial Theory encourages this tough conversation, reminding me that research should “find you feeling off-balance and more likely to critique and question your own assumptions.” (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012, p. 7). If the data makes you uncomfortable, it is worth analyzing. Being uncomfortable is often a result of realizing injustice or unfairness, and if data incites that emotion it is often a negative truth. Acknowledging personal shortcomings and teaching areas that need improvement requires putting egos aside, which also makes any teacher uncomfortable. Knowing the data is true and realizing it is unjust warrants deeper study. I hope that by engaging with these difficult ideas, all teachers, including myself, can improve pedagogy and promote positive third space.

Prior to beginning data collection, I used one major question to guide my study.
1. What are the effects of student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction on third space and learning for Latin@ students in the English Language Arts classroom?

The findings were derived from three different sources. First, I used observations from my classroom instruction and regular reflection with the LifeSize camera system. Most of my ideas for group interaction dynamics, such as how the Latin@ students only worked with other Latin@ students, came from these reflections. I used the camera throughout the entire process to document student interactions. Originally it allowed me to reflect and choose a starting point for the students to watch and analyze their own actions. Later, it became a tool to show different activities and for students to evaluate those activities. Second, I used the focus group interviews to build my themes and recognize the racism that was intertwined with interaction. The group interviews were most helpful in improving classroom pedagogy because the students were able to co-reflect with me on the practices that were most effective in my lessons. The focus groups also provided the most emotional testimonies, as Latin@ students revealed instances of racism in their classrooms. Lastly, the one-on-one interviews offered a more practical approach to post-colonial flows, with students recognizing ways they could grasp hybridity to advocate for themselves in student-to-student (S2S) and student-to-teacher (S2T) interactions. This phase, the individual interview and practice phase, is ongoing.

The interview process provided me with the themes for the study and became the major focus of the findings. The quotes pulled from the interview
transcripts act as vignettes to demonstrate scenarios consistent with the themes, especially regarding S2S and S2T interactions. The student participants in the interview process were critically reflective on their interactions with their peers. As the interviews proceeded, I was hoping to note the differences in third space between students of differing academic stature and social standing. I purposely picked students from varying academic backgrounds, ranging from struggling students who were failing multiple classes to high honor roll students who are in honors and AP courses. I postulated one of two outcomes: Either the students would all share similar third space experiences regardless of their achievement; or the third space for the academically challenged students would differ positively or negatively from the high performing students. While this was not in my research question, I assumed that I would witness this within the context of forming third space. The themes that emerged as the interviews progressed aligned with outcome number one. The third space experience for Latin@ students was largely similar regardless of their academic standing. For my research, this idea implies that academic achievement is not as important to third space as cultural ties and social interaction between students, their peers, and the teacher. The coming themes reflect this finding. Through the interviews three major themes emerged. Those themes were as follows:

1. Racism (negative third space)
   
   a. Sub-Theme: “The Only Mexican”

2. Critical Interaction (negative and positive third space continuum)

3. Post-Colonial Flows and Hybridity (positive third space)
First, I noted racism and the tension of binaries between Latin@ and White students as well as Latin@ and White teachers. When students noticed negative third space, racism was the primary perceived reason. Second, I analyzed “critical interaction” between all members of the third space had the greatest general impact determining whether the third space was negative or positive. “Critical interaction” happened when students were interacting directly with their peers and with the teacher and manipulating the content knowledge. The interaction was defined as “critical” because it is actively reflective, meaning that students were processing the content material as well as considering the social implications of the interaction. For example, in critical interaction between a Latino student and his table group of three White students in ELA, the Latino student is manipulating the content of the class while also considering how his Latino identity is perceived and accepted by the White students. Lastly, the theme of post-colonial flows and hybridity offered the most rigorous way to shift the third space continuum from negative to positive. If flows offer ways to navigate the third space, hybridity is the most important flow to master for my students to counter the colonially structured status quo (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012, p.10).

These three themes represent the process of space creation along a continuum from negative to positive third space (Appendix A). Racism represents the negative components of third space. Critical interaction demonstrates the authentic ways the third space can shift, both negatively and positively. Then, hybridity and post-colonial flows offer specific strategies students can use to advocate for themselves within the third space, pushing the third space from
positive to negative. In a theory as abstract as third space, the three themes add
structure for considering how Latin@ students negotiate school culture.

**Theme #1: Racism**

Along the third space continuum, higher prevalence of racism, in all
interviews, was linked with negative feelings of third space. There was no instance
where racism created third space and the student felt safe, comfortable, and
academically successful. Later, I will share vignettes demonstrated the breach in
student effort and academic performance in classrooms where racism is perceived.
From the high achieving Latinos in Action students to the low-performing struggling
Latin@s, racism was a persistent problem in many of their classrooms.

Listening to the students, I noted racism on two fronts within the interviews.
First, racism appears in S2S interaction. Second, racism occurs in S2T interaction.
Through quotes and vignettes I will demonstrate the situations Latin@ students
experienced where racism happened in their classrooms. It is essential to note that
racism is linked with decreased academic achievement. When students feel racism,
they cannot participate in class effectively, they cannot communicate in groups
appropriately, and it prevents them from engaging with the material in the same
ways as the other students.

**Vignette: Student Racism.**

During the interview process, my students often used the term
“uncomfortable” to describe situations where the third space was negative and
where racism was evident. Part of my inquiry was related to whether racism
adversely impacted learning. When asked about how being “uncomfortable” made
it difficult to collaborate within groups, Maria said, “You can’t contribute the way you want to. Like they (White students) don’t like your ideas. And you can’t work well together because it is uncomfortable” (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014). Based on her comment, Maria brought ideas and knowledge to the group, but could not contribute because the group did not appreciate her input. The issue was not that she could not understand the material, but rather she could not navigate the interaction to use her ideas. If her learning was limited in the activity the group’s learning was also limited because the other students were missing out on her potential input.

I was curious as to the relationship of academic difficulty versus negative third space. Perhaps in some situations student’s learning difficulties came from not understanding content more than the social relationships between the students. I did not want “uncomfortable” to be associated with unpreparedness for the day’s materials. To tease out what the word meant, I asked the students to answer this question: What was the bigger issue, lack of content knowledge or racial tensions? My participants noted that usually one compounded the other. Alejandra reflected, “We know for a fact that some kids are racists, so like when you are around them you don’t want to be there. It’s all awkward and sometimes when you really don’t know the material, that makes it even worse” (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014). Obviously not knowing the material was a problem for any student in any class, but when group interaction was marbled with racial tension, the isolation of the student was exacerbated and they had little hope for learning.

**Vignette: Teacher Racism.**
The underlying common factor in every third space was the role of the teacher. As previously stated by Bruna (2009), third space cannot be created by the teacher and must come from the students. However, Bruna also qualifies the definition by naming the teacher as the facilitator. In the interviews and through video reflection, my students and I noted that the teacher played a critical role in directing third space. The S2T interaction can push the third space continuum negatively or positively. As the figurehead of the post-colonial structure in classrooms, the actions of the teacher and the absence or presence of their racism could adversely underscore Latin@ student’s third space. I looked at both positive continuum movement and negative continuum movement based on the S2T interactions, as well as the S2F interactions. First I focused on the negative third space created by S2T communication with underlying racism.

This particular instance occurred in the classroom with a high-achieving, AP Latina student. In this particular vignette, the problem was not the teacher’s own apparent racism, but instead their inability to react to overt racism from a student. In this case, the Latina student was so offended that she walked out of the class. During a pre-assessment on the computer, a White student spoke out in a racist way. I asked Itzel to expand what happened and this was her response:

…and the quiz was like ‘what border is below the United States” or something, and this kid was like ‘they should change the question to where do Mexicans jump the border to the U.S’ or something like that. And the teacher kind of just stayed quiet, he didn’t know what to say at all. I kind of got mad, I was like, ‘shouldn’t you (the teacher) be saying something about
that? I got out of the room and just left. I was not wanting to be there.

(Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

In this particular case, there is no way to know whether the teacher’s response was due to personal racism. Regardless, the White student’s comment was hurtful, provocative, and insensitive to Itzel and demonstrated negative attitudes towards Mexican migration and the teacher did not address it. Another explanation may hint at the purpose for the teacher’s silence. The teacher may be unprepared to address the racism from the student, and resorted to muteness as a de facto reaction. The problem was not the lack of response, but the effect that response had on Itzel. She expected the teacher to recognize the racism and act to defuse the comment. Instead, silence left Itzel wondering the teacher’s true intentions. Whether racist or not, the outcome was a negative third space for Itzel, where she felt uncomfortable enough to leave the room. The entire situation stemmed from one original racist statement.

The underlying academic meaning to this vignette was added immediately after the story by Itzel, who clarified the outcome this situation had on her learning in that specific classroom. She clarified, “When you lose the respect for the teacher, I feel like its kind of like, its still my class, I try to do my work, but its not going to be my full effort” (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014). That one situation muddled the relationship between herself and the teacher. Lack of respect translated into lackluster academic motivation. Again, Krashen (1982) identifies motivation as one of the three components of the Affective Filter. For Itzel, her motivation to perform in that class ended when the teacher failed to respond to the
negative comment, and her learning was negatively impacted. Obviously there was not only negative third space, but that third space restricted Itzel from reaching her full learning potential in that class. Juan, another student in Itzel’s focus group, had a different response to her story. He associated this situation with his own experiences and remarked, “Maybe some teachers, I feel like, are secretly racist, and they just don’t show it because they can’t. That’s why they let stuff like that happen” (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014). This was Juan’s opinion, and it was impossible to know if any teachers held racist ideals. However, whether the teachers were actually racist was not the primary issue. The fact that Juan perceived racism and believed it existed from his teachers was more important than whether the teacher was actually racist. Regardless of the teacher’s views he felt racist tension and it negatively impacted his third space. Again, Juan is a high-achieving Latino honors student. He has not traditionally had issues with his grades, and he would not have warranted mistreatment from teachers for poor behavior or academic ineptitude. If he noticed racism in his classes, the issue appeared to be deeper than academic performance.

In these various vignettes, discerning racism amongst the top Latin@ students in the school is disheartening. While these were the stories discussed in this particular focus group, I have noted numerous comments, discussions, and classroom procedures where racism persisted, and not just with our high achieving students. The next sub-theme, “The Only Mexican”, is related to racism in the classroom, but can also exist separately from racist, negative third space. This split
between racist versus non-racist causation warrants separate discussion of the sub-theme.

“The Only Mexican” and Isolation.

Admittedly, phrasing the sub-theme as, “The Only Mexican” seemed coarse and stereotypical because all Latin@s are obviously not Mexican. However, in my study all the Latin@ students are Mexican. In the United States, the name for people from Mexico can be misconstrued into a racist term with negative connotations and inflections, especially with the conflict in politics with immigration. As a White researcher, using the title “The Only Mexican” made me anxious at first, because I felt the pressure of the underlying societal negativity associated with calling someone Mexican because they are dark skinned, whether they are Mexican or from a different country. The name made me nervous, because I felt the hidden meaning. After some reflection, I realized that my anxiety was from my own personal experiences, and had nothing to do with why my students were using the term. They used the term for identity only. In some cases they were literally the only Mexican in the room. It would be no different than if I were the only American in a room of Chinese educators. As I stated earlier in the paper, if data or an idea makes you uncomfortable it is worth analyzing. “The Only Mexican” made me uncomfortable because of how I perceived society would judge me based on my usage. However, the term does not belong to me, it belongs to my students. They took ownership of that identity and were applying it to their own space. For too long many public schools and the dominant society have ignored the true identity of students and supposed that all students regardless of their race, cultural identity, or
social class needed the same school system. "The Only Mexican" is just another way my students use identity to create their own space in school. I embraced this usage for my study as an ode to their identity, not a reflection of state politics and national debates. With this explanation, "The Only Mexican" became a key component of identity and third space in my study.

The theme of "The Only Mexican" is a by-product of racism, however it can exist separately from racist inclinations from White students and teachers. What makes “The Only Mexican” different from absolute racism is that students can feel isolated through no noticeable racial tension, but instead by literally being the only Latin@ student in the room. Although that experience is not necessarily a product of racism, the teacher still must be aware that the student is feeling this stressor so that they can find ways to facilitate positive interaction to break the isolation that accompanies being “The Only Mexican.” Even more interesting, the theme was noted most by the higher achieving students in the focus groups. The Latin@ students at our school make up 3.5% of the Honors and AP track population, so they have an even higher chance of encountering isolation by being “The Only Mexican” in a room of White students in those upper-level courses. Conversely, because of the high number of AP and Honors English classes, most of the regular English classes have multiple Latin@ students. One of my classes has 10 Latin@s in a class of 32, whereas the AP courses may have one Latin@ student in the same size classroom.

Despite my initial misgivings about the phrasing of the theme, it repeatedly occurred in the interviews, with numerous students using the phrase to describe their own classroom isolation. In fact, I had never considered the term until one of
my own CL students used it in conversation with me about her ELA classroom’s third space. The following vignette describes my initial realization and coining of the term, “The Only Mexican.”

**Vignette: “The Only Mexican”**.

There were a few students in 11th grade CL who I did not have in 11th grade ELA. They were either in Honors or AP Language, both of which were offered to our Juniors. At the beginning of my study, Lidi, one of the Latina students in Honors ELA who was also in my CL class, switched into my regular ELA class, leaving behind Stephanie, another CL Latina student in the Honors course. While they were not particularly close friends, they did socialize often at school and were two of the higher achieving 11th grade Latinas. They were both undocumented students from Mexico. A few days after Lidi dropped the honors course for my ELA class, I was helping Stephanie with her English homework in CL. She lamented that she was struggling in English and felt alone without Lidi in class with her. I reminded her that she was completely capable of succeeding academically in Honors ELA. She responded by saying, “But Mr. Jobe, I hate being in that class. I’m the only Mexican, and I sit by myself.” She said she sat in the middle of the room but felt isolated, and described it like “her own little island” and without Lidi she felt stranded (Research Journal Entry, February 2, 2014). At the time, I did not consider the comment to be specifically important, and a week later Stephanie also transferred into my regular English class with Lidi. However, I noted the conversation in my journal and proceeded to conduct the focus groups, intending to approach the subject depending on the direction of the interviews. While there were numerous factors
that seemed to affect her ability to succeed in that class, she told me in an informal conversation that isolation was the primary reason she transferred courses.

Throughout the focus groups, I realized that “The Only Mexican” was a common personal feeling amongst my Latin@ students. What follows are interview quotes and vignettes describing the isolation associated with “The Only Mexican” experience and how it relates to racism, third space, and increasing the affective filter. Other students shared similar perspectives, some of them related to active or passive racism in their classrooms. Sara noticed her own isolation in a class discussion on immigration for social studies. While it may not be intentionally racist, the rhetoric of the discussion, where students were using terms like “illegal alien” to describe undocumented immigrants made her feel isolated. She explained the situation when the class talked about immigration in the interview:

Well me, I really don’t like it when they (students) use the term illegal because automatically the (White) students are like, are you illegal? (She ended this sentence by mimicking the White students sideways glances and accusatory looks.) ...It’s just so uncomfortable, I feel like they should know what words to use, because if you say one word automatically the students have like this picture in their mind, like one of my teachers used that term and then, next thing you know a kid was like ‘well tell those Mexicans blah blah blah’ like, so I don’t know, its really weird when they use the word and everybody just stares. (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

Alejandra reiterated this isolation in a separate line of questions where the teacher was facilitating a discussion of Latin@ immigrants in society. The teacher
and White students looked at Alejandra and other Latin@ students in the room. Admittedly, the teacher may have meant no harm by acknowledging the Latin@ students presence, but the extra attention created feelings of “The Only Mexican”.

Our teacher was bringing up Latinos, and he kept looking at us, and we were like ok, no, why are you looking at us? We know we’re Mexican, you don’t have to look at us when you talk about them. (Alejandra, 11th Grade, Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

Teachers often turn to Latin@ students as “experts” anytime they are discussing content related to immigration or Latin@ relations and culture. In class I have seen Latin@ students volunteer to contribute their views on immigration and undocumented people. They have passionate opinions and offer insights that White students would never see. However, Alejandra was lamenting on the teacher seeing all Latin@s as identical experts on immigration. The teacher isolated her by immediately acknowledging her “otherness” as a person of that immigration culture. That was one instance where the teacher-student relationship was critical. For Alejandra, she felt isolated because of the added non-verbal attention. Latin@ students who want to share will do so if they feel safe in that environment. Immediately singling them out as experts during discussions on immigration, however, is not a comfortable way to encourage them to share their stories and expertise. The S2S and S2T relationships are critical in these classroom situations because those relationships dictate how safe a student feels and how willing the student is to participate in the third space openly and honestly.
This vignette offers one intersection between the upcoming theme, Critical Interaction (CI), and “The Only Mexican”. In the following vignettes under the new theme, I will offer instances where the two relate in my own classroom, and times when my students noticed the intersection. CI is principal in combating “The Only Mexican” feelings, and through co-reflection between my Latin@ students and myself we were able to identify strategies to limit instances of “The Only Mexican”, Racism, and improve the third space in my own classroom.

**Theme #2: Critical Interaction**

While racism can be the catalyst to only negative third space, critical interaction can push the third space continuum either negative or positive depending on the interaction. I examined the interaction in three forms. First, CIs happen between two or more students with at least one student being Latin@ and one or more students being White. Secondly, a variation of the STS interaction is Student-to-Student Teacher Facilitated Interaction (S2ST). This is group interaction between Latin@ and White students where the teacher has highly organized, structured, and facilitated the activity. An example could be a four-person group where the teacher has assigned students individual roles with specific talking points and structured interaction. The students are instructed to interact in a specific manner based on the activity. The third CI is Student-to-Teacher interaction (S2T). These are the interactions where a single White teacher engages a single Latin@ student. Again, these CIs in other circumstances could consist of different student and teacher ethnic complexities, but at my particular school there are no Latin@ classroom teachers, so the CIs are all Latin@ students engaging with White teachers.
I acknowledge that third space can be created between students who are all Latin@, all White, or any mix of other ethnic groups. However, because I was working specifically with English Learners who are also Latin@, my study only analyzed those Latino versus White interactions. Additionally, my students recognized this binary and were aware of the difference in Latin@ versus White students. For example, I asked my students to reflect on how their lives differed from their White peers, specifically related to their home roles. This difference was important because my Latin@ students saw personal commitments and home difficulties that made it difficult to relate to the White students, thus making S2S CI problematic. Kristina discussed the binary of her world versus the perceived world of her White peers in a focus interview:

I feel like we (Latin@s and Whites) live in completely different worlds. Because even if we tried talking to, like, an American, it is kind of like, what are you going to talk about if they are not going to understand you? And I'm not going to understand why they just go home and do [nothing], while I'm over here, like, helping my mom with my brother, like teaching my brother how to read, or whatever, and then doing my homework, and then going to work. So it's kind of like, I feel like, I don't know, it's just kind of different because there is really nothing to talk about. Or if we talk about it, maybe they'll think it is a little strange. (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

Kristina felt the separation between her home culture and her White peer’s home culture. Her home responsibilities seemed greater than the responsibilities of
the White students in her class. Thus, because of their different cultural identities, she felt she could not talk or interact with White peers because they would not understand her jobs outside of school. If she felt uncomfortable interacting with her White peers, she would have difficulty in any group work requiring her to navigate the CI third space. She believed she was dichotomized from the White culture, which also reflected the neocolonial education structures. Gallagher-Geurtsen (2012) reinforces Kristina’s feelings when she writes, “neocolonial institutions, such as schools, consistently and repetitively utilize hierarchies and binaries to classify people, knowledge, and ideas...One side of the binary is always considered to be superior to or more legitimate than the other side” (pp. 6-7). Kristina felt inferior to the dominate White culture because her home roles made her feel she could not connect with the White students in her class who had fewer or different responsibilities at home.

My Latin@ students realized the current structure favored White students over Latin@ students, catering to White students home culture, and making White students the neocolonial superior to my Latin@ students in all interactions. CIs occurred within this binary power structure. To begin the vignettes on CIs, I will present examples of S2S and S2T CI that create negative third space. Then, I will transition to vignettes that model ways S2S, S2T, and S2ST CI have improved third space for my students in my classroom.

**Vignettes: Student-to-Student Interaction (S2S)**

S2S interaction existed in two forms. First, pure S2S shows students interacting during activities without structure and scaffolding for the social aspects
of the lesson. Second, S2ST where the teacher has highly-structured the social roles that helps students navigate the content within groups. Within my study, the data demonstrated that the more structured the group roles, the greater the positive impact on third space. I will share the data to illustrate this pattern, less structured group roles to more structured group roles, to show how third space can gradually shift from negative to positive under teacher facilitation.

For many of my Latin@ students, they noted struggles within group work, especially when working with White peers, when they had no assigned group roles. Often the CI produced negative third space because of unfamiliarity between Latin@ and White students. In some cases, racism caused the rift between the two groups. In other instances, stereotypes about culture and uncertainty about “the other group” made CI negative and increased isolation for the Latin@ students. Carlos expressed frustration at these group dynamics when talking about his lab group’s interaction.

When I’m doing a lab, and I don’t really know these people they kind of don’t ask me anything, there’s like no way for me to contribute ‘cuz, um, I feel uncomfortable even speaking to them and they probably think that I don’t know anything at all. (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

The obvious issue stated by Carlos is that he felt that he could not contribute because of the social implications, not the difficult content. The underlying problem, however, was that Latin@ students and White students lacked familiarity with one another. Carlos predicted that the White students had preconceived views on what he knew because he was Latino. Conversely, Carlos had his own ideas of what the
White students thought about him. The tension meant that Carlos could not even speak, let alone contribute to the lab. The divide was not only by skin color, but a barrier of interest and understanding of difference between the Latin@ and White students. Carlos' point also reflects Kristina's earlier statements that the home lives of Latin@ and White students are so different, in her opinion, that they cannot understand each other and interact effectively. Regardless of race, there is a cultural and social divide between the Latin@ and White students. If they do not know each other before the group lesson begins or are not understanding of each other's differences, the Latin@ student's group work will stagnate because they feel separate from the White students.

Vignette: Student-to-Student Teacher Facilitated Interaction (S2ST)

The previous vignette was a case study under almost no teacher facilitation. To improve third space, the teacher must analyze the dynamics of the class and assign roles and carefully construct student interaction accordingly. One example comes from my second focus group who engaged heavily with the video recordings from the LifeSize camera to reflect on their own S2S CI in two separate activities. The two activities were meant to compare differences in CI depending on how much I facilitated the classroom activity.

In the first activity, students were allowed to pick the peers that they would interact with. The activity had ten parts, with different pairs having a single part. The students could move around the room and choose the other pairs to work with to complete all ten parts within the activity. The second activity, which occurred on a different day, did not allow the students to choose their groupings. Each student
had a role for the activity based on their initial table assignment, and after each round the students moved tables, so that when each student finished they had worked in four different groups of four students. The interactions in each group were coordinated based on the roles. Two days after filming both classes the focus group reflected on what activity helped them learn and feel “comfortable”. They watched film clips that showed them participating in different types of interaction from the two lessons and they discussed the pros and cons to each lesson as applied to the learning and third space.

Interestingly, two of the three girls preferred the heavily teacher facilitated activity over the student-choice grouping. In the student-choice grouping, I noticed that the 10 Latin@ students in the class worked together, but almost completely avoided any CI with White students. However, when given the option, they would rather be in more structured group roles, a decision that meant conversing heavily with White students. When I asked my Latina students which activity helped them learn the best, Ana pointed at the second, more structured video grouping and said,

I like hearing from different people (different meaning not Latina).
Sometimes I learn better with that one (pointing at video) because there are other people’s opinion. Some people that know more. Because if I haven’t read or understood then I can understand better. (Student Focus Group Interview, January 17, 2014)

Ana recognized that all students have the capacity to share knowledge, and she appreciated that structured atmosphere because it bridged the social gap and moved straight to content manipulation. She felt pressured to move into the White
student’s learning space. The structure of the activity facilitated the move for Ana, which lessened the pressure she felt to make that decision on her own, thus lowering the risk involved socially to navigate that space.

In the S2ST activity, the students were able to learn the content in the activity and bypass the divide between student cultures, thus improving third space and lowering the affective filter. Other Latin@ students I interviewed expressed similar sentiment. For example, Carlos explained how a similar approach in another classroom “forced” students to work together and communicate in groups. He states, “…whenever we do the projects, our teacher assigns each individual a role but then we just bring it together as a group, so then everyone has to get something done and you are forced to work pretty much.” When asked if that was a good thing, “forcing students to interact through roles”, all of my interview participants said, “Yes”. They appreciated the facilitation. Carlos then added, “It makes everybody work together, all kids in the group have to participate. We don’t have to do it ourselves” (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014). In this context, “do it ourselves” relates to navigating that interactive space. Carlos does not have to worry about how effectively he moves within the third space because the teacher has provided the path. He can focus on the material, not the interaction.

The students commented on other teachers who practiced the same S2ST and the practice also resonated as beneficial with the students. Itzel noted the same activity in a different class.

I say like, in [_______ class], since I have like no body there, um, well what [Ms. _________] does is she like, gives a problem out, and for each step there’s
a different person, so if you don’t really understand one step, then the other person is like, oh well you kind of have to do this, like awkwardly, but we actually do talk. (Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

The awkward interaction reflected the students navigating the third space. It was awkward because they were not familiar with one another. Itzel was the only Latina in that class. The step-by-step process meant the group was only successful if everyone understood each step. If one student was confused, their partners had to explain the step to them so that the group could be successful. For Itzel, this required discussion and learning in a group where she would typically be isolated without facilitation. The teacher was purposefully providing the structure that lowered the Affective Filter and improved Itzel’s third space. The whole group, including Itzel, benefitted academically from the activity.

When dealing with S2S CI, third space improved when students could avoid navigating the social, cultural, and racial undercurrents and instead focused only on the content. Creating highly teacher-facilitated activities provided the organization needed to lower the affective filter while also improving third space. In the previous vignettes, the teachers addressed all three parts of Krashen’s Affective Filter for all group members. They were motivated to assist each other because the group would not be successful without each member participating. The Latin@ students were self-confident because they knew if they struggled with their piece the group would support them. Lastly, anxiety went down because the Latin@ students were not required to navigate group space on their own.
Admittedly, teachers cannot predict every wrinkle of student civility, but with S2ST CI they can begin to improve the third space and promote learning within groups. Outside of the S2S interaction, teachers can also improve third space through direct one-on-one engagement with students. In the next vignettes, my Latin@ participants reflect on how teachers can move the third space continuum in S2T CI.

**Vignettes: Student to Teacher Interaction. (S2T)**

As previously mentioned by Bruna (2009), the teacher plays a special role in third space development. In a classroom of 30 students, the teacher is only one individual contributing to the third space generated by the other 30 students. However, because of the teacher’s role as the dominant figure in the neocolonial system (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012), they have the ability to influence third space more than any one student. My participating students noted instances where the teacher’s actions swayed third space positively or negatively across the continuum depending on how they directly interacted with a specific student. I will begin with the negative interactions and then proceed to the positive interactions between teachers and students.

The vignette returns to Sara, who nervously recalled the third space in a previous class. For her, the teacher’s interaction not only made the third space negative, but also raised the affective filter to the point where she felt she could not learn anymore. The teacher used “calling on” students as a management tool to control talking. Sara is an EL and still clarifies content in Spanish. If the teacher felt she was off-task, he would call on her to answer questions. He rarely, however, used
the same methods on the White students. Whether she was on task or not, the stress she felt in the classroom made learning almost impossible. Her third space, which consisted of her own personal culture, the other student’s space, and then the teacher-heavy classroom space, was stressful to her and her learning. Sara felt that she was singled out, and as a result isolated. She shared the story in the interview.

Ooooo, like [Mr. ____], I didn’t learn anything, like you know, like he always called on us (Latina students) and I was really terrified because I kind of know but sometimes I didn’t, and so when he calls on me I was terrified and didn’t pay attention, it was more scared of being called upon than I was learning, and it was horrible. (Student Focus Group Interview, January 29, 2014)

Terrified, scared, and horrible were words that Sara described for this classroom space. These feelings added pressure of learning in a second language and being one of the few Latinas in the classroom created an insurmountably negative third space for Sara. Whether the teacher used that strategy for pedagogic or racial reasons is uncertain. What is certain is that Sara’s third space did not allow for learning. The affective filter was too high, because she was isolated as the “The Only Mexican.” With this pressure, she felt too scared to learn given the classroom management tool utilized by a teacher. The expectation for any classroom, whether it is monocultural or multi-cultural, is that the student and teacher interaction will foster positive relationships. Diaz-Rico & Weed (2010) cite various ideas for creating positive student-teacher relationships. The first tip states teachers should “express care and respect equally to all students” (p. 288). The method of calling on
Sarah to answer questions as a way to discipline her for clarifying concepts with her partner did not show equal respect for Sarah compared with the White students in the class, because the teacher did not use the same method on the other students. The teacher’s management tool negatively shifted Sarah’s S2T CI.

Other students noticed that in classes where the teacher was especially strict or unfamiliar with the students, they struggled to feel confident speaking and interacting with the teacher and other students. The issue was not necessarily racial, but when the student did not feel the teacher took the time to get to know them, they were not comfortable in the classroom, especially as the only Latin@ student. Paulo noticed this in a few of his classrooms,

Paulo: It’s much different for me because there are teachers who are like, more strict and harsh towards me, and I don’t talk a lot.

Mr. Jobe: “So when the teacher is a lot more strict or harsh, does that affect your ability to learn?”

Paulo: “Yeah it does, like I don’t like talking a lot because I don’t know how they will react to me.”

(Student Focus Group Interview, January 25, 2014)

The teacher’s demeanor in the classroom affected all students, not only Latin@s. However, for students who were already feeling isolated with the school structure, the teacher’s demeanor had an even greater role. The teachers who took the time to get to know the kids, who showed them personal attention, dramatically improved the third space and the students’ learning. Examples of these positive interactions will come in the next vignette.
Although teacher’s practices can have a negative impact on third space generation, my students reflected on other circumstances where a teacher created positive third space where there was not enough S2S interaction to foster third space on a peer-level. In these cases, the teacher was able to insert themselves as dominant co-creators of third space with the student. Alejandra experienced a teacher who helped create positive third space in this way during the last school year. I asked her what was more important to creating positive third space, the interaction of students in class or the one-on-one interaction of the Latin@ students and the teacher:

I think the teacher because, like, um, in my math class, I don’t really have any friends in there but Ms. Thompson is always like, being nice, and she is always coming to me. I’m the only Senior, so she’s always coming back to me and I feel comfortable in that class. (Alejandra, 11th Grade, Student Focus Group Interview, February 12, 2014)

Alejandra placed high importance on S2T CI, specifically emphasizing how the one-on-one time showed the teacher cared about her, making her feel safe and creating positive third space. The S2T CI in this vignette shows the impact individual attention can have for Latin@ students who are faced with the feeling of isolation. The teacher created a third space that fostered safety and concern for Alejandra’s learning, allowing her to succeed.

Regarding CI, the most effective ideas thus far have centered around ways the teacher inserted themselves into third space to make it more beneficial for their Latin@ students. However, to truly embrace post-colonial practice, teachers need to give students tools so that they can advocate for themselves when third space is negative and there is no teacher to facilitate communications. Theme #4, post-
colonial Flows and hybridity, promoted those specific tools of self-advocacy and will be discussed in the Action Plan.
Chapter 5: Implications and Action Plan

Recommendations, Limitations, and Further Research

Within my study, I have discovered that our school, despite the academic improvements of our ELs through SIOP, still has a long road to achieving optimal third space for Latin@ students. Whether the students were in my classroom or in other content classes, many of our Latin@s were still experiencing marginalization and isolation. That said, I plan to continue this research and I see this particular action research study as a preliminary assessment of third space. The following explains the limitations of the study, my future research, and how the future research will address the limitations.

When my study began, there were two major concepts I was hoping to pursue as key pieces in my research. The first was FoK (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez N, 1992) and specific strategies for applying FoK to third space (Bruna, 2009; DaSilva Iddings & Katz, 2007). Second was hybridity (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012) as an applied tool for my ELs to use when they need help navigating third space, both in my classroom and in other content areas. However, as my research proceeded, I realized analyzing the factors that affect the foundation of my student’s third space was more critical in the initial phases than FoK and hybridity. Plus, FoK, when used to change curriculum and methods, takes time for implementation and learning. Without understanding the racism and CI components, I could not help students build tools of FoK and hybridity. I decided that the scope of the research would take longer than the deadline for the project, and so I refocused the study on racism and CI. However, I plan to pursue FoK and hybridity and continue the study
over the course of multiple school years. The following is preview for where I plan to take the study based on FoK, Hybridity, and Post-colonial flows.

Limitations

First, on a macro-scale, the study has limitations because it is qualitative action research in a specific school setting. The issues my students faced in our school may differ from the issues faced by other students in different districts across the country. Our district and a majority of the faculty were highly supportive of our ELs, and SIOP was a primary focus for classrooms in our district. However, the isolation and marginalization that happened to ELs in our classrooms persist in classrooms all over the country. For these reasons, the results of my study may not transfer to another school or classroom, but the issues the Latin@ students face are most likely universal. It was geared to benefit and assess my students, with large-scale application to other environments coming later. As I stated in Chapter 1, I aimed to open my classroom culture and third space initially, and apply the research on a large scale secondarily. That said, my next stages in research will hopefully allow for larger practical purposes across the school and district.

Next, the study functioned under a strict time deadline, which limited the continuing research on FoK and post-colonial flows. In order for the FoK and hybridity research to continue, I will need to follow a set of students for longer than the four months in this study. I will begin this process in the coming school year, where I will follow more students for the entire length of the year. This project will be the next stage of my research. Also, for the full effects of the study to advance, I will need time to bring my conclusions to the community and the administration.
However, that step cannot commence until I have a solid classroom foundation with ideas for third space, because I want more student feedback before I branch beyond my own classroom.

**Action plan: How I can acknowledge post-colonial flows and hybridity to foster positive third space?**

In reality, the next stage of this project will be a three-part approach to third space for ELs in our school and district (Appendix B). Part one, the inner circle, represents intrapersonal student skills grounded in post-colonial flows and hybridity. These skills will provide the tool kit Latin@ students can use to advocate for themselves within the neocolonial school structure, both in small-group CIs and large group school interaction. These skills are the most important component because they directly impact and empower the students; hence, those skills fall within the inner circle. Part two, the middle circle, represents third space in the classroom. In this circle exists the knowledge and skills that teacher’s need in order to facilitate the best possible third space in their classrooms. It is the “facilitation circle”. This level constitutes reflective strategies, S2ST and S2T CI knowledge, and cultural awareness for all students in each teacher’s care. Lastly, the outer circle represents total school and district strategies for building positive third space. This circle includes administration at both the school and district level, including the school board and local community. Programs such as Latinos in Action would fit within this outer circle. My plan would be to identify a common macro-message to support our Latin@ students while strengthening their support in the classroom. The key idea for the continuation of the project is that all policy would start with the
Latin@ students in the classroom. I would begin with the kids first, allowing them to reflect on their needs to build the program according to what they identify as positive and negative third space in the classroom. The post-colonial flows and hybridity they see as helpful for their learning would drive the project. The ongoing research would be student-centered and student-driven. The reflections of the students build outward and influence the teacher’s decisions for facilitation. Lastly, the community promotes the positive school atmosphere.

As the project continues, the first steps would be finding the post-colonial flows and hybridity that would help students individually in the classroom. The only way to find these skills is to predict negative third space circumstances, hypothesize skills that may help students navigate those circumstances, and then record and reflect with the students on whether the new post-colonial flows were helpful. Currently, my students identified only one major tool for dealing with negative third space in CI: silence. This tool allows minority students to avoid the CIs and escape the negativity of third space because it limits any S2S interaction. However, it is equally effective at stifling the learning opportunity present in collaboration and sharing ideas. As a hypothetical example, I will look at ways my students can choose a post-colonial flow other than silence that improves their learning and the learning of the group. This will include assessments that allow me to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of each tested example. When combined with this study on CI and racism, I will have a more comprehensive guide for teachers looking to improve third space in their own classrooms, with tips and ideas across all contents.
After focusing on the student’s post-colonial skills, my next step will be working with other colleagues to implement some of the findings in their own classrooms, and then comparing with the students on the effectiveness of the strategies. In order to gather larger quantities of data, I will have to expand beyond my own classroom. My department has been receptive to my research, and many of them have already stated that they would be willing to work with me as I continue my study. In this way I can increase the influence of the new strategies and interview a wider range of students.

Time will be critical as the study continues, because I will be maintaining contact with my students as they go to college in order to record whether the post-colonial flows that we develop in high school can transfer beyond the secondary classroom. I will have a full school year to work directly with my 11th graders, and then one more year of indirect correspondence as 12th graders before they move to the real world and college. Each year I will add a new cohort to the study and will work to implement post-colonial flows with them per the advice and development of the strategies with my students who came through the study previously. Over time, I aim to gather enough data, both qualitative reflection and quantitative assessments, to provide a comprehensive guide to post-colonial flow strategies that students can use to navigate third space in high school and beyond the classroom.

**Immediate Strategy Implementation**

For next year, I have a few immediate strategies that I will apply to my classroom based on the feedback from the students in my study. First, I will use the “get-to-know-you” activities to begin the year as an intensive third space builder in
my classroom. This lesson is critical to engaging the students, both White and Latin@, with one another to gain familiarity and appreciation for the differences that each bring to the classroom. My students recognized in the interviews that it is critical that student’s are comfortable with one another socially in the classroom in order to work together effectively academically. The “get-to-know-you” activities are the first opportunity to build that relationship.

Second, I will highly-structure my group activities, which constitute the major method in my class, to reflect the expressed concerns of my Latin@ students in this study. In practice, this means pairing Latin@ students with other Latin@ students when in groups of four to prevent “The Only Mexican” feelings. High-structure also includes assigning group roles so that students are “forced” to interact with one another, especially early in the year when they are unfamiliar with their peers. While these ideas may seem like best practice, they also facilitate positive third space, which will improve learning for the Latin@ students in the group. All of these methods, plus a continuation of the video reflections and student interviews, will continue to grow my data on third space and promote positive third space for my students. The process is cyclical. Each round of observation, with the video, the interviews, and the immediate application of the student’s responses, improves my teaching and the student’s third space. The cycle fits with the long-term goals of the study because the students can practice post-colonial flows that we discuss in the interviews, and then they apply them to my classroom as well as other subject areas.
Recommendation for school: How can the school and administration support positive third space?

Fortunately my school has been responsive to my recommendations and the results of the study thus far. We have a school-wide novel assignment based on a story of an undocumented child coming to United States as required reading for the upcoming school year. All students will read *The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande and all teachers must be prepared to facilitate proper discussion on the issues of immigration in their classroom. In accordance with the planned school-wide novel assignment, I will be working with teachers in the school in professional development to prepare them for the potential discussions that come from reading the novel. As a piece of the upcoming research, I will work directly with our Latin@ students on post-colonial flows that can help them navigate these potentially uncomfortable CIs related to the text. Then, I will use their feedback as a way to identify initial strategies for post-colonial flows and hybridity.

I have begun presenting my findings to the community through a short presentation to the school board and our school’s administration, and so far they have been encouraging, with the superintendent discussing including the research in professional development trainings. Third space is not “teachable” in that a teacher cannot control the influences and cultures that create a classroom third space. However, I am hoping through awareness with the help of administration I can spread strategies that have been effective in my classroom for facilitating positive third space, even if I cannot create third space on my own. Luckily the administration recognizes that third space is not ideal, because the first step to
improving classroom culture is recognizing that a problem still exists. For many teachers and administrators, admitting that fact is difficult. But with help from administration and student feedback, I can gradually present my findings to the whole staff.

For administrators looking to assist their teachers in improving third space, I would recommend three helpful tips: First, resources for awareness on the cultural and social rhetoric that is acceptable in the classroom. My administration has already begun this process through a presentation from our Latinos in Action students for our staff on how to talk about immigration, facilitated by the ESL department. These student-directed discussions are empowering to the students and more impactful to the staff than handouts or PowerPoints. Second, administration should provide feedback on the effectiveness of group interaction during administrative observations. A teaching coach, principal, or colleague can be the “eye” in the classroom for teacher’s who do not have video cameras. Better still, the second person in the classroom could record an activity with a handheld camera and then provide that recording for reflective purposes. Reflection is the only way progress happens in the classroom, and the only way to watch third space creation. Lastly, administration must understand that they are the most authoritative position within the Neocolonial education structure inside the school. That position holds power to impact school third space in negative or positive ways. Just as S2T interaction is critical in the classroom, student-to-administrator interaction is critical to school culture. Feeling safe and respected by administration can help a Latin@ student within the third space of school.
Recommendations for Teachers: How can teachers create space for hybridity and post-colonial flows in their classrooms?

For teachers, the critical recommendation is to build awareness and recognition of third space and how CI can impact learning, regardless of the student’s background socially and academically. Based on the findings, even talented students can fall victim to being “The Only Mexican” in small and large groups. At times the tension is racial, and in other circumstances the tension comes from unfamiliarity with peers and ignorance to proper rhetoric. Therefore my recommendations are three fold:

First, teachers must be intentional in designing lessons that scaffold roles within small-group interaction. This gives ELs the ability to interact without initiating and navigating the communication independently. It is like guiding them without the teacher sitting with the group. Besides functioning as strong SIOP practice, it prevents the hybridity response of silence, the go-to reaction from ELs when they feel like “The Only Mexican” in groups. Also, the more these activities take place, the more familiar Latin@ students feel with their peers. In the interviews I conducted, all Latin@ students felt they were more comfortable with their peers and learned better under highly structured work environments with assigned group roles. Although this will be a major part of my further research, I predict that over the course of the year these activities will dramatically impact positive third space because they reflect my student’s reflections throughout this study.
Second, teachers must take seriously the “get-to-know-you” activities at the beginning of the year, and build lessons that emphasize every student in the class working together and becoming comfortable with one another. Again, many teachers may have these activities already implemented in lessons. The difference is the activities allow students to genuinely work together and get to know one another. These activities help build classroom third space and can be the groundwork for Latin@ students feeling comfortable with their peers, and vice versa, later in the year.

Lastly, teachers must be informed and observant of what rhetoric is used and what actions are perceived by them and their students regarding issues and content affecting Latin@ students. For example, in one of the examples from the study a Latina student was offended by a student comment, but the teacher chose not to correct the student or use the comment as a teaching moment. When asked, most Latin@ students at my school do not want the student making the inappropriate comment to be reprimanded, but rather for the teacher to use the moment to discuss what the student said as a teachable moment. In this way, rhetoric about “Illegal Aliens” becomes a discussion about why “Undocumented immigrant” is more appropriate. Many times the comments and discussions are not meant to be racist, but because of ignorance regarding facts and sensitivities with immigrant students, the Latin@ students feel discriminated against, isolated, and marginalized. If the teacher is cognizant of what is said and discussed in their classroom they can turn racial tension into teachable learning.
Conclusions

Ideally, all teachers will be committed to improving third space for their Latin@ students. The benefits to all students are obvious, with Latin@ students engaging better with the content, and more importantly, feeling safe and confident to collaborate with their White peers. However, that is not the reality in all schools. The simplest observation that all teachers can strive towards is to know their students as people, not just as academics. The effect from a positive, self-aware student-to-teacher relationship can change the third space for a Latin@ student and improve their learning. Understanding Latin@ student's personalities, culture, and strengths will begin the process of a positive third space in any classroom.
References

Benson, S. (2010). "I don't know if that'd be english or not": Third space theory and literacy instruction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53*(7), 555-563.


Appendix A

Third Space Continuum

Interaction and racism pulls the third space towards the negative end or pushes the third space towards the positive end of the continuum. This model demonstrates that third space is not a sum of cultures, but rather a moving entity that can shift depending on interactive factors between students and teachers in the classroom.
Appendix B

Three-Part Approach to Third Space: Macro-Plan

The student skills come first, hence why they are in the innermost circle. The other circles grow based on the student's needs.

**Student Skills:**
Postcolonial flows and hybridity for students

**Teacher Skills:**
Strategies and awareness for facilitating third space

**Community Skills:**
Whole school, and administration strategies for improving third space
Appendix C
Westminster College
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Subjects

Form G
Notification to IRB of Exempt Research Activities
Please answer each question below, sign, and submit to the IRB
prior to instituting research activities

1. I am the faculty member serving as the principal investigator on a project entitled:

2. Said project involves ONLY the following activity as defined in section C1 (check one):

   ☑️ Research conducted in an established educational setting involving standard educational practices.

   __________________________
   Research involving the use of educational tests, surveys, interviews, or observations of public behavior in which the researcher does not interact with the participants and information is recorded in such a way that participants cannot be identified.

   __________________________
   Research involving only the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

   __________________________
   Research involving study, evaluation, or examination of public service or benefit program; and such research has been approved by the agency or program head.

   __________________________
   Research involving only a taste and food quality evaluation.

   If none of the above are applicable, this project is not exempt.

3. Does the project involve the use of vulnerable populations as defined in section D1a. If "yes", this project is not exempt.

I certify that the above information is true and accurate. I also agree to suspend research activities and notify the IRB immediately should said project change in such a way that it no longer qualifies as exempt.

                                                  09/21/2013
Name of principal investigator

Signature

Name of Co-investigator

Date

Signature