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MAPPING THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE OF A RIGHT-TO-READ CLAIM:  
A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Mursalata Muhammad

ORCID Scholar No. 0009-0001-3432-2089

June 2024

MAPPING THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE OF A RIGHT-TO-READ CLAIM:  
A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation, by Mursulata Muhammad, has  
been approved by the committee members signed below  
who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of  
Graduate School of Leadership & Change  
Antioch University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MAPPING THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE OF A RIGHT-TO-READ CLAIM: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

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Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Yellow Springs, OH

This dissertation project used an interpretivist qualitative research design to study how the right-to-read claim made by seven teenagers attending Detroit public schools in 2016 reflects, addresses, or describes contemporary discussions about educational access. Using situational analysis (SA) as a theory/method, the entirety of the claim comprises the situation of the social phenomenon being studied, not the people. This research combines critical race theory (CRT) with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems and uses situation analysis to map historical discourses to conduct a study that examines the history of a present situation of inquiry as presented by this question: How does the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school students in Detroit, Michigan reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access? The study collected data to allow me to construct a prosopography<sup>1</sup> that articulates an answer to the question that claims access to literacy is a public school policy right. Because situational analysis (SA) is designed to open research data to aspects of a circumstance that may have been overlooked, marginalized, or silenced, I was not certain the research results would answer this exact question. Additionally, critical theory and SA were used to conduct this qualitative research, examining historical data that addresses the right-to-read claim as a Foucaultian programmatic social problem. As such, it seeks to understand the complexities of

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<sup>1</sup> "Prosopography is the investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives" (Stone, 1971, p. 46).

recurring and historically situated education practices that limit actualizing U.S. education policies that embrace access to basic literacy skills as a human right. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (<https://aura.antioch.edu>) and OhioLINK ETD Center (<https://etd.ohiolink.edu>).

*Keywords:* critical theory, critical race theory, critical theory, education, education policy, feminism, grounded theory, literacy, situational analysis, Foucaultian, programmatic social problem

## **Dedication**

To children—our most valuable and precious natural resource.

To adults who will, unapologetically, gobble down the systems that seek to harvest our children.

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*God.*

Next, I acknowledge Mutasha Muhammad, my mother, who demonstrated an unreasonable amount of love that I accept but still cannot conceptually understand how she did it. My fathers are Qabid Muhammad and Elton Farris. From one, I learned to rarely take anything personally. From the other, I learned that a father's love does not depend on biology

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Naming is human behavior. It is an inclusive practice that people from all socioeconomic, genders, racialized categories, and ages practice. Naming is power. It calls into being that which is present but unseen. Naming, for those who imagine a god or who ascribe to creation stories, is the closest people get to being nearly almighty. Calling an action into view by naming it and constructing a description of it with evidence, examples, and support (basically more naming), is a performative act that is subject to the social dynamics of the people involved in the communication. However, when the practice of identification through naming is routinely held by people who employ exclusionary practices and have social power, social systems are dominated by the ideas of those people.

As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, James Coleman, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins, led a study to examine the state of equal education opportunities in public education (Coleman et al., 1966). This study came more than 10 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the case that ended legal practice of segregated public schools. Over the past 50 years, the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* Report—more commonly known as the Coleman Report—has remained a benchmark for public education research standards (Dickinson, 2016; Hill, 2016). The Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) presented research focused on the availability of equal education access for children based on race, color, religion, and national origin.

One area of the study addressed the educational progress of Black and White children in public schools. As measured by standardized tests used during the time period, the report showed that White children demonstrated more literacy achievements than Black children. In the report's findings, Coleman et al. (1966) identified the current but unarticulated differences in the educational achievements between Black and White children attending public schools as the



“achievement gap.” Additionally, the report provided specific descriptions of what contributed to the achievement gap as the result of race-based segregation that limited family income, diverse socio-economic school population, and teacher quality. Thus, the lower literacy achievements of Black children as compared to White children enrolled in public schools, in part, resulted from a combination of segregative practices—it was intersectional. According to Coleman, racial segregation practices that limited family income also limited access to economically diverse public schools and access to quality teachers.

### **Research Purpose and Significance: Why This Research?**

The impetus for this dissertation research is a claim filed in 2016 that access to basic literacy skills is a fundamental right for children in K-12 public schools (*Gary B. v. Snyder*, 2018)<sup>2</sup>. Several Detroit high school students sued the state of Michigan for failing to provide them with the tools needed to access basic literacy skills. They cited the state’s failure to provide conditions needed to attain a basic minimum education as evidenced by the poor classroom and building conditions, lack of instructional materials, and employment of underqualified teachers. What stood out in the descriptions of their school environment were similarities to the five cases combined in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case. The focus on education access was concentrated on the inequities created by the segregation law that required separate public schools for Blacks and Whites. The details of each case cited inequitable public school conditions like poor buildings, inadequate learning materials, teacher preparedness, the distance of segregated schools from communities, and the lack of public school transportation.

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<sup>2</sup> As this suit was brought against the Michigan governor et al., and the governorship changed while the case was going through the courts, from Rick Snyder to Gretchen Whitmer, the case name also changed. I have used “*Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020)” when referring to the entire case in text. Separate references are provided in the reference list for *Gary B v. Snyder* (2018) and *Gary B. v. Whitmer* (2020).

One obvious difference between the contemporary claim by the Detroit high school students and those represented in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) is that U.S. public school education has been legally racially desegregated for several decades.

This research study is timely because current political changes, the global health pandemic, and local actions by public high school students, teachers, and unions are probably providing a tipping point for what is possible for the next iteration of U.S. education policy. The research aimed to provide data that explain how the 2016 right-to-read case contributes to issues related to educational access. It may also reveal relationalities that provide a deeper understanding that may disrupt centuries of racialized inequities that limited access to literacy skills required for basic and educational attainment.

Discussions of U.S. educational policy tend to focus on imbalances in power, control, and reformation rather than on educational justice and transformation. The underlying assumption of reforming educational practices is that the current practices are generally adequate for educating all children. Contemporary reform generally develops from an acceptance of the nature of the educational system without questioning the (historical) roots that might have caused systemic access inequalities. However, this research takes a historical discourse perspective to question the situation from which the access to literacy claim arose. It examined practices of educational inequalities in the same conversation as practices that created educational equity and inclusion. There are educational literacy approaches and practices that have not been sufficiently taken into account. As a result, official U.S. educational policies—those mandated by federal and state governments—and the practices they perpetuate appear stuck in an educational reform loop. This loop fuels this research. It led me to wonder not why education policies are not reformed but what has happened that secures the failure of attempts to provide access to literacy for all

Americans. This dual perspective of official (dominate in power/minority in numbers, White, male) and unofficial (a minority in power/dominate in numbers, Black, nonbinary-gendered) educational actions and practices contextualizes education policies in two broad categories:

- Category 1: Official policies enforced by laws and rules based on racialized principles or imbued with racist implications. Racialized principles may be explicit and implicit but often defer to implicit, indirect action (e.g., any individual, collective, institutional, or illegal/legal actions that limit access to basic literacy skills for racialized populations).
- Category 2: Unofficial policies maintained by practices that implement actions based on educating-principles (e.g., individual, collective, institutional, illegal/legal practices that increase access to literacy for people regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, or religion).

Official education policies may serve several complex social aims. They may dehumanize and humanize, which definitely affects a person's access to basic literacy skills. They may be limiting and liberatory. Whatever the case, education policies can also lead to humanizing and liberatory effects by showing up as explicit actions in both official and unofficial education practices. It is the phenomenon of unofficial education policies I intend to research empirically by using situational analysis (SA) to study the 2016 right-to-read claim. Using SA and sensitizing concepts from critical race theory (CRT) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the research examines extant historical discourse materials that comprise the right-to-read situation, I look at if and how the 2016 claim that K-12 public school children have a fundamental right to access basic literacy skills can reflect, address, or describe

contemporary discussions about educational access. Data gathering and analysis were guided by the principles of situational analysis (Clarke, 2005, 2015; Clarke & Friese, 2007).

The 2016 lawsuit, initiated by Black and Latino high school students, claimed that access to basic literacy skills is a fundamental right for K-12 public school children (*Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer*, 2018/2020): This was the basis for my initial research questions. Black Americans have repeated the demand for access to basic literacy skills for over 150 years in multiple ways. In 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation provided Black Americans with their first legal opportunities to access essential reading and writing skills. U.S. history provides numerous instances of marginalized Americans who have struggled against U.S. education policies that limited their access to literacy. However, Black Americans' pursuit of literacy is a complex history that should not be ignored in light of the 2016 claim made by Black and Brown high school students in Detroit, Michigan.

### **Research Question and Rationale**

As an educator and graduate of Detroit Public Schools, I continue to ponder multifaceted questions such as how it is that after so many historical points of educational reforms and in the midst of current reforms, poor, Black, and Brown American children and adults are still demanding access to basic literacy skills more than 150 years since the abolishment of slavery?

This introduces the research question for the dissertation project:

- How does the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school students in Detroit, Michigan, reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access?

The rationale for this research is to improve educational access by creating a biography of the claim that moves more deeply into discourses that shape historical iterations of the

right-to-read claim. Focusing on the relationships of discourses that impact this claim can help articulate it in a variety of performative situations, which provides more perspective than examining it as a static problem.

My interest in this situation is based on the increasing expectation that community colleges offer development and basic literacy skills. I am not suggesting that developmental education should not be part of community college curricula. I am concerned about the number of traditionally-age college adults who struggle to complete the first year of college-level courses.

### **Historical Context**

The historical context for challenges to educational policies that govern literacy access instead of providing literacy access began with the 1740s anti-literacy laws. These laws created the first educational policies in colonial America, making reading illegal for enslaved Africans. The criminalized status of literacy for marginalized people came with the expectation that any materials used to gain literacy would be inherently inferior, separate, and unequal. However, despite the anti-literacy colonial educational policies, enslaved peoples and their allies devised practices that led to literacy for children and adults. U.S. history provides evidence of specific legal actions that made access to literacy an illegal pursuit and the response actions that resulted in people attaining the skills anyway. Those who could read made way for others by using ordinary and extraordinary actions. In this sense, the practice of educational policies included principles for increasing educational access and laws and rules that reinforced the principles.

The descendants of enslaved Africans faced continued assaults against their literacy pursuits through U.S. educational policies established between the 1860s and 2020. However, Black educational theorist-practitioners' practices defied the educational policies in the late

1860s to mid-1900s with concerted efforts, mostly in the Southern United States. Table 1.1 identifies some of the major Black educational theorist-practitioners whose teaching continue to positively impact African American education in the United States.

**Table 1.1**

*Some Influential Black Educational Theorist-Practitioners*

NAME	LIFE RANGE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND REFERENCE(S)
Benjamin Banneker	1731–1806	tobacco farmer, astronomer, and almanac author (Cerami, 2002)
Mary McLeod Bethune	1875–1955	educator, philanthropist, humanitarian, womanist, and civil rights activist (Bethune, 2001)
Mary Frances Berry	1938–	historian, writer, lawyer, activist (Berry, 1982)
Hallie Quinn Brown	1875–1955	educator, writer, and activist (Berce et al., 2000)
Nannie Helen Burroughs	1879–1961	educator, orator, religious leader, civil rights activist, feminist, and businesswoman (Burroughs, 2019)
Alexander Crummell	1819–1898	minister, academic, and African nationalist (Crummell, 1995)
Fanny Jackson Coppin	1837–1913	educator, missionary, and advocate for female higher education (Jackson Coppin, 1913/1995)
Esau Jenkins	1910–1972	South Carolina African American Human Rights leader, businessman, local preacher, and community organizer (Clark & Twining, 1980)
Daniel Payne	1811–1893	bishop, educator, college administrator and author (Payne, 1888)
Inez Beverly Prosser	1897?–1934	teacher and administrator, first African American woman to receive a PhD in psychology (Prosser, 1933)
Virginia Randolph	1870–1958	educator in Virginia (B. S. Chapman, 2015)

NAME	LIFE RANGE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND REFERENCE(S)
James Edward Shepard	1875–1947	pharmacist, civil servant and educator, the founder of what became the North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina (Ellis, 2017)
Jeanne Noble	1926–2002	educator and author on experiences of African American women in college (Noble, 1957)
Manning Marable	1950–2011	professor of public affairs, history and African American Studies at Columbia University; founder of the Institute for Research in African American Studies (Marable, 1983, 1995)
Booker T. Washington	1856–1915	educator, orator author and presidential advisor (Washington, 1901, 1902)
Fanny C. Williams	1982–1980	educator and community organizer

Limitations on access to basic literacy and higher education took more muted forms with the Black migration of the 1940s—a time when large numbers of Black Americans migrated to northern states from southern ones. In states like Michigan, where legal school segregation never existed, Black American parents, guardians, and children still faced educational obstacles without much of the infrastructure that had formed in southern states.

While not always a negative approach, uncritical use of “decentralized education . . . with its tradition of local autonomy” (Bok, 2013, p. 90) has enabled the spread of failing U.S. education policy. The consistent local focus on educational needs trends toward trade-based literacies rather than knowledge-based literacies. This educational divide is starkly apparent in community colleges’ dual mission and the nation’s dedication to summative versus formative testing. The United States’s heavy reliance on testing permeates educational practices, which dehumanizes students. The first ideas for testing took shape in 1838, which means the United States has spent approximately 178 years of focused research and development to produce

methods (tests) to extract and categorize what we know (Bok, 2013; Sahlberg, 2011). Much less time and funds have been spent on studying the methods that support learning and the process of how we come to know to remain underdeveloped.

This battle of “what” children learn versus “how” children learn, contributes exclusionary practices affecting “who” gets access basic, potentially, liberating literacy skills. The trifecta of what, how, and who gets access to public education capable of providing basic literacy skills is entrenched in U.S. education psyche. As a result, attempts to reform educational practices fail because cultural reproduction operates with oppressive habits of mind instead of liberatory practices. Current educational policies function in ignorance of the cultural economics of education.

Successful educational policies require rigorous teacher education and redesigned educational systems that facilitate learning at multiple junctures. The lack of coordinated standards between U.S. colleges and high schools contributes to a culture of unprepared learners matriculating from secondary schools with high remedial educational needs (Bok, 2013). Black educational theorist-practitioners’ actions in this context have been overlooked. Their principles are rooted in social justice actions that increase people’s access to literacy skills (Anderson, 1988; Dillard, 2022; Givens, 2021). When an education policy relies on decentralized approaches, the assumption is that they are not exclusionary. However, the current decentralized education system is rooted in protectionism, which encourages competition, finger-pointing, and separatism. Bok (2013), argued that often,

[When] school systems and higher education bodies . . . do meet to achieve better coordination, community colleges are often left out of the discussion even though they are the point of entry for most of the students who are especially likely to experience academic problems and leave before earning a degree. (p. 90)



Often, K-8 schools and 9–12 schools in rural areas are also left out of the coordination conversation. The United States's decentralization of education and use of local autonomy has been cited as a continuous impediment to establishing a strong educational policy. Bok (2013) elaborated on this issue:

In principle, state officials should be able to persuade schools, universities, and community colleges to create a closer alignment between the courses taught in high school and the academic skills and knowledge required for college. Other countries have solved this problem. However, the marked decentralization of education in the United States, with its tradition of local autonomy, makes the problem of coordination especially difficult. Universities resist having to accept a statewide definition of college readiness. Many high school authorities feel that they have enough problems graduating students with the standards already in place without raising the requirements to conform more closely to college demands. (p. 90)

Bok's claim about decentralization and local autonomy is valid. Still, it overlooks the fact that what has been decentralized and promoted through law and rules are racialized, gendered, and economically-based educational principles. It was a result of this generational exclusionary education policies that seven high-school public school children students from Detroit, Michigan, were able, in 2016, to advance a legal case for a fundamental right to access basic literacy skills through their local public schools.

This legal case marked a historical continuation point for Black educational theorist-practitioners' work. The contributions of their educating-actions have been overlooked in the genealogy of educational research methods. They fueled a variety of unofficial education policies both of theory and practice based on the idea that the need for basic literacy skills was so urgent that action could not wait for research to be completed. Thus, the legal case of *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) is planted squarely in the past, present, and future U.S. education policies.

The dehumanizing practice of enslaving African peoples created the racialized practices from which the current United States' educational policies (local, state, and national) developed.

The decentralized governing approach established to protect and unite colonial America enabled racialized-education policies that reincarnate old practices for centuries to continue without challenge. Historically, dominant U.S. educational policies focused not on increasing literacy but on governing it by continuing practices aimed at limiting access to basic literacy skills for specific groups of people. Educational inequities revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Domingue et al., 2021; Kogan & Lavertu, 2021; Pier et al., 2021) are only new to some Americans. Unpredictable educational leadership at the federal and state levels has varying effects on official education policies. As a set of principles, collection of laws, and rules meant to guide, if not govern, educational systems, U.S. education policies fail to support literacy across the United States. Critical research such as Dillard's (2022), hooks's (2021), and Grant et al.'s (2016) suggested that U.S. education policy failures are related to their focus on racialized educational principles instead of on educating-principles. The failure may be the lack of direct action present in the educating-principles established by Black educational theorist-practitioners (Table 1.1).

In sum, the biography of discourses expressed here uses the terms of educational policies and practices. These macro/meso-level practices not only regulate educational access to basic literacy skills but also relate to and are co-constitutive elements in situations like the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) claim. Digging into the relationalities between educational claims, policies, and practices goes beyond focusing on “policies” as the preferred, selective, and highly contextual point from which to discuss educational access. In this case, there is no context, no chicken-or-egg dilemma: There is only the situation as evidenced by all its relationships. The methodology most apt for this kind of research is situational analysis.

### Research Methodology and Its Limitations

Situational analysis (SA) offers researchers a design method that seeks to articulate heterogeneous elements of complex social issues. It provides a rigorous model comprising mapping, coding, and memo writing that researchers can use to unravel complex social issues and has seen increased use as a method used in policy research. I chose SA for its ability to situate the various elements (human and nonhuman) involved in the legal claim that access to basic literacy is a public education policy right. However, Uri (2015) identified the following limitations after using SA in their study on the impact of systemic design on 21st-century education: scope, setting boundaries, lack of adequate vocabulary, and managing mapping complexities. According to Clarke (2005),

If we lack both an *adequate vocabulary* [emphasis added] and research methods to specify genres of difference, we will continue to be paralyzed in terms of constructing ways of sharing the planet that works effectively toward greater social justice and more democratic participation. (p. xxx)

I noted the importance of having an adequate vocabulary because it is an issue that Uri (2015) singled out for SA as a methodological research choice. It implies that the research SA makes possible to create more social justice is hindered by the lack of ways to make the research accessible.

### Research Ethics

This research does not include human participants so there was no need for IRB approval or informed consent procedures. It focused primarily on historical discourses that include human and nonhuman elements. However, I am a researcher who comes to the task with a social justice ethical perspective that privileges intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). The ethics of these areas require researchers to explicitly question and situate the multiple identities involved in the research. Additionally, I used research ethics that incorporate historical consciousness (Edling et

al., 2020). Combined, social justice, intersectionality, and historical consciousness provide the following ethical research expectations when examining historical data:

- Do not ignore contradictions.
- Be reflexive—acknowledge my bias.
- Acknowledge the biases in sources by recognizing that people are complex with experiences tied to place and time (at least).
- Maintain research transparency.
- Seek critical feedback.

Specifically, my ethical research perspective “utilizes and integrates core concepts of pragmatism, including its emphasis on pluralism, lived experience and public philosophy, with feminist theory and practice with a focus on social change” (Whipps & Lake, 2020, para. 1). This is activist-oriented employment of ethical research.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Even though I teach that articulating one’s worldview is helpful to any writing task, I do not delve into the complexity of the task. I struggle to articulate my positionality. I am frustrated by the constraints that I feel the process demands and that I place on the description. I want to provide a simple straightforward positionality statement such as that I use a Black-feminist approach to employ an interpretive constructivist lens for this research on literacy and U.S. education policy. However, this straightforward position fails to present the crux of my recurring dilemma to express when and where I enter the ongoing education research conversation (Cooper, 1892/2016; Giddings, 1984/1996). Before I understood the joy and gravity that came with being female, poor, Muslim, or Black, I experienced the silence of being young. As a result, I remain motivated by understanding social dynamics relationships and the cultural practices that

frame them. How and where children learn is a complex relationship that incorporates several informal and formal environments. As a girl who was economically disadvantaged, Muslim, and Black in America, I experienced a variety of educational environments. I was homeschooled, attended Detroit public elementary school, a private Muslim school, and a public high school. All of the schools were majority Black.

As a Black woman educator teaching at a community college in Michigan, whose family was poor, large—I have 12 siblings—and cared for by a mother who was the primary parent, I still find it inadequate to state my positionality primarily using the broad categories of gender, class, and race, even though these are integral to my lived experiences. My earliest memories of life without a voice were temporal and gendered. For example, most of the adults in my life believed in the idea that children must be seen but not heard. This belief struck me as oppositional and objectifying.

In my seen-but-not-heard childhood, I experienced deeper silencing when I learned that girls and boys are expected to be silent, but boys could do more with their bodies than could girls. Luckily for me, this attitude was not something I experienced in the wider community. I was allowed to be a “tomboy” without question. From earliest memory and until I was about 14 years old, I ran races, played basketball, and football in the streets with neighborhood boys and a few girls who cared to enjoy those activities. However, from my father I learned that he preferred my brother to sit in the front seat of the car when we went on outings with him. I also learned that he did not want children. When he learned my mother was pregnant, he said that if she insisted on having the baby, could she make sure not to have a girl! My father and I loved each other, but we battled constantly during my early teens—which should still be defined as

girlhood. American culture has ingrained a consistent adultification process for Black children (Epstein et al., 2017; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021).

I was about 13 or 14 when I confronted my father about his attitude towards me. I wanted to bring up all accounts my other siblings gave me over the years about the horrible things he said and did to my mother before I was born. I thought I would get the upper hand. My decision to tell him how unfit a person he was, came from some frivolous issue I had with him at the time. I rolled out all the stories in a wonderful litany full of child-like enthusiasm for finally having more power than my parent. My father took ownership of every past action I reported. Finally, I asked him why he was so cruel. He told me not to take it personally because it had nothing to do with me. He said it would be crazy to hate a baby and that he could not hate me—I was not even me then. He continued to explain that he hated himself and failed to understand why my mother loved him. The idea of being a father and having a child was wrapped up in all his other relationships and childhood. He checked in with me by asking if I understood why it is not a good idea to take what others do too personally. He added that when he realized his wife was going to have this child, he thought the only thing that could make the situation worse was if she had a girl. I pressed him about what is so bad about having a daughter. He said there was nothing bad about having a baby girl, before adding that he remembered how he used to treat women. He knew how the world treats women. He did not wish that treatment on anyone. That confrontational conversation with my father empowered me early in life to avoid personalizing too many elements in relationships with others. It supported the performative nature of positionality and reiterates that meaning-making is an interpretive-constructivist process for me.

My positionality is performative-girl/child-centered. The life experiences influencing my research position for inquiring into the demand for basic literacy as a public education policy

right are rooted in the temporality of girlhood. As a moment in time that has gone, I situate my positionality in a past moment, not to suggest something lost, but to construct a continuous relationship. The continuity of relationships between myself now and my past self, reminds me that nothing is settled. As the younger girl in a large family, I have developed radical noticing skills because I saw relationships as always-emergent renewable natural human resources. Sinclair (2007) described the development of relational positioning as skills that later-born children develop because of parental scarcity in large families. Later-born children learn to read and negotiate familial power dynamics out of necessity. The eight year age gap separating me from the next youngest sibling and the proximity of everyone living close until I was about 18 had two lasting effects. First, they loved me despite the chaos of their relationships with each other and my parents. Second, in a variety of unique ways, they attempted to give me as much girlhood time as possible and pushed against adultification practices. Using a girl/child lens to inform my positionality provides the following sensitizing concepts as constitutive elements for the position I bring to the current research, feminisms (Clarke, 2015; hooks, 2000) womanist, radical-reciprocity and noticing, and interpretive constructivism.

### **Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter II will review key historical documents that informed the collective and individual education practices of America's official and unofficial education policies. Individual and collective actions of a ruling class of White males focused on protecting property rights (e.g., land, money, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans). From their enfranchised power position, they established officially recognized formal education policies that restricted practices that might otherwise increase access to literacy. Those restrictive practices continue today;

attempts to reform formal policies fail because they rely on dehumanizing principles (e.g., race, class, sex, religion). These formal policies enforce disenfranchising education practices.

However, laymen stakeholders' individual and collective actions (i.e., children, parents, community collectives) and educational theorist-practitioners focused on protecting what we have come to call human rights (Lauren, 2011). They established unofficially recognized informal educational policies that increased literacy access from their disenfranchised power position. Those practices continue today; however, attempts to improve formal policies fail because they are resistant to the changes required for practices that rely on humanizing educational principles. Both types of policies began operating at the same historical moments.

To portray and explain the history of present social circumstances surrounding the relationship between U.S. education policies and the people who want access to basic literacy skills, I will use critical theories from educational field and CRT. This critical theory approach frames my research within a historical discourse grounded by social justice principles and dialogic practices as components that are not distinct from teaching and learning processes. Specifically, I used a critical theory framework to examine how the 2016 *Gary B. v. Synder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) lawsuit (the right-to-read claim) contributes to U.S. education policy discourse. The political nature of education cannot be ignored and calls for more specific critical theory concepts and analysis. The social and political complexities associated how people gain access to education in the United States, are rife with shifting allegiances and competing interest.

Chapter III focuses on the proposed methods and methodology. I used SA, rooted in grounded theory to map specific historical practices. Using Foucault's approach to examine the "history of the present," Clarke (2005) wrote, "Grounded theory approaches have been used on



historical materials for years but only by a fairly limited number of researchers” (p. 264). SA provides the tools I can use to conduct a multi-site analysis to explain how the *Gary B. v. Synder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) case fits into historical discourses about educational access in the United States.

Clarke et al. (2015a) described the SA method as one that uses specific situational mapping —abstract/messy maps, relational maps, social worlds maps, and positional maps. I used SA mapping techniques as the main research design approach for conducting a historical analysis of the right-to-read claim, which is situated in the *Gary B. v. Synder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) lawsuit initiated in 2016. I used grounded theory-based coding and memo writing techniques and multiple versions of all three SA mapping methods: situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps. Project maps may be added to present the research findings. This dissertation explores the following main idea and research question: How does the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school students in Detroit, Michigan reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access?

Several supplementary questions follow from this:

- How have historical educational discourses contributed to the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school students in Detroit, Michigan?
- How has the 2016 claim contributed to U.S. education policy discourse?
- How are educational concepts, practices, or ideas connected to this claim?
- Who is involved in this claim and how are they like and/or different from others who have made a similar claim?
- How has the claim challenged official and unofficial educational practices or policies?

Chapter IV of the dissertation encapsulates the findings from using SA to map the historical discourses of claims that literacy access is an education policy right. It incorporates researched data aimed at providing clearer articulation of my working concept—that human literacy skills can be acquired through iterative educational practices. Additionally, it presents my findings and insights in a manner that could contribute to future critical examinations of humanizing practices in U.S. educational practices.

Chapter V builds on Chapter IV by providing conclusions and insights into future considerations, particularly for community college theory-practitioners. It includes recommendations for practitioners, implications for leadership, change, innovation, and suggestions on future research studies. It also notes key areas for future work that could continue to provide valuable insight within the context of community college faculty as contributors to scholarly research.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW OF THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

In this chapter I describe sensitizing concepts in the theoretical framework of research and practice literature to inform my critical research approach. The critical framework used to contextualize this research is CRT in education and ecological systems theory. Both CRT in education and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989) provide concepts for examining complex social systems by addressing systemic issues across the individual, community, and societal groups.<sup>3</sup> Theoretical flexibility is needed for studying U.S. education policy and practices. Artifacts of policy and practices include localized examinations of education practices at the school/classroom and principal/teacher/student/parent interactions. The goal of studying the artifacts is to understand how the microsystems and mesosystems may be influenced by a confluence of interactions between a variety of social systems including but not necessarily giving priority to macrosystem influences.

My study of how individual and collective social systems contribute to the formation of America's official and unofficial education policies is suited for the historical centering tenets used in both CRT in education and the ecological systems theory. This addresses, for example, the individual and collective actions of a ruling class of White males focused on protecting property rights such as land, money, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans (Allen, 2016; Patel, 2016). White males used their enfranchised power position to establish officially recognized formal education policies that restricted practices that might increase access to literacy. Those restrictive practices continue today, for example, in attempts to reform formal policies that fail because they rely on dehumanizing principles. These formal policies enforce

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<sup>3</sup> Bronfenbrenner's approach is one of many "ecological systems theories" that have been transferred to social research from longer standing natural science concepts focused ecological systems theory (Herrero-Jáuregui et al., 2018; Rotabi, 2007).

disenfranchising education practices. However, laymen stakeholders' individual and collective actions (e.g., children, parents, community collectives) and Black educator theorist-practitioners focused on ensuring educational access as a human right.

As a historically marginalized diasporic population, Black people's access to basic literacy education is an international human right. Lauren (2011) noted,

[Several] other international bodies, the specialized agencies, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also enhanced human rights with their many expanded activities. UNESCO focused on the right to an education, cultural rights, and human rights education (p. 263)

Working within and on the margins of local and international governing systems, individuals and groups made educational access a reality. Specifically, in the chapter, "Entering the Twentieth Century: Visions, War, and Peacemaking," Lauren's (2011) discussion of the development of international human rights policies provides examples of social changes in terms of Martin Luther King Jr.'s (1968) concept of creative maladjustment. King argued that maladjustment to discriminatory actions is a moral and necessary stance. Creative maladjustment involves innovative thinking, courageous actions, and a commitment to transformative social change to drive social change and work toward a more just and equitable society. In the context of U.S. education policy as a human rights issue, Black educator theorist-practitioners used creative maladjustment.

During the 1900s, Black Americans' disenfranchised position was clearly codified by formally recognized education policies, practices, and popular public opinion. Without the political power to change formal education policies, Black Americans used a variety of creative maladjustment acts. One result was that Black educators created educational practices within the formal policies. Through teaching and learning actions marked by humanizing principles that recognized access to literacy as a right for all, Black education practitioners developed unofficial

policies and practices. As a result, the critical framework used in this research suggests Black educators worked from practice to theory. Referring to them as Black educator theory-practitioners is meant to represent their approach to developing unofficial education policy and practice.

Since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, attempts to improve U.S. education policies have shown little progress. The lack of progress or outright failure is related to an ahistorical approach to “educational reformation” that is uncritical. As a result, contemporary U.S. education policies and practices are cultural reproductions of colonial disenfranchising, 19th century marginalizing, and 20th-century exclusionary acts. The ahistorical distance between educating newly emancipated people and those living in a not-post-racial America is a challenge for education research. In part, the challenge is in contextualizing history with a number of converging and diverging historical points. Engaging the history of U.S. education policy from multiple historical points humanizes educational research. An additional outcome of the ahistorical treatment of educational access is that contemporary policies and practices disenfranchise people based on race, sex, and class with codified terms that are difficult to identify. Both types of policies—official (White, dominant culture) and unofficial (Black, marginalized culture)—began operating at the same historical moments. Both education policies affect access to basic literacy skills.

My application of CRT in education includes an overview of the canonical nature of educational theories. A critical theory approach provides a historical discourse framework, grounded by social justice principles and dialogic practices. These principles and practice components are not distinct from education policies (approved principles or actions by a group with codification powers) and practices (procedures and actions used to implement policies)

influencing laws that govern the gateways to educational access. As discussed in the “Historical Context” section in Chapter I, I used the sensitizing concepts from the following approaches:

- Decolonizing settler-colonial canon influences on education theories.
- Critical theory and critical pedagogy.
- CRT in education.
- Ecological systems theory.
- Black educator theorist-practitioners whose life and writing provide a way to analyze the Black American educator's critical role in developing and implementing practices that increased access to education despite the limitation of official U.S. education policies.

This fivefold critical framework approach is appropriate for my goal to describe the situation of the 2016 right-to-read case emergently contextualized by three historical Supreme Court cases: *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974).<sup>4</sup> With a critical approach, I address educational practices as embodied elements in various historical and contemporary discourses—legal cases, development of educational action-research methods, case studies, education policies—and I examine them as specific historical sites of reflections on actions. These historical and present discourse materials present cyclical opportunities for envisioning possible iterations of humanizing educational policies.

### **Settler Colonial Canon Influences on Education Theories**

Educational research in the United States generally does not hold the worldviews that influence major educational theories. Examining the role of assumptions (e.g., class and socialization into White-patriarchal social systems) that construct the education theories is

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<sup>4</sup> A Michigan legal case that was decided at the U.S. Supreme Court.

important because all theorists approach the field with specific orientations. Those orientations affect the agency–structure debate (Barnes, 2001). This debate refers to an individual’s ability to make independent choices (autonomous liberating subjectivity) and the social components of the larger world that influence, direct, or limit individual choice (socialized, indoctrinating subjectivity). Additionally, those orientations assign power relationships that affect how the importance of individual subjective agency or objective social structures is understood and how the agency-structure relationship interacts at various social levels and within various social systems: microsocial, macrosocial, and specific beliefs about the nature of reality and how it should be studied (Lynn & Dixson, 2013; Robson, 2019). My use of CRT in education and ecological systems theory takes a historical perspective that recognizes assumptions and limitations of canonical education theories. One possible alternative perspective treats educational issues as systemic instead of as isolated issues that can be identified and solved by interventions based on empirical research and data. Additionally, this research seeks to expand the chorus of voices beyond the usual participants—teachers, researchers, parents, politicians—to include inter-generational voices, educational common folk who may or may not possess basic literacy skills, and non-human texts (e.g., primary documents, court cases, speeches, notes).

The historical view of education research exposes the reality that most education theories rely on exclusionary practices of settler colonialism and the cultural reproductions of those practices. Settler colonialism is based on accumulating wealth by occupying the lands of indigenous peoples and declaring ownership of the land as settler property (Patel, 2016; Veracini, 2010). In this sense, settler colonialism is an economic venture.

For colonial settlers in America, the land was the initial fundamental property for wealth accumulation. Between 1607 and 1775, the 13 British colonies operated as businesses

established to increase Britain's economic wealth (Horne, 2018). Under this societal business structure, the colonies began with a specific worldview associated with British Imperialism and the social functions of class and race. As enterprises were required to produce goods for Britain, the English and Dutch colonists took legal measures to reinforce economic segregation between the people working the occupied land properties. As the first British North American colony, Jamestown was established in Virginia in 1607. The first Africans arrived involuntarily in 1619 to work the land. Africans (enslaved and those with ambiguous freedom status) and English/European indentured servants worked the land and built the structures for the colony. During that time, both groups took advantage of social and economic capital resources like a religious conversion (social), learning to read and write for religious reasons (social and economic), and buying one's freedom (economic). While these options may have been challenging to achieve, arguably, buying one's freedom may have been more difficult for Africans.

One obstacle to freedom for Africans in colonial America between 1619 and 1662 was the ambiguous role of race—in terms of one's Whiteness or Blackness—limiting one's degree of social-economic mobility. As the first colony, Jamestown set the colonial legal standards. The first runaway laws the colony enacted addressed the access to freedom for English servants. Specifically, the 1660 law established that English servants would be made to serve any amount of additional time the Negro could not serve. Two years later, the law was expanded to include monetary fines and addressed English Christian and non-Christian servants who ran away in the company of negroes. These laws ingrain English-white privilege and ensure that historical socioeconomic and social class benefits would not develop as a means for common ground between colonial Whites and Negroes.



However, as a limited resource, the idea of property as the main avenue to wealth, was converted over time into other resources like class, knowledge, and race (Delgado et al., 2017; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Dixon & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; Patel, 2016). As a result, knowledge becomes property reserved for those with colonial legal rights. Racialized practices established in the 1660s by White men, distinguished the working classes and White indentured workers from African slaves (Patel, 2016). Such practices that have maintained White supremacy serve White people at all socioeconomic levels. In this way, settler colonialism converts land into property and uses the wealth associated with land ownership to mediate social relationships and reinforce social structures (Applebaum, 2016; Harris, 1993; Patel, 2016) that privilege colonial settler interests. This conversion of wealth through land ownership process “permeates settler nations such as the United States, echoing through homes, workplaces, and places of learning” (Patel, 2016, p. 31). Through historical practices of operationalizations in everyday life—such as the pursuit of the American Dream and formal education, which has become nearly synonymous with the ability to earn money (Patel, 2016). This moral and merit-based settler colonial system shows up in the genealogy of formally accepted educational theories. Major educational theories focus on reproducing dominant White culture. They do not provide space for examining race, gender, or the intersection of these identities with class.

Structural formalist education theories of the early 1900s lacked generative components to empower individual agency and privilege dominant cultural ideologies. They asserted that the world is a system of interrelated parts that all work together to serve a larger social order. They employed macrosocial approaches that tended to subjugate individual agency in the service of understanding social structures from the assumption that research should use empirical evidence

to define an objective social reality. However, the canon of U.S. education theories uses colonial-settler ideologies. The genealogy of U.S. education theories is based on concepts of men with French, German, and other Western-European regions. Except for Talcott Parsons (1959), a White male American-born sociologist, no contributions from contemporary American-born, Black education critical thinkers are mentioned in canonical education theories. As a result of formative racist and sexist colonial laws that explicitly limited basic literacy access, U.S. education theory continues to demonstrate exclusionary practices of settler-colonial culture. However, the presence of Africans in colonial America included their initial efforts to cultivate practices that worked to increase degrees of freedom. With no power to create and enforce laws or, the time to formalize education theories that included them, colonial Africans operationalized beliefs that access to education was an inherent right.

Sociologists Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), for example, both treated education within schools as places to socialize children. They defined socialization in moral and academic terms based on settler-colonial values. Durkheim’s (1925/2011) theory of moral education asserted that the purpose of schools was to socialize children by teaching them to practice a predetermined set of common values and morals, creating the trust that leads to general social cohesion. In this sense, the public school serves as a domesticating educational process instead of a liberating one (Freire, 1970). Parson’s (1959) contributions to this banking approach asserted that school was a neutral space that allows for merit-based achievement. In the banking method, learners are treated as repositories for teachers, who give them content to hold, memorize, and repeat later. According to Parsons (1959), as discussed by Robson (2019), assessing children “in a standardized universalistic way [provides a] level the playing field so that children are assessed based on merit—how they are judged is

based only on how they perform on a standardized set of goals regardless of social background” (para. 14). Both the common moral and merit-based approaches fail to include the impact of ascribed traits, like socioeconomic background, gender, and race, on access to various educational outcomes.

Critical theory, primarily influenced by Karl Marx (1818–1883), Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), and Jürgen Habermas (1929–), provided the socioeconomic ideology absent in other educational theories. However, critical theory was not widely implemented in the education field until the post-structuralist and post-modernist shifts in the late 1960s which resulted in critical pedagogy based on tenets from the Frankfurt School of critical theory and Freirean theory.

The contributions of Black American education scholar-activists like W.E.B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington, and Mary McLeod Bethune informed unofficial education policies and practices. Black education theorist-practitioners had already bridged the divide between theory and praxis that Freire articulated. While Freire’s ideas are explicitly noted as a foundation for critical pedagogy, many tenets and characteristics of Black American scholar-activists thought remain implied (T. K. Chapman & Crawford, 2021; Giroux, 2017; Lynn & Dixon, 2013). However, within the larger socio-historical context, colonial-settler ideas remain the dominant educational narrative to this day.

The colonial-settler ideologies informing theory and restricting education access through policy began as overt and explicit exclusionary practices and anti-literacy laws. These ideas have been consistently culturally reproduced in education theory and policy despite moments of disruption from post-modern theories (e.g., critical pedagogy, feminism, CRT) and major socio-historical events (e.g., reconstruction, the suffrage movement, civil rights movement).

Becoming less overt and more subversive, the implicit elements of racism and sexism in U.S. education theory and policy that continue limiting educational access to large portions of descendants of colonial-Africans and other marginalized Americans. In contrast, the colonial-African ideologies lead to operationalized behaviors and increased educational access loss cultural reproduction. This loss is evidenced by how post-modern theories and the results of major socio-historical events were implemented in educational practices. As a result, the United States at minimum has two kinds of education policies: one reproduced by making dominant oppressive behaviors subversive and one underdeveloped by making the disruptive operationalizing liberatory behaviors appear unnecessary.

### **Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy**

Defined through the Frankfurt School, *critical theory* established a socio-historical program of research that relied on an interdisciplinary research approach. The theory combined philosophical studies and cultural analyses that included a humanist Marxist perspective (Abromeit, 2011; Celikates & Flynn, 2023; Kellner, 1989). Despite its German philosophical and Western-European Marxist roots, works of specific theorists like Horkheimer (1972) and Habermas developed a generative critical theory that provided “unique and powerful perspectives to conceptualize, explain and critique recent socioeconomic developments” (Kellner, 1989, p. 182).

The inception of critical theory was in the 1930s by the collective effects of German philosophers and Western European Marxist theorists through a tradition known as the Frankfurt School (Celikates & Flynn, 2023). Major contributors to this formalized approach to critical theory include Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer. Collectively, this group of critical thinkers asserted that available social theories

were not equipped to address the political issues of the time. An issue they responded to by embracing a humanist Marxist view. The humanist Marxist view did not fully abandon positivist research. However, this view questioned the adequacy of structuralist theories for understanding the social world using approaches that privileged society/structure/macrosocial systems over individual/agency/microsocial systems. The inadequacies of structuralist theory in education include critiques of exclusionary practices. Those inadequacies are inherent in research that focuses on using social structures to explain the social world at the expense of understanding individual agency contributions.

Horkheimer has been credited with integrating philosophy and social science (Hunter, 1993). This integration paved the way for an interdisciplinary critical theory approach, providing the foundations for developing post-structuralist theories. Additionally, he developed “an empirically and historically grounded research program that was fundamentally interdisciplinary, intending to overcome the inadequacies of received Marxist theories of historical and social development” (Hunter, 1993, p. vii). However, this period of critical theory development and its use in education theories in the United States understates the significance of Horkheimer’s generative description for what makes a critical theory and omits the contributions of Black American critical thinkers specifically W. E. B. Du Bois (Ladson-Billings, 2012, 2021; Rabaka, 2013).

According to Horkheimer, a theory is critical only to the extent that it seeks to free people from the social circumstances that enslave them. Specifically, a *critical* theory may be distinguished from a *traditional* theory according to a specific practical purpose: a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks “human ‘emancipation from slavery,’ acts as a ‘liberating ... influence,’ and works ‘to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of

human beings” (Horkheimer as cited in Celikates & Flynn, 2023, para. 1). Referencing the Frankfurt School as the origin point for critical theory overshadows the generative nature of the critical theory. It also continues to omit sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois’s contributions to critical theory most frequently articulated as *double consciousness*. Du Bois (1897) explained that the Black Americans/Negros are born into,

a world which yields him no true self-consciousness but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 194)

Du Bois’s (1897, 1903) ideas demonstrate the important role meso-theorists serve by addressing the dichotomy of privileging either agency or structure by recognizing the need for interconnectedness between the agency/individual and structure/society. As a concept firmly rooted in lived experiences, Du Bois’s also provided a bridge between moving from theoretical concepts to producing tangible actions. With over 60 years of scholarship, Du Bois established the importance of education as “liberation of the severely oppressed” (Aptheker, 2001, p. vii). To that end, his ideas did not discount the relevance of lived experiences on theoretical ideas.

Despite the availability of contemporary contributions of critical thinkers from a variety of practical and theoretical disciplines (abolitionists, sociologists, journalists, and educators) critical theory, and its use in education research failed to consider the limitations of self-examination. Scholars who work outside a Western/European perspective have noted that the Frankfurt School is historically silent on issues of race, the effects of colonization, and empire-building (Allen, 2016; Celikates & Flynn, 2023; Patel, 2016). As a result, education theories have perpetuated those silences, as evidenced by the continued lack of recognition of Black American educator scholar-activists conceptual and engaged pedagogical contributions.

So, even shifts in critical theory and education theory from the 1960s to the 1980s did little to create what Horkheimer explained as required for a theory to be adequately critical. A sufficient critical theory must be explanatory, practical, and normative. Celikates and Flynn (2023), based on Horkheimer, argued, “[critical theory] must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable, practical goals for social transformation” (para. 3). Jurgen Habermas, a second-generation theorist in the Frankfurt School, is credited with moving critical theory away from Marxist concepts and contextualizing it within American pragmatism. In its development, American pragmatism did not include contributions from Blacks and other marginalized people. The Frankfurt School of thought has dominated how researchers understand critical theories. The focus on structuralism, society over the individual, and relationships based on various interpretations of dichotomies of the working class and bourgeois permeated ideas in most education theory approaches.

As I reviewed Horkheimer’s contributions to the development of critical theory outside of the institution known as the Frankfurt School, it seemed that the school was more a vehicle for critical theories rather than a container. Horkheimer’s process for what makes a theory critical, serves as a sensitizing concept, providing guiding ideas, not definitive descriptions whereby the contributions of historically omitted critical theorists and practitioners are recognized.

Critical theory in education is most commonly known as *critical pedagogy*. The collection of concepts associated with critical pedagogy makes it an adequate critical theory. Paulo Freire is arguably one of the most influential education theorists. His book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), is considered a seminal text in developing critical theory applications in the field of education. Freire described the relationship between concept (theory)

and applied behavior as the instance of praxis, as a continual, balancing process of reflection and action. He emphasized that action arises from critical perception of lived experiences that can challenge oppressive social arrangements, so long as reflection does not dominate action or vice versa. The application of praxis at an individual and collective level is required to create critical consciousness that is an engaging and ongoing iterative process of theoretical application, evaluation, reflection leading back to further theorizing and application (Freire, 1970). The goal of this process is to liberate people from oppressive life circumstances.

Freire's concepts describing the emancipatory education practices have been expanded on by the scholars such as Henry Giroux (2021) and Peter McLaren (2002, 2005). Critical pedagogies focus on teaching practices that recognize and attempt to eliminate student/teacher practices that perpetuate inequalities (Robson, 2019). It looks to disrupt, dismantle, and reveal educational inequity. This approach is more practical and dynamic than theories based on limited interpretations of social status in terms of class (Neo-Marxism), schools as the sites of moral socialization (Emile Durkheim), or those whose guiding principle is equality based on meritocracy (Talcott Parsons). Its focus on individual agency over social structure makes critical pedagogy an educational research approach. However, critical pedagogical approaches in educational research tend to focus on localized issues within classrooms or relationships between teachers and students as a pedagogical approach; Analysis of curricula have the potential to address larger policy ideologies. Critical pedagogy often uses aspects of cultural reproduction theory (associated with Bourdieu, 1984) that connect individuals and intracommunity networks, limiting its use for examining education policies beyond those levels. But it does not necessarily produce practical actions or disrupt larger power structures that have created the inequities teachers, and students face. While critical pedagogy does unveil oppressive educational practices



routinely reproduced within classrooms, curricula, and schools, it tends to rely on a class-based framework. This tendency lacks the disruptive operationalization needed to employ liberatory changes within dominant culture's education policies.

For this research, critical pedagogy provides a frame for addressing dehumanizing practices by unveiling a variety of educational bias. It acknowledges the presence of and works to include marginalized voices. Critical pedagogy has maintained Freire's assertion that the learner is an active, knowledgeable participant in the learning process.

### **CRT in Education**

Race has not been an obvious conceptual component of critical theories adapted for educational research or education theories designed specifically for educational research. However, class, various nuanced interpretations of social status, capital, and gender, have obvious conceptual connections to several critical social research theories. Research done in the absence of race limits all attempts to conduct research that delivers more complete data—quantitative and qualitative. As one of the newest theoretical frameworks, CRT addresses the gaps other critical theories fail to address.

Established in the U.S. legal field in the 1980s (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1989; Matsuda, 1987) CRT further develops previously recognized critical theories. Specifically, CRT provides an expansive, clarifying definition that a theory is critical only to the extent that it seeks to free people from the social circumstances that enslave them. One significant task for founding CRT theorists was developing a vocabulary capable of naming oppressive race-related social structures that had not been adequately addressed in existing scholarship (Crenshaw et al., 1995). By the 1990s, CRT scholars (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 1998) had created a critical framework with six unifying themes that provided a starting point for how it

might be used in educational research. In the educational field, CRT asserts that “inequalities experienced in education cannot be explained solely by theories of class or gender—that it is also race and the experience of being racialized that contributes to stratification of many aspects of social life” (Robson, 2019, p. 45). CRT’s naming vocabulary provides additional tools for applying critical pedagogies to contemporary American contexts that remain racialized in the absence of overt or explicit language.

By the 1990s, CRT education scholars also asserted that race remains a major aspect in society in general and education in particular. Yet, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), race remained under-theorized as a topic of scholarly inquiry in education. In 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate wrote an article that presented the first attempt to apply CRT framework in education. They considered the intersection of CRT in legal studies and educational practices. For example, the construction of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993), is a CRT tenet that asserts the historical implementation of U.S. law “has accorded ‘holders’ of whiteness the same privileges and benefits accorded holders of other types of property” (Harris, 1993, p. 1731). Property holders have the right to exclude others from access to what they own. In education, this right to exclude has been described as follows:

In schooling, the absolute right to exclude was demonstrated initially by denying blacks access to schooling altogether. Later . . . by the creation and maintenance of separate schools. More recently . . . by White flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice. Within schools, the absolute right to exclude is demonstrated by resegregation via tracking. (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 60)

In the decades since Ladson-Billings and Tate’s article, other scholars have written about CRT in education with varying degrees of interpretation. CRT posits that theories based on class and gender—taken separately or combined—cannot explain the inequalities experienced in America. To address the full scope of American inequality requires theoretical inclusion of race

and racialization experiences (Delgado et al., 2017; Lynn & Dixson, 2013). Three literature reviews describe the developments of CRT in education in the years after Ladson-Billings and Tate's initial article. All three reviews assert that CRT in education seeks to build on the work done in legal studies. Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) stated:

As has been argued elsewhere (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lynn & Dixson, 2013), not all scholarship that includes race necessarily engages critical race theory . . . we seek in the following sections to outline the landscape of CRT in education. In particular, we highlight prominent features of CRT in education, particularly as they relate to CRT scholarship in legal studies. In essence, we are attempting to create an overlay map that captures the features of CRT in education *in relation to* the features of CRT in legal studies. (p. 123)

Cross referencing the articles by Dixson and Rousseau (2005), Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018), and Capper (2015) provides the following unifying CRT themes in the educational field as the themes are articulated in relation to CRT in legal studies:

- CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
  - CRT in education argues that racial inequity in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on competition.
    - Operationalized: This means the permanence of racism and intersectionality.
- CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
  - CRT in education examines the role of education policy and educational practices in the construction of racial inequity and the perpetuation of normative Whiteness.
    - Operationalized: Whiteness as property/color blindness.

- CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis and presume that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
  - CRT in education rejects ahistoricism and examines the historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression.
    - Operationalized: interest convergence and counternarratives
- CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
  - CRT in education rejects the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of White people.
    - Operationalized: counternarratives
- CRT recognizes that class and gender cannot explain social inequalities.
  - CRT in education engages in intersectional analyses that recognize the ways that race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status).
    - Operationalized: counternarratives
- CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.
  - CRT in education agitates and advocates for meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity. CRT does not merely document disparities.
    - Operationalized: intersectionality and critiques of liberalism

CRT in education provides elements useful for conducting research in various contexts that hide race in plain sight. By addressing race, CRT provides a missing theoretical link. CRT overtly and explicitly accounts for the racialized elements that have become pervasively supplanted in law and education policies that govern the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. Far from perfect, CRT is criticized for using a binary Black/White racialized focus. However, this criticism ignores the complexity of Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) scholarship on intersectionality and its presence as a founding tenant of CRT. Intersectionality addresses race inclusively as it intersects with other identities and experiences of being racialized. An additional point to recognize when using CRT, is that it is a set of ideas and frames subject to change and adjustment but also able to provide direction in research. In this sense practicing CRT scholars should not treat CRT as a set of analytic or strategic tools.

### **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Educational psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) developed the approach of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989) characterizing the process of child development and the role of education in it, as influenced by multiple interacting systems that contribute to children's life chances. Since the theory's inception, it has evolved substantially, a change that Rosa and Tudge (2013) describe as a shift from ecology to bioecology. This evolution will be described in more detail below.

Ecological systems theory asserts that a child's life outcomes are the results of the multiple reciprocal effects between the child, multiple learning environments, and relationships (e.g., how children are treated by parents, peers, other adult influences on their development). Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined five distinct systems encompassing the child development process from conception through death. These systems, nested within each other, interact, and all

have the potential to impact a child's development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

As the first element of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, the *microsystem* includes relationships and environments with direct contact with the child (e.g., parents, caregivers, siblings, peers, teachers, school). Specifically, the theory recognizes parents having a critically important role in shaping the lives of their children (Guy-Evans, 2020; Robson, 2019). The other four levels in Bronfenbrenner's original framework included several increasingly complex, larger, external forces. With each system in this hierarchy, parental control lessens even though these other social systems include relationships and environments that shape children's lives and opportunities into and throughout adulthood.

The *mesosystem*, the second element, is significant because this is where interactions happen between various systems. The relationships between all systems will impact a child's development (e.g., harmony between parents and teachers is more likely to have a positive developmental impact). While the model only shows the mesosystem once between the microsystems and exosystem, the last three elements of Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory, include social structures that indirectly impact a child's life. Bronfenbrenner clarified that mesosystem interactions occur between and among all the systems. The *exosystem* includes informal and formal social structures (e.g., various media, social services, government agencies, parents' work environment). Within the broader *macrosystem* are larger environments in which individuals live—urban or rural, developed or underdeveloped, democratic or non-democratic, multicultural or not, for example.

The last, largest, most conceptual, and, arguably, most complex element of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) theory is the *chronosystem*. Within the chronosystem are

socio-historical events as experienced by those who dominated and those who were marginalized. The chronosystems are the master's narrative, the subaltern's narrative, and that of the oppressed. This system recognizes all the elements impacting a person's life from conception to death.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) model quickly became very appealing and widely accepted as a useful framework for psychologists, sociologists, and teachers to study child development. Ecological systems theory provided a holistic approach inclusive of all the systems that children and their families are involved in and accurately reflecting the dynamic nature of actual family relationships (Hayes & O'Toole, 2017). Some critiques and limits of this theory include challenges examining the mesosystems—interactions between children's various communities as they are easily isolated from each other (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Ecological systems studies may establish an effect, but they cannot directly cause such effects. As a result, the theory does not lend itself to empirical testing and leads to assumed correlations. These limitations include the assumption that mesosystem interactions begin from the center where the child is located. Locating this theory from that perspective is limiting and ignores the pre-existing interactions of the various systems. However, interaction at the chronosystem level provides a framework for studying a variety of education issues influencing a person's development. For example, social events exist prior to a child's interaction with their most immediate social systems.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1974), "Science needs social policy—needs it not to guide our organizational activities, but to provide us with two elements essential for any scientific endeavor—vitality and validity" (p. 1). Bronfenbrenner (1974) made this claim as a

counter-thesis to “the first axiom . . . that social policy should be based on. science” (p. 1). He expanded on. this proposition:

The proposition not only has logic on its side, but what is more important, it recognizes our proper and primary importance in the scheme of things. [It says that] the policymakers should look to us not only for truth, but we must modestly confess, for wisdom as well. In short, social policy needs science. (p. 1)

The significance of Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) statement for framing this research is the reciprocal relationship he posited between social policy and social science. The focus on policy—especially as far as education policies are concerned—makes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory appropriate for framing a study that defines chronosystems of specific educational events.

### **Black Educator Theorist-Practitioners**

The documented origin of critical theory is rooted in the Frankfurt School. Critical pedagogy is one of the foundation ways ideas from the Frankfurt School of critical theory find their way into educational research. However, the theory and pedagogy defer to ideas authored by emigrant European and white American male scholars. This historical preference is more than humble submission or respect for theoretical ideas and critical practices applicable to educational research. It is uncritical deference. Audre Lorde (1984) provided a view of what uncritical deference means when she asked, “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (p. 111). As a result, educational research often fails to produce systemic changes because it uses an ahistorical research frame. Instead, research focuses on treating educational problems like isolated incidents and identifying specific interventions for them.

However, in practice, educational research methods are based on specific historical frameworks, which tend to be infused with the ever-presence of specific dominant cultural



perspectives. In the context of this research, that perspective is an American-Eurocentric male lived point of view. Within this perspective, difference and inclusion are noted and welcomed but only as they fit within a larger, dominant category (e.g., male, White, American). This perspective preserves dominant cultural views that are reproduced because those views permeate the materials researchers are taught to reach for first. As a result, researchers and scholars may find themselves struggling to do work that goes beyond limitations that restrict inclusive educational access. An educational reality more researchers should consider acknowledging is that the “master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 1984, p. 110). Lorde explained that this precept “is only threatening to those [researchers] who still define the master’s house as their only source of support” (Lorde, 1984, p. 112). The contributions of Black-Americans in education provide the ever-present but under-expressed sources of educational research support.

The call to move from concept to praxis is where current CRT in education finds contemporary scholarship. Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) explained that CRT in legal studies and education has provided profound influences as intellectual and conceptual movements. However, both movements struggle to move into practice. Specifically, in the field of education, Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) expressed the current situation this way:

[While] the growth of CRT scholarship over the past two decades has far exceeded our expectations . . . what has been the impact on schools and communities of color?” Notably, several CRT scholars have called for a critical race theory praxis—an engaged approach to CRT that moves from campus to community . . . Thus, we submit that *the question of location is not merely rhetorical* [emphasis added]. (p. 129)

It is this comment about location that brings the current discussion around to finding engaged CRT in education approaches in the practice of praxis to several situated ideas and actions of Black educator theorists. Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018), concluded their

20-year retrospective article on CRT in education with recommendations that require looking back in order to move forward: “Although we have outlined recommendations for CRT scholarship to move forward, perhaps our most important recommendation is for us to collectively seek to ensure that CRT becomes more than an intellectual movement” (p. 129).

This section of Chapter II offers a description of Black educators, theorists, and practitioners whose work, taken together, is toward expanding educational access out of situated necessity that required no recommendation. Pre-CRT Black education, theorist-practitioners worked toward universal education access (Anderson, 1988) with actions that foreshadow the theoretical language currently used to define the CRT tenets used in education. How and why CRT scholars must look back to move forward is apparent in this statement: “As CRT scholars in education, we embrace this as our chosen role” (p. 129). Black educator theorist practitioners are practicing academics. With the divestment in traditional public education as reflected in the expansion of charter schools and other neoliberal education reforms, we must continue to use our voices and our praxis to positively impact schools and communities. As CRT scholars/activists, *where are we?*

Black educator theorist practitioners were and are practicing academics. Their educational work predated the critical and theoretical vocabulary we use today. Their lived experiences prefigured their conceptual and applied education theories. Their speeches and personal and published writings described many of the ideas that were documented later by others. Most Black educators are referenced by multiple community identities, especially since work as educators failed to provide living wages prior to the 1960s civil rights movement. In this sense, their multiple identities are explicitly from Antebellum and Jim Crow America. For example, Givens (2021) wrote:

One South Carolina educator expressed this reality in plain language at a 1922 teachers convention: “He teaches ’tis true, but he also farms, preaches, laws, barbers, insures, clerks, typewrites, keeps books, sews, cooks, nurses, launders, dresses hair, and God only knows what else, in order to eke out an existence.” Despite common perceptions, black teachers were rarely comfortably middle-class, even as they benefitted from an elevated social status in Black American communities. (p. 9)

Thus, Black educator theorist-practitioners were practicing academics whose personal and professional lives functioned within complex, intersecting identities. Their lived experiences prefigure what Crenshaw (1989) effectively coined and defined as *intersectionality*. The following historical overview illustrates the scope and development of Black educator theorist-practitioners who occupy the intersectional educating spaces as practicing academics:

- Advocates for basic literacy access when access was treated as the exclusive, privilege of Whites (circa 1619–1775)
  - Enslaved and free Black Americans who learned to read despite anti-literacy laws (e.g., Benjamin Banneker [1731–1806])
- Advocates for basic literacy rights and the architects of universal public education policy (circa 1863–1964)
  - Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), Swartekill, New York
  - Frederick Douglass (c.1817–1895), Maryland
  - Harriet Tubman (1822–1913), Maryland
  - Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), Virginia
  - Ida B. Wells (1862–1931), Mississippi/Memphis
  - Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950), Virginia, Washington, DC
  - Mary McLeod Bethune (1875–1955), South Carolina
  - W.E.B Dubois (1868–1963), Massachusetts

- Advocates for basic literacy rights and access in opposition to contentious public education policy (circa 1965–present)
  - Horace Tate (1922–2005), Georgia
  - Marian Wright Edelman (1939– ), South Carolina
  - Gloria Ladson-Billings (1947– ), Philadelphia
  - Lani Guinier (1950–2022), New York. A lawyer, Guinier publications and public advocacy explored the myth of merit and for democracy in higher education.

Several of the educators listed above overlap time periods and the earliest individuals advocates for literacy rights are as yet unnamed. Details about the contributions of Black educator theorist-practitioners examined in this dissertation cannot be fully articulated until data is collected and analyzed. However, geography is important to this research, which is why the above list includes the birthplace of the named educators. Geography helps outline where educational access discourses have happened and continue to occur.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter describes the methodology and the methods used in this research study. Although often used as synonyms, “methodology” and “methods” should be described separately as the former provides the systematic basis and justification for the methods, which are the specific research tools to be used. My methodology section provides the ontological and epistemological foundations for situational analysis (SA)—the theory/methods package. The methodology section is followed by a more specific description of methods, focusing on my approach to SA.

#### Methodology

In this research, I use a pragmatic philosophical approach. As a conceptual framework with ontological and epistemological roots, pragmatism provides the fluidity that best matches my ways of constructing reality and examining knowledge. Additionally, I decided to use SA as a stand-alone method. SA is a theory/method that extends grounded theory into the interpretive turn and calls for new methods to address social science (including education) research issues that have been overlooked, underdeveloped, or ignored. Clarke et al. (2018) described several methodological issues in need of improved methods, for example, tools that allow researchers to do the following:

1. Intentionally elucidate relational complexities.
2. Elucidate silenced or marginalized perspectives and communicate meaning as it relates to heterogeneous life in complicated and unstable situations all over the planet.
3. Decenter the subject and move beyond the individual, knowing the subject.
4. Pay explicit attention to nonhuman constituents of a situation (pp. 13–14).

SA's attention to these key methodological issues is related to pragmatic ideas about the nature of knowledge. This pragmatic research design aligns both my ontological and epistemological tendencies to identify and study knowledge. Both the view of reality and the study of it are framed by action in pragmatism. In this sense, action and experiences provide the perceptions of reality as an iterative meaning-making process even when moments of stability and feeling of permanency seem to disrupt that process. The knowledge-focused orientation of pragmatism is examined through action and interactions that occur in social systems. To summarize, pragmatism asserts value in conducting research that focuses on understanding real-world issues in concrete terms and interrogating the value and meaning of research data by examining practical consequences (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Pragmatism is a philosophy that focuses on results, accuracy, and the impact of the results on social issues (Legg, 2021; Paul, 2005).

Educational access in the United States has a complicated history. Since educational access was determined mainly by a person's social class and gender during colonial America, there has been some form of resistance to exclusionary educational practices and some iteration of the claim that access to literacy skills is an educational right. The complexly problematic history of educational access in the United States makes education research that attempts to address systemic topics challenging because issues often occur as multifaceted phenomena with complex social-ecological systems. As a result, educational research aimed at unfurling the social dynamics embedded in systemic issues requires qualitative methods that are "distinctively relational and ecologically minded" (Clarke et al. 2015a, p. 17) and capable of illuminating the performative (Austin, 1975; Butler, 2010, 2011; Derrida, 1988) and intersectionality (Collins, 2019; Cooper, 1892/2016; Crenshaw, 1989; Du Bois, 1903; hooks, 2010) aspects of a situation.

Additionally, efforts to understand and study social issues benefit from empirical qualitative research approaches.

My research is an exploratory inquiry into the following claim: Access to education is a fundamental human right. The complex components that emerge within various social structures to limit people's educational access are fluid and elusive; they are not spatially or temporarily bound. As social complexities reconfigure to limit educational access, so do the efforts to make access available. While these social behaviors are complex and elusive, they exist as observable material, and, as Clarke et al. (2018) explained, the "situatedness of phenomena" (p. 16) can be studied. My research question situated the phenomena as follows: How does the right-to-read claim made by seven teenagers attending Detroit public schools in 2016, reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access?

The following are the reasons I selected SA as the methodological research design for this study:

- Distinct interpretive qualitative inquiry approach within the constructivist grounded theory tradition.
- Focus on *the situation* as the key analytic component for studying and interpreting social phenomena.
- Its interpretivist and pragmatic theoretical underpinnings that explicitly focus on the complexities and problematics of researching the ecologies of social phenomena.
- Its analytic mapping methods for studying and interpreting social phenomena.

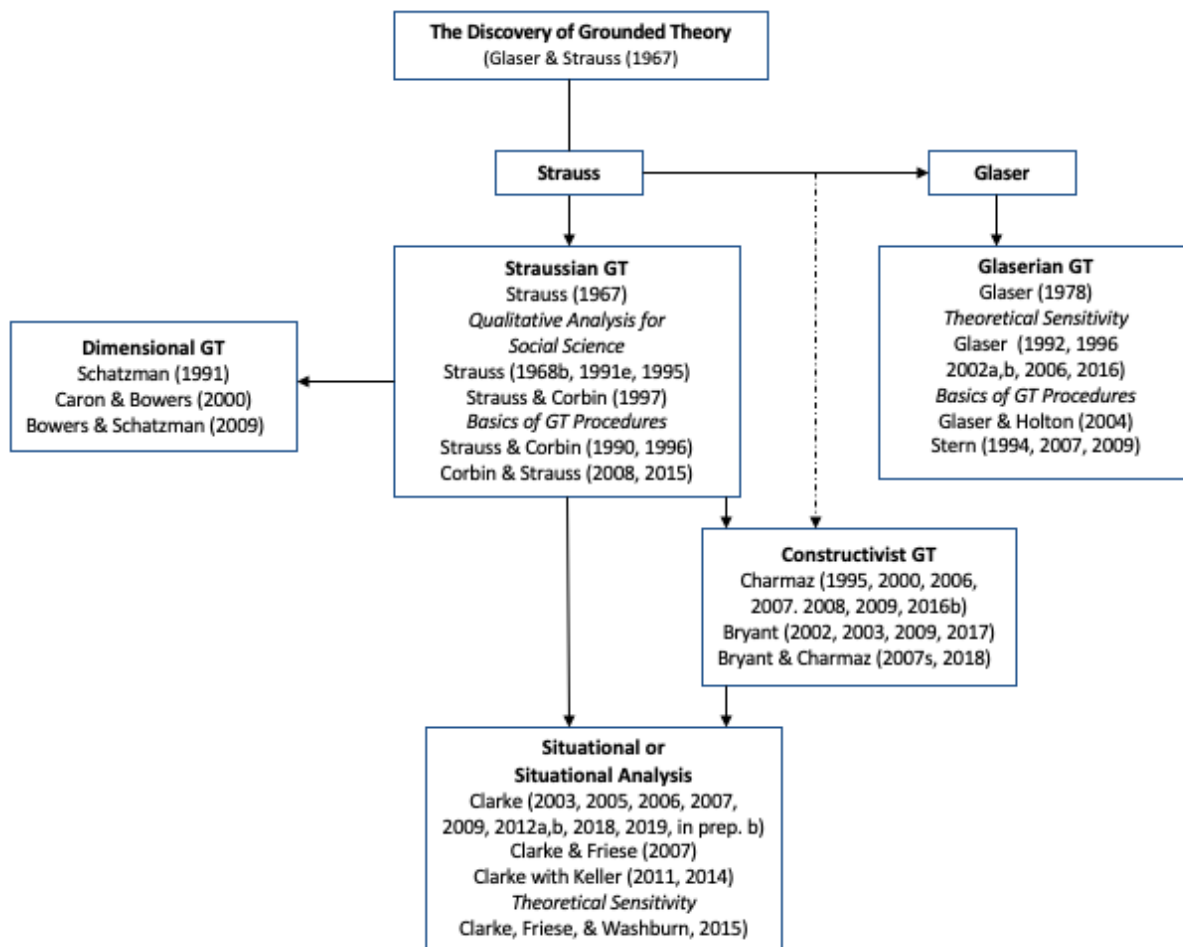
### **SA Within the Grounded Theory Tradition**

The primary reason I selected SA is due to its development within the grounded theory tradition. Initially, SA was developed to "regenerate and extend" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. xxvi)

grounded theory—a popular, epistemologically sound qualitative research approach (Clarke, 2003; Clarke et al., 2018). However, philosophical, academic, and social changes framed by postmodern ideas (Clarke, 2003) and reframed by the “interpretive turn of the late twentieth century” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. xxiv) resulted in SA theory/methods package that both extend specific areas of grounded theory (GT) and stand as a new, distinctive analytic GT approach. As a “new” method within grounded theory traditions, researchers can use SA partnership with other GT approaches, with non-GT approaches, and as the single main approach in a research study (Clarke, 2003, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018).

In the development of SA, Clarke (2005) explicitly rejected the positivist GT approach while extending and amplifying guiding metaphors within the Straussian-constructivist GT tradition. Specifically, SA assumes the Straussian-constructivist GT theory/methods package is grounded “epistemologically and ontologically in pragmatist and symbolic interactionist theory” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 24). However, the rigorous use of coding is a characteristic shared by all GT approaches, including SA. Since its inception as a qualitative theory of inquiry by Glaser and Strauss (1967), GT has seen several significant developments. While there is some variety in how scholars categorize major GT frameworks, classic GT, Straussian GT, and constructivist GT represent the main strands (Clarke, 2003, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018; Sebastian, 2019). Recently, Clarke et al. (2018) described the development of major GT strands in terms of first and second generational changes. Within those two generations are five GT frameworks, which are practiced today and supported by sustained scholarly publications. This can be seen in Figure 3.1, Clarke et al.’s (2017) genealogy of GT and SA.



**Figure 3.1***A Genealogy of Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis*

From *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn* by A. E. Clarke, C. Friese, & R. S. Washburn, 2017, p.7. Copyright 2017 by SAGE. Used with permission.

Key developments in the evolution of GT and, subsequently, SA include the following:

- *Classical GT*— In the positivist tradition, where the researcher is assumed to be “objective,” adheres to positivist functional traditions, and argues against other forms of GT.
- *Straussian GT* (Strauss, 1978, 1982)—Interpretive/interactionist tradition, where the researcher is engaged and actively interprets data.

- *Dimensional GT*—Based on social interactionism. Dimensional analysis is a method of defining complex phenomena in which meaning is socially constructed and dependent on perspective and context. It develops theory based on analysis of data that includes identifying and categorizing relevant dimensions, inferring relationships, and defining connections among dimensions.
- *Constructivist GT*—Based on constructivist/pragmatist traditions, where the researcher constructs meaning rather than discovers it.
- *Situational analysis*, as developed by Clarke (2003, 2005) and Clarke et al. (2018), includes aspects of dimensional, Straussian, and constructivist GT while strengthening other methodological issues.

These GT developments form the genealogical base for SA (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2022). While theory development is key for all GT frameworks, SA makes a point to extend this purpose through three philosophical turns: postmodern, poststructural, and interpretive. The resulting main point of difference is SA's focus on the situation and relationalities within instead of on processual analysis action-centered basic social processes (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015, 2018; Clarke et al., 2022). Specific methods SA shares with GT methods are memo writing and saturation<sup>5</sup> as applied to mapping methods, and theoretical sampling.

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<sup>5</sup> Clarke referred to Charmaz's description of saturation: sampling and analyzing data until no new data appear and all concepts of the theory are well developed and their linkages to other concepts are clearly described. In constructivist GT (e.g., Charmaz, 2006), saturation does not happen when repetitive patterns of stories and incidents occur, but these incidents, which yield different properties of pattern, should continue to be "conceptualization of comparisons . . . until no new properties of the pattern emerge" (Glaser, 2001, p. 191 as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 113).

## SA Through Philosophical Turns

SA's focus on the situation as the key analytic component for studying and interpreting social phenomena is a development that responded to different philosophical frameworks. To better understand SA's philosophical relationships with grounded theory and its shift from analyzing action to the situation, useful texts are Clarke's (2005) *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn* and Clarke et al.'s (2018) *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn*.

When describing GT/SA in postmodern terms, Clarke (2003) contextualized the theory/methods packages within symbolic interactionism and used the referent of grounded theory/symbolic interactionism. She asserted that GT/symbolic interactionism has six properties that are "always already"<sup>6</sup> (Clarke, 2003, p. 555), which places them within a postmodern framework. In the postmodern turn, SA is defined as a theory/methods package that builds on and extends GT into an always already interpretive framework. For example, Table 3.1 shows how situational analysis affects the "always already"<sup>7</sup> postmodern properties as they relate to "always already" interpretive properties framework.

**Table 3.1**

*SA's Development from the Always Already Grounded Theory Properties*

<b>Always Already Postmodern Properties</b>	<b>Situational Analysis</b>	<b>Always Already Interpretive Properties</b>
1. The Meadian notion of perspective (Mead, 1934) through which both partiality and situatedness are assumed;	Extends	1. The Meadian notion of perspective through which both partiality and situatedness are assumed;

<sup>6</sup> A broadly used philosophical concept, "always-already" refers to the idea that the essence of everything exists and within that existence is all potential of becoming. In phenomenological terms, for example, thought (in the form of an awareness of our being) comes before language. See Heidegger (1962) on "thrownness" and phenomenology.

Always Already Postmodern Properties	Situational Analysis	Always Already Interpretive Properties
2. Its materialist social constructivism;  3. Its foregrounding of deconstructive analytic interpretation via open coding and the legitimacy of multiple simultaneous readings/interpretations;	Extends and defines       Explicitly includes the researcher in the process and rejects the inductive idea of researcher objectivity.	2. Its materialist social constructivism;  3. Its foregrounding of deconstructive analytic interpretation via open coding and the legitimacy of multiple simultaneous readings/interpretations;
4. The orientation toward action, processual analyses, and negotiations as anticipating instabilities;  5. A range of variation as an always significant but underemphasized focus of analysis featuring difference(s); and		4. Its use of abductive theorizing data;    5. The orientation toward action, processual analyses, and negotiations as anticipating instabilities;  6. A range of variation as an always significant but underemphasized focus of analysis featuring difference(s); and
6. The long-standing ecological and social worlds/arenas bent of both interactionism and GT as presaging relational forms of analysis such as SA and its maps.	Builds, defines, and adds	7. The long-standing ecological and social worlds/arenas bent of both interactionism and GT as presaging relational forms of analysis such as SA and its maps.

These postmodern and interpretive differences are worth noting because each philosophical framework denotes specific developmental changes in the SA methodology. With the exception of one additional property, the interpretive framework includes the same six properties from GT's postmodernist groundings. Overall, when grounded in symbolic interactionism and pragmatism, GT is always already embracing the postmodern, poststructural, and interpretive turns (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018). In both the postmodern and interpretive groundings, two GT foundational properties are extended and more deeply developed SA foundational elements. However, *abduction* (discussed in the Methods section below) is one foundational property unique to the interpretive grounding of GT and is specifically developed and described

in terms of its SA function. Both GT postmodern and interpretive groundings have the following foundational properties, ones that are more extensively used and developed in SA.

- GT Property 1: Mead's (1934) notion of perspective is further developed and is "perhaps the strongest foundational element of SA and its most powerful tool" (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018, p. 26). Mead's (1934) description of perspectives as social challenged the concept of an "autonomous knowing subject" (p. 26) and the constructivist aspects of perspective became a tenet of the Chicago School of sociology and further developed as a form of American constructivism based on pragmatism and interactionism (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018).
- GT Property 3: Deconstructive analytics use open coding to suggest there is no one correct way to read data because data is always open to various interpretations and subject to situatedness shaped by a plethora of elements, such as history and geography. However, this GT property has been criticized for how narrative data is examined and its processes of representing individual and collective data. The criticism, according to Clarke (2005) and Clarke et al. (2018), is not a weakness but a juncture articulating analysis and (re)presentational in GT as two valuable but "distinct interpretive qualitative approaches each showcasing different aspects of social life" (Clarke et al., 2018, pp. 26–27). In light of this distinction, GT's analytical goal is to analyze data to interpret particular social process(es), not to (re)present a specific narrative truth. SA's focus on using deconstructive analysis to interpret the situation not only further distinguishes the analysis and (re)presentation as two valuable but distinct interpretive qualitative approaches but also strengthens the GT tradition by amplifying the analytical, interpretative goal.

- GT Property 6: The long-standing ecological and social worlds/arenas bent on interactionism and GT are two concepts that are further developed as root metaphors in SA. In SA, social situations are analyzed as complex relational ecologies in which all constituents require analytical attention. SA's pragmatist-interpretive grounding and analytic mapping tools used to elicit relationalities embedded in social ecologies using the situation as the unit of analysis does not only build on the ecological/social world arenas GT property but empirically develops this foundational element of GT tradition.

In contrast, the following GT property is present only in the interpretive turn:

- GT Property 4: GT's use of abductive theorizing data as derived from Straussian GT and constructivist GT in SA emphasizes the researchers as active in the research process. *Abduction* explicitly recognizes experiential contributions to theorizing data (Clarke et al., 2018).

Abduction increases reflexivity by bringing the researcher into the process. It explicitly challenges the positivist, inductionist assertion that researchers are non-active, objective participants. The use of abduction requires researchers to bring prior knowledge, experiences, and perspective to the task, so they can be examined "through the lenses of abduction and reflexivity" (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 31). This foundational element in GT and SA problematizes experiences, making them part of the process researchers are expected to acknowledge. Additionally, the abduction engages researchers in cognitive, intellectual, imaginative, and experiential ways that are sometimes startling (Clarke et al., 2018; Locke, 2007).

SA's initial iteration (Clarke, 2005, 2010; Clarke et al., 2015a, 2015b) extended aspects of GT by addressing modernist methodological problems made evident in the postmodernist

movement. Specifically, SA extended Straussian/constructivist GT by elaborating its analytic and interpretive capabilities while resisting its positivist characteristics. For example, SA emphasizes reflexive practices that reveal relations between subjects and objects, which resists the positivist approach of duality between subject and object. It resists naive claims of objectivity by asserting the noninnocence of subjectivity, reflexivity, and possibilities. Overall, SA aims to “construct processes, sensitizing concepts, situational analytics, and theorize” as a provisional process (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 57).

As a result of this resistance, SA’s iterative development process, and interpretivist philosophical concepts, GT is further reconceptualized within the interpretive framework. When describing GT/SA in interpretive terms 15 years later, Clarke et al. (2018) contextualized the theory/methods package within pragmatism and interactionism and consistently uses the referent: constructivist GT, which makes explicit theoretical connections to symbolic interactionism (Strauss and Chicago School symbolic interactionism) and American pragmatism (Dewey and Foucault). Constructivist GT has seven properties that always already place it within an interpretive framework (Table 3.1). However, in interpretive terms, SA has developed beyond its original inception as an extension of GT to become a distinct analytic approach developed from GT. It was referenced by Clarke et al. (2018), at least once, as “Situational GT or Situational Analysis” (p. 6). Clarke et al. noted three new theoretical groundings that make SA a distinct GT approach: sensitizing concepts connecting Foucault with pragmatism and interactionism, taking the nonhuman explicitly into account, and Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) work on rhizomes and assemblages.

## SA Theoretical Grounding After the Interpretive Turn

Within the interpretive framework, SA maintains foundational theoretical roots in Straussian GT, symbolic interactionism, and American pragmatism. However, as a theory/methods package that continues through the interpretive turn, SA is “part of the (re)turn to the social, or the reconfiguration or relationality in social theory across the social sciences and humanities manifest it both quantitative and qualitative methods since circa 1975” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 62). The more recent theoretical developments within SA are not so much new, as they are more clearly articulated within the approach. For example, SA has always stressed its connection with symbolic interactionism as they relate to the Chicago School ecological social worlds/arenas approaches. The newer SA theoretical groundings include the following:

- *Social worlds/arenas key concepts*, where the focus is on ecologies of social phenomena is based on expanded and more clearly articulated discussions of Chicago School of symbolic interactionism and social world/arenas theory.
- *Critical pragmatist interactionism* based on sensitizing concepts from Foucault’s genealogy and Dewey’s American pragmatism as interpreted by Koopman (2011) who asserted,

The basic categories with which both the pragmatist and the genealogists who work with philosophical traditions are problems and responses . . . Both philosophical traditions are in present-centered in the mode of what R.G. Collingwood often referred to as the logic of question-and-answer. The genealogist begins in the present, with a problem inchoately sensed or felt, and works historically to expose and articulate the conditions that make the problem possible. The pragmatist also begins in the present, with a problem roughly sensed or perhaps already described in fine and works with the future in mind to articulate and innovate practices that promise a resolution of the problematic situation. (pp. 6–7)

Additionally, Clarke et al. (2018) and Clarke et al. (2022), use the Foucaultian pragmatist relationship to provide ontological and epistemological connections that reveal analytical central



sensitizing concepts key to doing SA research. The specific concepts based on Foucault are the gaze, discourse(s) and disciplining, fields of practice(s) and conditions of possibility, and the *dispositif* (Clarke et al., 2018).

- *Explicit inclusion of the Nonhuman* as an extension of GT and grounded in science and technology studies.
- *Rhizomic assemblages concept* based on Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Rhizomes, a metaphor drawn from the field of botany, are subterranean networks with many nodes. The nodes can sprout new growth even if separated, the rhizome pieces possess the potential for new growth. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome pertains to a map that “must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on a map, not the opposite” (as cited in Clarke et al., 2018, p. 92).

These ideas heavily influenced how SA situational and relational mapping, which “Clarke had not realized until 2013, despite having taught their work” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 91).

In sum, collectively, these theoretical frameworks situate SA as a theory/method that “uniquely braids together strands from multiple theories and theorists” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 91) making the approach suitable for research in multiple fields, where analytical interpretations of complex social systems contribute to scholarship, practical actions, and the iterative process of meaning-making. As a theory/methods package (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018), SA provides methodological flexibility that suits this pragmatic research, which is the second reason I selected it for this study.

### **Methodological Fit**

The focus of this research is the right-to-read claim advanced by the lawsuit filed by several Detroit high school students against the State of Michigan in 2016. SA's focus on social complexity, critical interactionism, analyzing the social, the use of sensitizing concepts, and guidelines for mapping extant history discourse materials make it a fit for this research.

Methodologically, this topic fits SA because the situation is emergent and requires the researcher to heed the following implications: "The situation may be bigger than expected; is relationally complex and radically dynamic; it involves radical heterogeneity; and it is political (with a small p)" (Clarke et al., 2022, p. 117). Politically, this situation has a long contentious social history in the U.S that comes with an abundance of extant material.

According to Clarke et al. (2022), SA is part of an expanding critical interactionism framework. There have been several qualitative inquiry theories and methods that focus on addressing complex social issues using expanding critical perspectives. The roots of SA mapping methods in "radical democratic pragmatism, contemporary feminist, antiracist, social justice, decolonizing, queer, and related concerns" (Clarke et al., 2022, p. 63) situates it with approaches that analytically grasp, reconfigure, and analyze the social, broadly conceived within specific social phenomena. SA's interpretive approach uses sensitizing concepts to provide reference and guidance for the research (Blummer, 1969; Clarke et al., 2022). Sensitizing concepts come from the researcher's familiarity with theories related to the research topic. Specifically, Clarke et al. (2018) stated, "We want to validate that researchers should, in advance, have a solid grasp of the extant theory pertaining broadly to their topics" (p. 55).

Additionally, the use of sensitizing concepts makes SA's methods applicable for interdisciplinary research. Its interdisciplinary flexibility makes framing the situation - broadly

conceived, which Clarke et al. (2018) explained as necessary and less daunting when combined with sensitizing concepts from theories that share ontological and epistemological roots.

As an approach rooted in GT, SA is compatible with GT. However, Clarke et al. (2018) are consistent in pointing out that as “an extension of Straussian GT, [SA] of course can be used with Straussian (1987) and constructivist (e.g., Charmaz 2014) GT” (p. 366). They also noted that because of SA’s focus on the situation and relationalities within such situated social phenomena, using SA with constructivist GT of methods is separately and to “add[s] a grounded processual analysis to a cartographic situational analysis emphasizing relationalities” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 366). Additionally, SA’s focus on the situation as broadly conceived and on analytically mapping the relationalities within a situation makes it compatible with other methods. However, when combining SA with other methods for discipline-specific research studies, Clarke et al. (2018) noted:

Both theory and methods travel widely today across disciplines and transnationally (see Clarke, Friese, & Washburn 2015:22–49) . . . [However] as a theory/methods package, SA is clearly and deeply rooted in the epistemologies and ontologies of symbolic interactionism, pragmatist philosophy, Foucaultian discourse analysis, and Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomic assemblages. But researchers may well want to pull in concepts from elsewhere, or tweak a map to do some other kind of work. The issue then becomes making things *very explicit*. As Riessman (2002:706, emphasis added) noted, “Some fancy epistemological footwork is required. . . . [Borrowing and/or] combining methods forces investigators to confront troublesome philosophical issues and *to educate readers about them*.” Such problems need to be put on the table and discussed in our publications. We may well not be able to “solve” them, but coming to terms with and describing the limits, constraints, and partialities they place on our analyses is important reflexive work—to be shared with readers, if only in endnotes. (pp. 366–367)

Chapter II of this dissertation provided details on the sensitizing concepts from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1989) ecological systems theory (bioecological systems theory) and CRT. However, this chapter details how these sensitizing concepts are adapted to use in this research.

To be very explicit about the theories used with SA, I assert that bioecological systems theory and CRT do not require fancy epistemological footwork since both theories and methods

are rooted in the qualitative inquiry discipline used by social science researchers. Broadly conceived, critical qualitative inquiry in the social sciences includes history and education. Clarke et al. (2018) noted that mapping extant historical discourse materials is different from mapping other discourses (e.g., narrative visual). Mapping extant historical discourse materials “studies change in the situation by mapping it at two or more time periods and comparing the maps” (Clarke et al., 2022, p. 116). The explicit time for mapping required that an SA historical process be undergirded by using sensitizing concepts from Bronfenbrenner’s (1989) bioecological systems theory and CRT to frame the situation for this educational research study.

### **Mapping Historical Discourse**

My implementation of SA focuses on historical practices as they influence social change and lead to a variety of possibilities for creating a biography of a present situation that has its roots in the genealogies of discourses (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Clarke, 2005; Foucault, 1980) and Foucault’s concern: “We are doomed . . . to the task of hearing what has already been said” (as cited in Clarke, 2005, p. 264). However, I see the task of analyzing the trajectory of actions that may have produced the right-to-read claim that is the focus on the proposed research, as an opportunity to articulate specific “sites of silence” (Clarke, 2005, p. 85). So, while we may be doomed to hear what has already been said, we are still discovering the voices located in sites of silence. This is illustrated by the absence of Black educational theorists-practitioners in the published developmental genealogies of action research, the multiple actors who have contributed to educational practices that support literacy access, and the more explicit articulation of the opportunities for envisioning possible iterations for humanizing educational policies.

SA emphasizes reflexivity. SA encourages researchers to do preliminary mapping and memo writing that intentionally and explicitly includes the researcher. How and why did I come to study this topic, which manifested itself as a claim in 2016 about access to literacy? What goals did/do I have in mind? For whom? In my preliminary map and memo, the main point of inquiry for me was and remains understanding the history of a contemporary moment. Since my point of inquiry is about a claim—a thing in time—I selected SA for mapping historical discourse. This SA method is apt for bringing forth as many meanings and relevancies associated with the multiple perspectives that may ground multiple histories of a moment (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018; Foucault, 1980; Garland, 2014) as the moment is situated.

According to Foucault, writing the history of the present requires a person to “set out from a problem expressed in the terms current today and . . . try to work out its genealogy. Genealogy means beginning analysis] from a question posed in the present” (as cited in Garland, 2014, p. 367). The quest is for what is hidden in the present as it is informed by multi-historical points (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015). Further, Clarke (2005) wrote, “Grounded theory approaches have been used on historical materials for years but only by a fairly limited number of researchers” (p. 264). As a methodological approach rooted in grounded theory, situational analysis is often used as a companion approach, although the method is capable of being used as stand-alone tool for conducting rigorous qualitative research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015b, 2018) and examining specific discourse materials.

For this research, I applied the central method of SA by mapping historical discourse material. SA provides the analytic mapping tools to examine the influencing elements and their relationalities for discerning how the 2016 right-to-read claim in Detroit fits into historical discourses of U.S. education. I use the right-to-read claim as it is presented in the *Gary B. v.*

*Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) case “to tell stories of the nonhuman—biographies of things as well as people, of technologies, discourses, and so on” (Clarke, 2005, p. 268). In this attempt to historicize the contemporary claim that access to literacy is an educational right claim, SA can provide for inclusive data collection. Additionally, SA requires researchers to practice reflexivity, multiple readings of data, rigorous memo writing, use of inductive coding, and categorizing memo techniques (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015b; Pérez & Canella, 2016; Saldaña, 2021).

Framing the human and non-human components within historical phases, instead of as objects along a strict timeline, provides the analytical flexibility that SA requires. Time is real, so my research references time. However, the SA methodological approach allows the fluidity to conduct research that does not privilege time. To reinforce the situatedness of my research as an exploration of the history of the present, I mapped historical discourse materials using situational analysis mapping methods. SA draws from historiography, an approach that has developed over time into eclectic and fluid approaches that “[are] not only the province of historians; most other disciplines also have serious historical concerns and foci” (Clarke et al., 2018). What began as homogeneous historical research focused on political, economic, and military stories of mostly White men, has developed into post-structuralist and interpretivist approaches that constructed history from the bottom up instead of top-down (Clarke et al., 2018). Using SA to map historical discourse also aligns with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of rhizomic assemblages, which expressly focuses “relations and spatialities so central to analytic mapping in SA” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 93). This focus supports researcher reflexivity, which helps avoid oversimplifying history.

## SA and Educational Research

In addition to SA's historical mapping of discourse, this research used sensitizing concepts from CRT and Bronfenbrenner's (1989) bioecological systems theory. These theories incorporate methods that align with SA mapping and are often used in education research. Even though SA is most often associated with grounded theory, its use is expanding. Clarke et al. (2018) listed diverse current research that use SA as the main research method. The field of education studies is one of several areas seeing an increase in SA research. Using SA is particularly useful for education research that seeks to understand large complex social situations.

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) bioecological systems theory and CRT theorists provide methods that apply understanding social phenomena that occur across social systems and are particularly useful for studying systemic social issues. Framing with bioecological systems theory and CRT framing foreground the social and historical complexities that are part of the situation examined through the SA mapping method. As a qualitative methodological approach, SA "provoke[s] analysis of relations among different elements" (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 14) by addressing heterogeneous relationships while avoiding simplifications. SA's explicit, intentional engagement with heterogeneity, as it lives within the conceptualized and material world, allows researchers to untangle the knottiness of social phenomena by mapping the relational ecology of a situation.

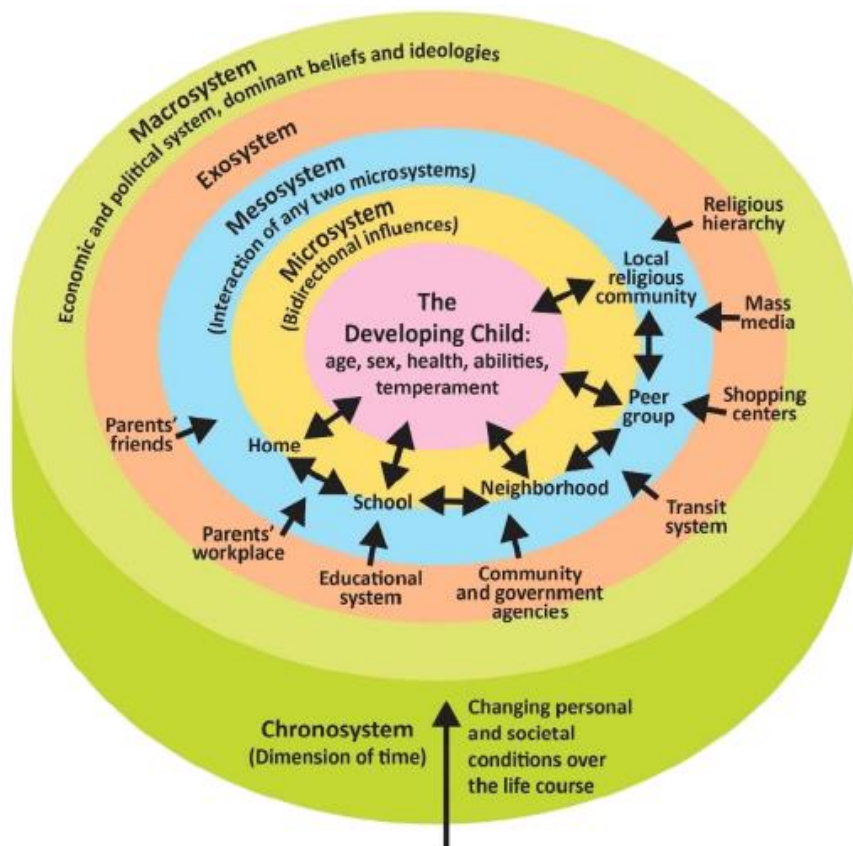
Bronfenbrenner's (1974, 1989) work is well documented in research influencing education policy. In 1965, he co-founded Head Start, an educational program designed to alleviate some of the major educational barriers faced by low-income children in the United States. Applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory concepts aligns with SA's

relationalities and analytics focus. As an ecology approach, bioecological systems theory also aligns with SA's roots in social worlds/arenas theory that stem from the Chicago School of Human Ecology. Bioecological systems theory's focus on understanding social ecologies situates it within the interpretive philosophical movement.

Figure 3.2 shows the five social systems Bronfenbrenner's (1974, 1979, 1989) theory encompassing specific elements that impact a child's development, which includes the role education serves in their development. Understanding how the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem interact together, and all have the potential to support SA relational mapping.

**Figure 3.2**

*Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Model*



*Note.* Image by Ian Joslin, licensed under Creative Commons BY 4.0



Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original ecological systems theory did not include the influences of time (chronosystem) or personal characteristic of the "child" in the development process. However, he spent nearly 20 years revising his theory, so that it emphasized the interrelationships between all the social systems including the influences of an individual's characteristics (self) and time (chronosystems) as it relates to significant personal or historical experiences. The additional attention to person and time resulted in Bronfenbrenner's (1989, 1998) renaming the theory as bioecological systems theory. This theory articulates complexities of Bronfenbrenner's theory and its central tenets:

- Social systems are interrelated.
- The person influences the system.
- The mesosystem represents relationships between and in association with multiple microsystems.
- Proximal processes are ongoing everyday activities and interactions with objects, symbols, and other persons. These interactions are mutually influenced by a person's characteristics, the environment, historically by what has happened, and currently by what is happening (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

It is important to note that in Bronfenbrenner's research design model, the concept of process-person-context-time that he developed for bioecological systems theory explicitly addresses processes and time as spatial and temporal. As a social systems theory, bioecological systems theory provides a framework for addressing a variety of critical perspectives related to the socio-political nature of human development. Some researchers felt that the continued use of a two-dimensional image as enveloping nested circles is an inapt metaphor for Bronfenbrenner's theory (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The multiple two-way arrows shown crossing the five nested

social systems suggest the relationalities similar to those in the rhizomic assemblages that influence SA situational maps. As a method, SA mapping provides the relational perspectives that the bioecological systems model suggests.

In 1965, Bronfenbrenner's ideas on human development contributed to his role as a co-founder for the federal Head Start program. The program was part of the 1964 "War on Poverty" presidential initiative (see Orleck & Hazirjian, 2011). Over the next 30 years, Bronfenbrenner refined his theory of human development as processes occurring within bioecological systems. His research on child development and the influences of poverty and education established his work within critical theory inquiry. While his theory does not explicitly address issues of race or racism, Bronfenbrenner (1994) invited critical revisioning when he writes:

Certainly thus far it has by no means been demonstrated that this latest extension of the ecological paradigm has any validity. Nor is the validation of hypotheses the principal goal that ecological models are designed to achieve. Indeed, their purpose may be better served if the hypotheses that they generate are found wanting, for the primary scientific aim of the ecological approach is not to claim answers, but to provide a theoretical framework that, through its application, will lead to further progress in discovering the processes and conditions that shape the course of human development. (p. 41)

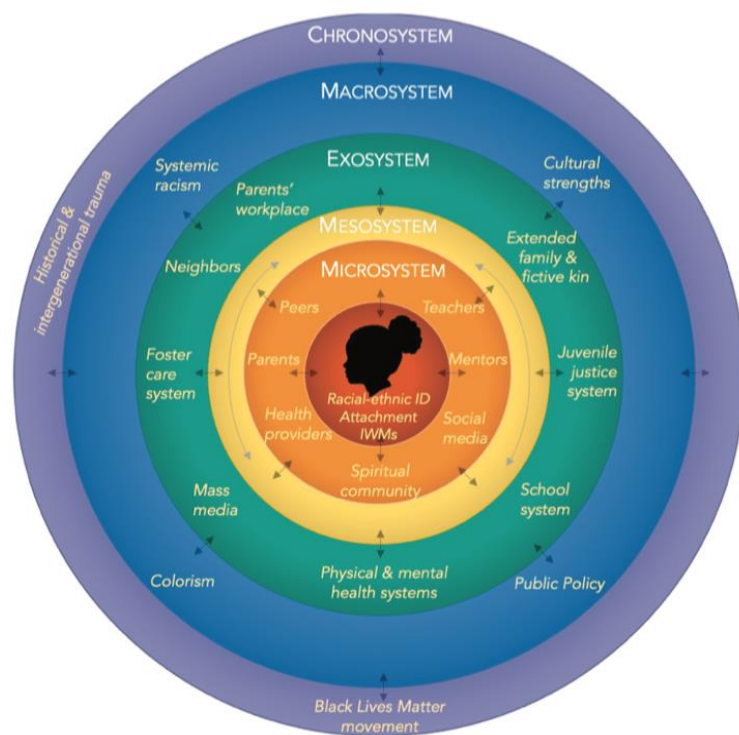
Bronfenbrenner's (1998) bioecological systems theory and model have been extended and adapted, as seen for example with life history theory, an evolutionary-ecological reconceptualization of Bronfenbrenner's model of human development (Hertler et al., 2018). Their interpretation shows Bronfenbrenner's model reconceptualized within an evolutionary ecological systems theory framework by encapsulating the original model inside two additional nested spheres: community ecology and physical ecology (Hertler et al., 2018, p. 330). This model is intended to examine "the question of life history theory, and how it might apply to our evolutionary-ecological reconceptualization of Bronfenbrenner's model of human development" (Hertler et al., 2018, p. 334). While not visually represented in the model, the researchers

explain: “Our more biologically grounded recasting of the Bronfenbrenner model now permits us to discern two different levels of Bronfenbrenner’s chronosystem” developmental and evolutionary<sup>8</sup> (Hertler et al., 2018, p. 332).

Likewise, CRT extends Bronfenbrenner’s model to include and specific factors of particular relevance to attachment and Black youth development (Stern et al., 2021). Figure 3.3 shows the reconceptualized CRT framework focusing on Black child development within the social systems of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (Stern et al., 2021).

**Figure 3.3**

*Stern et al. ’s Adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s Model to Depict Black Youth Development*



*Note.* From “Working Toward Anti-Racist Perspectives in Attachment Theory, Research, and Practice” by J. A. Stern, O. Barbarin, & J. Cassidy, 2021. *Attachment & Human Development*, 24(3), p. 403. Copyright 2021 by the authors. Open Access Article.

<sup>8</sup> Development chronosystem refers to Bronfenbrenner’s original construct, includes environmental events and life transitions experienced during organismic development, and may also subsume relevant sociohistorical circumstances. The evolutionary chronosystem now adds the evolutionary-ecological interactions over deep time Hertler et al. (2018).

When combined with sensitizing concepts from CRT, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1998) theory is enabled with a critical perspective capable of addressing partialities and revealing marginalized influences that may otherwise have been overlooked in previous research. For example, in regard to her research team's work on attachment theory and African American youth (Stern et al., 2021), Stern et al. (2021) began with the basic model and contextual factors identified by Bronfenbrenner (1974) and added CRT identifiers to the microsystem level (Stern, et al. 2021). Specifically, they were intentional about integrating racism-related contextual factors into their CRT adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Both early and later versions of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1998) model address elements in the chronosystem. Hertler et al. (2018) made distinctions between two kinds of time elements. Stern et al. (2021) effectively used categories from CRT and attachment development theory to ground the kinds of time/historical elements in the chronosystem. However, how the chronosystem functions is relatively flatly critiqued. The heightened importance of time became apparent in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. Time is included in the chronosystem as the "temporal equivalent of the spatial context" (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 254). The version for this research takes this aspect of time into account and used sensitizing concepts based on the following tenets from CRT in education:

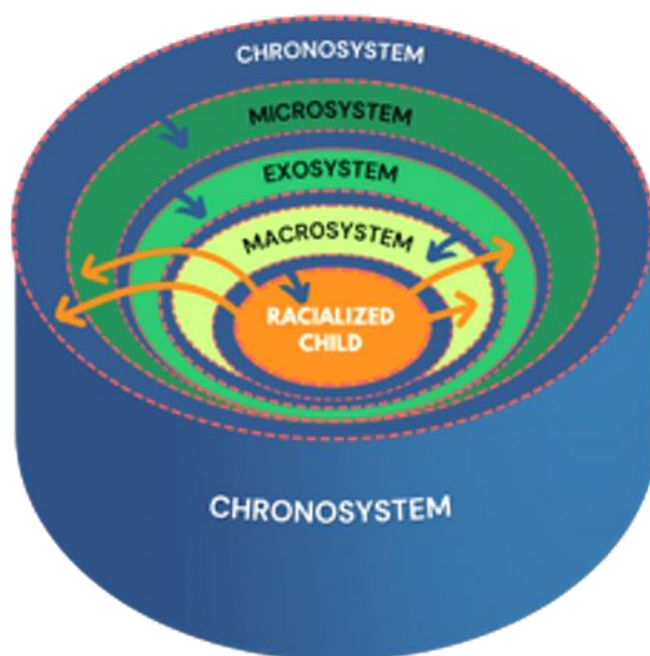
- Racial inequity in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on competition.
- Constructions of racial inequity and the perpetuation of normative whiteness must be critically examined.
- Rejects ahistoricism.

- Examines historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression.
- Rejects the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of White people.
- Establishes the permanence of intersectionality by engaging in intersectional analyses that recognize the ways that race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers.
- Agitates and advocates for meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity.

Historical patterns of oppression, intersectionality, and counternarratives are the specific CRT sensitizing concepts influencing my adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1998) model. Figure 3.4 is my preliminary interpretation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems model, which shows spatial and temporal influences in the chronosystem as proximal processes.

**Figure 3.4**

*Muhammad's Bioecological Systems Model of CRT in Education*



*Note.* Created for the author by Barbara Lash. Copyright © 2024 Mursalata Muhammad

In my interpretative model, the influences of historical elements, represented by the chronosystem, are foundational to the other systems. The model rejects ahistoricism (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018) and acknowledges aspects of the chronosystem as spatial and temporal (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). This model's rendition emphasizes critical perspectives of the bioecological systems racialized children may experience. More specifically, the model shows Bronfenbrenner's proximal processes as they apply to time spatially and temporally. This idea is represented by the blue sphere—the chronosystem—which is a foundational component appearing closest to the child and between all the other social systems. Second, the figure suggests that when racialized, a child might experience their development in real time as proximal processes (their everyday interactions) as continuously engaged with elements of what has already happened in history. As a result, the impact of history (chronosystem) displaces influences from microsystem (e.g., parents, caregivers, families, teachers).

Third, the model conceptualizes ahistoricism and patterns of oppression by inverting the social systems. For example, in this model the potential microsystem influences (e.g., parents, caregivers, teachers) are furthest from the child, which suggests the substantial power historical events have over assumed influences of elements in the microsystem.

Fourth, the model uses dashed borders around each system to capture Bronfenbrenner's (1979) definition of the mesosystem as the relations occurring between, among and across all system levels, not as a system located around the microsystem (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). This model attempts to show the ever-presence of historical events on all aspects of bioecological systems.

Finally, this model describes the permanence of intersectionality and Bronfenbrenner's (1989) emphasis on the role of "person characteristics" (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 243). This acknowledges the child's influence on the ecological system. In Figure 3.4, the arrows emanating from the racialized child represent the continuously negotiated idea of self as it is constructed as intersectionality and influenced mutually by the child's engagement with the social constructs that make up their bioecological systems.

As theories meant for examining social systems, CRT and Bronfenbrenner's (1998) bioecological systems theory support theoretical sampling. CRT scholars explicitly state that critical race theory provides a guiding framework not an analytic tool (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018). They are extant theories used in education research and studies. Both theories are used to conduct education research. While using either theory to ground education research is not novel, using sensitizing concepts from CRT and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems to ground an SA mapping of historical discourse materials for an education research project, is a fresh approach.

### **Study Design**

The key method in SA is analytic mapping to portray and interpret social phenomena. SA mapping is crucial to data collection to unravel the human and nonhuman components involved in describing problematic situations. In this dissertation, the research situation is the right-to-read claim. More specifically defined—the right-to-read claim was advanced in a 2016 lawsuit charging that Detroit public schools failed to provide children access to literacy and claimed that such access is an educational right.

I used four SA mapping methods (situational, relational maps, social world/areas, and positional) and memo writing to map historical discourse materials connected to the defined

situation. While SA is used to map a variety of discourses. Clarke (2005) and Clarke et al. (2015a) described three types of maps: situational maps, social worlds maps, and positional maps. Situational maps were described as abstract and had two forms: messy and ordered. The purpose of situational maps is to “provoke analysis of relations among the different elements” (Clarke et al., 2015, p. 13), which the researcher does by first creating abstract messy and order maps to do relational mapping and memo writing.

Several years later, Clarke et al. (2018) and Clarke et al., (2022) provided more distinction for situational maps: abstract-messy, abstract-ordered, and relational. Additionally, to capture the analytical, interpretative, and reflexive data provoked through mapping with researchers memoing meticulously throughout the process. Each mapping session requires a dated memo.

While SA follows the rigorous memo writing techniques established in GT, Clarke et al. (2018) and Clarke et al. (2022) noted that constructivist GT and SA are two different analytic approaches. While both approaches may be used for a research project, they “are done one at a time, not blended together” (Clarke et al., 2018, p.109). So, while SA uses GT memo practices, it does not use constructivist GT coding.

SA methods explicitly include various kinds of discourse analysis. Clarke et al. (2015, 2018) provided guidelines and exemplars for using SA to map narrative, visual, and historical discourse materials. Each discourse provides different foci. My social justice, humanities background and interest in social science led me to select SA for mapping historical. Additionally, my interdisciplinary experiences converge into action-oriented practices that address issues related to educational policies and practices that extend beyond the classroom. According to Clarke et al. (2018), creating situational maps for historical data is similar to working with other types of discourse; but one “key difference . . . is that one can and usually



should do *multiple maps for different historical moments* in the research” (p. 322). Mapping different historical moments is vital for historical SA research because researchers are likely to come across important events or major technological changes that impact the situation under inquiry. These events should not be overlooked. The research design model for historical SA projects, includes mapping at least two time periods—Time 1: before the event or change (Time 1) and later (Time 2).

Project maps are another SA map available to researchers. This kind of map is done at the end of research and used for presenting research findings. SA provides project maps as a complementary addition to final documents. Project maps are helpful for “developing representations practices that can travel well and widely” to various audiences (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2015, 2018), which makes them well suited for presenting research findings. In sum, the researcher must be diligent and follow through with detailed map record keeping and memo writing practices.

### **Memos and SA Maps**

SA memo writing takes place along with the mapping process. Researchers are expected to memo after each mapping session (Clarke, 2005). First in SA mapping is the situational map. This map prepares a social phenomenon for analysis by laying out and identifying, in broad terms, the following elements in the situation:

- Human individuals including the researcher, groups, organizations, institutions, subcultures
- Nonhuman elements such as technologies, material infrastructure, specialized information and/or knowledge, material “things”

- Symbolic and discursive elements such as normative expectations of actors, actants, and/or another specified element, moral/ethical elements, mass media and other popular cultural discourse, situation-specific discourse.

Situational maps provide the material needed for researchers to begin analyzing the relationships among them (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2018). While they are created for identifying major elements, situational maps take on specific variations, for example:

- *Preliminary memos and abstract situational maps*—for use in project design. Clarke et al. (2018) recommended these early memos and maps to address questions about how and why the research topic is of interest to the researcher. They are abstract and “messy” because the content is recorded as ideas come. The step of making preliminary memos and maps not only helps to capture the research genesis and major elements involved in the situation but also satisfies reflexivity expectations. While informal, preliminary memos and situational maps are dated and saved as part of the continued research process.
- *Abstract situational maps, messy version*—these are revised preliminary maps and sometimes are referred to as *topic maps* (e.g., Pérez & Canella, 2016). This map and the accompanying memo are created after the researcher has completed preliminary memo, mapping, and reflected on what they already know about literature related to the research topic or question. These maps are made, remade, and copies recorded across the duration of the research. “At later stages, they work to open things up again, and help you think afresh ...stop you from sticking with comfortable and perhaps sufficient maps, leading you instead push on to exciting new analyses” (Clarke et al., 2018, pp. 130–131).

- *Abstract situational map: Ordered Version*—This is made using messy map data and guiding categories shown in Figure 5.2 (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 131). Clarke developed this from generalizing her work with Strauss’s processual ordering framework (Clarke et al. 2018, p. 130 - 131). The researcher is expected to add categories that address their empirical materials.

Social worlds or arenas maps prepare social phenomena for analysis by laying out and identifying major collective and individual participants and the dimensions within which their interrelated discourses and negotiations take place (Clarke et al., 2015a, 2018). Social world or arena maps are distinctly interpretive. Their underlying assumptions are that the situation could always be at an individual, collective, and organizational level. The relationalities embodied in social words are always capable of rhizome and assemblage behavior (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Positional maps prepare social phenomena for analysis by laying out and identifying the foremost positions taken and not taken in the data to explicate areas of difference, controversy, and the question contained within the situation of inquiry (Clarke, 2005, Clarke et al., 2015, 2018). These maps attempt “to represent the heterogeneity of positions in all its richness, not to link them to particular actors” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 166) and are key to addressing elements in a situation that initially appear ephemeral.

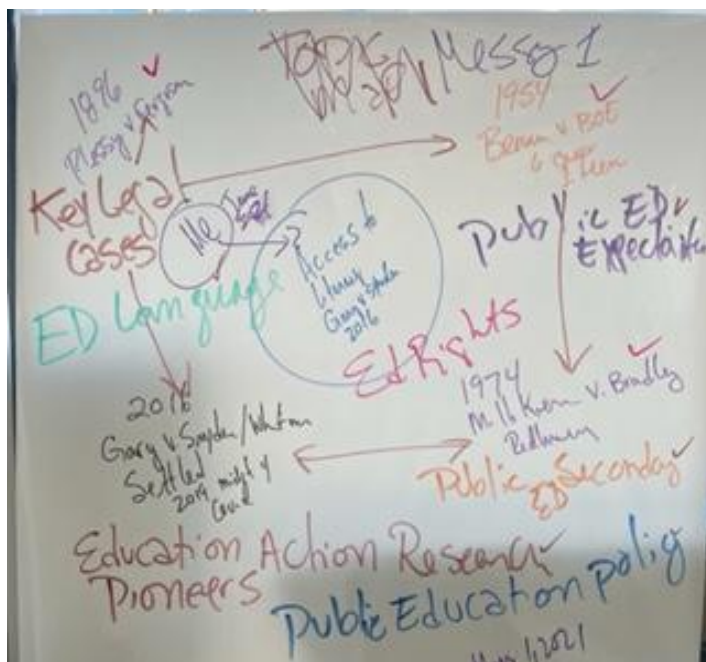
Record keeping is strategic. For the proposed research, memos and SA maps are dated and stored in, at least, two ways: on Google Drive and on a flashdrive. I created maps on white boards and freehand on an iPad and taking photos. I used pen and paper, and voice-to-text features to compose memos. Since content is meant to be accessible and manipulated throughout the research, memo writing was done after each mapping session and all items will be dated.

## Preliminary Maps and Memos

As a general starting point, preliminary maps help establish the practice of using “a reflexive rereading/analysis of [the maps] and the discourses associated with” (Pérez & Canella, 2016, p. 102) the historical process outlined by Clarke (2005), Clarke et al. (2015, 2018) and Clarke et al., 2022). Pérez and Canella (2016) suggested making an initial topic map to complement messy maps, explaining that this approach helps researchers “focus attention toward the extremely broad environmental context” (p. 102) associated with a particular issue as it relates to the researchers’ deep familiarity with the subject being studied. The topic map also helps articulate and revise initial research questions for my initial topic map. I incorporated this map in my preliminary memo. Figures 3.5, Figure 3.6, and Figure 3.7 show my preliminary situational and topic maps with typed memos.

**Figure 3.5**

*Mursalata’s Preliminary Messy Map 1 (from January 1, 2021)*



The preliminary map in Figure 3.5 shows the major elements related to the issue of access to literacy. At the time I made this map, I was working on the dissertation concept paper. While I have “Me” on the map, my mapping focused on what I knew about access issues as it related to public policy influences like other legal cases. The memo for this map was handwritten, but I provide a typed version below.

***Memo 1: Preliminary Messy Map 1a***

Date Written: 1 Jan 2021

Keywords: Access, children, education, law, literacy, politics

When I first heard about this lawsuit I wasn’t surprised that people were graduating high school with limited reading skills. My work at an open enrollment community college where our developmental math, reading and writing classes seem to always fill is kind of evidence that people aren’t getting basic skill in K-12. Also, I’ve seen truly angry young adults in my first year writing courses.

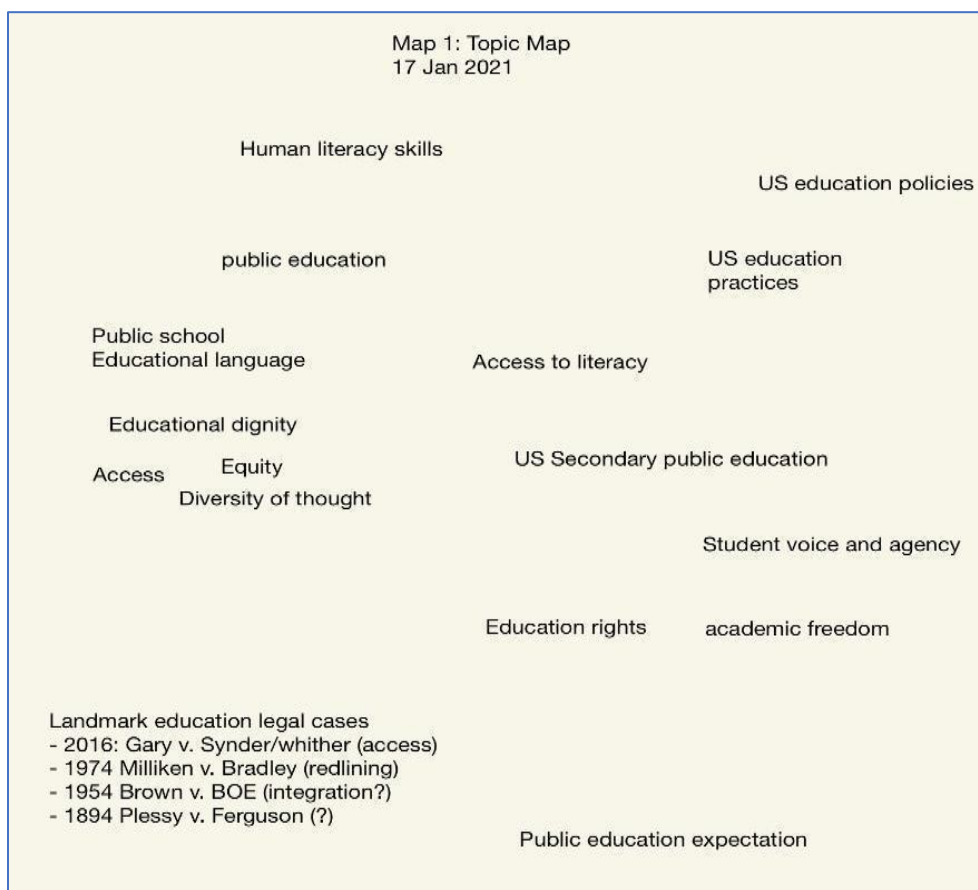
I wasn’t surprised that a lawsuit about children not getting reading skills was filed in my hometown of Detroit, MI. I wasn’t surprised that the lawsuit was a topic in the governor’s race, but honestly, I only vaguely remember it being mentioned during the 2016 election.

What did surprise me?

- That I didn’t pay it much attention until it was loud in the media sometime in 2019 maybe when it “won.”
- The fact that an actual lawsuit was filed, and the plaintiffs were teenagers.
- I was and remain most curious about the teenager voice in this case. I’m not used to children being prominent voices in current issues about literacy.

**Figure 3.6**

*Mursalata's Initial Topic Map 1 (from January 17, 2021)*



This initial topic map is based on my public discussions and lived experiences. Topics capture the broad ideas I noted as they relate to (de)humanizing practices within secondary and post-secondary educational policies and practices. Specifically, topics focus on the intersection of public education at the community college and high school levels. As these are the academic levels, which connect with my work as a community college faculty member. The topics are drawn reflections on Preliminary Messy Map 1 and its accompanying memo, as well as from notes from and observations I have made over the last 10 years from the following personal and professional experiences:

- Childhood K-12 experiences in Detroit, Michigan with homeschooling, private religious and public school institutions.
- Informal conversations about community college and high school connections.
- Previous work on other learning achievements tasks (global cultural, my ILA-A and ILA-BB).<sup>9</sup>
- K-12 substitute teaching (2012–2020);
- Participation in professional networks.
- State of Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards Bias review committee (2018–2019).
- Michigan Civil Rights Social Justice Network—about 25 K-12 teachers, staff, administrators, community activists (2019 to present).
- Colleagues of Color for Social Justice Network comprising about 54 faculty, staff, and administrators from across the United States, a group established in response to a publication request email by a retired white male educator with whom I serve as co-convenor for this self-managing group (2020 to present).

### ***Memo 1a: Initial Topic Map 1***

Date Written: 17 Jan 2021

Keywords: Access, children, education, educational policy and practices, literacy, homeschooling, law, literacy, race, gender, politics

While creating this map I thought about my personal journey to literacy. Even though I did not include these details about myself in my preliminary map, my relationship with learning to read and advancing my literacy skills were clearer this time. I think it's because I experience very different educational settings. I was homeschooled until I turned 9. My parents conversion to Islam was done in the 1960s through the Nation of Islam. Their beliefs

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<sup>9</sup> Among the requirements to advance to candidacy in Antioch University's Program in Leadership and Change, students complete two Independent Learning Achievements (ILAs). ILA-A, which is an opportunity to explore the substance of prospective dissertation topics, and ILA-B which pertains to methods and methodology.

about the public schools meant my brother and I would not attend. They saw the public school curriculum as white-washed, specifically designed to keep Black Americans ignorant of any historical facts that did not feature Europeans as victors, saviors, and superior to all other races.

So, my earlier education consisted of Arabic lessons, memorizing suras from the Quran by having adults recite them to us in Arabic and English. Spelling lessons were direct from the dictionary. History lessons included learning about Mesopotamia and noting that Egypt is in Africa.

The truant office had a lot of power—at least from my child’s perspective. This man or talk of him showed up everywhere we lived. We moved around the city of Detroit a lot. Eventually, threats from him sent my brother, nieces, nephews and me to Detroit public schools. Initially It was scary, but I quickly found out the learning there was easier than the lessons I had at home. What’s 10 spelling words compared to writing essays about great Black American and African historical figures? It didn’t even bother me that the principal of the school we attended decided that since we were “homeschooled” we weren’t ready to be in grades that corresponded to our ages. When I was nine , I started public school and was placed in the second grade. Yes, even math—at that moment—was easy.

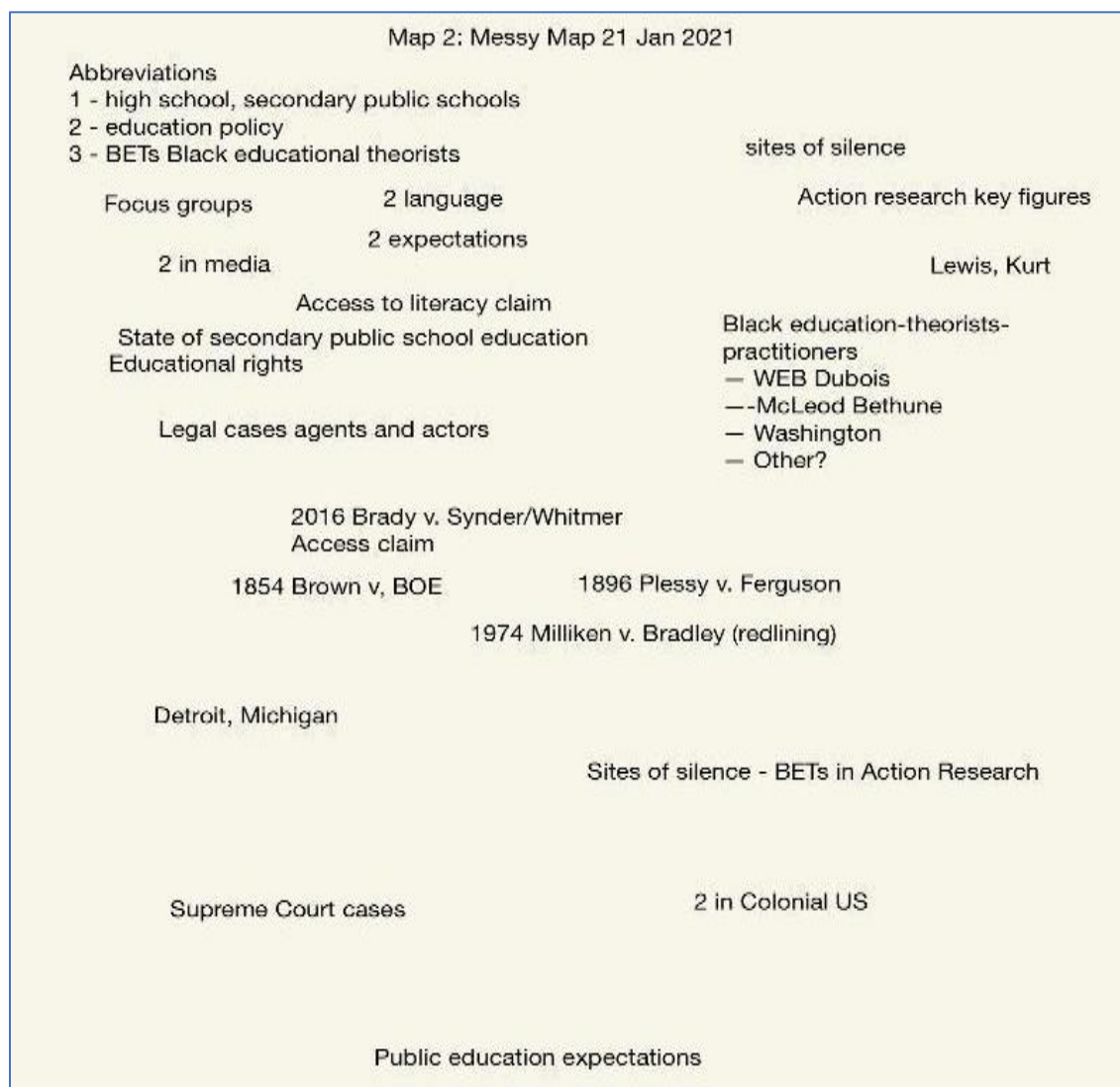
When I was 13 and entering the 6th grade, my parents enrolled me in a private Muslim school. At that school I was able to demonstrate my skills with the help of my teacher and principal’s approval, I started 9th grade the following year.

I write all this because mapping initial topics brought my home, public and private school life experiences to forefront of my mind and I wonder about the following things:

- how politics affected my access to literacy
- how race affected my access to literacy
- how being a girl and poor and Muslim affect my access to liteacy

Other thoughts—One reason I started substitute teaching (even though I teach full time at a community college) is because I had two Black teachers during my time in Detroit public schools 1978–1982 and 1984–1984.



**Figure 3.7***Mursalata's Preliminary Messy Map 2**Memo 1c: Preliminary Messy Map 2*

Date Written: 17 Jan 2021

Keywords: Access, Black educators, colonialism, children, education, educational policy and practices, gender, literacy, law, literacy, race, sites of silence, politics, supreme court cases

For this map, I did a general internet search for legal cases. I wanted to find a bit more information about Brown v. BoE. I knew the supreme court case was made from several other cases but had never looked at the other cases.

The best nugget of information was that one case—*Dorothy E. Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1951)—which named a teenager as the plaintiff. This is important because the case at the center of my research has teen plaintiffs, which I found surprising and curious.

Now, I have two curious cases where children/teenagers are prominent in the conversion—at least on the legal filings.

### **Situational Maps and Memos**

The preliminary maps and memos, provided me with directions for conducting a literature review, collecting extant data, and redoing the preliminary maps as situational maps. The next elements in this research design were as follows:

- Literature review—in SA, this is an ongoing process, which mapping helps to produce.
- Messy situational maps: The goal is to lay out all major elements connected to the history of the present moment being examined (e.g., human, nonhuman, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political, etc.). Using my preliminary messy situational map, I created two additional messy maps:
  - Time Period 1: 2016 when the right-to-read claim was filed as *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020).
  - Time Period 2: 2020, when the case was settled.
- Ordered situational maps: These maps reorder the messy map content into general categories, which “allows for new and different inductive categories and/or modifications” (Clarke, 2005, p. 89). This may be the first time I used general coding

- guidelines. Since I am not using the constructivist GT approach, I did not use any associated coding for that method.
- Time Period 1: 2016 when the right-to-read claim was filed as the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2016) case.
  - Time Period 2: 2020 when the case was settled.
  - Relational analysis maps
    - Situational maps were used to create relational analysis maps. In this stage, I used the situational maps to ask questions, identify relationships and create memos to organize this data collection.
    - I created relational maps to help articulate my findings and accompany the memos. This step was crucial for locating silences—once I found them, I noted them. However, I was be able to follow up on all of them and, so, prioritized them.
    - This map works with situational maps in the process. For each element in the situational map, Clarke and Fries (2007) recommended “think[ing] about it in relation to each other element on the map—as if you are drawing lines between them and had to specify the nature of the relationship by describing the nature of that line” (p. 376).
    - Each map became a memo for the diagrammed relationship.
  - Social Worlds/Arenas Maps
    - I created multiple social worlds/arenas maps based on the 2016 case that attempt to lay out all the collective actors. These focus on “meaning-making collectivities—crucial for locating broader interpretations from social

organizational, institutional, and discursive dimensions” (Clarke, 2005, p. 14).

The following guiding questions for creating social worlds/arenas maps combined suggestions from Clarke et al. (2022, p. 155) with provisional results from my earlier messy maps:

- What patterns of collective commitment create the social worlds engaged in the right-to-read discourse?
  - Who makes up the social worlds involved in the right-to-read discourse and are the features of their constellations, divergences, or points of overlap?
  - What new/emergent nonhuman technologies or other nonhuman actants are characteristic in each world? What constraints, opportunities, and resources did the nonhuman elements supply to that world?
- Positional Maps
    - I used the previous maps and memos to create positional maps for major positions, those taken and not taken.
    - I examined data from the same period to locate basic issues and differing positions about those issues. This step recognizes that some issues may or may not be contested.
  - Project Maps
    - I followed advice from Clarke et al. (2018) and Clarke et al. (2022) and created project-specific maps for presenting research findings. These maps help make research results accessible. They are simplified situational maps that include only the elements that will be part of the final dissertation.

## Coding

Clarke et al. (2018) noted that constructivist GT and SA are different kinds of analytic approaches that are done separately. While SA does use memo writing, it does not use constructivist GT coding. However, coding for qualitative research provides novice researchers focused filters for creating a foundation for future coding cycles (Saldaña, 2021). The coding choices for this research are explicitly appropriate for examining extant and nonhuman data.

- *Initial/Open Coding*—Breaks data into discrete parts so that they may be closely examined for differences and similarities (Saldaña, 2021). This coding method may be helpful in identifying areas of absence or silence. Additionally, this method provides researchers with analytic needs that can be used for furniture further exploration and interpretation.
- *Descriptive/Topic Coding*—Summarizes in words or short phrases basic topics for identifying qualitative data. This coating method is particularly helpful for beginning qualitative research because it allows them to learn how to code data and works well with a variety of non-interview data.
- *Concept/Analytic Coding*—Extracts and labels big picture ideas suggested by data. This approach can be used as a standalone method and combined with other coding tools. This coding tool is useful in assigning meso/macro levels of meaning to data analytic work in progress. It is an appropriate method because it helps when the research calls for moving beyond the local and particular of the phenomenon being studied. It pairs well with critical theory approaches.

These three coding types will be used as needed in memo writing and as guides for articulating and interpreting map data. Coding approaches will be recorded to further explain its function in the analytic process.

### **Ongoing Literature Reviews**

The literature review is an ongoing aspect of the SA analytic process. The mapping and memo writing processes requires researchers to update literature related to the data as items are discovered. Researchers often come to the dissertations and research study phase having already been exposed to literature in their area. Clarke et al. (2015a) explained that working knowledge of one's areas supports the idea that researchers come with prior information that should be acknowledged and expanded upon as part of the analytic process.

### **Ethics and Research Trustworthiness**

This research did not involve human subjects or collect first-hand data from human participants. It used extant materials (documents, reports, social media artifacts, journalist artifacts, court documents, and secondary sources). Even though the primary data examined did not pose ethical issues for individuals I submitted the research proposal for IRB, which was approved.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality and rigor of the study. In lieu of an SA research team, I relied on reflexivity, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and analytic dialogues to demonstrate the credibility and confirmability of this research.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, I encapsulate the findings from using situational analysis to map the historical discourses of the right-to-read lawsuit, which posited literacy access as an education policy right. This chapter incorporates results of the SA maps for the time periods examined and shows how the research addresses the research question. Additionally, it presents my findings and insights in a manner that could contribute to future critical examinations of humanizing practices in US educational practices.

As discussed in Chapter III, shifts in events related to the situation or inquiry, broadly conceived, require mapping multiple time periods using situational analysis (SA) to conduct historical research. At a minimum, researchers are expected to map the situation at two points in time. Mapping should be done at a point identified as Time 1. This is a historical point that happens before the event, marking the situation of inquiry. Next, mapping was done at a later point identified as Time 2. Creating these points in the study through multiple maps provided the comparative data needed “to understand the nature and consequences of the change(s) in the site of inquiry. (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 322).

As I moved from the preliminary messy maps and memos to generating my first messy map for the situation of inquiry, I was not sure what time periods would serve as the earlier, Time 1, and later, Time 2, historical moments. I was starting at the point of the situation of inquiry as I understood and recognized it as an assemblage (Clarke et al., 2018) of a social phenomenon in the Foucaultian ideas of writing the history of the present. My maps began at the historical moment of the situation in 2016 when the lawsuit was filed. The best way for me to differentiate Time 1 and Time 2 was to create a messy map of each time, marking the situation of inquiry by the research question: How does the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school

students in Detroit, Michigan reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access? Since the first messy map begins at the point of the event, the map is labeled Messy Map Time 0.

The decision to begin with the year of the situation of inquiry as my mapping process led to drafting three messy and three ordered situational maps each with multiple iterations for Time 0 (2016), Time 1 (1992–2020), and Time 2 (1950–1970). The arrangement of the time in the process I used differs from the expected chronological approach. Instead of mapping from the earliest historical moment revealed in the data from the initial and Time 0 maps, I mapped in reverse chronological order. Time 1 began in 2016 and then I mapped back to 1992. The end result was the 1992–2020 timeline for Time 1. Due to the relational connections between the subject of literacy access and lawsuits, the *Gary v Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) lawsuit and *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), was the starting point for Time 2. Because SA maps of historical data requires examining extant material from multiple sites at a time before and after the initial social event, Time 1 (1992–2020) encompasses the *Gary v Snyder/Whitmer* (2018–2020) lawsuit and Time 2 (1954–1970) encompasses *Brown v Board of Education* (1954). The mapped time periods are presented in reverse chronological order due to the procedural need to align research that attempts to construct an analytical narrative of the history of a present moment.

## **Mapping Results**

### **Messy Situational Maps**

I began data collection by creating one messy situational map that took several iterations. I generated the first version of this map in December 2022 and the current version in February 2024. Messy Situational Map 6 Time 0 (Figure 4.1) details all the elements, broadly conceived,



associated with the 2016 right to literacy lawsuit defining the situation of inquiry. This map provided the provisional perspective needed to identify at least two appropriate time periods to map for the situation under study. Based on my memo notes from messy situational maps 1 to 5 and relational maps 1 and 2, I conducted research interactions that provided additional elements for the messy and ordered maps. My memoing and research process included observations, interpretations, and, most importantly, questions. Addressing the questions by conducting research using Google, Google Scholar, library databases, government websites, and periodicals was done intermittently with the mapping and memoing activities.

All my mapping sessions included multiple SA activities. After generating Messy Map 4, most of my research sessions included the following activities: relational maps, memoing, online research, reading, notetaking, and updating the messy situational map. Moving back and forth between situational analysis activities (mapping, memoing, researching, reflecting) helped me reach an acceptable saturation point shown in Messy Situation Map 6 Time 0.

**Figure 4.1**

*Messy Situational Map Time 0: Right-to-Read 2016 Legal Claim*



The Ordered Situational Map: Time 0 includes all Messy Map Time 0 elements. While I did update the Ordered Situational Map 6, those updates were less frequent. After generating the first ordered map from Messy Situational Map 3, I spent time on the iterative process of generating relational maps, researching, memoing, and presenting my research in progress<sup>10</sup>, which provided additional elements for updating the Messy Situational Map.

**Table 4.1**

*Ordered Situational Map Time 0: Right-to-Read Legal Claim*

Individual Human Elements/Actors:	Nonhuman Element/Actants
Governors Emergency managers Mursalata Muhammad (researcher)	Transportation Educational dignity, access, equity Elementary Secondary Education Act Every Student Succeeds Act Religion
Collective Human Elements/Actors:	Implicated Silent Actors/Actants
school boards State & Detroit political appointments & elections State Governors: Whitmer, Snyder, Granholm, Engler Presidents Legal cases agents and actors	Teachers Parents/guardians Parent teacher associations (PTAs) school administrators Children Voters Black educational theorists (BETs), practitioners: W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington Education pioneers Sites of silence, BETs in action research Focus groups
Individual and/or Collective human actors Discursive Constructions	Discursive Constructions of Nonhuman Actants
Student voice and agency Public Education Policy Research & Scholarship	Education Language Public School Educational language Education policy Language Home, alternative, non-public schools
Political/Economic Elements	Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements

<sup>10</sup> Work Session 10: I presented my work in progress at the ICPEL (International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership) 2023 Conference on July 28, 2023.

Curriculum control/development Finance Operational control Academic freedom School partnerships Teacher professional development Public charter schools Federal “education” Policies	Student demographics Free & reduced lunch numbers
Temporal Elements/on Going Historical Processes (see message, p. 323 Clarke et al., 2018)	Spatial//GEOGRAPHY Elements
Access to basic literacy/Access to literacy/Basic Literacy Key legal cases Supreme Court cases COVID	Geography Detroit Michigan Key Legal Cases
Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested)	Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative, and/or Visual)
2016 <i>Gary B. v Snyder</i> 2019 <i>Gary B. v. Whitmer</i> (settled 2019) 1896 <i>Plessy v Ferguson</i> 1954 <i>Brown v Board of Education</i> 5 cases combined in 1 1974 <i>Milliken vs Bradley</i> (redlining) 14th amendment	Education policy in the colonial United States Education Policy in Media Education rights Social services in schools Public discussions / Public education expectations U.S. education policies U.S. education practices
Other kinds of Elements: Items I’ve yet to categorize from the Messy Map Version 3	
Sites of Silence Action research key figures: Kurt Lewin Action research Diversity of thought human literacy skills Public secondary education	

By combining iterative searching on Google, Google Scholar, and various databases guided by questions, reflections, and elements from the maps noted in the memo process, I uncovered a range of public discourses related to the history of federal education policy with a particular focus on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The following memo notes address major ESEA federal initiatives from 1992 to 2020. This time period encompasses the 2016 right to literacy lawsuit that defines the situation of inquiry under study.

- US Department of Education (n.d.-a) history of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA);

- Vinovskis's (2022) "Federal Compensatory Education Policies from Lyndon B. Johnson to Barack H. Obama";
- Wong and Flanagan's (2022) analysis comparing Biden and Trump on education;
- Brookings Institution's "Education Policy Through Executive Action: Comparing the Biden and Trump Presidencies" (Wong & Flanagan, 2022).

The following content and timeline is excerpted from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (2024):

1992—The National Commission on Time and Learning, Extension (Public Law 102–359) amending the National Education Commission on Time and Learning Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for such Commission. It also amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to revise provisions for (1) a specified civic education program and (2) school-wide projects for educationally disadvantaged children and provided for additional Assistant Secretaries of Education.

1994—The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 (Public Law 103-382) It included provisions or reforms for The Title 1 program, providing extra help to disadvantaged students and holding schools accountable for their results at the same level as other students; charter schools; Safe and Drug-free schools; Eisenhower Professional Development; Major increases in bilingual and immigrant education funding; Impact aid; and Education technology and other programs. It reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

1995—The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was again amended (Public Law 104-5). This amended a provision of Part A of Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 relating to Indian education to provide a technical amendment and other purposes.

1998—The Charter School Expansion Act (Public Law 105-278) amended the Charter School Program, enacted in 1994 as Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

2001—The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001 (Public Law 106-554) created a new program of assistance for school repair and renovation and amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize credit enhancement initiatives to help charter schools obtain, construct, or repair facilities; reauthorized the Even Start program; and enacted the "Children's Internet Protection Act."

2002—The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110) was signed into law in 2002. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The

Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state.

The current reauthorization of ESEA is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The ESEA also allows military recruiters access to 11th and 12th-grade students' names, addresses, and telephone listings when requested.

March 13, 2010—On March 23, 2010, the Obama administration released its blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). According to the Department of Education, “The blueprint challenges the nation to embrace education standards that would put America on a path to global leadership. It provides incentives for states to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace, and create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and succeed in college.” (Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, 2024, paras. 20–27):

Significant policy-related changes of significance between 2011 and 2020 included the following:

- “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) . . . bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation’s national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students” (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.-a, para. 1).
- U. S. Department of Education (n.d.-b) “The Federal Role in Education.”
- The 2016 proposal to merge the U.S. Department of Education with the U.S. Labor Department.
- COVID-19 Executive Orders Affecting Schools.

Through memoing and reflecting on the elements associated with the situation, I found key connections between the 2016 right to literacy claim, the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) lawsuit, and federal and state education actions. The most prominent actors in the situation appeared to be elected officials, while teachers, parents, and children occupied sites of silence. With the exception of being the plaintiffs in the 2016 lawsuit, children appeared to be the

most silent actors in discussions related to accessing literacy. This lawsuit is combined with five separate lawsuits, leading to a second messy map I created about a year later.

## **Relational Maps**

Early versions of the relational maps (1, 1.1, 1.2, and 2) revealed connections between the following mapped elements:

- Key legal cases about education—specifically supreme court cases and lawsuits in Detroit:
  - *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896)
  - *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) - specifically, each of its five combined cases. The *Davis v County School Board of Prince Edward County* (1952) is particularly interesting for this study. The named plaintiff in this case was an African American teenage girl, and the lawsuit resulted from the protests led by public school children.
  - Civil Rights Act (1964)
  - *Milliken v Bradley* (1974)
  - *Gary B. v Snyder/Whitmer* (2016)
- Michigan governors: Milliken, Snyder, and Whitmer
- Geography: lawsuit locations
- Sites of silence: children, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators
- Politics—specifically political appointments of “emergency managers”). The relational map helped me locate significant educational actions that preceded the 2016 lawsuit. Most of those significant actions were gubernatorial legislative actions

### Figure 4.2

[illegible]

The relational maps helped me pinpoint 1999 as the starting year for Time 1. I settled on 1999 because it marked the first time the governor's office transferred control of Detroit Public Schools from local to state control. Additionally, 1999 is near the time period when the first children who would become plaintiffs in the 2016 lawsuit were born. Governor John Engler was in office, and his educational actions initiated the state take-over. With the data collected from the messy situational maps and the ordered and relational maps, I was able to identify 1999 as an



additional time period for my mapping. Before moving on to create social world maps for Time Period 1 (1999–2016), I gathered information about all the governors involved in the state-controlled history of the 2016 lawsuit.

I used the information I collected and my written memos to create six visual memos. These memos combine elements of mapping and memoing, which helped me see my thinking more concretely. Visual Memo 1 Time 0 (Figure 5.1) contains data identifying key national and state educational policies, relationships between governors and presidents, plaintiffs, and DPS's local and state control periods.

The research I conducted for each Michigan governor revealed how state politics shaped the conditions that became the grounds for the 2016 lawsuit. Governor Enlger's early 1990s public school funding changes and charter school legislation provided significant shifts in how Michigan public schools functioned. His tenure as a three-term governor (1991–2002) appears to have significantly impacted the current way Michigan public schools are run. While local control was temporarily returned to the Detroit Public School Board during Governor Jennifer Granholm's two-term tenure (2003–2010) the transfer of control only lasted for four years. During Governor Snyder's two-term tenure (2011–2018), Michigan had a record number of school districts under state control. After nearly 20 years of state control, the city received local control in 2019, during Governor Whitmer's first term in office (2019–2022). Governor Whitmer is currently in her second term. After completing several visual memos and combining that research with the other mapping work, I solidified circa 1999–2020 as the timeline for locating Time 1.

Using 2016, the filing year for the *Gary B. v. Snyder* right-to-read lawsuit, as the point of entry for determining what time periods I might map, provided a broad historical view for

situations of inquiry. The Time 0 messy and ordered maps, subsequent relational maps, researching, and memoing provided the foundation for examining federal, state, and local influences on contemporary access to literacy claims from a broad historical lens. Various elements of power relationships and sites of silence emerged as elements in shifting ecologies and assemblages, which can help articulate the many iterations of the claim that access to literacy is a fundamental human right. Mapping 2016 as Time 0 identified discursive and silent elements, which became clearer after I mapped Time 1 and 2.

### ***Mapping to Time 1***

Many of the elements for Time 1 were in the Time 0 maps. However, mapping this time period helped further articulate sites of silence and gubernatorial educational practices associated with the contemporary access to literacy claim. For example, comparing the Time 0 and Time 1 maps provided insight into which elements were associated with earlier iterations of the claim. The comparisons also helped identify discourses of power sites of silence. The role of federal and state politics on local public school governance began to emerge.

**Figure 4.3***Messy Situational Map Time 1*

**Table 4.2***Ordered Situational Map Time 1: Access to Literacy 1992–2020*

Individual Human Element/Actors	Nonhuman Elements/Actants
Governors Emergency managers Mursalata Muhammad (researcher)	Transportation Educational dignity, Access, equity ESEA / ESSA Religion
Collective Human Elements/Actors:	Implicated Silent Actors/Actants
school boards State & Detroit political appointments & elections State Governors: Whitmer, Snyder, Granholm, Engler Presidents Legal cases agents and actors Detroit Federation of Teachers	1. Students/children 2. Teachers 3. Parents/guardians 4. Education Pioneers 5. Voters 6. Sites of Silence BET's in action research 7. School administrators 8. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)
Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors	Discursive Constructions of Nonhuman Actants
1. Public Education Policy Research & Scholarship 2. 2016 Detroit teacher sickouts 3. DPS Students Support Teacher sickouts 2016 4. Black Lives Matter	Education Language Public School Educational language Education policy Language
Political/Economic Elements	Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements
Curriculum control/development Finance Operational control Academic freedom School partnerships Teacher professional development Public charter schools Federal “education” Policies	Student demographics free & reduced lunch numbers Home, alternative, non-public schools
Temporal Elements/on Going Historical Processes (see message, p. 323 Clarke et al., 2018)	Spatial/Geography Elements
Access to basic literacy/Access to literacy/Basic Literacy Key legal cases Supreme Court cases COVID	Geography Detroit Michigan Key Legal Cases

Individual Human Element/Actors	Nonhuman Elements/Actants
Governors Emergency managers Mursalata Muhammad (researcher)	Transportation Educational dignity, Access, equity ESEA / ESSA Religion
Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested)	Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative, and/or Visual)
2016 <i>Gary B. v Snyder</i> 2019 <i>Gary B. v. Whitmer</i> (settled) 1954 <i>Brown v Board of Education</i> 5 cases combined in 1 1974 <i>Milliken vs Bradley</i> (redlining) 14th amendment	Education policy in the colonial United States Education Policy in Media Education rights social services in schools Public discussions / Public education expectations US education policies U.S. education practices
Other kinds of Elements: Items I've yet to categorize from the Messy Map Version 3	
human literacy skills Public secondary education	

Comparisons between the Time 0 and Time 1 maps produced clearer relationships between elements influencing the 2016 claim that access to literacy through public education policy is a right. For example, key observations based on Time 1 maps include the development of public charter schools and home-school options as threats to traditional K-12 public school funding in Michigan. The implicated and silent actors and actants listed for Time 1 are included in the list for Time 0, mapping Time 1 provided evidence that teachers and students found ways to be heard. For example, in 2016, teachers and students used their bodies to bring attention to the learning conditions. Teachers called in sick, and students were intentionally absent. The Detroit teachers' "sickout"<sup>11</sup> actions closed city schools for nearly two weeks.

Finding that children are silent actors in discourse about education, even though they are the most direct recipients of public education policies, is not surprising data. As a group, children

10. A "sickout" means "an organized absence from work by employees on the pretext of sickness, as to avoid the legal problems or antistrike clauses that would be invoked in the case of a formal strike" (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

are vulnerable to disenfranchising practices. However, data from the Time 1 messy and ordered situational maps include a larger number of implicated silent actors and actants, such as the following:

- teachers
- parents/guardians
- parent teacher associations
- school administrators
- children
- voters

After conducting additional research based on prompts from my memos, the above list grew to include implicated silent actants such as teacher unions and organizations like the NAACP and Urban League. The diversity in this category was surprising but also helped support additional social patterns that reinforced the marginalization of children's voices.

### ***Mapping to Time 2***

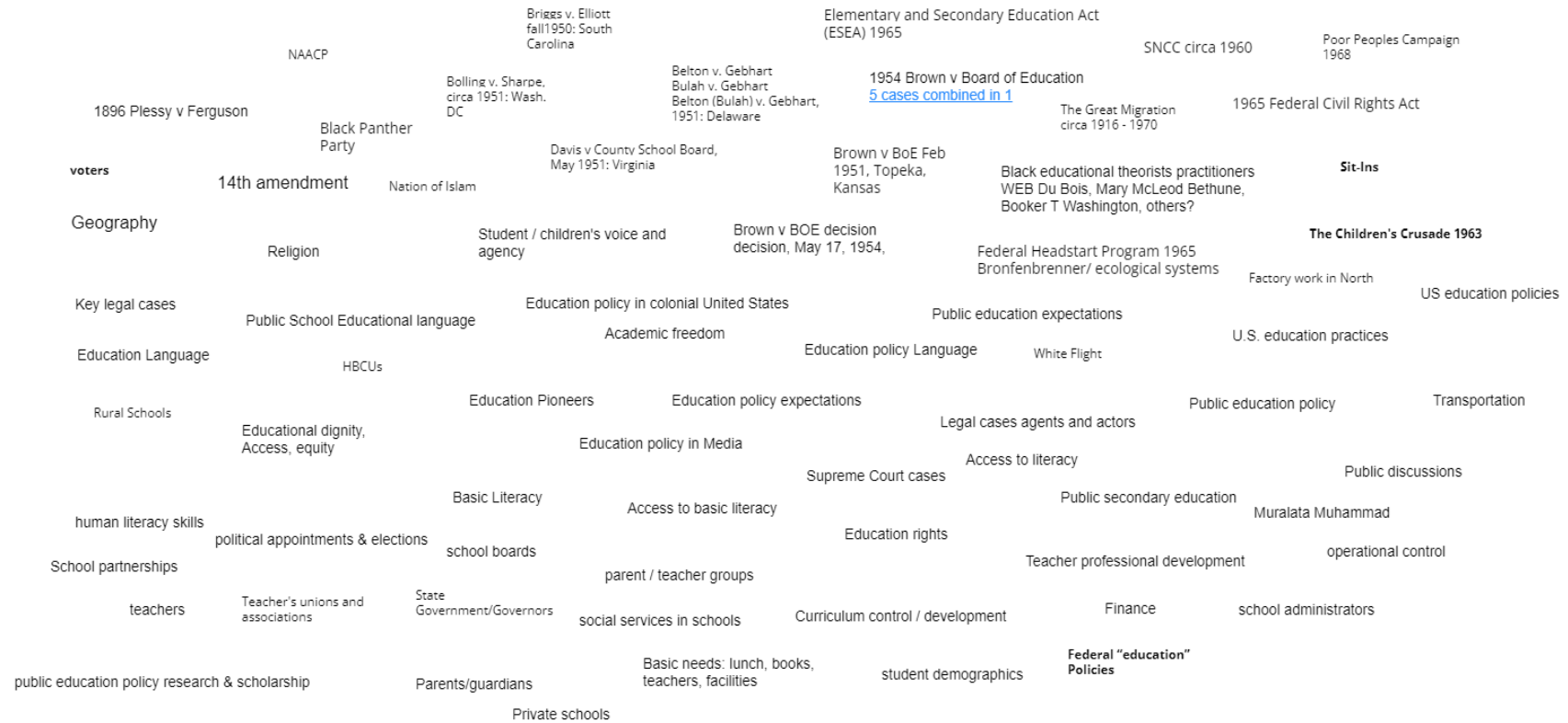
Relational Map 3 Time 0 was instrumental in helping articulate relationships between key legal lawsuits. My approach to mapping lawsuits on the Time 0 Messy Situational Map focused on supreme court cases that provided educational changes at the federal level and cases filed in Michigan. Due to the historical significance of *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) in public and scholarly discussions about education in the US, it was not surprising to find the case prominently discussed in relation to the 2016 case. Public discourse (e.g., scholarly articles, newspapers, and educational websites) discusses the 2016 lawsuit's relationship with *Brown v Board of Education* (1954).

The results of Time 1 messy and ordered maps revealed that children, parents, teachers, and young adults were frequently silenced. Had it not been for the children plaintiffs in the 2016 lawsuit, I would not have had any explicit evidence of how children were part of the conversation. As actors and actants, children, parents, and teachers' participation in actions that sought increased access to literacy through public school education are present but muted, marginalized, and dispersed in the data contained in the Time 1 messy and ordered situational maps. The actions and presence of marginalized groups—specifically, children and young adults—are represented in conversations about access to literacy (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4**

### Messy Situational Map Time 2

### Muhammad's Messy Situational Map: Time 2 1950 - 1970 Access to Literacy





**Table 4.3***Ordered Situational Map Time 2: Access to Literacy 1950–1970*

Individual Human Element/Actors	Nonhuman Elements/Actants
Mursalata Muhammad (researcher) Governors Voters	Transportation Educational dignity, Access, equity Religion Factory work in North 1965 Civil Rights legislation ESEA
Collective Human Elements/Actors:	Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants
Collective Human Elements school boards State & Detroit political appointments & elections State Government/governors Presidents Legal cases agents and actors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students/children</li> <li>2. Teachers</li> <li>3. Parents/guardians</li> <li>4. Education Pioneers</li> <li>5. Voters</li> </ol>
Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors	Discursive Constructions of Nonhuman Actants
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Black educational theorists and practitioners—W. E. B. Du Bois,-Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T Washington, others/BET's in action research</li> <li>2. <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954)</li> <li>3. School administrators</li> <li>4. Parent teach associations PTAs</li> <li>5. Black Panther Party</li> <li>6. Nation of Islam</li> <li>7. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sit-ins</li> <li>8. The Children's Crusade</li> <li>9. March on Washington</li> <li>10. Poor People's Campaign</li> <li>11. HBCs</li> </ol>	Education Language Public School Educational language Education policy Language
Political/Economic Elements	Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements
Curriculum control/development Finance Operational control Academic freedom School partnerships Teacher professional development Federal “education” Policies	Student demographics free & reduced lunch numbers Federal Headstart Program 1965 Bronfenbrenner/ ecological systems

Poor People's Campaign 1968  
 White Flight  
 The Great Migration

Temporal Elements/Ongoing Historical (see message, p. 323 Clarke et al., 2018)

Spatial//GEOGRAPHY Elements

Access to basic literacy/Access to literacy/Basic Literacy  
 Key legal cases  
 Supreme Court cases

Geography  
 Detroit Michigan  
 Key Legal Cases  
 Rural Schools

Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested)

Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative, and/or Visual)

1896 *Plessy v Ferguson*  
 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* (5 cases combined into 1)  
 14th amendment

Education policy in the colonial United States  
 Education Policy in Media  
 Education rights  
 social services in schools  
 Public discussions/Public education expectations  
 US education policies  
 U.S. education practices  
 Public education policy research & scholarship

Other kinds of Elements

human literacy skills  
 Public secondary education

The Time 2 messy and ordered maps include several actors and actants absent in the Time 1 messy and ordered maps. It's key to note the duality of the implicated/silent actors in Time 2. While these individuals and collective groups are silenced in one aspect of the situation of inquiry that restricts access to literacy through public education policies, they are part of discursive construction in another area of the situation. I offer the following examples to demonstrate how some implicated/silent actors were individual and collective human actors contributing to discursive constructions.

Example 1 is *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), students/children, parents, teachers, and administrators demonstrate individual and collective agency. They push back against public education policies and practices to establish that segregated schools are illegal. The direct action of one teenage high-school girl resulted in one of a teenager being named plaintiff in one of the

five lawsuits. The lawsuit, *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward Cty., VA.* (1951), demonstrated how a student/child can be an impacted/silent actor and simultaneously a human actor in a discursive constructive collective narrative. The result of the collective human actions was the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. However, the limits of litigation were revealed when segregationists at local school districts defied the Supreme court ruling and refused to integrate public schools. The local decisions were supported at the state level by governors resulting in clashes between state and federal policies as evidenced by the “Little Rock Nine” in 1957 and the case of Ruby Bridges in 1960.<sup>12</sup>

Example 2 is the 1960s sit-in movement and the rise of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) which saw college students from various states participate in direct-action protests, concentrating on southern states’ resistance to changing segregated practices in schools and other areas of everyday life.

Example 3 is the Children's Crusade 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, a pivotal direct-action civil rights protest in which school-aged children marched (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d.). Law enforcement used police dogs, fire hoses, physical violence, and incarceration to stop the children’s act of civil disobedience. Significant moments of this event were captured and televised across the U.S. and internationally.

On May 2, 1963, more than one thousand students skipped classes and gathered at Sixth Street Baptist Church to march to downtown Birmingham, Alabama. As they approached police lines, hundreds were arrested and carried off to jail in paddy wagons and school buses. When hundreds more young people gathered the following day for another march, white commissioner, Bull Connor, directed the local police and fire departments to use force to halt the demonstration. Images of children being blasted by high-pressure fire hoses, being clubbed by police officers, and being attacked by police dogs appeared on

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<sup>12</sup> The Little Rock Nine (Arkansas) and Ruby Bridges (New Orleans) attendance at all-white schools was part of a court-ordered desegregation plan following the landmark Supreme Court decision (The Martin Luther King Jr. Research Education Institute, n.d.; National Park Service, n.d.).

television and in newspapers, and triggered outrage throughout the world. (National Museum of African American History & Culture, n.d., para. 1)

Collectively, children became actors who contributed to discursive constructions that demanded improved access to literacy through public education policy. This narrative of school children's lives occurred three months before Example 4, Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington, on August 28, 1963. This discursive collective of events provided specific situations where formerly implicated/silent actors demonstrated agency.

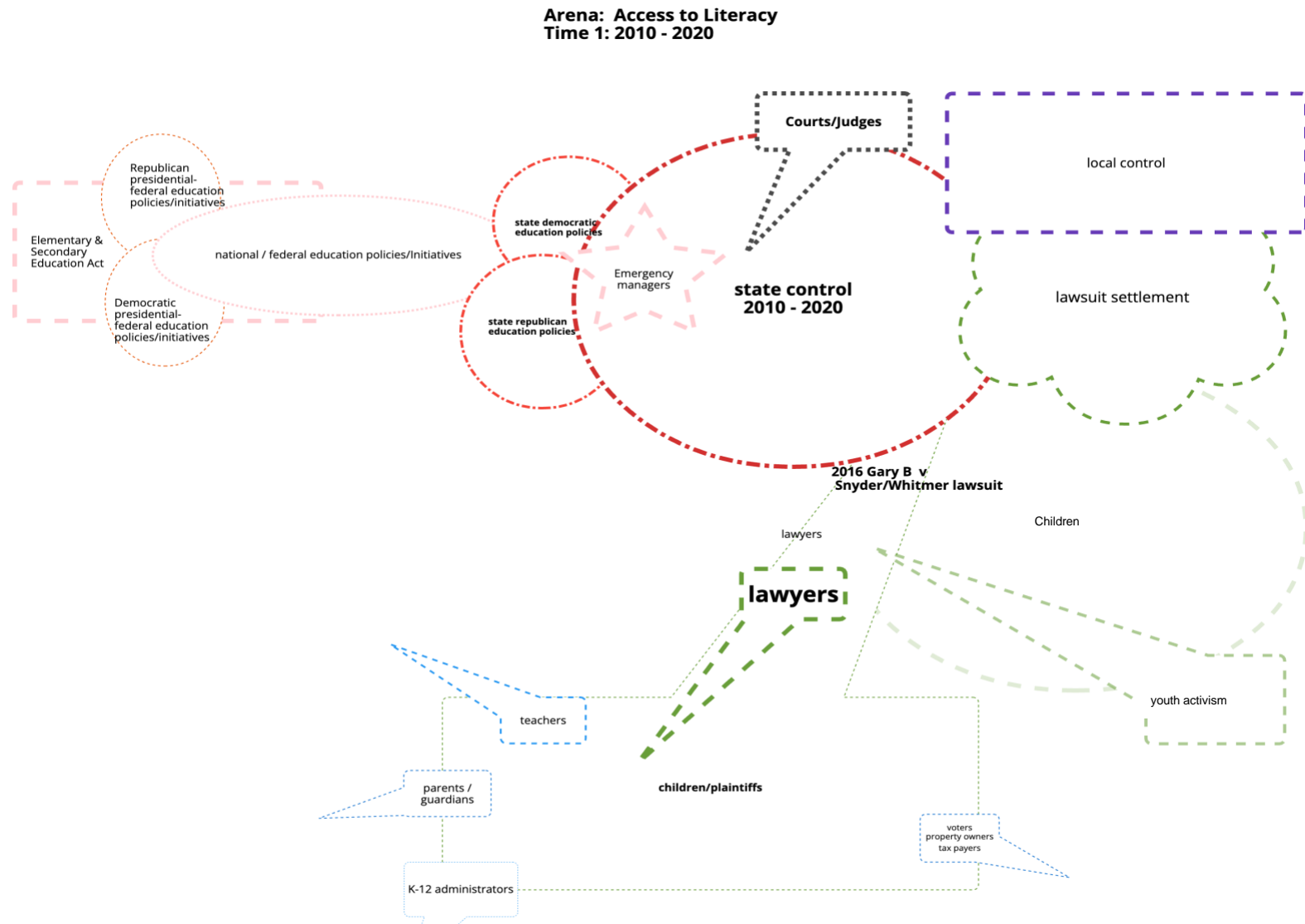
Example 5 is the Nation of Islam (1930s to present), a religious and political organization found in Detroit, Michigan. The organization's initial tenets included separation from white society, black empowerment, and self-reliance. This made discursive contributions that empowered parents, educators, and voters to express African-centered discourses about education in private and public spheres. The religious organization formed youth groups for boys and girls and opened K–12 schools in Detroit and Chicago. Throughout its engagement with controversies, the Nation of Islam's evolution continues to promote messages of self-empowerment, social justice, and Black liberation.

Example 6 includes non-human actants that resulted from multiple discursive acts by groups of people, who were often marginalized by the local, state, and federal laws. Three significant federal policy changes happened in 1964: civil rights legislation, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the founding of the Head Start program (summer programs for low-income families).

Even with those landmark federal changes, the Time 2 maps provide two additional examples of instances where implicated/silent actors are also collective human actors contributing to discursive constructions. Example 7 is the Black Panther Party established in 1966 (Self & Bush, 2006) and the organization's community programs that addressed the needs

of African American communities. What stand out most for the context of this research are the Black Panthers' free breakfast programs for children, health clinics, education initiatives, and legal aid services. The short-lived Poor People's Campaign of 1968 (McKnight, 1998), led by Martin Luther King Jr. serves as the final example for Time 2 Map.

The above elements from the Time 2 messy and ordered situational map demonstrate how implicated/silent actors find voice and agency in discursive constructions individually and as part of collectives. When the actors and actants of both time periods are compared, a significant finding was that the number of discursive constructions of individual and collective human actors decreases. The ordered situational map for Time 2: Access to Literacy 1950–1970 has 12 elements while the ordered situational map for Time 1. The Map for Time 1: Access to Literacy 1992–2020 has four elements. Additionally, these two time periods show that the number of implicated/silent actors increases—Time 2 has five elements and Time 1 has eight elements.

**Figure 4.5***Social Worlds Map Time 1: 2010–2020*

### **Social Worlds/Arena Map**

This social worlds/arena map illustrates the arenas where conversations unfold. At its core, an arena represents the broader space within which discussions transpire. I created a historical map, spanning at least two distinct time periods. Initially, I anchored this exploration in 2016. Within this timeframe, I delineate the social worlds implicated in a specific case that emerged during that period.

One crucial observation pertains to the circumstances surrounding the lawsuit filed in 2016. Notably, during this juncture, the Detroit Public School System was under State control. Delving into the nature of this control necessitated a retrospective analysis. Initially, I lacked clarity regarding which historical periods to scrutinize. However, I resolved to commence the investigation from the vantage point of 2016.

The map, although not fully depicted here, contains vast expanses of white space symbolizing the overarching arena. Within this arena, the focal point of discourse revolves around access to literacy. Notably, the map transcends individual-level analysis, instead focusing on collective action, groups, and systemic influences. While individuals inhabit these social worlds, the map underscores broader societal dynamics.

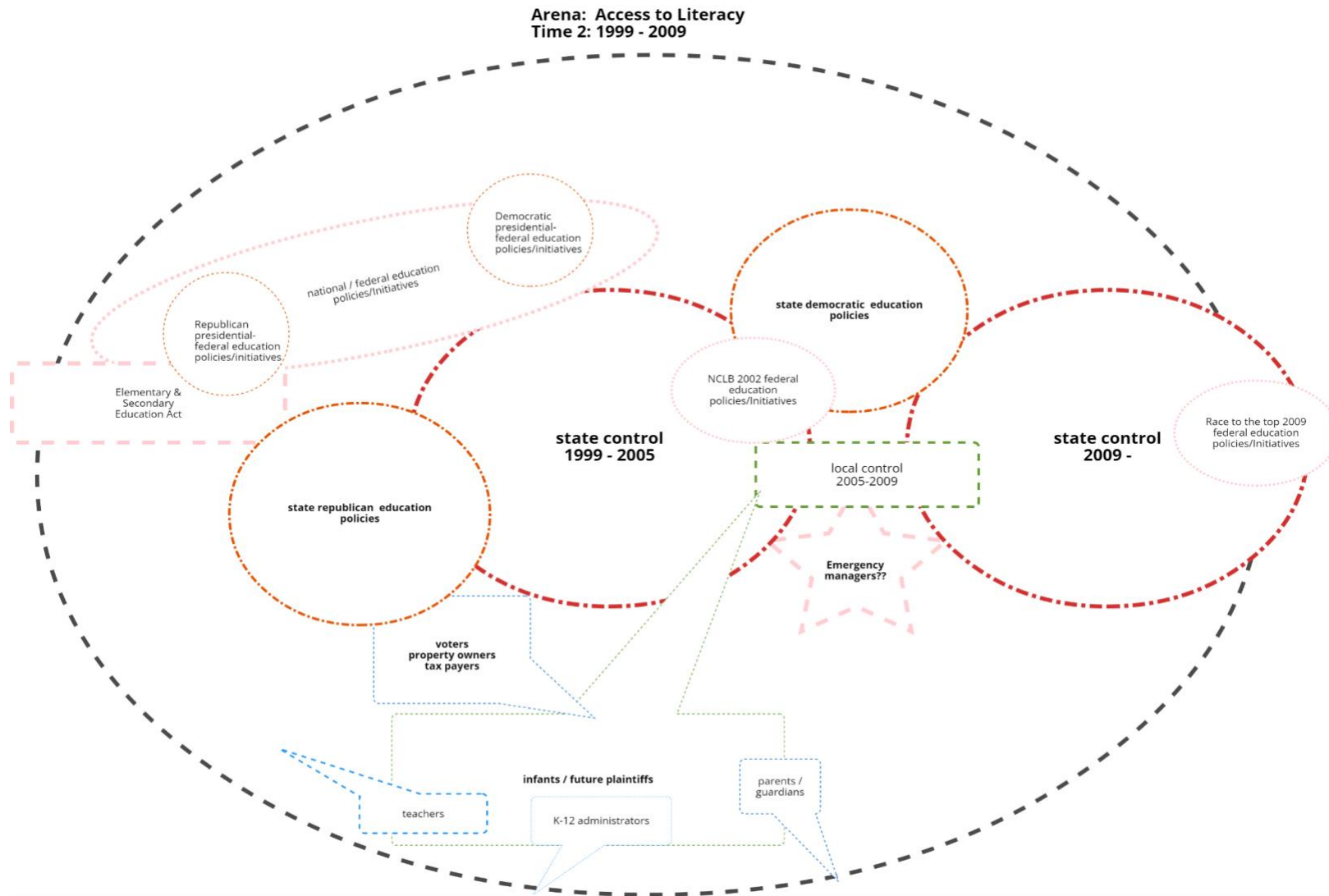
Interconnectedness pervades the map, denoted by overlaps within various social worlds, signifying the multifaceted nature of participation. Central to the map's narrative are the elements contributing to State control and implicated/silent actors. Given the pivotal role that State control serves in the lawsuit, it is positioned prominently on the map. The lawsuit defined state control as the actions encapsulating the intricacies of the socio-political landscape shaping education policies that disenfranchised children.

During this session, I focused on the big blue dialogue bubble labeled “children/plaintiffs” based on the 2016 lawsuit. The following saying continued to echo in my mind as it relates to the role of implicated actors in the situation: “Children are meant to be seen, not heard.” A dialogue bubble labeled “Youth activism” highlights the significant role played by teenagers in some of these cases, notably the Prince Edward County and Detroit lawsuits, both featuring children as plaintiffs. This correlation underscores a noteworthy continuity across time. The dialogue boxes in Figure 4.5 proved essential to identifying implicated/silent actors. Through several iterations of shapes, sizes, and colors, the dialogue boxes evolved to articulate how the lawsuit underscores the marginalization of children as implicated/silent actors, while revealing their involvement as plaintiffs to be a powerful collective discursive act.

As I completed work on this map, I was unsure where to position the K-12 administrator voices in this situation. They remain implicated actors, alongside children, parents/guardians, and voters. Despite their role, determining their precise placement within the social world map poses a challenge, necessitating further exploration and analysis.

The Social Worlds map shown in Figure 4.6 focused on access to literacy, particularly within the context of the 2016 lawsuit and State control spanning from 1992 to 2020. This map highlights the connections between various political administrations and the enduring impact of collective actions on public school education policies.



**Figure 4.6***Social Worlds Map Time 2: 1992–2009*

During this session I mapped and searched the internet iteratively for documents to help position items chronologically in this social worlds map. I used federal, state and local documents to identify key actors and actants. The most significant change that came with this map was the decision to revise the 2016 period to reflect the governor's connections to the lawsuit, which connects to Governor Engler's administration. This decision meant my social worlds/arenas maps could focus on three time periods, which differs from the two time periods in the initial and messy ordered maps. The potential three time periods are listed below but still remain in the access to literacy arena where I continue to examine extant discourse materials related to public school education policies as situated by the 2016 lawsuit.

- 2010–2020 in Michigan
- 1999–2009 in Michigan
- 1950–1965: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)—precedent case which contextualizes the situation from a federal lens.

This final version of the social worlds/arenas map for Time 2 continues to explore the theme of access to literacy as framed by the lawsuit, particularly within the context of State control. This period spans from 1992 to 2020, encompassing various iterations of State control and examining the actions prompted by the lawsuit during this timeframe. Within the realm of state control, several significant developments emerge upon closer examination. Despite not being actively enrolled in school, the plaintiffs, whom I previously referred to as children, persist as relevant entities within this narrative. Their existence underscores the enduring impact of collective actions, even in the absence of a direct voice in the proceedings.

Through extensive, iterative research (e.g., media sources, government sites, university libraries, online political organizations), I developed insights into the dynamics of the 2016

lawsuit revealing connections to earlier events, particularly actions initiated prior to 1999, which marked the initial takeover of the school system. I undertook analysis of political initiatives and policies of following four leaders of state government: Republican Governor John Engler (1992–2001) and included Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm’s administration (2003–2010), Republican Governor Rick Snyder’s (2011–2018), and Democratic Governor, Gretchen Whitmer (2019– ). This sheds light on the historical framework within which these events of the 2016 right-to-read lawsuit claim unfolded. Notably, while the lawsuit targets two specific governors, the broader historical context involves several administrations removed from the legal proceedings. While both the current and previous maps inhabit the same overarching arena, each represents a distinct temporal iteration.

Figure 4.7 presents a geographical map focusing on the spatial aspects of lawsuits related to access to literacy, centering on the 2016 Detroit lawsuit and its connections to the 14th Amendment, with notable historical parallels to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

**Figure 4.7**

*Social Worlds/Arenas Map: Geography*

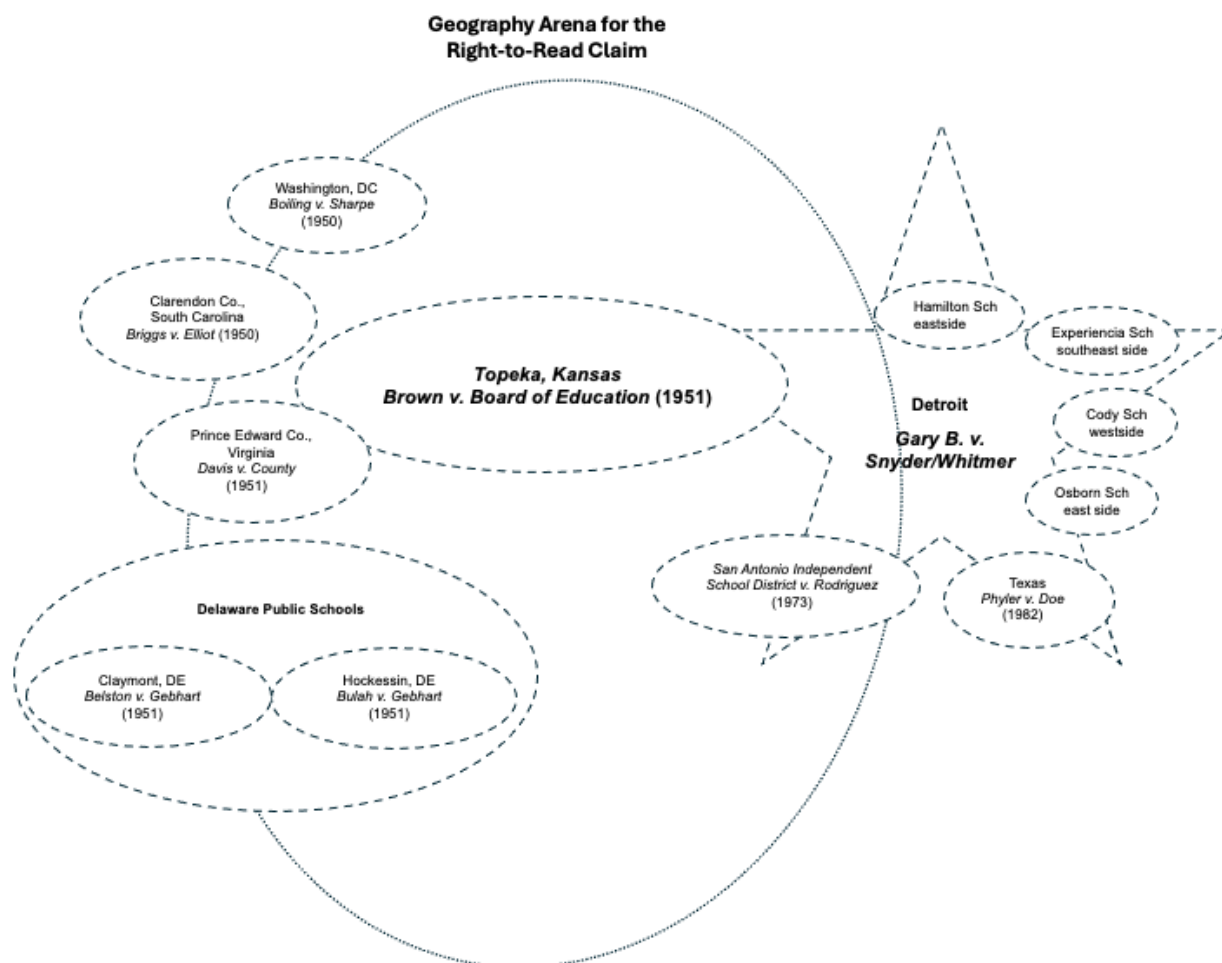


Figure 4.7 focuses on the geographic aspects of the arena. To see the spatial elements on the lawsuits, I use a second arena, distinct from the temporal one, focused on the geographical aspects of the dialogue surrounding access to literacy, still anchored in the 2016 lawsuit. Within this arena, the current case remains rooted in Detroit, with notable connections to the 14th Amendment, invoking parallels to landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

On this geographical social worlds/arena map, smaller circles on the left side represent cases cited in the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, ones connected to the contemporary discourse. To complement the visual representations in Figure 4.7, I utilized Google Earth to

map the locations of schools cited in the 2016 lawsuit, providing insights into the spatial distribution and demographics of the affected neighborhoods. I used red dots denote the current cases cited in the 2016 lawsuit, starting in Detroit and extending to Texas. This mapping exercise offers a tangible understanding of the geographic spread of the cases, facilitating a nuanced analysis. The inclusion of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), represented by yellow dots, offers further context, prompting considerations of historical precedents and patterns. Comparison between the issues raised in the 2016 lawsuit, such as teacher preparedness and building safety, and those addressed in *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling reveals striking parallels, particularly concerning access to quality education amidst challenges of segregation. As my research progressed, these visual aids served as invaluable tools for unpacking the complexities of the cases and discerning broader trends in educational equity and access. These maps are in Appendix C.

### **Research Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality and rigor of the study. Reflexivity, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and analytic dialogues demonstrate the credibility and confirmability of this research.

#### ***Reflexivity***

- I demonstrated awareness of my potential biases and influence on the research process by implementing the following reflective practices:
  - To address my lack of adequate vocabulary, which is also a limitation associated with SA, I relied on the adaptability of a theoretical framework that combined Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenants with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems

theory to describe new insights that emerged from the maps, which provided relevance and accuracy in the research.

- Moving between mapping, memoing, researching, and reflecting indicated my conscious effort to understand my impact on the research. For instance, the iterative development of messy situational maps and the acknowledgment of uncertainties in determining historical periods (Time 0, Time 1, and Time 2) illustrate ongoing self-reflection.

### ***Triangulation***

- The research utilizes various historical discourses, legal cases, federal and state education policies, and social actions to map the situation of inquiry. For example, the use of the Gary v. Snyder/Whitmer lawsuit, the Brown v. Board of Education case, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and other educational policies across different time periods indicate a comprehensive approach to data collection.
- The integration of situational analysis (SA) maps - messy and ordered situational maps, relational maps, social worlds maps, memoing, and visual memos shows a robust methodological approach. Each method contributes different perspectives and insights, enhancing the overall understanding of the research context.

### ***Prolonged Engagement***

- The creation of multiple messy and ordered situational maps over time (e.g., Messy Situational Map 6 Time 0, and ordered situational maps for Time 1 and Time 2) reflects a deep and iterative engagement with the research context.

- The detailed mapping of historical periods shows an extensive temporal engagement with the data, which involved spending sufficient time in the research context to build a deep understanding from which to identify long-term trends and patterns in educational access and policies. My sustained engagement ensured time to develop a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study, thus enhancing the credibility of the findings.

### *Analytic Dialogues*

- To address the limitations of not having access to SA researchers with whom I could have detailed analytic discussions about my map, I presented my research in progress to interdisciplinary groups of peers and scholars.
- During the data analysis and interpretations segment of my research, I conducted three dialogues. This period lasted six months and included creating more specific social worlds and positional maps and deciding which SA maps to use in the dissertation.
- Two of the dialogues were delivered via Zoom by organizations that were already engaged in critical discussions about research. I only needed to participate. Recording the dialogue was not an unusual request for the participants. I did get their permission to share the recordings with my chair and methodologist.
- After the research-in-progress dialogues, I purposefully scheduled meetings with my chair, Dr. Essed, and my methodologist, Dr. Schwartz.
- The first dialogue was at the July 2024 International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership Conference. This presentation helped me identify an issue with the social worlds map for Time 1. After discussing the issue with Dr. Schwartz,

my methodologist, reviewing Clarke's explanations for how to create social worlds maps, and revisiting the parameters for creating SA social worlds maps for historical data, I corrected the issue. Without that dialogue, all of my social worlds maps would have been skewed by the presence of individual people.

- The second dialogue was at the October 2024 ILA Conference in Vancouver.
- The third dialogue was at the December 2024 Colleagues of Color for Social Justice meeting. I used this opportunity to verify that I had reached the point of saturation for the messy and ordered maps for Time 1 and Time 2. I shared my relational maps and social worlds maps. There were about 10 people at the presentation. The group included CCSJ members, a colleague from work, two colleagues from my undergraduate and graduate school years, and my daughter, who works in international philanthropy. The dialogue was insightful. I received two important questions I could not answer, which was excellent. This dialogue resulted in detailed information with questions and comments about the presentation and follow-up conversations.
- These dialogues were essential in helping me critique my research, find my errors, and uncover questions that needed to be addressed. By incorporating external perspectives and critiques, they contributed to the credibility of the research. The dialogues also reiterated the importance of having SA analytic researchers to work with during the later stages of map creation and interpretation.

I present the above activities as evidence that this research used rigorous and reflective practices. As a result, the research is trustworthy, ensuring the findings are credible, confirmable, and valuable for advancing understanding in educational access and policy.



## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study's theoretical framework combined critical race theory (CRT) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1998) ecological systems to conduct a situational analysis (SA) of historical discourse in the field of education. The study's objective was to map historical discourses and delve into the history of a present situation of inquiry that focuses on the 2016 right-to-read claim asserted by high school students in Detroit, Michigan. The central question driving the investigation was as follows: How does the right-to-read claim reflect, address, or depict contemporary discussions concerning educational access?

Utilizing SA, with its roots in grounded theory methodology, the research aimed to construct a prosopography elucidating an answer to the research question. The first phase of data collection came from messy and ordered situational maps spanning three distinct time periods: Time 0 (2016), Time 1 (1992–2020), and Time 2 (1950–1970). By integrating CRT with ecological systems theory and employing SA, I sought to provide a nuanced understanding of the historical context and present-day implications surrounding the right-to-read claim in Detroit's educational landscape. The resulting prosopography posited that access to literacy is an inherent public school policy right.

This chapter discusses the mapped data as it informs several aspects of the research. The first section reviews the elements from the SA Social Worlds/Areans Maps for Time 1 (2010–2020) and Time 2 (1992–2009) within the theoretical framework described in Chapter II. In the second section, I discuss situational elements relevant to the prosopography of research question and their impact on the question. The subsequent sections address implications leading change and key moments in my learning. The concluding sections are brief discussions on the research limitation and suggestions for further research.

### Research Questions and Critical Framework Revisited

My research aim was to provide a prosopography—a collective biography—to articulate the history of a specific situation, describing a contemporary claim about who has access to literacy and the tools needed to attain literacy. The *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* lawsuit defined the situation of inquiry for exploring a current claim about who has access to literacy. Over the four years of litigation, the lawsuit became commonly referred to in the media as the “right to literacy” and “right-to-read” claim lawsuit. The lawsuit contextualized the claim as it relates to state public school policy and practice for children attending public schools in Detroit, Michigan. Examining the demographics problematizes the lawsuit's claim that children attending Detroit public schools have the right to learn in an environment that gives them access to tools needed for achieving basic literacy skills.

To gather the data needed to historicize this problematic contextualized situation related to public school policy, I used SA to trace historical discourses surrounding the lawsuit. This lawsuit, which challenged the adequacy of the state's educational provisions, serves as a pivotal starting point for my inquiry. The fact that the children/plaintiffs were Black and Brown (African American and Latinx-American) aligned with my research question and theoretical approach.

As my research progressed, the results impacted the research question focus. However, this was expected given the exploratory aspects of situational analysis mapping.

- Initial Question: How does the 2016 right-to-read claim made by high school students in Detroit, Michigan, reflect, address, or describe contemporary discussions about educational access?

- Current Revision: How does the 2016 claim by public school children in Detroit, Michigan, asserting "access to basic literacy" as a right, contribute to shaping the current discourse on education policy?

To examine this situation's education and race elements, I used aspects of Bronfenbrenner's (1998) less frequently used bioecological systems theory within a CRT framework to address the racialized aspects. This theoretical approach gave me the flexibility to analyze and interpret historical discourse content. In the absence of material that did not acknowledge the impact of race on children's educational opportunities, I was able to use Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and CRT to ground the historical narratives related to Detroit's 2016 situation, where mostly Black and Brown children were the victims of state-legislated anti-literacy public education policies.

The social worlds/arenas maps for Time 1 (2010–2020) and Time 2 (1992–2009) infrequently discussed race. Media coverage that comprised much of the public dialogue about the case rarely included information about Detroit public schools' racial demographics. However, content related to Detroit being a low-performing and economically disadvantageous school district was part of the public discussion. The omission of race-related public dialogue happened despite the following summarized allegations (Cha et al., 2021) against Governor Snyder.

1. The children/plaintiffs alleged that the governor/state officials violated the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment by:
  - a. Denying them the fundamental right to literacy compared to other students in Michigan.
  - b. Functionally excluding them from Michigan's statewide system of public education.

2. The children/plaintiffs argued that the governor/state officials violated the state-created “danger doctrine” by creating and increasing the risk that children/plaintiffs would be exposed to dangerous learning environment conditions, which would do harm to them as a consequence.
3. The children/plaintiffs argued that the governor/state officials violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution by:
  - a. Intentionally discriminating against the children/plaintiffs based on their race.
  - b. Responding with deliberate indifference to the needs of the children/plaintiffs.
4. The complaint alleged that the defendants violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by utilizing criteria or methods of administration that discriminated against individuals based on race, color, or national origin.

Even though allegations (items 3a and 4) explicitly include race as a mitigating factor in State education policies, explicit or common public discourse about the topic is not apparent in the discourse literature between 1992 to 2020. However, given the connection between the Civil Rights Act and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), I was able to use that historical moment and the elements from the messy and ordered maps for 1950 to 1970 to provide the narrative elements I used to tell the prosopography through the two social worlds/arenas maps to articulate how the 2016 claim by public school children in Detroit asserted access to basic literacy as a right contributes key, historical complexities that continues shaping current discourse on education policy.

### **A Prosopography of Maps**

This study's findings offer various analytical components useful for constructing and contributing to discourse about U.S. education policy. To maintain focus and clarity, I

concentrated on three stakeholder groups in the 2016 case: Michigan governors, Michigan voters, and Michigan children. These social groups intersect and provide varying perspectives on how K-12 education policies ensure and prevent access to literacy skills. Though seemingly distant from colonial anti-literacy laws, the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* right-to-read lawsuit serves as a point of reflection on a contemporary situation of inquiry containing historical disparities and strategies for improving education policy change. Through situational maps, I have constructed this brief prosopography to describe the common characteristics of the key actors involved in the lawsuit. For example, Chapter I of this dissertation provides context by exploring colonial America's race and gender-based anti-literacy laws, which entrenched educational disparities. However, the lawsuit underscores centuries of failure to create education policies that ensure all children, particularly Black and Brown, have equitable access to the tools necessary to develop basic literacy skills.

Colonial anti-literacy laws provide the foundation for continued anti-literacy characteristics in current education policy and practices in America from the 1950s through the 1970s. Time 2's (1950–1970) messy and ordered situation maps through the 1970s provide data that shows how Colonial anti-literacy laws remained part of education policy and practice throughout the United States. When examining anti-literacy policies, my research suggests that the policies remained entrenched in state-level educational policies despite a governor's political affiliation or discussions focused on geographical dichotomies like northern states versus southern states.

### **Governors Engler, Granholm, Snyder, and Voters**

School-aged children living in economically disadvantaged cities like Detroit with large populations of African American, Latino-American, and immigrant populations were adversely

affected by state legislation and voter decisions. These marginalized children to the point of dehumanization by treating them as objects that belonged to adults, guardians, or the state.

Republican Governor John Engler's administration (1992–2002) and voters enacted education policies that had far-reaching consequences for public school children. Within his first two years in office, Engler and the legislature created laws that gave parents school choice options and eliminated property taxes as the major source of school funding. He signed legislation establishing public charter schools. Michigan voters approved Proposition A, which approved the state's plan to replace property taxes as the main source of school funding with an increased sales tax. In 1999, five years after allowing charter schools, the Governor's Office took control of Detroit Public School District. Engler's education policy and voter support provided the foundational circumstances leading to the 2016 lawsuit.

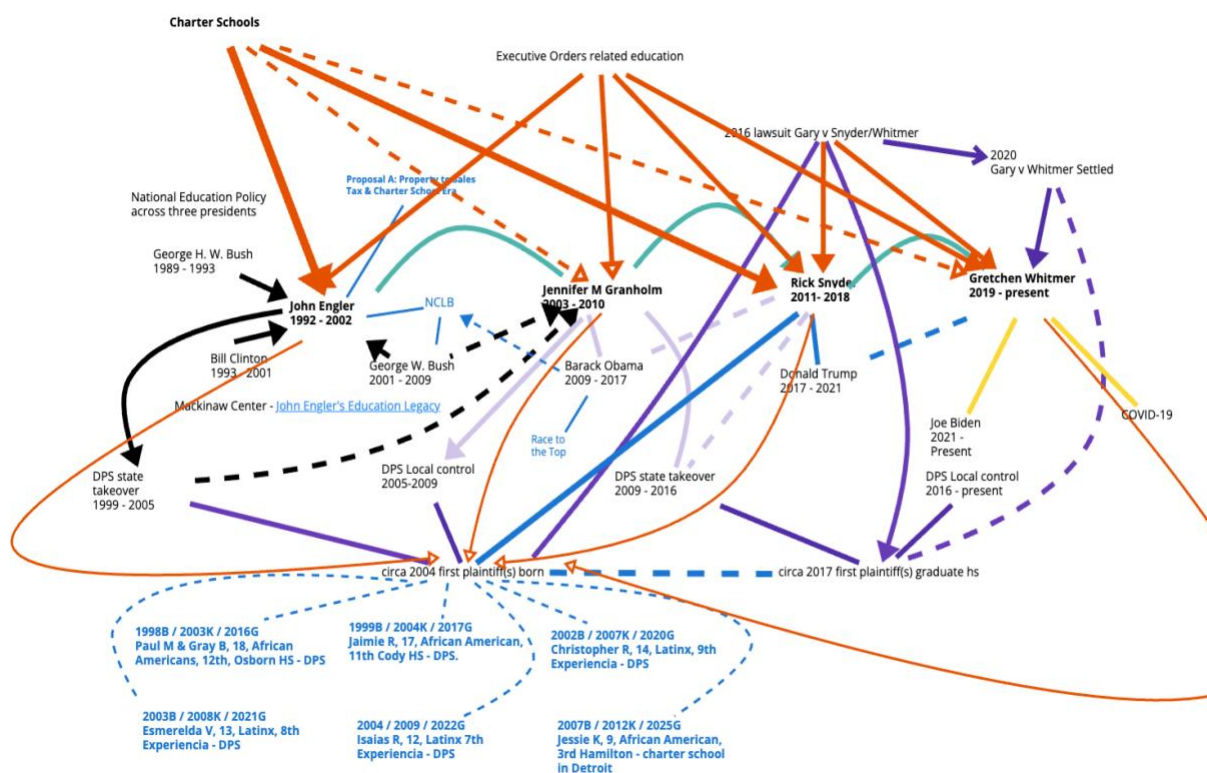
Over time, the governor/voter trends reveal historical characteristics of anti-literacy elements that are still part of current education policies and practices. An example was the Michigan gubernatorial reaction to the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954). Outspoken, Southern, segregationist governors overtly resisted the Supreme Court decision overturning public school segregation laws. However, state-level anti-integration actions were not limited to Southern states. The collective actions of the four successive Michigan governors mapped in this research reveal an array of state-level decisions that produce various iterations of anti-literacy education policies whether that was the governors' intentions or not. For example, Democratic Governor Granholm's administrative (2003–2010) policies focus less on developing tensions between public charter academies and traditional public schools. Detroit public schools experienced a brief period of local control from 2005 to 2008 before reverting to state control just before the end of Granholm's term. An overview of the executive orders related to education

during Granholm's tenure suggests that her education policies focused on learning requirements, preparedness, and graduation rates through early childhood programs, high school dropout rates, and college access initiatives. Many of the initiatives appeared to work within the existing framework established by the previous state administration.

Unlike Granholm, Republican Governor Rick Snyder's administration (2011–2018) initiated legislation that lifted the limitations on the number of public charter schools in Michigan, increased focus on teacher accountability for student learning, and established the Education Achievement Authority (EAA). The EAA was an autonomous organization with seven members. Governor Snyder's Administration created it to manage Detroit's lowest-performing schools. The organization was controversial from its inception until it was disbanded in 2017. During Snyder's Administration, Michigan had the largest number of school districts under state control, more than under any other governor. State-controlled school districts were disproportionately economically distressed with residents of color. In 2012, Snyder's administration took state control in Detroit a step further by creating the Education Achievement Authority (EAA). The EAA was an independent state-run school district for managing Detroit schools that were categorized as failing. Figure 5.1 shows the evolving policy setting for Michigan schools in relation to the succession of governors.

**Figure 5.1**

*Time 0 Visual Memo: The Situation Broadly Conceived*



## Voters and Children

This study identified Michigan voters and children as the two most significant groups of implicated and silent actors. Voters are implicated actors. Children are silent actors. As implicated actors in the social worlds/arenas of literacy and geography mapped in this research, voters are complex and can be physically and discursively present in a situation. As physically present actors, voters may be silenced, ignored, made invisible, or manipulated by those in power in the social world or arena. As “solely discursively constructed . . . [actors]” organization was , voters are usually “constructed by others for other’s purposes . . . They are conceived, represented, and perhaps targeted by the work of those others” (Clarke et al., 2018, p. 75). For example, my research suggests that voters are physically present as people who can vote in the



social worlds/arenas of literacy and geography. However, they are also discursively constructed by the politics of voting history in the United States.

Articulating how Michigan voters contributed to the state-administered education policies examined in this situation was equivalent to running into seeing the tip of an iceberg (gubernatorial education policies) and adjusting for it but finding that crashing into it is the only way to know its density. The relationship between a voter and elected officials appears evident and straightforward. Most adults know voters choose governors in a system that acknowledges and honors democratic voting processes. As implicated actors, voters are an elusive, adaptive, malleable collection of individuals. Identifying the complex and varied consequences for K–12 education that resulted from Michigan voter cultural practices remained elusive and beyond the scope of this research.

As silent actors, children are presented in the social worlds and arena maps of literacy as objects belonging to others (e.g., parents, guardians, schools, and government). For children, agency is elusive and time-bound by age and, later, by other socially constructed factors like gender, race, ethnicity, class, and geography. They lack the elements of power and autonomy associated with agency. As a result, children are repeatedly regulated into discursive silence by social practices that acknowledge—even when they are seen, they are not to be heard. While current attitudes about children’s agency appear to push against the 15th-century proverb that reinforced hierarchical societal structures to designate children to silent, objectified roles within the family and society, their lack of visibility in literacy-related discussions suggests they remain silent observers in matters that directly affect them.

The silent existence of children is exemplified in the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) suit. The conditions leading to the 2016 lawsuit began in 1999 when Governor

Engler implemented the first state takeover of Detroit public schools. These schools were state-run for approximately six to seven years before the birth of the two oldest children/future plaintiffs. By the time they were eligible for kindergarten, Detroit schools had been state-run for nearly four to five years. Most of the six children/future plaintiffs began their pursuit of literacy in public schools run by state officials. With the exception of the period from 2005 to 2009, the children/future plaintiffs spent the bulk of their K–12 learning experiences in schools without local governance. Not only were the children silenced, but we can assume their parents/guardians were also silenced because growing into adulthood does not guarantee agency.

### **Whitmer Administration and Children/Plaintiffs**

Governor Gretchen Whitmer's administration's approach to the 2016 lawsuit markedly contrasted with that of her predecessor, Governor Snyder. Upon assuming office, Whitmer succeeded Snyder as the defendant in the lawsuit, which was directed against the State and thereby against the governor. Notably, within the first year of her tenure, Governor Whitmer facilitated the settlement of the lawsuit.

A pivotal aspect of Governor Whitmer's approach to resolving the lawsuit was her direct engagement with the children/plaintiffs. By deliberately including them in the conversation, Governor Whitmer signaled a commitment to amplifying their voices within the legal proceedings. News coverage and educational organizational communications surrounding the case settlement underscored the significance of the governor's dialogue with the children/plaintiffs.

Furthermore, the settlement established a precedent and provided a legal framework for future reference. By effectively resolving the lawsuit, Governor Whitmer ensured the continuity and relevance of potential future legal pursuits asserting access to literacy claims as foundational

in state education policy. The settlement meant a resolution that upheld the integrity of the initial legal challenge, acknowledged the power of voters, and recognized the children's agency.

The dialogue with the children/plaintiffs exemplifies how an administration, under the leadership of a governor, can empower children and amplify their voices within the realm of governance. The enduring impact of the children's conversation and the settlement with Governor Whitmer continues to unfold, shaping the trajectory of policies and legal actions even four years after its conclusion.

### **Implications for Educational Leadership and Change**

This research explored the implications of educational leadership and change, drawing from historical perspectives and contemporary challenges. It highlights the transformative potential of educational leadership in shaping equitable education policies and outcomes, particularly for marginalized communities. Through historical investigations with methods like situational analysis, practitioner-scholars gain insights into the complex dynamics of decision-making processes and policy outcomes within education systems. The research emphasizes the significant impact of state governors' policy choices on the educational opportunities and outcomes of Black and Brown children as articulated by the children in the form of legal action. It underscores the importance of understanding historical disenfranchisement and systemic inequities in the education experienced by marginalized populations.

Given the opportunity, practitioner-scholars can be educational leaders who serve as advocates for equity, social justice, and driving legislative initiatives that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities. They can do this using the following steps:

1. *Investigating historical perspectives on educational leadership and state governance:* Analyze historical data and documents to understand how educational leadership and state governance structures have evolved over time.
2. *Creating awareness of policy impact:* Educational leaders must be cognizant of the significant impact that state governors' policy choices can have on black and brown children's educational opportunities and outcomes. Understanding the historical context of disenfranchisement and systemic inequities in education is crucial for informing policy decisions and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing these disparities.
3. *Advocating for equity:* Educational leaders are responsible for advocating for policies and practices that promote equity and mitigate the effects of historical disenfranchisement on marginalized communities. This may involve lobbying state government officials, mobilizing community support, and partnering with advocacy organizations to advance legislative initiatives and funding allocations that prioritize the needs of black and brown children.
4. *Monitoring charter school expansion:* Given the impact of charter school policies on traditional public schools, educational leaders should closely monitor the expansion of charter schools and their implications for educational equity. Leaders may need to advocate for regulations and accountability measures to ensure that charter schools operate in a manner that promotes equitable access and outcomes for all students.
5. *Advocating for transparency in funding allocation:* Educational leaders must work towards greater transparency in allocating state and local revenues to public and charter schools. By advocating for policies that promote transparency and

- accountability in funding distribution, leaders can address economic inequities and ensure that resources are allocated equitably to support student learning and success.
6. *Advocating for teacher certification standards*: Educational leaders should advocate for clear and consistent teacher certification standards prioritizing qualifications and competencies essential for effective teaching, particularly in underserved communities. By engaging with state policymakers and accrediting bodies, leaders can influence the development and implementation of certification requirements that support high-quality instruction and student achievement.

### **Limitations of This Research and My Efforts to Overcome These**

As an experienced educator who is a novice practitioner-scholar using SA to map historical discourses of the access to literacy claim, I had several key learning moments related to research limitations. Revisiting the limitations noted in Chapter I, I found managing mapping complexities and establishing scope challenging but manageable. Examining the elements related to the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* lawsuit provided a clear historical moment—2016. The flexibility of SA in mapping historical materials required mapping two time periods—one before the situation of inquiry and one after—thus, I could define the scope by time.

However, the scope was not limited to time. It also included establishing boundaries for the kinds of historical discourse materials in the research. While a single researcher can do SA, I found that not having other researchers as an analytic group for discussing the maps is a constraint. As a method rooted in grounded theory, where the principal researcher works with other knowledgeable researchers to help process and code data, SA benefits from the same structure. Working with others helps establish the scope and set boundaries that inform which

historical, extant materials to examine, helps identify and address bias, and addresses time constraints.

During my application of SA to conduct a historical analysis of the access to literacy class as it represents itself in public education policies, I found contextualizing some aspects of the mapped results limiting. Due to the complexity of educational contexts and historical processes, I experienced moments that challenged my ability to succinctly contextualize events, practices, and phenomena within broader socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts, potentially leading to misinterpretations or oversimplifications. Acknowledging limitations to my research underscored the necessity for researchers to approach our work with critical reflexivity, methodological rigor, and awareness of their limitations to maximize the validity and reliability of their findings in educational research.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

This research leads to suggestions for further study in the realm of educational leadership and change. Drawing from historical perspectives and contemporary challenges, it identifies areas ripe for exploration and research. Firstly, this research proposes investigating the intersection of educational leadership and state governance structures, utilizing historical data and documents to understand their evolution over time. Secondly, it suggests examining the implications of state governors' policy choices on the educational opportunities and outcomes of marginalized communities, particularly Black and Brown children. The following list provides education policy and leadership with further research suggestions:

1. *Study the impact of governance structure on educational equity*: Investigate further how different governance structures, such as state control versus local control, impact educational equity for Black and Brown children. Compare outcomes in states or

- districts with varying levels of state intervention in education policy and administration.
2. *Explore historical educational policy shifts between 1950 and 1970:* Use SA to examine historical shifts in educational policies and practices within the specific context of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. By analyzing historical data and documents, researchers could identify key policy changes, underlying drivers, and implications for educational outcomes and equity.
  3. *Inquire into historical perspectives on educational reform movements:* Use historical analysis to examine past educational reform movements and their impact on educational systems and practices. SA can elucidate the situational contexts and discourses surrounding these reform efforts, shedding light on the factors that facilitated or hindered their success.
  4. *Pursue qualitative interviews with key stakeholders:* Conduct qualitative interviews with people involved in the *Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer* (2018/2020) case, including plaintiffs, lawyers, and elected officials at the local and state levels. This research would provide valuable insight into perspectives that shape education policy.
  5. *Investigate historical perspectives on educational leadership and governance:* Analyze historical data and documents to understand how educational leadership and governance structures have evolved over time. SA can help elucidate the situational dynamics and power relations that shape educational institutions and systems' decision-making processes and policy outcomes.

Based on this research I also recommend exploring the role of educational leaders in conducting longitudinal research that can increase advocating practices for equity and social

justice within the education system, including strategies for lobbying policymakers and mobilizing community support. These could include:

1. *Investigating longitudinal trends in educational access and equity:* Employ historical analysis to trace longitudinal educational access and equity trends over time. SA can complement this by exploring the situational dynamics and contextual factors shaping these trends, offering insights into persistent challenges and emerging opportunities for improving educational equity.
2. *Examining historical perspectives on educational resistance and social movements:* Analyze historical data and documents to understand instances of educational resistance and social movements that challenge inequities and injustices within educational systems. Situational Analysis can help uncover the contexts and discourses shaping these movements and their outcomes.

Finally, this dissertation suggests the importance of future research into the impact of voters as implicated/silent actors with the power to be collective discursive agents. This collective of human actors is diverse and includes every voting-age adult. Local, state, and national elections depend on voter values, attitudes, knowledge, and interests. Voters contribute largely to the state of public education policy. For example, the continued use of charter schools, public and charter school failure to provide educational equity, transparency in funding allocation to ensure resources are distributed equitably among public and charter schools are influenced by both people who vote and those who do not vote. I have the following suggestions for further research focus on voters:

1. *Case studies of key elections:* Conduct case studies of key local and state elections where public school policy was a prominent issue. Examine how voter mobilization



- efforts, campaign messaging, and candidate platforms affected election outcomes and subsequent education policy decisions.
2. *Understanding voter dynamics:* Educational leaders should recognize the importance of understanding voter dynamics in local and state elections. By analyzing voter turnout trends, demographics, and motivations, leaders can better anticipate the political landscape and advocate for policies that align with the priorities of the electorate.
  3. *Developing engagement strategies:* Educational leaders should develop strategies to engage with voters and mobilize support for education issues during elections. This may involve outreach efforts, community partnerships, and messaging campaigns to raise awareness of education policy issues and motivate voters to participate in the electoral process.
  4. *Building coalitions:* Educational leaders should work to build coalitions with other stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and community organizations, to amplify their collective voice in elections. Leaders can enhance their influence in shaping election outcomes by forging alliances with groups that share common education policy goals.
  5. *Advocacy and lobbying:* Educational leaders should engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts to ensure that candidates and elected officials pay attention to education issues. This may involve communicating with candidates about education policy priorities, organizing candidate forums or debates focused on education issues, and mobilizing support for pro-education candidates.
  6. *Strengthening community connections:* Educational leaders should prioritize building strong connections with the communities they serve to cultivate trust and support.

Leaders can foster a sense of ownership and investment in the electoral process among community members by engaging in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and soliciting input on education policy matters.

7. *Adapting to changing political landscapes:* Educational leaders should remain adaptable and responsive to changes in the political landscape, including shifts in voter demographics, electoral dynamics, and policy priorities. By staying attuned to evolving political trends, leaders can adjust their advocacy strategies and priorities to effectively navigate the electoral process's complexities.

### **Conclusion and Key Learning Moments**

I feel that this research offers valuable insights into the multifaceted realm of educational leadership and change, spanning historical perspectives, contemporary challenges, and avenues for further exploration. My use of the rigorous mapping methods of SA to delve into historical data sheds light on the intricate complex social systems informing state-level educational policies that position historical and contemporary elements of chronosystems as powerful influences that influence a child's fundamental right to access the tools needed to achieve basic literacy skills. This research experience underscores the profound impact of policy decisions, particularly those made by state governors, on marginalized communities, especially Black and Brown children, thereby emphasizing the urgent need for equitable education policies and practices.

As an experienced educator and novice situational analysis practitioner, I encountered and addressed various research limitations, highlighting the importance of critical reflexivity and methodological rigor in educational research. These reflections underscore the necessity for researchers to navigate complexities and boundaries effectively, ensuring the validity and reliability of their findings. Furthermore, the research outlines suggestions for future studies that

encompass various aspects of educational leadership and change, from governance structures to advocacy strategies, funding transparency, and teacher certification standards. Addressing these areas will not only deepen our understanding but also pave the way for positive change and the advancement of equity and social justice in education.

By recognizing the transformative potential of educational leadership and advocating for equitable policies, practitioners can play a pivotal role in driving positive outcomes and prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities. In reflection, I posit that this research contributes valuable insights to ongoing education policy discourse and actions aimed at fostering a more equitable and empowering educational landscape for all students.

## Epilogue

Open Letter: A Message to the Children about Literacy  
Thursday, 23 May 2024

Dear Michigan Public School Children,

When you find yourself becoming activists and protestors about anything your community should provide, it's a sign that the grown-ups have let you down.

When you have to lead the way as plaintiffs in lawsuits about the conditions of your schools and the quality of your teachers, we have failed to give you what this history of civil rights acts and laws intended—an inclusive, equitable opportunity to learn. Even though many adults work hard to make childhood a time for children to learn and grow, there are adults who don't believe in taking care of all children equally.

Today, things are different from when adults, young adults, and children worked together in movements like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Children's Crusade March (1963). But now, your voices are often unheard on topics that affect you. For example, your learning experiences in school.

School should be a safe place where you can expect to get what you need, like emotional and physical safety, teachers and buildings that help you learn, and learning materials that allow you to access literacy skills like reading, writing, and math.

These basic things should have been provided to all of you by 2016. After the Civil Rights Movement, our country should have become better at ensuring you get a good education and are well taken care of.

Unfortunately, unfair policies that started long ago, like when laws prevented certain people from learning to read, still affect us today. Decisions made by governors and voters still prevent some children in Michigan from getting the literacy education they deserve.

Governors in Michigan, like John Engler, Jennifer Granholm, and Rick Snyder, made decisions that impacted your schools in complex ways. For example, Governor Engler changed how schools were funded and allowed charter schools to open. Those decisions led to many challenges for children who attended Detroit public schools. Governor Granholm and Governor Snyder also made changes that affected your education, sometimes making it harder for your schools to succeed.

As a former child, I remember my time in Detroit public schools. I had great teachers, tired teachers, and teachers who didn't know what to do sometimes. Every school I went to had some part that needed updating. When I went to Finney High School in 10th grade, dance class was my gym/health class. The year after I graduated, it was no longer an option.

So many decisions about your schools and your future are made without asking you what you need. This was clear in the 2016 lawsuit, which started because of decisions made by governors years before you were born that prevented many schools from giving you the education you deserved. For many of you, your schools were controlled by the state for most of your time there, making it hard for your families to have a say.

If you're willing to trust my word - as a former child and current adult - believe me when I say you, the children, are important even if you don't always feel heard.

When Governor Gretchen Whitmer took office, she did something different. She listened to you and helped settle the lawsuit, making sure your voices were part of the conversation. This was a big step in recognizing your rights and showing that you matter.

Governor Whitmer showed how important it is to listen to children and include them in decisions about their lives. Since talking to the children and settling their lawsuit. She's made decisions about your access to basic literacy skills, which was a main point in the lawsuit. For example, her education budget includes money for individualized tutoring, academic support for all children, and literacy-related programs and activities in Detroit's public schools. This shows that when leaders listen to children, they can make choices that may have more positive changes for more children.

Your voices are powerful and important. You deserve a say in what happens in your schools and your communities. You deserve to grow and thrive with the support and care you need. You deserve to attend schools where your right to access literacy skills is a reality, not a cause you have to fight for.

Sincerely,

Mursalata Muhammad—a former child.

P.S.

As I worked on the second version of this letter at 5 AM, News 8 was on in the background. I tuned most of it out until I heard the reporter say, "Michigan Reconnect." I looked up from working to see images of Grand Rapids Community College on the screen as the reporter explained that Governor Whitmer's Michigan Reconnect program began in 2021 by offering people 25 and older tuition-free associate degrees and certificates. In 2023, the program expanded to include people 21 and older. The "Michigan Reconnect Milestone" story was about yesterday's virtual ceremony held on Wednesday, 22 May 2024. Governor Whitmer was the keynote speaker. About 7,000 people have completed degrees or certificates since 2021, and about 36,000 people are enrolled.

An Open Letter to Voters and Non-Voters  
Thursday, 23 May 2024

When you vote, your decisions affect every child's access to education. Most voters understand this influence, even if only vaguely.

However, when you decide not to vote, your decisions affect every child's access to education. Unfortunately, many non-voters do not realize the significant impact their lack of participation can have on educational policies and outcomes.

As voters or non-voters, you influence education policies. Both voting decisions are part of our electoral process. Both types of voters shape education policies through their electoral choices, while children, often seen but not heard, bear the consequences.

While we may strive to provide our children with the best possible educational choices, when they become activists and protestors demanding better schools, it becomes evident that we are part of a bigger, collective failure. When our children are plaintiffs in lawsuits demanding their schools provide them with access to the tools that enable them to learn, it's clear that our collective decisions—as voters and non-voters—exclude too many children.

Michigan's history with education policy demonstrates how the actions of governors, influenced by voters' decisions, have significant impacts on public education. For example, education policies implemented by Governor John Engler, Governor Jennifer Granholm, and Governor Rick Snyder laid the groundwork for the 2016 lawsuit, where Detroit public school children led the charge to address inequities perpetuated by state legislation and voter decisions.

The Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer (2018/2020) lawsuit underscores the importance of recognizing your voting responsibility to ensure all children get access to basic literacy skills. It's your decision-making processes that affect their education and future.

As voters, you have the power to influence positive change in our education system. By staying informed and voting for policies and leaders who prioritize equitable education for all children, you can help create a brighter and more equitable future for the next generation.

It is imperative that we, as a society, recognize the failures of our education system and work collectively to ensure that all children have equitable access to the tools necessary for their development. Let us commit to creating a future where children do not have to fight for their basic rights but can grow and thrive in an environment of support and care.

Sincerely,

Mursalata Muhammad—Voter

An Open Letter About Education to Governors  
Thursday, 23 May 2024

When children are compelled to become activists and protestors, it means you and the broader social system have failed them. When children lawsuit plaintiffs charge to forge change by sharing their lived experiences of preventable inequities, it means we have failed to build a democracy worth inheriting. Despite efforts by some of us to make childhood a time for nurture and growth, the reluctance of many policymakers, voters, and indifferent adults to embrace the collective responsibility for all children has disenfranchised our youth. We have created an environment where children are forced to fight for justice.

Today's practices that disenfranchise children have not resulted from new ways of seeing the value of a child's life. We have managed to keep some key post-civil rights gains just beyond the reach of most American children. Unlike the times of political activism and landmark lawsuits such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Children's Crusade March, today's young activists are not supported by a unified adult front. They do not march hand in hand with adults who acknowledge their disenfranchisement. Instead, their voices are often muted and dispersed. We only seem to hear our children when the trauma of childhood results in physical, emotional, or developmental mistreatment, which is especially true within the public education system.

Public education, through the policies that define it, should provide a space where all children can experience safety and collective care. Schools are expected to provide access to essential services such as healthcare, safety, and the resources needed to attain basic literacy skills. By 2016, the results of our pre-Civil Rights should have exceeded those expectations for the majority, and I dare say, "all" children attending public schools in the United States. Instead, our children find themselves historical collateral damage in a post-Civil Rights era.

Colonial anti-literacy laws laid the foundation for continued inequities in education policies and practices in America from the 1950s through the 1970s. Decisions made by governors, voters, and non-voters make it difficult to rid our current educational practices of historical educational disparities. The actions of various Michigan governors, voting and non-voting adults have had significant impacts on public education, often perpetuating anti-literacy characteristics. For example, Governor John Engler's policies in the 1990s and early 2000s created conditions that led to the 2016 lawsuit. His administration's laws on school choice and funding had far-reaching consequences, especially for children attending schools in Michigan cities like Detroit.

Similarly, Governor Jennifer Granholm's policies and Governor Rick Snyder's policies further influenced the state's education landscape. Granholm's administration continued to navigate the

complexities of public charter academies while giving some attention to various K - college initiatives. However, these efforts often worked within the existing framework rather than challenging the foundational issues.

Snyder's administration further intensified educational challenges by establishing the controversial Education Achievement Authority (EAA) to manage Detroit's lowest-performing schools and extending state control to numerous school districts.

The collective gubernatorial decisions made by Michigan's policymakers disproportionately affected economically distressed areas with predominantly residents of color. The policies laid the groundwork for the 2016 lawsuit, which addressed the inequities perpetuated by state legislation and voter decisions. The conditions leading to the 2016 lawsuit began with Governor Engler's state takeover of Detroit Public Schools (DPS) in 1999. The precarious rule by subsequent governors meant the children involved in the lawsuit spent most of their K-12 years in state-run schools.

However, Governor Gretchen Whitmer's administration marked a significant shift in addressing the lawsuit issues. Upon taking office, Whitmer facilitated the settlement of the lawsuit, directly engaging with the children/plaintiffs and amplifying their voices and recognizing the agency of children. Governor Whitmer's approach exemplifies how leadership can empower children and amplify their voices within governance. The enduring impact of the children's dialogue with Governor Whitmer continues to shape policies and legal actions, emphasizing the importance of listening to and acting on behalf of our youngest citizens.

As governors, you have the power and responsibility to shape education policies that truly support and nurture our children. It is imperative that you listen to their voices, recognize their rights, and take decisive actions to address the inequities they face. Let us work together to create an educational system where all children can thrive, ensuring a brighter and more equitable future for the next generation.

Sincerely,

Mursalata Muhammad—Concerned voter



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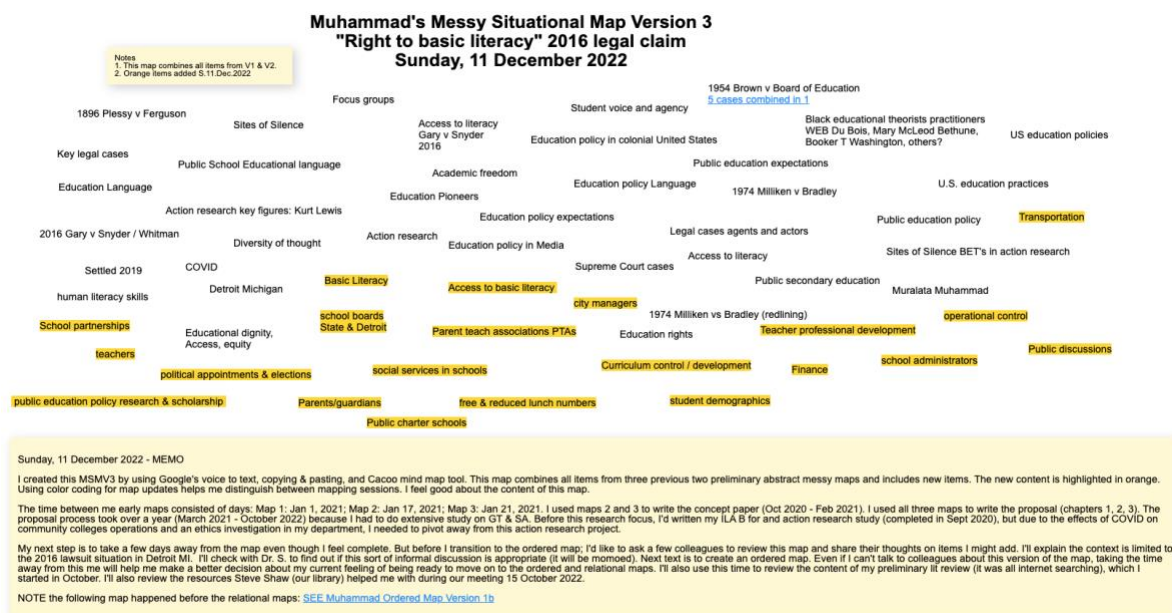
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## APPENDIX A: MESSY MAPS

**Figure A.1**

*Muhammad's Messy Situational Map Version 4—December 11, 2022*



**Figure A.2**

*Muhammad's Messy Situational Map Version 4—March 19, 2023*

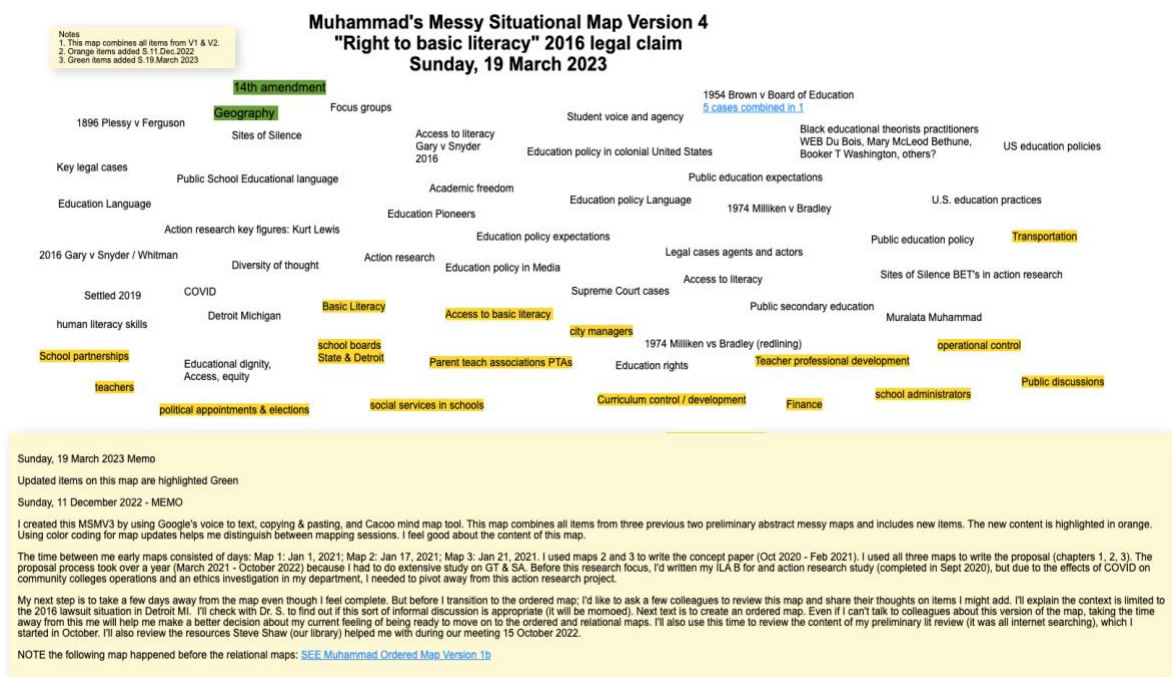
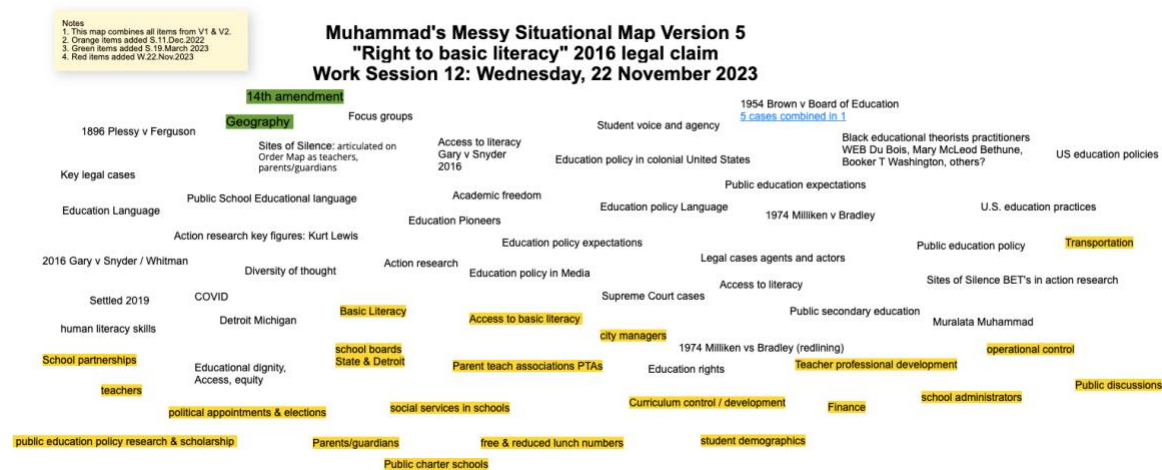


Figure A.3

*Muhammad's Messy Situational Map Version 5—November 22, 2023*



#### Wednesday, 22 November 2023 MEMO

Updated this messy map to version 5: It reflect the individual actors I erroneously mapped as social worlds components - Governors, presidents, and children plaintiffs.

I also updated the ordered map to version 4 with the revised content from this messy map V5.

I am going to do the social worlds maps based on these two updated maps: Messy Map 5 and Ordered Map 4.

I am going to use Abstract Perspectival Project Maps to represent the Arenas and social worlds components of my Messy Map 5 and Ordered Map 4. According to Clarke (2018), et al. Perspectival Project Maps are "especially useful in the study of long-lived arenas...and for different historical moments" (266)

#### Sunday, 19 March 2023 Memo

Updated items on this map are highlighted Green

#### Sunday, 11 December 2022 - MEMO

I created this MSMV3 by using Google's voice to text, copying & pasting, and Cacao mind map tool. This map combines all items from three previous two preliminary abstract messy maps and includes new items. The new content is highlighted in orange. Using color coding for map updates helps me distinguish between mapping sessions. I feel good about the content of this map.

The time between me early maps consisted of days: Map 1: Jan 1, 2021; Map 2: Jan 17, 2021; Map 3: Jan 21, 2021. I used maps 2 and 3 to write the concept paper (Oct 2020 - Feb 2021). I used all three maps to write the proposal (chapters 1, 2, 3). The proposal process took over a year (March 2021 - October 2022) because I had to do extensive study on GT & SA. Before this research focus, I'd written my ILA B for and action research study (completed in Sept 2020), but due to the effects of COVID on community colleges operations and an ethics investigation in my department, I needed to pivot away from this action research project.

My next step is to take a few days away from the map even though I feel complete. But before I transition to the ordered map, I'd like to ask a few colleagues to review this map and share their thoughts on items I might add. I'll explain the context is limited to the 2016 lawsuit situation in Detroit MI. I'll check with Dr. S. to find out if this sort of informal discussion is appropriate (it will be removed). Next text is to create an ordered map. Even if I can't talk to colleagues about this version of the map, taking the time away from this map will help me make a better decision about my current feeling of being ready to move on to the ordered and relational maps. I'll also use this time to review the content of my preliminary lit review (it was all internet searching), which I started in October. I'll also review the resources Steve Shaw (our library) helped me with during our meeting 15 October 2022.

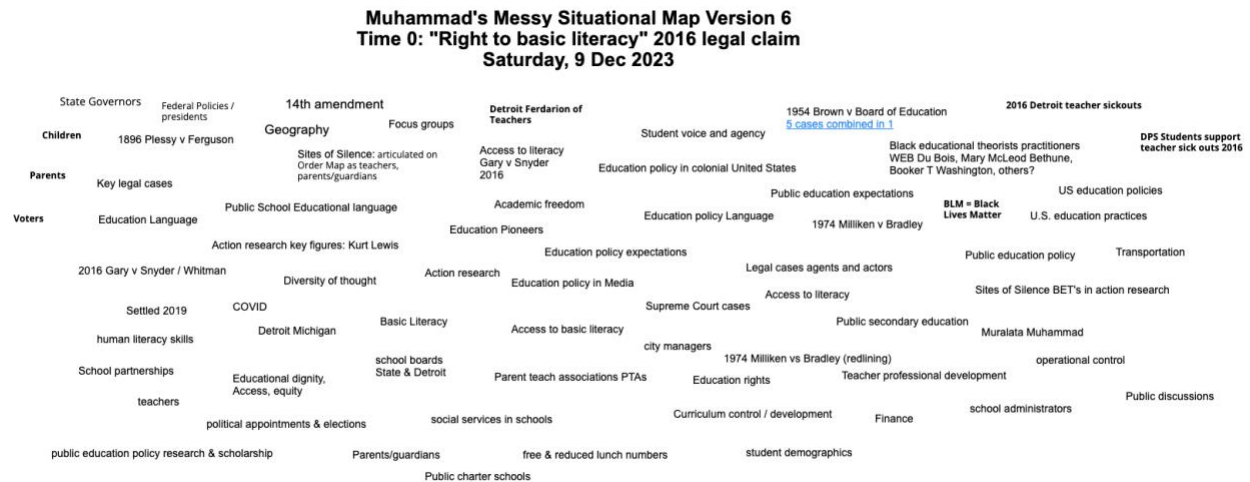
NOTE the following map happened before the relational maps: [SEE Muhammad Ordered Map Version 1b](#)

**Figure A.4**

*Messy Situational Map for Time 0 Right to Basic Literacy, Version 6: December 9, 2023*

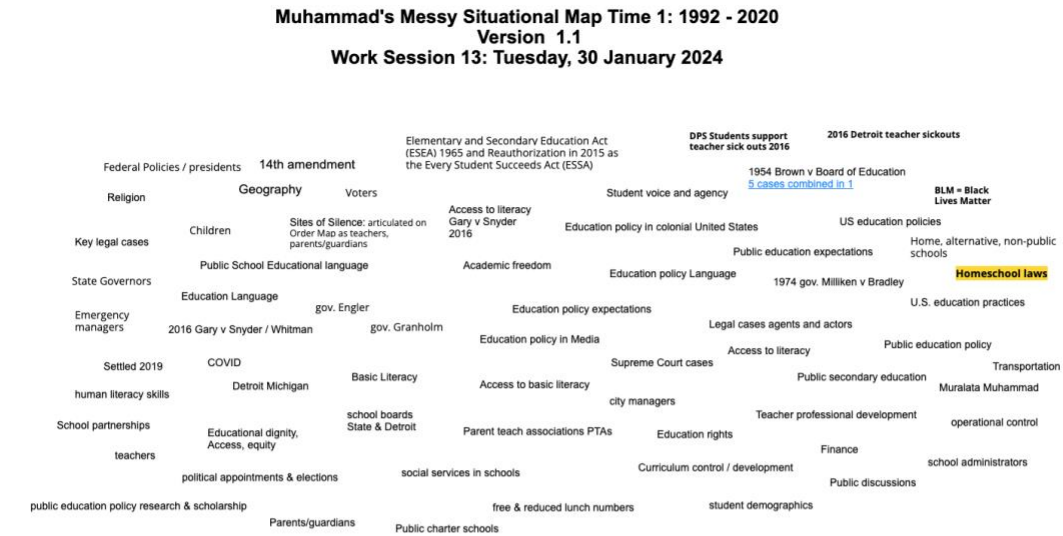
**Figure A.5**

*Messy Situational Map for Time 0 Right to Basic Literacy, Version 6: December 9, 2023*





-- Pink = Sites of silence or discourse created by agents or about the actors/actants may be difficult to locate

**Figure A.7***Messy Situational Map for Time 1, Version 1.1: January 30, 2024*

Mursalata Muhammad

Memo  
 Tuesday, 30 January 2024

This Messy Map Version 1 for Time Period 1: 1992 - 2020 is a revised version of Work Session 12's Messy Map Version 5, which is not time based. I began my SA research by focusing on mapping the situation as defined by the 2016 Gary v Snyder/Whitmer lawsuit. Historical SA research requires the researcher to map at least two different time periods related to the situation, ideally before and after the situation being analyzed. I determined the before and after time periods by making the first messy map for 2016.

After creating and revising the ordered map versions, I created several relational maps, which also lead to updating the 2016 Messy Map.

The relational maps (1, 1.1, 1.2, and 2) revealed connections between key legal cases (Brown v BOE, 1974 Milliken v Bradley, 2016 Gary v Snyder/Whitmer), three Michigan governors (Milliken, Snyder, and Whitmer), geography, sites of silence, and politics - specifically political appointments of "emergency managers".

The relational map helped me locate significant educational actions that preceded the 2016 lawsuit. Most of those significant actions were gubernatorial legislative actions that resulted in the first transfer from local control of Detroit public schools to the state control in 1999 when John Engler was governor.

This discovery helped me pinpoint 1999 as the starting year for time 1. Initially, I selected 1999 because that was the year Detroit first lost local control of its schools during Governor John Engler's tenure.

Now, I had 1999 - 2016 as the first historical time for my mapping research.

Before I moved on to create social worlds maps for Time Period 1: 1999 - 2016, I gathered information about all the governors from involved in the state controlled history of the 2016 lawsuit.

I used the information I collected to create, what I call visual memos (See Visual Memo 1 Time 0: Ed Politics 1999 - 2020). These memos combine elements of mapping and memoing, which helped my see my thinking more concretely.

Visual Memo 1 Time 0 contains data identifying key national and state educational policies, relationships between governors and presidents, the plaintiffs, local and state control periods for DPS. The visual memos helped me solidify the first time period for my social worlds mapping stage as 1999 - 2020. Due to the historical significance of 1954 Brown v BoE in discourse about education in the US, I planned to use it as the marker for determining the second historical time period.

Before I turned my attention to mapping the second time period, I focused on the social worlds maps for the first time period.

ESSA - meant to address permissible by law, civil rights practices that disenfranchised and restricted children's access to literacy development in public schools. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/editorial-education-civil-right-n606356>

NOTE: I erroneously labeled my visual memos social worlds maps. However, I corrected that error by presenting my research in progress to others. For me, the visual memo is different from concept mapping because the SA method I was using provides more direction at the moments I brought specific ideas about the governors' role in how children accessed opportunities to become literate in the DPS K-12 school system.

#### ANNOTATION COLORS

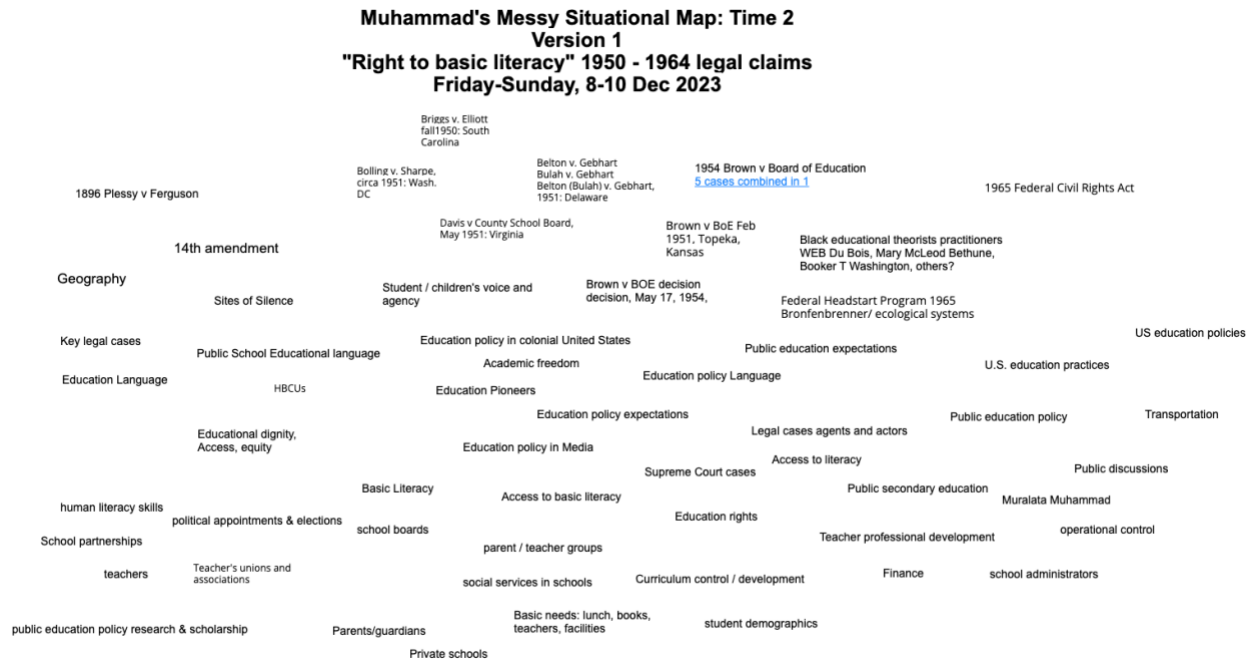
- The color coding in this correlates to relational map and ordered map. Changes are expected in future iterations.
- Blue suggests areas of public discourse that can be located in some form of artifacts or documents
- Green = mostly court cases or items related to them
- Orange = I'm not sure exactly how to describe potential associations. I expect the relational and ordered maps will help articulate relationships.
- Pink = Sites of silence or discourse created by agents or about the actors/actants may be difficult to locate



Figure A.8

*Messy Situational Map for Time 1, Version 1.1: January 30, 2024*

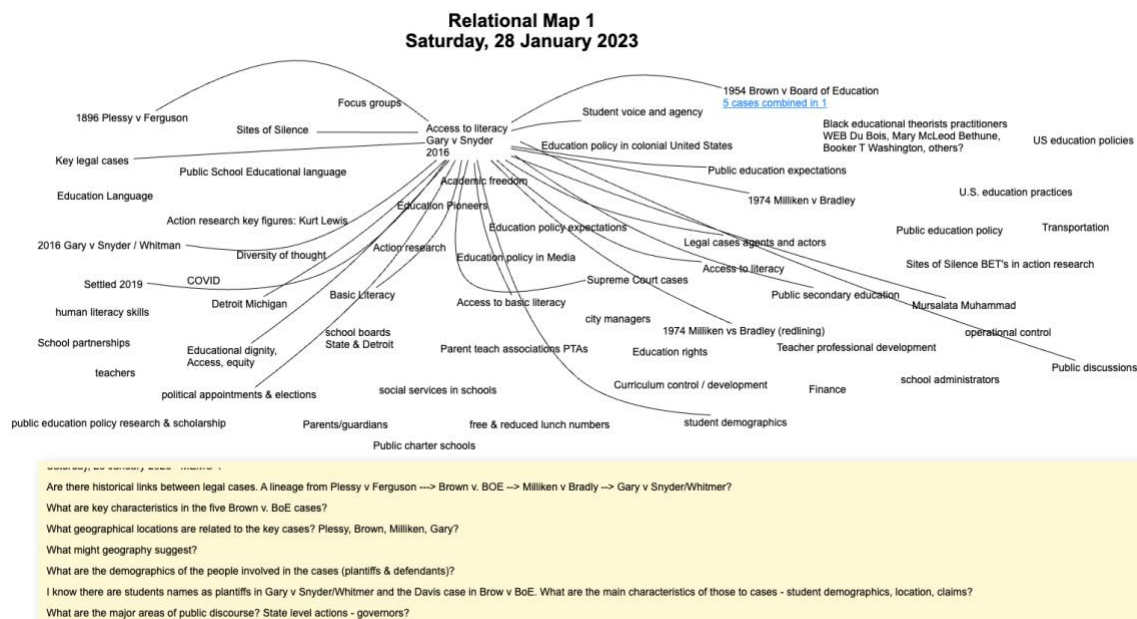


**Figure A.9***Messy Situational Map for Time 2, Version 1: December 8–10, 2023*

## APPENDIX B: RELATIONAL MAPS

**Figure B.1**

*Relational Map 1, January 28, 2023*



**Figure B.2**

*Relational Map 1.1, January 28, 2023*

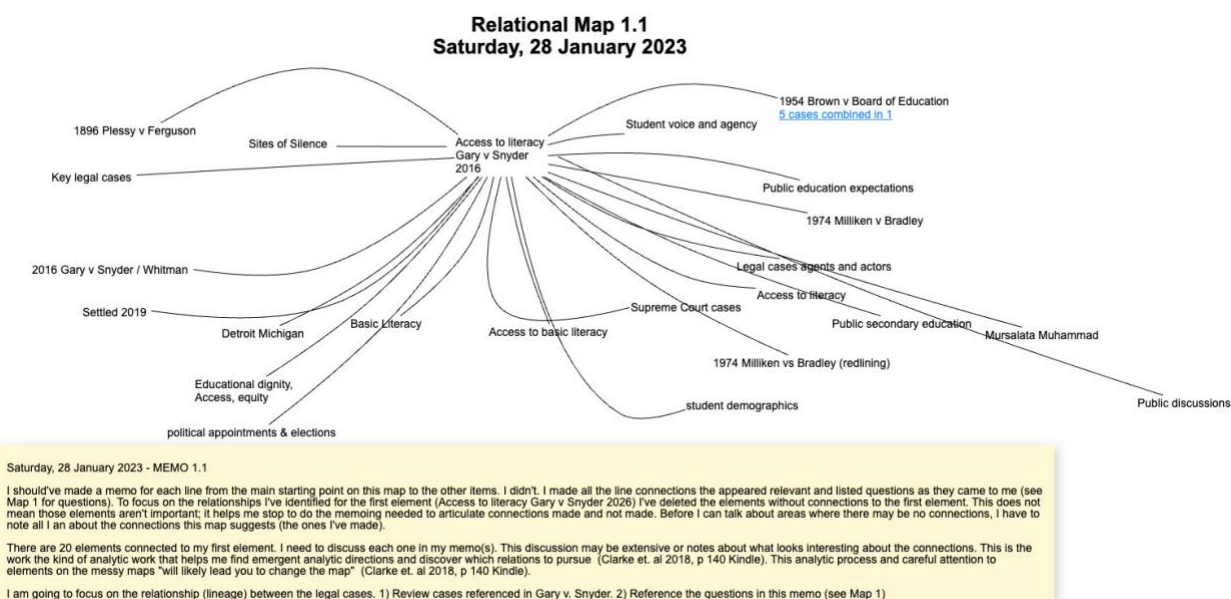


Figure B.3

*Relational Map 1.2: January 28, 2023*

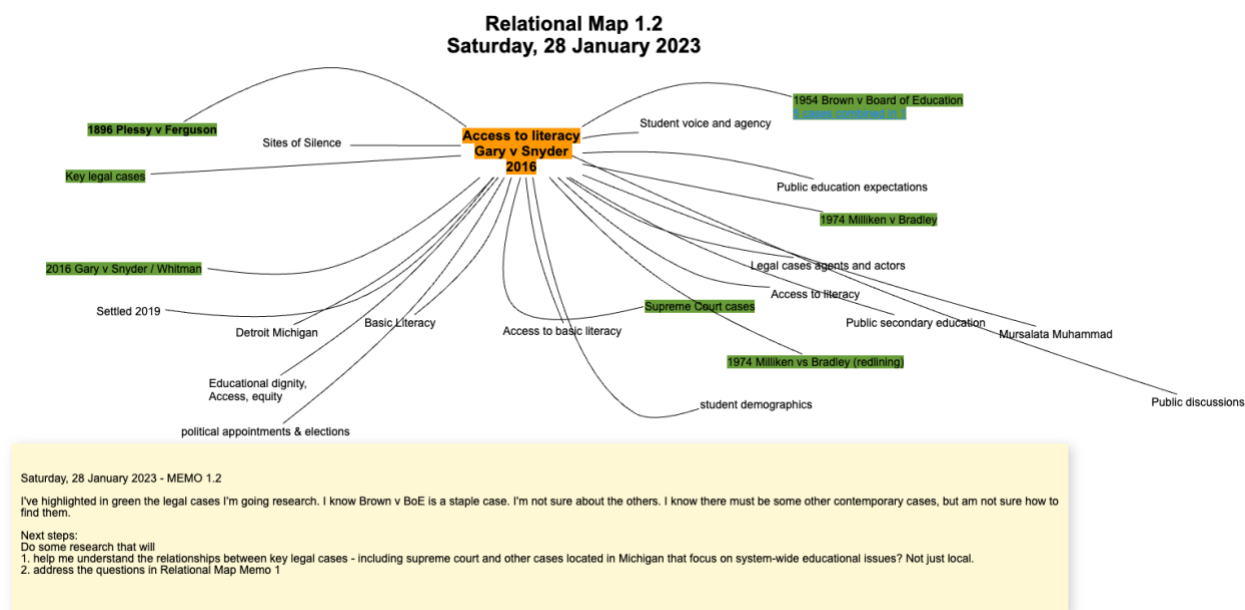


Figure B.4

*Relational Map 2, February 2, 2023*

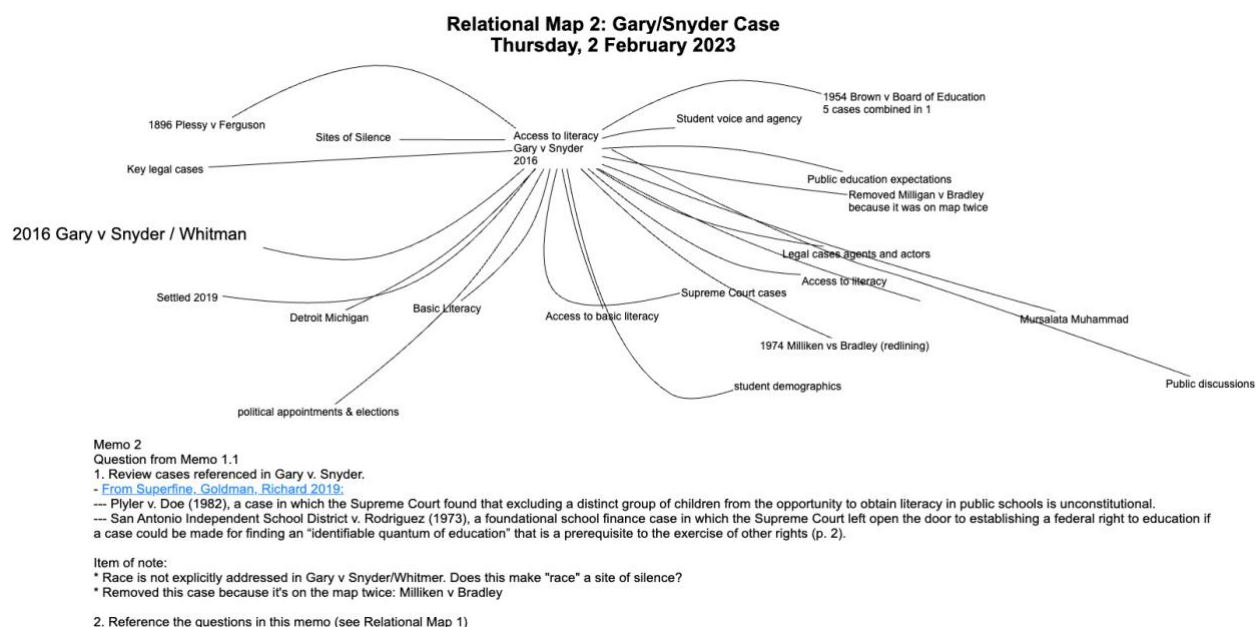
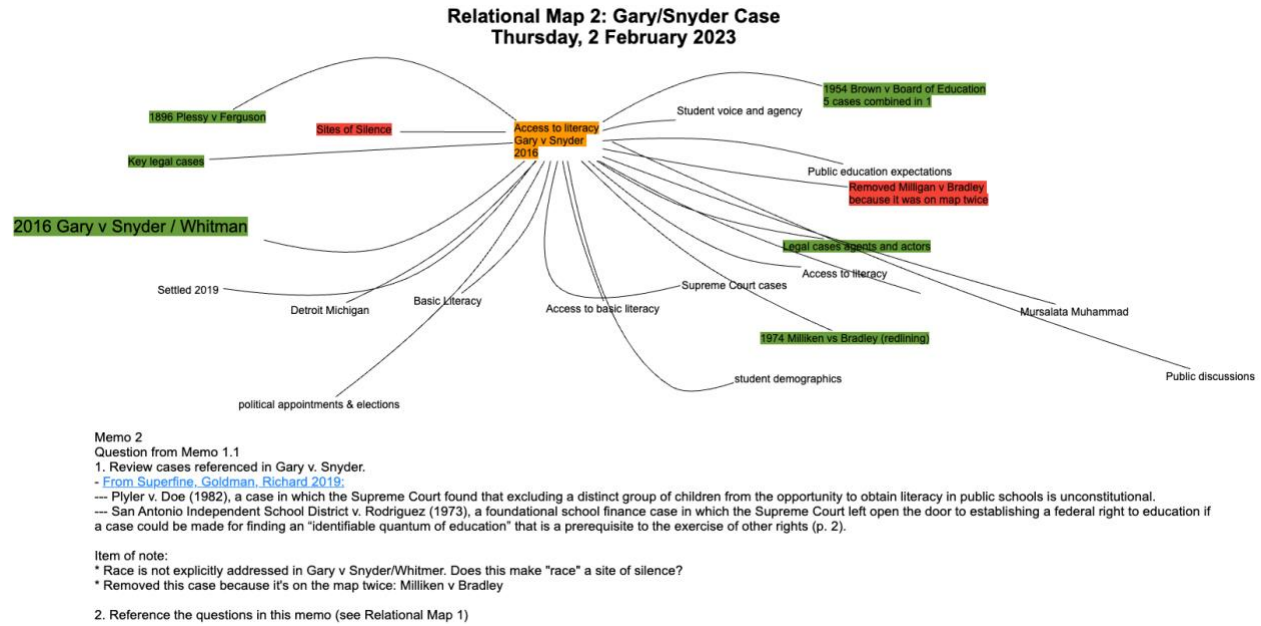


Figure B.5

*Relational Map 2, Colored, February 2, 2023*



## APPENDIX C: VISUAL MEMO MAPS

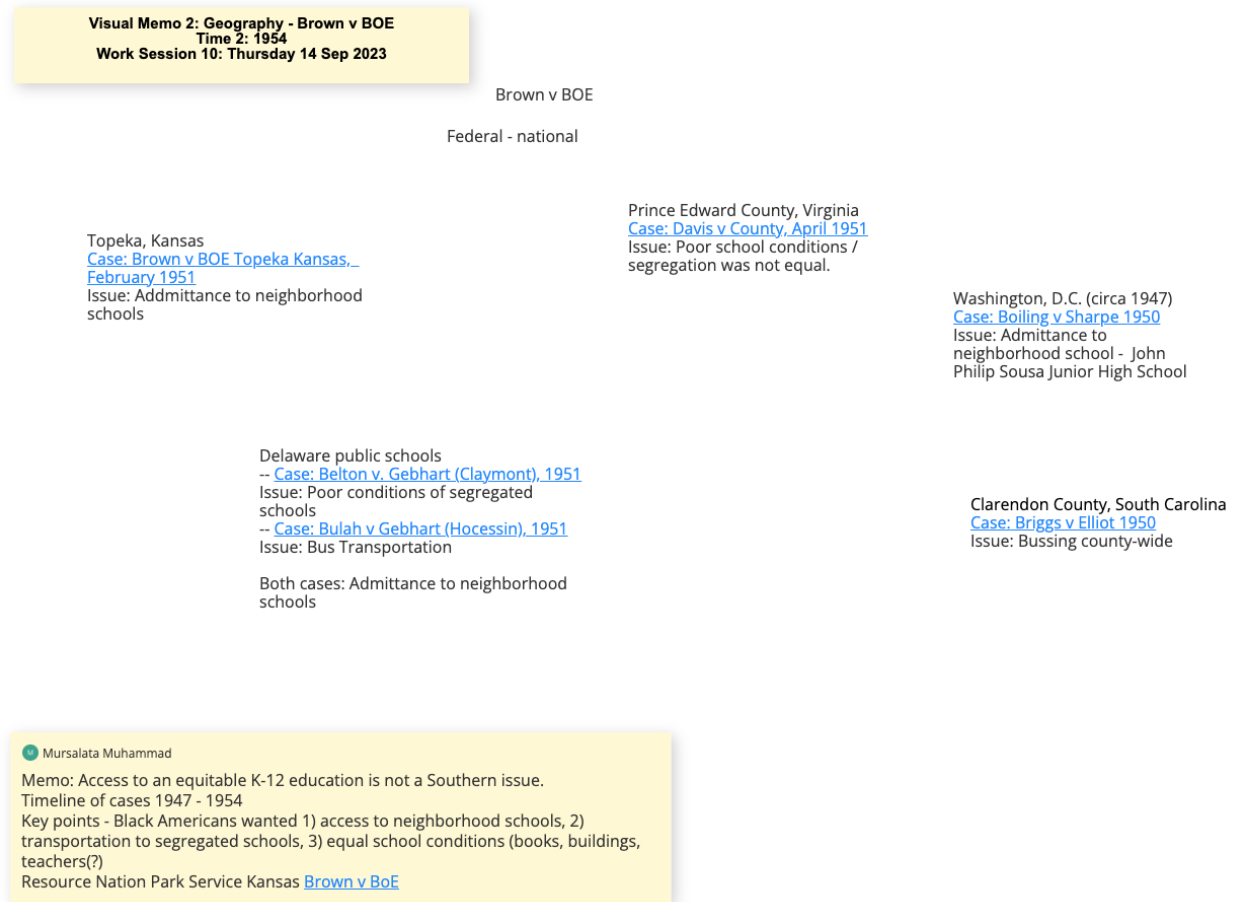
**Figure C.1**

*Visual Memo Map from Work Session 10, Gary B. v. Snyder Case, September 14, 2023*



## Figure C.2

### *Visual Memo Map for Geography, Work Session 10, Brown v. BoE, September 14, 2023*



**Figure C.3**

*Visual Memo Map for Education Politics, Work Session 8, Brown v. BoE, May 30, 2023*

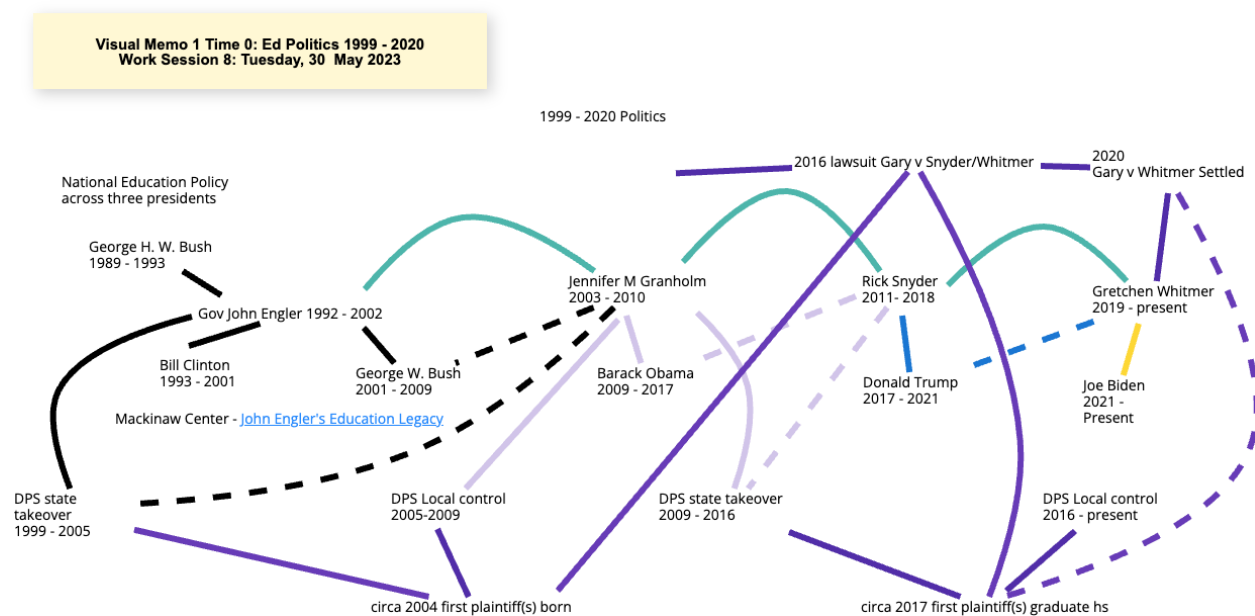




Figure C.4

*Visual Memo Map for Education Politics Gov. Engler 2 , February 10, 2024*

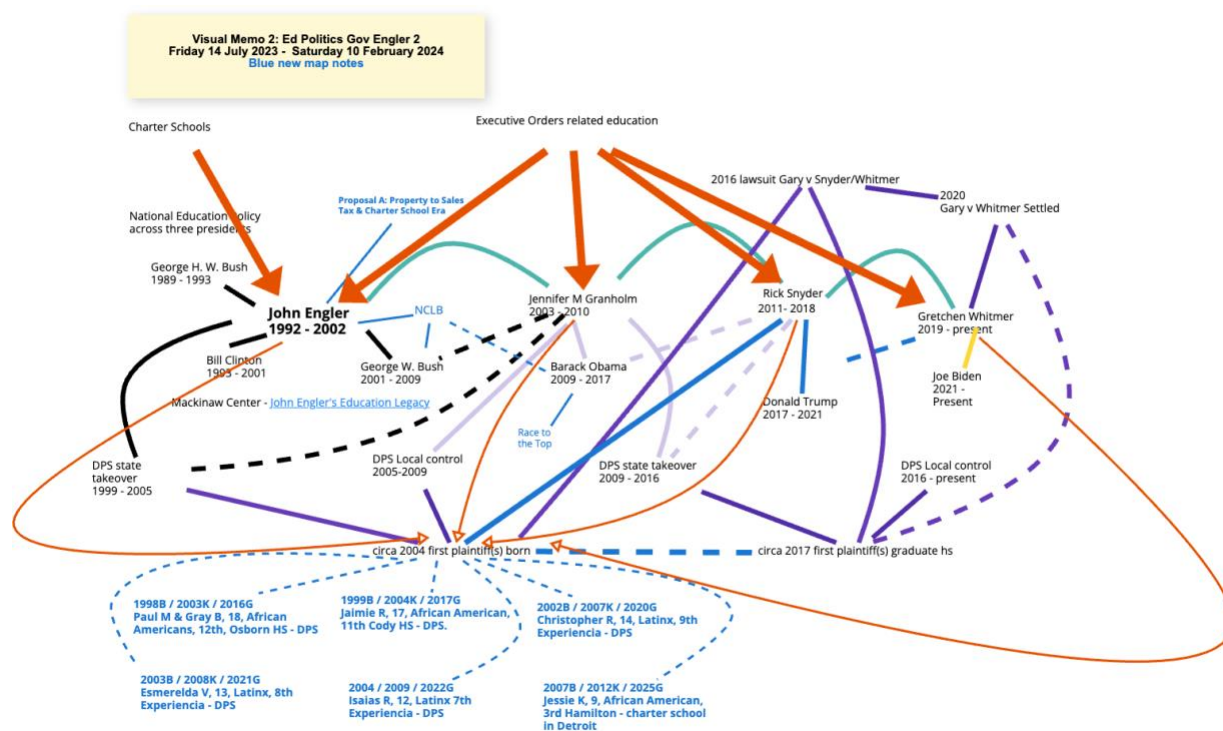


Figure C.5

Visual Memo Map for Education Politics Gov. Granholm, February 10, 2024

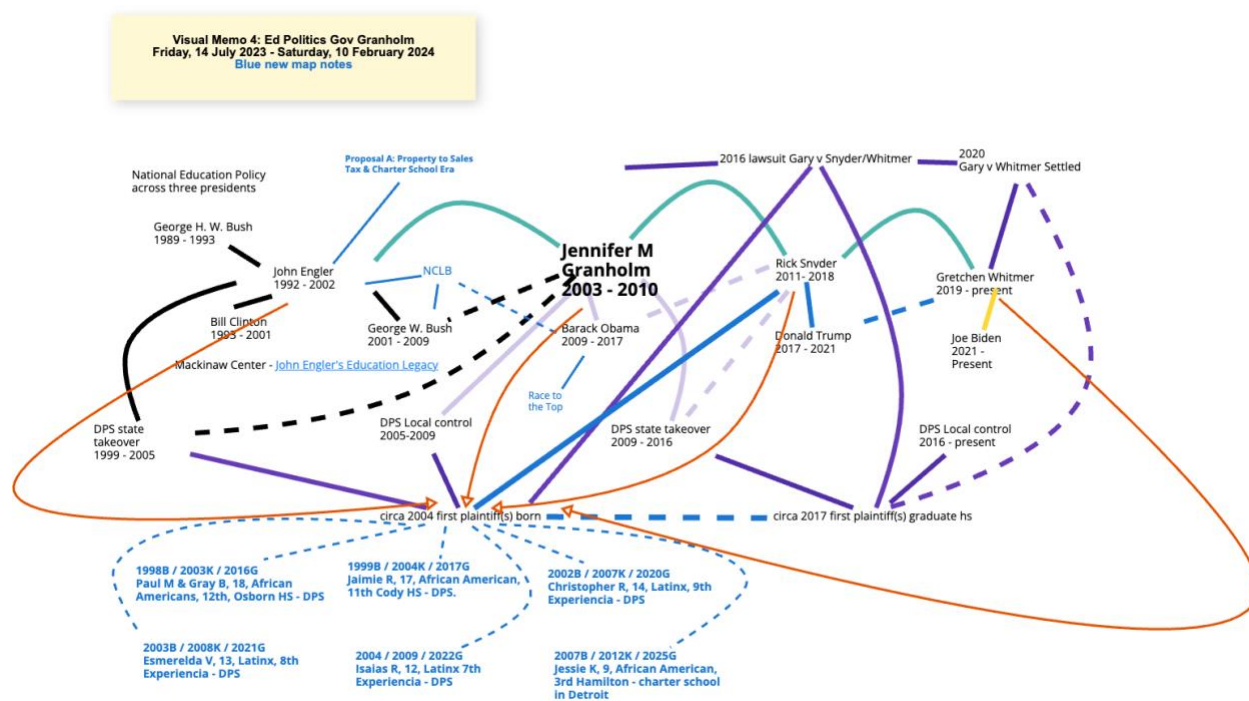
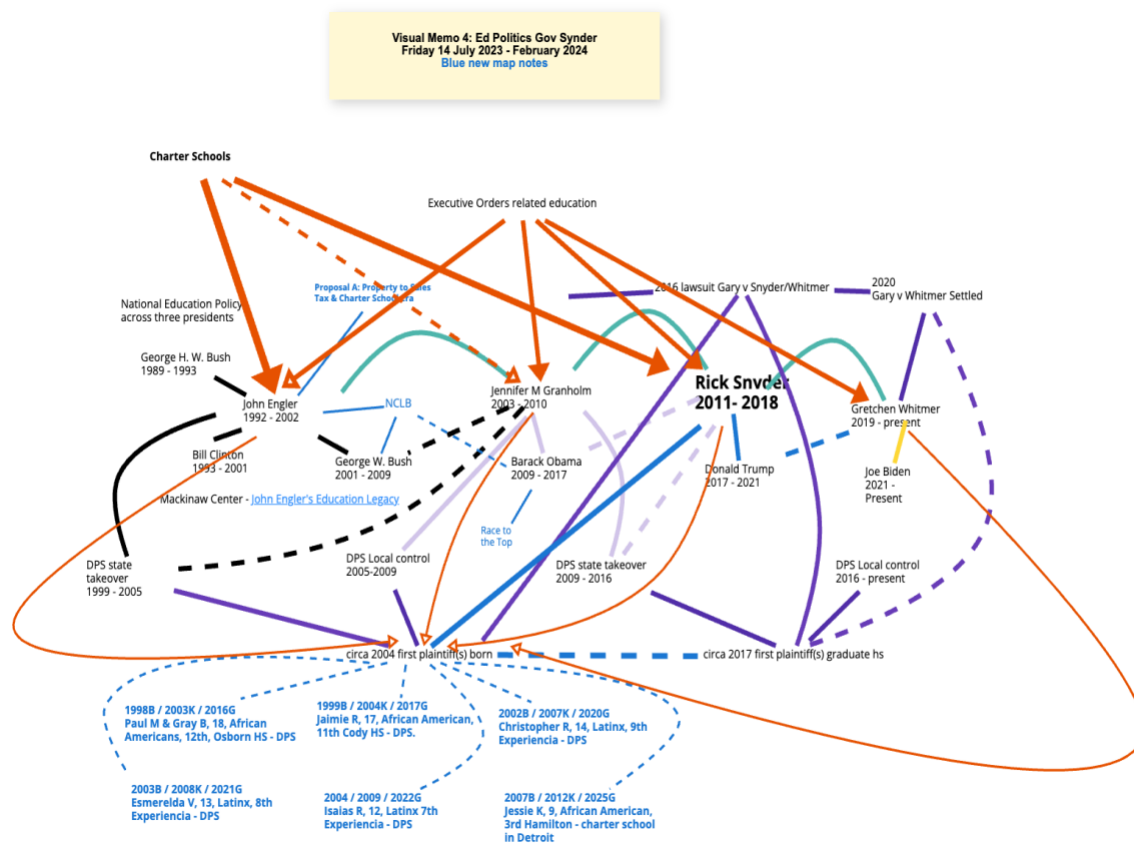
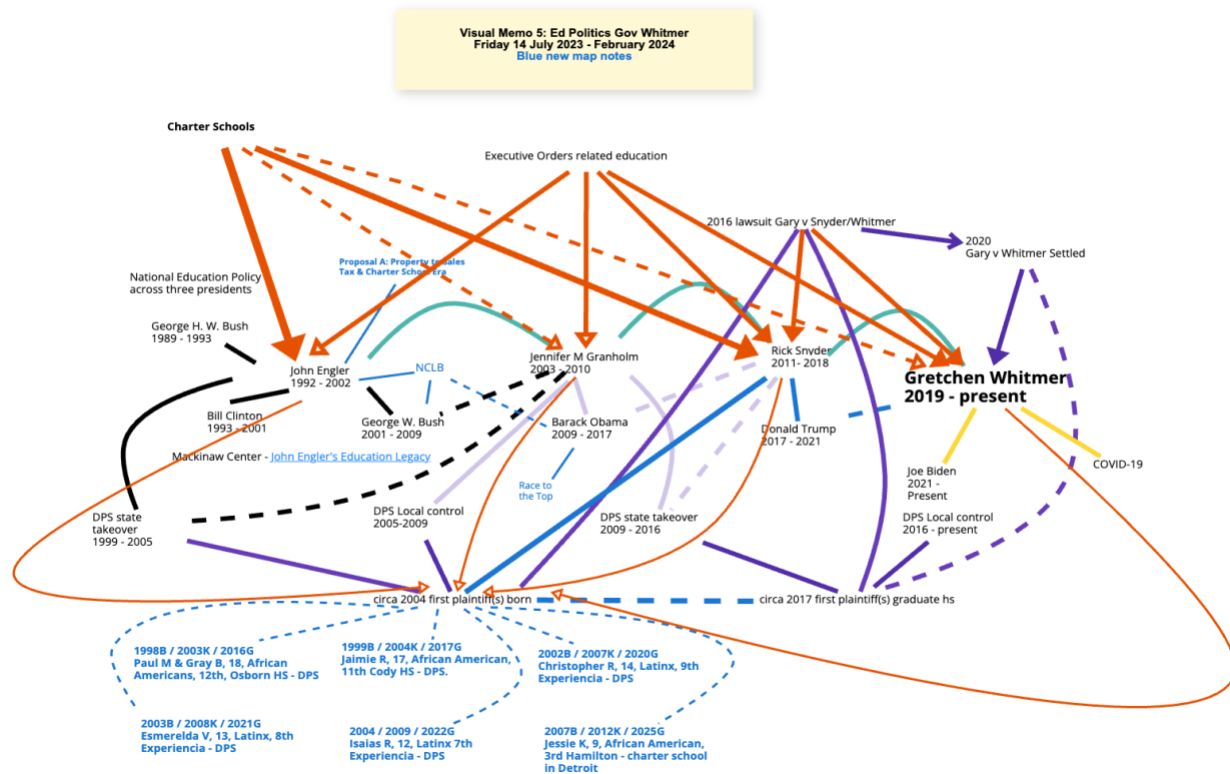
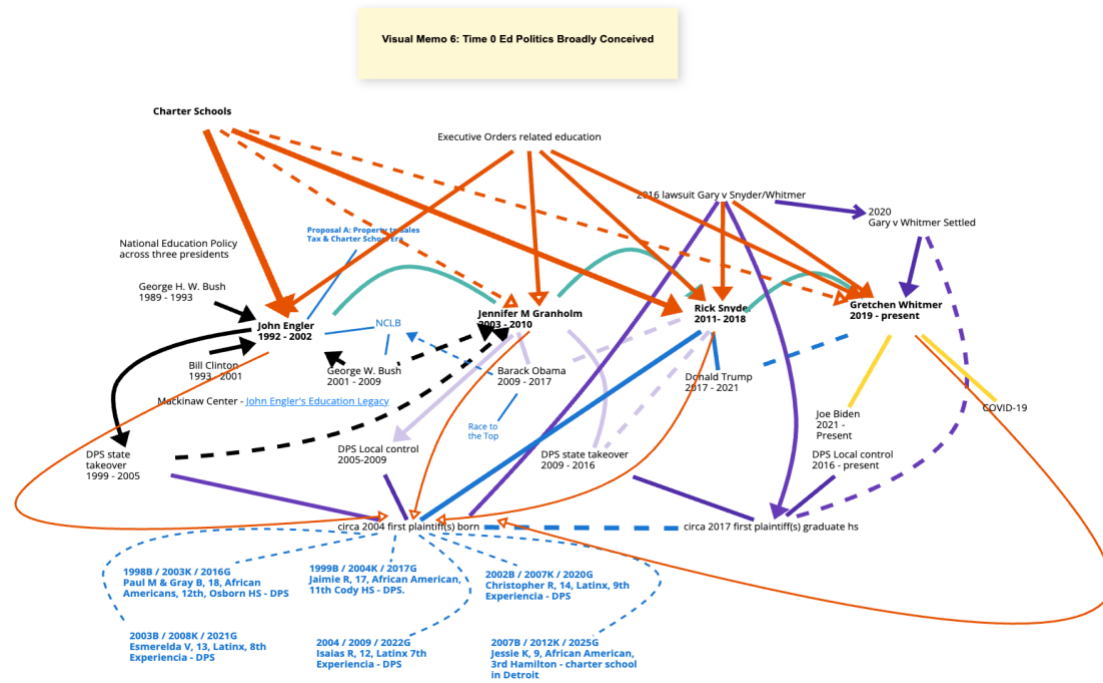


Figure C.6

Visual Memo Map for Education Politics Gov. Snyder, February 10, 2024



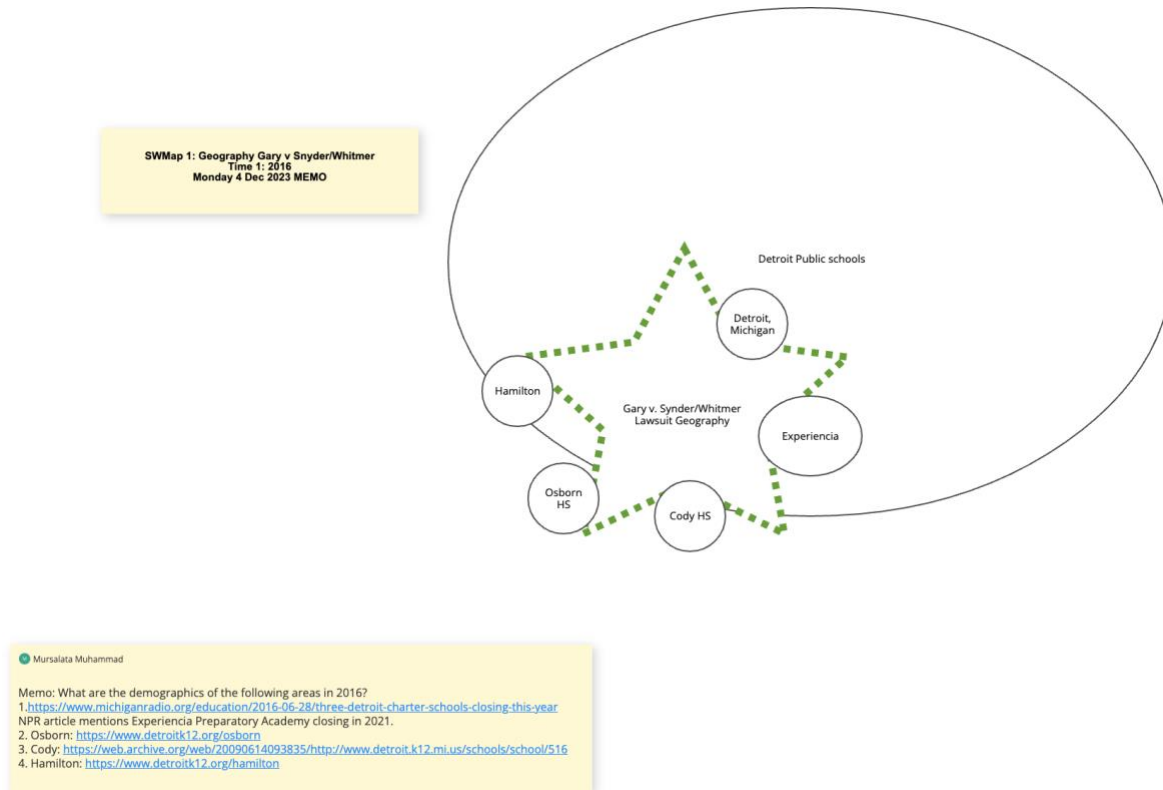


**Figure C.8***Visual Memo Map for Education Politics Broadly Conceived*

## APPENDIX D: SOCIAL WORLDS MAPS

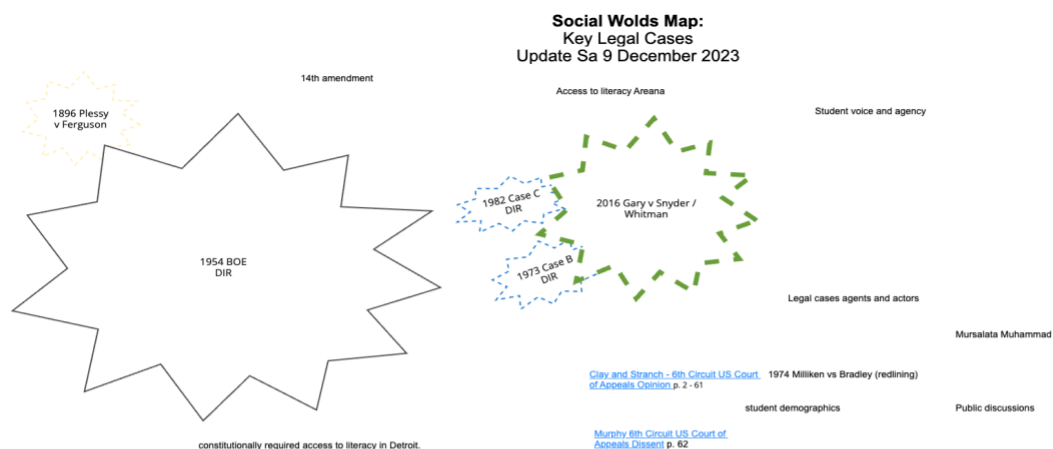
**Figure D.1**

*Social World Map and Memo for Geography for Gary B. v. Snyder/Whitmer*



**Figure D.2**

*Social World Map and Memo for Geography for Key Legal Cases, Updated December 9, 2023*



#### Memo Notes

Annotations Key: DI2 = decision, implementation, relationship to Case A

Case A = 2016 Gary B v Snyder / Whitmer

-- Michigan 6th court of Appeals decision supports constitutionally required access to literacy in Detroit. NPR:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/27/845595380/court-rules-detroit-students-have-constitutional-right-to-an-education#:~:text=School%20in%202017,-A%20lawsuit%20claims%20the%20state%20of%20Michigan%20failed%20to%20provide%20the%20ability%20to%20read.&text=in%20a%20landmark%20decision%2C%20a%20federal%20appeals%20court%20has%20ruled,a%20remarkable%20victory%20to%20students.>

Case B = 1973 San Antonio Independent School District v Rodriguez

Case C = 1982 Plyer v Doe

Sites of Silence or implicated actors:

-- Children

#### Questions

-- Who are the Legal cases agents and actors?

-- What are the results?

-- How the the results implemented?

-- What the implementation results?

-- If there are connections between the cases, what are they?

-- If there are connections between the implementation of each case's result what are they?

-- If there are connections between any results from how each case was implemented, what are they and what are the nature of those connections to the claim that access to literacy is an educational right children can expect to receive through compulsory public education delivered through alignment of local, state, and federal public school education policy and practice?

## Figure D.3

### *Social World Map and Memo for Geography for Key Legal Cases, October 14, 2023*

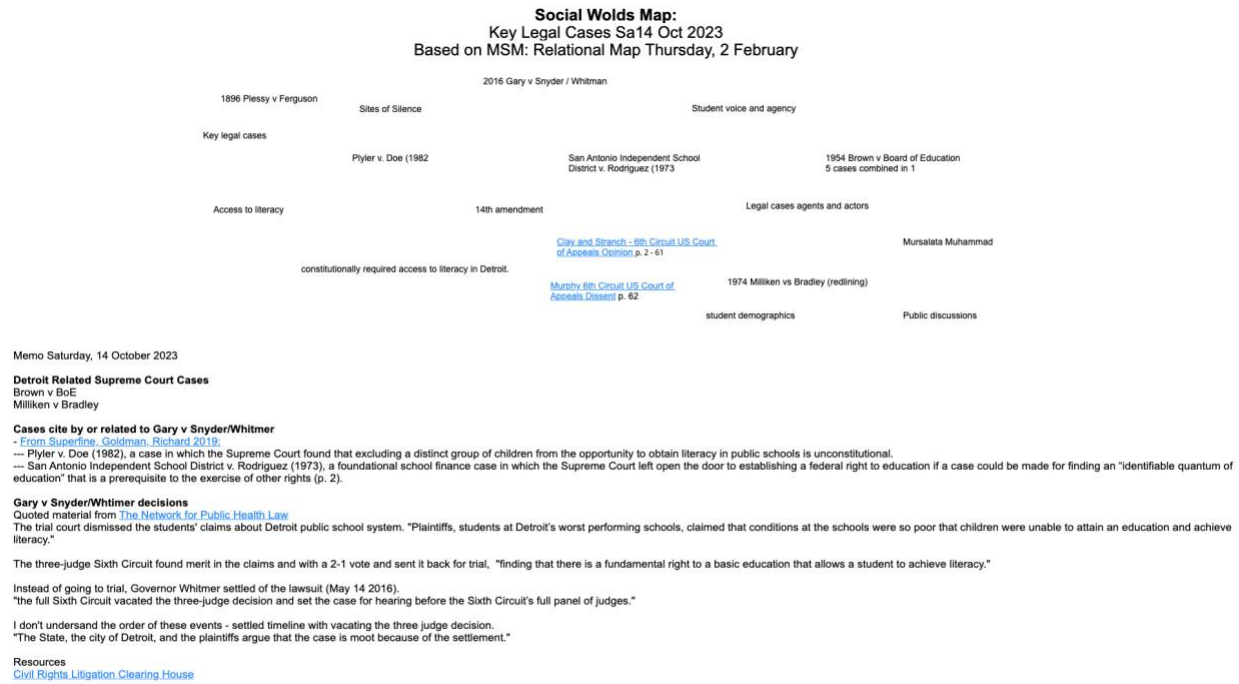
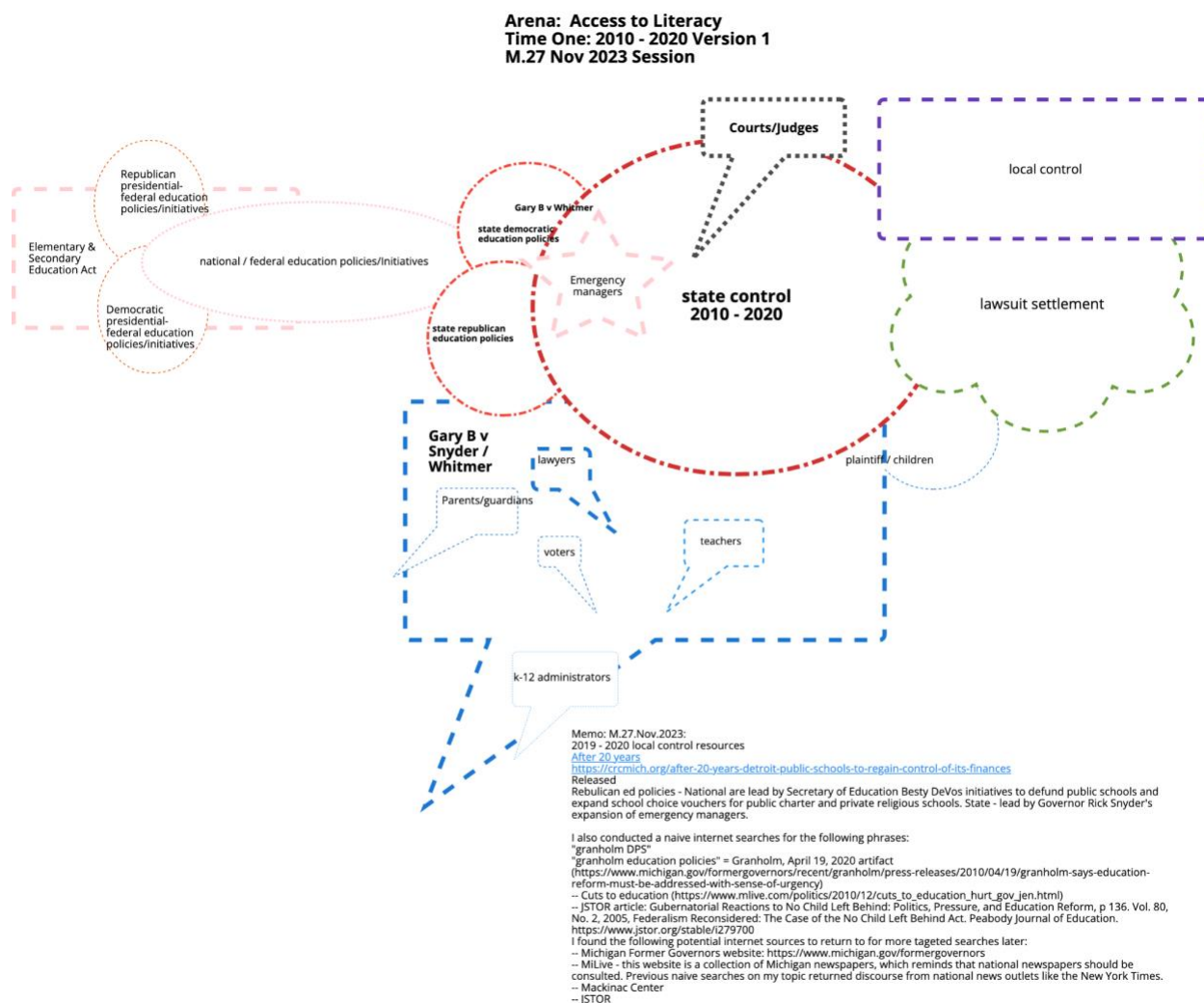




Figure D.4

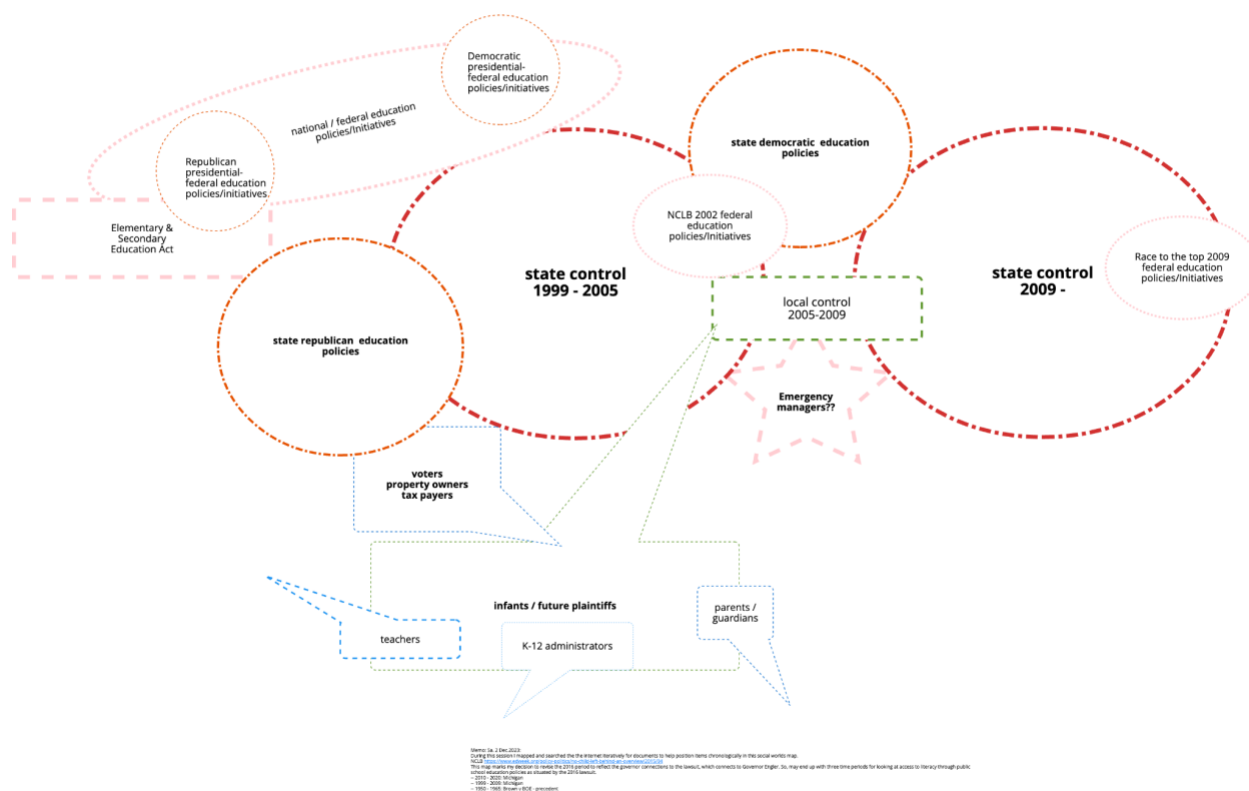
*Social World Map for Access to Literacy, Time 1, 2010–2020, November 27, 2023*



**Figure D.5**

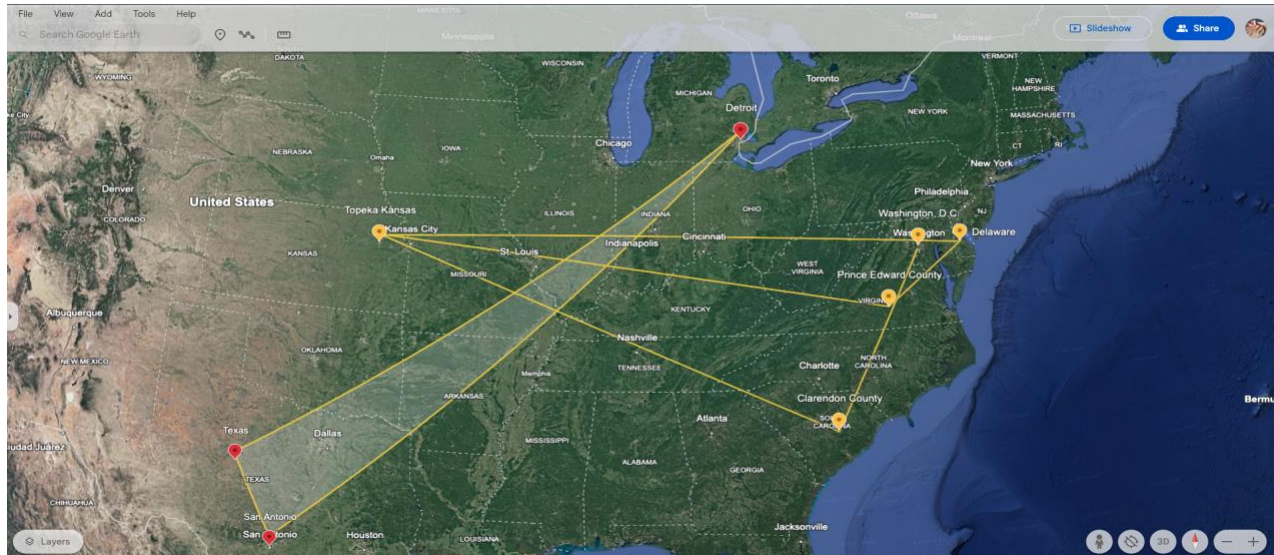
*Social World Map for Access to Literacy, Time 2, 1999–2009, December 2, 2023*

**Arena: Access to Literacy**  
**Time 2: 1999 - 2009 Version 1**  
**Sa. 2 Dec 2023 Session**



**Figure D.6**

*Google Earth Map Showing Locations of Key Legal Cases*



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