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Sonic Cartography: Mapping Space, Place, Race, and Identity in an Urban Middle School

Walter S. Gershon

This article began as an exploration of the ways in which sounds can be utilized to understand urban educational contexts. My interest in this intersection has manifest in a longitudinal interpretive study that examines how writing songs about academic content about science might help mitigate race and gender gaps in science for urban students in Northeast Ohio. This study was conceived in light of contradictions between national concerns about a general lack of science knowledge in the United States in schools (e.g., Dye, 2004; Holland, 2009) and far less frequent discussions of continuing racial gaps as and still under-reported gender gaps in science knowledge in P-12 education and science professions (e.g., Huang & Fraser, 2009; Prime & Miranda, 2006). I wondered if processes of music-making might serve as a curricular tool (on cultural tools and toolkits, see Swidler, 2001) to help students better understand and be more interested in science content. I was similarly interested in whether or not this curricular tool could serve as a lens for the meanings about science their songs contained and what might be learned about middle grades classrooms through its use (see Cockburn, 2000; Hudak, 1999). While this article focuses on the case of Ricky, a student in one of four classrooms, approximately 70 students from across these four contexts participated in this study over the course of the 2009-2010 academic year.

Although it is not possible to disentangle the content of one's talk from the way in which one speaks and/or again from the movements that accompany one's talk (for a particularly elegant discussion of this entanglement, see Erickson, 2004), I focus here on how sounds form local and less local geographies (cf. Brandt, Duffy & MacKinnon, 2009; Feld, 1996; Iseli, 2004; Leitner, 1998; Sterne, 2005). In the same ways that music in a car creates sound spaces that supersede the physical boundaries of the vehicle's interior (Bull, 2001) or headphones alter a person's migration through physical geographies (Thibaud, 2003), the distance voices carry enunciate the boundaries of learning places that can be within or beyond physical boundaries of classroom walls (Gershon, 2011a).

Sounds serve as a sociocultural means for the empirical and theoretical understanding of places, histories, and peoples (e.g., Bull & Back, 2004; Erlmann, 2004, 2010; Kim-Cohen, 2009; M. M. Smith, 2004; Sterne, 2003). Similarly, sounds can be the means, focus, and locus of qualitative research (Bauer, 2000; Drobnick, 2003; Erlmann, 2004; Feld & Brennis, 2004; Makagon & Neumann, 2009; Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, & Porcello, 2010). The viability of such sonic understandings and possibilities in studies of educational contexts has also been established (e.g., Aoki, 1991; Dimitriadis, 2009; Gershon, 2011b; McCarthy, Hudak, Miklaucic, & Saukko, 1999; Powell, in press; Stovall, 2006). In all cases, these are critical discussions of how sounds constitute spaces, places, and identities, a discussion that necessarily attends to questions of norms and normalizing, of sociocultural ideas and ideals.

Of equal importance are the ways in which the mapping of these sound fields¹ is a form of narrative cartography. As Dennis Wood (2010) presents and Katharine Harmon (2004, 2009) and Lex Bhagat and Lize Mogel (2008) document, maps do not necessarily have to be, nor from the point of critical geography are they ever (e.g., Harvey, 2002; Soja, 1989), objective sets of factual information—maps tell stories. Here, following in the footsteps of sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009), sound studies (Pinch & Bijsterveld, 2011; Sterne, 2012), and sonic ethnography (Gershon, 2012), these narratives are presented sonically, a possibility I am calling sonic cartography. While it is certainly possible to envision future versions in which sound maps are not accompanied by contextualizing text, my choice to do so here lies at the intersection of ethics and methodology because the textual information provides both transparency into process and contexts, important factors in allowing the reader/listener to more clearly delineate between local actors' lives and my interpretations of those lives.

Specifically, this article focuses on Ricky², a student I met working with Ms. Whaley's eighth grade science class during the 2009-2010 academic year. While listening over and over again to the larger data set, I kept returning to my conversations and work with Ricky. What was it about Ricky that caught my ear? Why did it continue to resonate (Erlmann, 2010; Gershon, in press b)? Perhaps most importantly, how could listening to Ricky help me better understand the relationship between curriculum, classrooms, and urban students?

As I listened to Ricky, other social actors talking about Ricky, and to the sounds of the classroom, what emerged were the fluid, porous, and nuanced boundaries of his identity. Reenunciating Bakhtin's borrowing of musicality to theorize language, these sounds, both talk and non-talk, were iterations of polyphonic heteroglossia in which they simultaneously enunciated both the place in which that talk occurred (the room where Ms. Whaley teaches) and as the school and home spaces that contextualized his classroom talk. Closely listening to both what Ricky said and the ways in which he talked, revealed how Ricky conceived of himself as well as the sonic variables and markers that scored his performance of self (e.g., Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Erickson, 2003, 2004; Goffman, 1959). It was hearing these differences in his speech patterns

that led me to consider the spaces in which Ricky lived and the places within those spaces, the contexts that informed his sonic identity (see also Helfenbein, 2009; Low, 2011; Nesor, 1997; Soja, 1989). This sonic cartography therefore not only maps narratives of Ricky's identity but also charts a curriculum of race that permeated the permeable membranes between community and school, school and classroom, and classroom and students—between spaces, places, and identities.

Thus, this piece can be understood as triply sounded. It is (1) a case drawn from an ethnography focused on sounds that (2) uses sounds methodologically in order to (3) critically attend to nested layers of a students' sonic identity. As such, this article lies at the intersection of sonic ethnography (Gershon, in press a; Gershon & The Listening to the Sounds of Science Project, 2012), curriculum studies (e.g., Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; Malewski, 2009), and critical geography in education (Helfenbein, 2004, 2009).

This article is therefore significant in at least the following three ways. First, it demonstrates the possibilities for sonic mapping of educational spaces, places, and identities. Second, it illustrates the potential at the intersection of the sensual and the critical, the aesthetic and the political, between sound and race. Finally, it is a mapping of urban students and race that tends to be overlooked, the in-between identity of an Anglo kid in a primarily African-American middle school that locates him firmly in the racial tensions of the ecologies of his daily life.

In light of scholarship at the intersection of educational contexts, sound, and the sensual (e.g., Erickson, 1982, 2003; Gershon, 2006, 2011b; Powell, 2006, 2012), this article takes for granted the following assumptions about sound: (a) sounds can be utilized to examine educational contexts; (b) sounds can form educational systems of meaning; (c) sounds can denote and connote spaces, places, and identities; and (d) that such scholarship focused on sounds can be understood as part of a now longstanding tradition of interpretive research in and out of education (cf. Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa & Porcello, 2010; Sterne, 2012).

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. I first outline the differences between curriculum mapping and mapping curriculum, a section that also outlines the relationships between curriculum studies, interpretive studies of education, and critical geography. This section is followed by a section that provides both the methodology used in this study and contextual information about the spaces and places that inform Ricky's identity. The third section below provides both the sound contexts for the piece of sonic cartography as well as the sound map itself. In the fourth section, I analyze the sound map from the perspectives of curriculum studies, interpretive studies of education, and critical geography. A final brief concluding section presents possible implications and next steps.

From Curriculum Mapping to Mapping Curriculum: Cartographies of Curriculum Studies, Critical Geography, and Interpretive Studies of Education

As its name suggests, curriculum mapping is the terminology used to describe the processes through which teachers, administrators, and districts plot the formal curriculum over the course of an academic year (e.g., Glass, 2007). The formal curriculum is the texts, assessments, homework, and other such components that comprise daily classroom lessons, lessons that are in turn organized into increasing units of intentionally organized knowledge.

This article, however, offers a mapping of curriculum as it conceptualized in the field of curriculum studies (e.g., Baker, 2010; Malewski, 2009; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Therefore, rather than turning to the sequentially predetermined process of curriculum mapping, this sonic mapping is derived from recent arguments for the possibilities of critical geography within the field of curriculum studies.

Scholars such as Casemore (2007), Ellsworth (2005), Kincheloe and Pinar (1991), Ng-A-Fook (2007), Wang (2004), and Whitlock (2007), speak eloquently and critically about the intersections of space, place, and identity. While there is indeed much overlap between these discussions and the ideas presented in this article, my understandings of these terms lies at the intersection of critical geography (Helfenbein, 2004, 2006, 2009; Helfenbein & Taylor, 2009), interpretive research in education (Anderson, 2009; Nespor, 1997; Sobel, 1998), and curriculum studies (Baker, 2010; Malewski, 2009; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995).

Curriculum studies can be conceptualized as the study of ways of knowing and being, education as it occurs both in and out of formal, institutional contexts such as schools and classrooms (Kridel, 2010). What critical geography and interpretive studies of education share is their orientation towards the study of (a) the various intersections between the contexts that surround social actors and (b) the ways in which social actors work in conjunction, from micro to macro-interactions, to construct the sociocultural norms and values according which they conduct their daily lives. Critical geographies and interpretive studies of educational contexts can therefore be understood to be examinations of the enacted curriculum—the ways in which local actors in educational contexts negotiate meaning, the local understandings that emerge through such interactions, and the sociocultural contexts are revealed through local actors' face-to-face interactions (Page, 1991; Spindler & Hammond, 2006).

What for critical geographers tend to be questions of scale (Helfenbein, 2004, 2009) are most often questions of culture for interpretive researchers in education (Erickson, 1986, 2004; Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996; Varenne & McDermott, 1998). These two fields share the following understandings. First is an understanding that relationships between micro and macro interactions can be conceptualized as concentric circles from the local to the global and back again. These layers and meanings are nested and emergent (Agar, 2004; Gershon, 2008) and their boundaries

are both fluid and porous. These layers can be understood as, “(1) spaces that speak; (2) spaces that leak; and (3) spaces of possibility” (Helfenbein, 2009, p. 305).

Second are the ways in which emergent meanings at each layer are constantly in flux. What occurs on one layer of context does not necessarily influence another layer and both contextualizing and contextualized ecologies can and do inform one another (for an excellent non-educational illustration of such phenomenon, see Tsing, 1993, 2005). Last but not least is a focus on questions about the relationships between social actors and power. Different social actors have both varying degrees of ability to negotiate the contexts that inform their local interactions as well as an equally broad range of degrees to which social actors are constrained. Long-standing discussions of difference as deficit in educational contexts are but one example of this phenomenon (e.g., Rist, 1970; Valencia, 1997; Valenzuela, 2005).

Therefore, with an understanding that each layer of the following map is fluid and that the boundaries between them are porous, I offer the following conceptual maps. The first is a cartography—space, place, and identity derived from discussions of critical geography (see Figure 1). With a reminder that each might be found in the other, space is the broader category that delineates this from that place is a location within a particular space, and an identity is comprised of and constituted by places and spaces (see Figure 1).

Figure 1:
Critical Geography: Space, Place, & Identity

Furthermore, although there is certainly room for multiple definitions for identity in future iterations of sonic cartography, my use of the term identity in this paper is closest to McDermott's reminder that identity is relational (McDermott, 2004; Varenne & McDermott, 1998; McDermott & Varenne, 2006). Therefore, the question here is not whether or not a single social actor embodies either plural identities or that multiple relations and facets combine into a singular identity. Rather, I focus on questions of whom Ricky identifies with. From this perspective, the identity of social actors is located in the ways in which they negotiate meaning with others, whether another person is present or not, and regardless of the degree to which that relationship is explicit or implicit in a social actor's interactions with others.

Although discussions of space, place, and context are again rising to the fore of discussions in anthropology (cf. Coleman & Collins, 2006; Low, 2011), talk about authority, agency, place, and identity have deep roots in interpretive studies of education (e.g., Heath, 1983; Metz, 1978; Spindler, 1982). In light of this alignment, the relationship between students and schools can be mapped in the following manner (see Figure 2). As the shade of each layer suggests, this conceptualization of nested layers of school, classroom, student can also be understood as nested layers of space, place, and identity.

However, given the complexities of scale, that each level or layer impacts

Figure 2:

The Spatial/Contextual Relationship between School and Student

yet is independent from another, and in light of discussions of the complexities of contexts in interpretive studies of education, this third iteration is closer to the kinds of nuanced, complicated cartography that these two fields suggest (see Figure 3). Here the duo-directional arrow represents sociocultural norms and values that simultaneously inform each layer yet are as mutable and independent as much as they are influential and constant. To illustrate the complicated ways in which contexts/space/place/identity mutually constitute one another and the difficulty of naming fluid spaces, the home/school layer is labeled in as space/place—home and school are specific places within the communities and district in which they reside yet are also the spaces in which classrooms are placed.

As but two examples, although neither scholar specifically maps their work in this fashion, both Nespor's (1997) mapping of the relationships between students

Figure 3:
Complex Map of Space, Place & Identity

and the communities in which they live and Varenne and McDermott's (1998) braided rope of contexts that impact students' daily lives in many ways resonate with the cartography of Figure 3. Again, it is of utmost importance to note that the purpose here is not simply the mapping of terrain but an effort to make sense through the sonic of what such spaces, places, and identities can mean to the local actors whose lives constitute those ecologies.

The sound map below is a critical cartography in that it necessarily attends to questions of power and its impact on social actors and is a narrative mapping of stories, places, and identities. From my perspective, it is also a sensual cartography, seeking to better conceptualize how people make sense of their world, an understanding that is predicated on and often realized through the sensorium. To be clear, this is a critical aesthetics, an understanding that the aesthetic must necessarily examine the political. It is an understanding that the aesthetic is inseparable from either questions of power and their impact on individuals' perceptions or from the sociocultural norms and values that create the spaces where such perceptions make sense (see Gershon, 2011a; Panagia, 2009; Roleofs, 2009; Young & Braziel, 2007).

Sound Spaces, Methodology, and Context

Helfenbein's (2009) chapter "Thinking Through Scale: Critical Geography and Curriculum Spaces" and Pinar's (2009) response to this chapter are firmly located in sound. Their conversation parallels discussions in sound studies that argue that sounds can and do delineate space, place, identity, and power, such as social and financial capital (e.g., Back, 2007; Erlmann, 2004, 2010; Feld, 1982, 1996, 2000; LaBelle, 2010; Weheliye, 2005). Along similar lines, it has also been suggested that thinking otologically (Erlmann, 2010) can help interrupt ocular metaphors that often lie at the heart of Western conceptualizations of knowledge (Aoki, 1991; Gershon, 2011b; Kim-Cohen, 2009), a helpful tool when trying to find the strange in familiar places like classrooms. My task here is to take such suggestions of the possibilities for the sonic in understanding educational contexts in a somewhat literalist practical manner—to map a student in relation to the spaces and places that inform his identity.

Methodology and Context

Sonic ethnography is the answer I have proposed in response to increasing calls for what Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa and Porcello (2010) call "a sounded anthropology." As its name implies, this methodology follows the tenets of contemporary ethnography (e.g., Agar, 1996; Atkinson et al., 2007; Faubian & Marcus, 2009) with an attention to the sensual (e.g., Howes, 2003; Stoller, 1997) in general and to sound in specific (e.g., Feld, 1982, 1996; Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, & Porcello, 2010). For example, rather than represent findings in a purely textual manner, the sonic data collected over the past academic year (2010-2011) has been turned into a sound installation that will be exhibited in the spring of 2012 at the Akron

Art Museum. Here, I use both shorter pieces of sonic data and curricular map of sound—a sonic representation of Ricky’s identity and the spaces and places that inform his location (see Figure 4).

In this case, I have spent the past three years with seventh and eighth grade students and their teacher Ms. Whaley at an urban middle school in northeast Ohio. A mid-sized school for the district (~1000 students), the student population is majority African American (~85%) who are most often from poor to working class families. Most students live in the community surrounding the school, a building that, while it remains in generally good shape, is one of the older buildings in the district.

This article focuses on the case of Ricky, his eighth grade classmates, and their teacher Ms. Whaley, over the course of the 2009-2010 academic year. Although Ricky was an eighth grader, he had already turned 15 years old, an age when many students are freshman and sophomores in high school. Although I never received a complete understanding of the reasons for his age difference due in no small part to questions of confidentiality, the picture I received from Ms. Whaley and Ricky was a combination of starting school a bit later than his peers and being held back a year in elementary school. Ricky is Anglo, from all his interactions and discussions (inasmuch as such public displays can be read as they appear in issues of sexuality people of any age) is straight, and Christian. He was one of three non-African-American or bi-racial students and one of two Anglos in his class of 23 students. According to Mrs. Whaley and supported through data collection and analysis in this study, race was not a factor in Ricky’s friendships, a point to which I will return shortly. As will be made similarly clear below, Ricky’s academic career was in something of a backslide after his seventh grade year.

In the fall of 2009, Ms. Whaley had taught science for 18 years, the first half of her career in high school and the latter at the middle school where she currently teaches. She is bi-racial, grew up in the city in which she still resides and teaches, and sees herself as providing the space for students to “just be kids” while “getting encouragement to do better,” or, as she informed me one afternoon, “I want to give these kids a place where they can be successful without all that pressure and yelling that I so often see.”

Although her room can be chaotic at times, students tend to respect Ms. Whaley and, in my experience in her room over the course of this study, her tolerance for students acting out does indeed provide them with a space to release tension and focus on their work, like an escape valve with an eye on science content. Similarly, when students go beyond acceptable levels of interaction, she is quickly on the phone not to the office but to their homes, talking and working with parents in helping students, something that parents I met who came to the room to observe their children shared that they and other parents deeply appreciated—a true home-school connection. Similarly, it was not unusual to see Ms. Whaley pull a student aside as they walk down the hall to offer a quick word of encouragement or a reminder about an important event.

Ms. Whaley became involved in this study at her own request after she participated in a workshop on the possibilities of writing songs as a curricular tool for science that I gave at the request of the district's curriculum specialist in science. While I was most interested in the possibilities for songwriting to encourage students of color and girl's interest in science content, this project has grown to become what participating teachers and I have come to think of as listening to the sounds of science, the academic and social content of teaching and studenting in their respective rooms.

In this project, teachers were not directed in how they wanted to use songwriting in their classes nor was my role one of academic advisor about science content; I was more observer than participant on both counts. Similarly, the purpose of this study was the possibility of the integration of songwriting into teacher's daily lessons, an opportunity for students to consider the science content they were learning through sound and song. Other than this addition to her classroom, Ms. Whaley's seventh and eighth grade science classrooms functioned in rather typical fashion. Students learned primarily through a combination of texts and worksheets, coupled with experiments as they fit the district's pacing plan. Ms. Whaley similarly used a combination of lectures and small group work to deliver the mandated curriculum to her students. Additionally, although Ms. Whaley had a strong social agenda in terms of race in her classrooms, as can be heard in the sonic cartography below (see Figure 4), this was enacted in the ways in which she taught and the social lines in classroom management—questions of equity and access formed a foundation for her teaching but were not often explicitly tied to the science content she taught.

As noted in the introduction, this was a rather collaborative research project in which I asked students not only to write songs about the science content they were using but also to record audio reflections of their processes. Although this was the process I had in mind, unlike students in the other three participating classrooms (grades 1, 5 and another 8th grade room), Ricky and his classmates rarely added lyrics to the "beats" they made and audio reflections were even less frequent. While not the focus of my discussion here, I include this information as context for understanding Ricky and his relationship to both me and the songs about science he worked on. Unlike his peers and how he approached his work in other classes, something about writing songs about science interested Ricky enough to not only have him return to class during lunch and on other occasions, but also enough to serve as a bridge for Ricky to open up to me about his life in and out of school over the course of the academic year.

In addition to this collaborative portion of this study, I also conducted research in a rather typically interpretive manner. For example, over the course of the academic year, I regularly attended Ms. Whaley's classroom (approximately once every two to three weeks), took fieldnotes while I was in the room, collected documents such as class assignments and assessments, and audio (and occasionally video) recorded both students working on their songs, interviews (Spradley, 1979),

and classroom interactions in general. I also served as a kind of technical advisor for the software students utilized when they took the time to create their beats, a role that diminished as students quickly grasped the program and began to help one another. This combination of audio recordings of students working, occasional audio reflections, recorded interviews, and students' beats created a wealth of audio data both in Ms. Whaley's room and throughout all contexts in this project.

Finally, before continuing it is important to note that the ability to hear an audio recording of a context does not in and of itself constitute a deeper level of verisimilitude (see Gershon, 2011b). While it can be understood to remove yet another layer of translation from the sonic to the ocular/textual, sound is easily manipulated and any recording should not be confused with the live event. Recordings are particular not only to the equipment used to create the audio record but also to the perspective of the person doing the recording. In keeping with the still burgeoning tenets of sonic ethnography and aligned with contemporary ethnographic practices, I have endeavored to be as transparent as possible with both the sounds utilized and in contextualizing those sounds.

Sound Contexts

The conversation began not unlike many other instances of recorded talk in this project. Once in the classroom, I moved to the back of the room where the computers were situated and turned on the audio recorder. It was a movie day, the day before spring break in April of 2010.

Ms. Whaley & Tapping

The loud wooden knocking is exactly what it sounds like, Marcus³ was using his knuckles to tap out a rhythm as students often did when the mood hit, sometimes absentmindedly and other times more intentionally. My sitting in the rear of the classroom where Ricky worked transitioned into a conversation with him about how his songwriting was progressing and his thoughts about the work he was doing. Here is how Ricky described his process in working with Adam and the challenges that they were currently facing in trying to fit the lyrics to the music they had created.

Ricky Talks about Lyrics

This was followed by moments of me offering advice on how Ricky might better adjust their track to fit the lyrics and in turn lead to a discussion of how often he and Adam worked on their songs (they were coming in during and lunch to work on their songs), and other such talk about their music making. At this time, Ricky was trying to fit lyrics he and Adam wrote about plate tectonics.

In order to provide a better sense of my relationship with Ricky and the ways in which Ricky both understood and sought to manipulate school rules and procedures, I offer the following two excerpted pieces of sonic data from my conversations

with Ricky. In the first Ricky explains how he was able to continue working in Ms. Whaley's classroom rather than attend his regularly scheduled English class. The latter is from an interview after a member check of the piece of sound art/sonic ethnography below in which I pressed Ricky about his most recent retelling of a particular set of events.

Ricky's "Suspension"

Ricky on the Truthfulness of His Talk

As can be heard in these sound files, Ricky is not only clear about school rules, he is also equally clear about how to negotiate them in order to suit his needs and whims. It is similarly evident that Ricky is a person who is in trouble enough that the idea that he received an in-school suspension was not greeted with suspicion from either Ms. Whaley or me. Additionally, as can be heard below, Ricky has also enjoyed manipulating or resisting working with me in my capacities as researcher and technical assistant for the music software in the room.

However, it was the following moment that struck me, both when I heard it the first time and in listening back to the conversation later. In the course of a conversation about his home life, Ricky said:

Alternate the Weekends

I remember thinking to myself, "alternate the weekends?" It seemed as though Ricky was changing his linguistic footing, the way conversations are framed and the modes of conversations as determined by both conversants and sociocultural norms and values (Goffman, 1974). It also appeared that if he was not fully switching dialects from a version of African American Vernacular (AAV) towards a more "standard" form of English, changes in prosody and word choice were markedly different enough that Ricky was code switching⁴ (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Gal, 1988; Nilep, 2006). However, code switching generally entails either both conversational partners moving to a different language, dialect, or manner of speaking (from Spanish to English) or when one conversant switches conversational partners (a student talking to a peer then a teacher). In this instance, Ricky neither switched conversational partners nor did I alter the way in which I was talking. What, I wondered, was Ricky signaling through this change in talk?

It was this rich point (Agar, 1996) that served as the starting point for the sonic mapping of Ricky's identity. In the process of mapping Ricky's identity, another map emerged, superimposed on Ricky's—the racialized ecologies that were his community, district, home, school, and science classroom. Additionally, this sonic cartography is an understanding of space and identity that is grounded in a specific place. Because all recordings are of the classroom in which Ms. Whaley teaches, these sounds and this accompanying text is as much an iteration of the place that is this classroom over the course of an academic year as it is about the nested layers of

community, school, district, and identity that emerge in conversations that occurred in this room. Had these recordings occurred elsewhere, the resulting map, although perhaps similar in its layers, would have been different in its specific contours. In this way, this piece demonstrates the ways in which spaces and identities can exist in specific places, places can reveal particular spaces, and both spaces and places strongly inform particular identities.

Sonic Cartography: Ricky, Classroom Places, School, and Home Spaces

This is a sonic cartography of Ricky's identity, how he sees himself in relation to others and how others see Ricky. These follow Ricky's construction of his identity in relation to his life at home and school. In the center are Ricky's discussions of home, school, and differences between home and school. To the school side is Ricky's talk about being suspended and the song he was working on. To the home side are comments about how he alternates the weekend at his cousin's house and a snippet of talk from the classroom in which Ricky talks about how he would fight for his cousin.

Contextualizing Ricky's talk about himself are the sounds of how others spoke of and with Ricky. Above Ricky's talk about himself is Jared's talk about Ricky, Ricky's interjections into Jared's talk, and Jared's talk about home. Below is Ms. Whaley's talk about Ricky, talk that is further contextualized by Ms. Whaley's comments about her teaching and the neighborhood in which Ricky lives.

In order to illustrate that Ms. Whaley is not alone in her thoughts about the raced, if not racist, nature of the community spaces and school places she inhabits, I have included excerpts from a longer interview I had with a non-arts teacher at the district's middle grades arts magnet about her experiences at the school's founding. This appears in the sound map (see Figure 4) as the sonic data titled, "Power struggle @ arts school." While there is much to discuss in this narrative of the school's founding in terms of race, that popular culture is black culture and black culture is not valued is but represents one of many examples, the point I seek to clarify here is that Ms. Whaley's talk about schools and communities as race are commonly held understandings throughout the district. Similarly, it is not only teachers of color like Ms. Whaley who are aware of such tensions in the district. As her talk documents, Anglo teachers such as the teacher at the arts magnet also experience these community tensions in local educational spaces and places, their schools and classrooms. Students also feel these tensions as can be heard in the piece of sonic data (That's Racist) in which a student of color in Ms. Whaley's room tells another student not to be racist. I offer this piece in order to further demonstrate the ways in which race and racial tensions were an everyday part of classrooms in Ricky's school, even classrooms like Ms. Whaley's where the teacher actively sought to allay and address such issues.

Finally, the outermost layer is comprised of Ricky's talk about his work with

Figure 4:*Sonic Cartography: Mapping Identity, Place, and Space*Ricky on truthfulness with Gershon

me as both a reminder of the interpretive nature of this map and the complex nature of our relationship. What Ricky heard in the member check provided at the bottom of the map was not this map but a more linear version of these sounds assembled for a sound installation for a one-day gallery event on my campus. Only the teacher from the art school's talk was not included in the sound installation Ricky heard. Although meanings do indeed change according to their physical organization, a point that critical geography makes quite clear, my intention in including this piece of sonic data is to indicate that Ricky had an opportunity to disagree with or retract any of the sonic data included in the map below. That he elected not to do so speaks to his continued agreement with his recorded talk and with Ms. Whaley and Jared's ideas about Ricky's home and school lives.

A key question remains: how might this map be interpreted? Is it a map of Ricky's identity in relation to others or of Ms. Whaley's classroom? Is it a map of curriculum or of the sociocultural norms and values that combine to inform Ricky's relational identity? The answer I propose to these questions is "yes," an answer that I detail in the following section of analysis.

Analysis: Listening to Ricky's Map

This section considers the emergent sonic cartography from the three perspectives that undergird this article, curriculum studies, interpretive studies of education, and critical geography. Although there are certainly other ways to hear this map and to arrange these pieces of sonic data, they are in some ways still tethered to the ocular. As noted above, future iterations of this process could well have sound files that are not hyperlinked, a choice I made here largely due to the relative newness of this approach.

Listening to Curriculum

One of the difficulties in curriculum studies is the ability to make the hidden curriculum explicit, to make apparent the often-implicit and unintended ideas and ideals that students acquire through schooling. Mapping the sounds of Ricky and other's talk in a way that also allows the classroom space to speak provides an opportunity for the listener to be more experientially immersed in the sounds of the classroom. In this case, the reverberations of race echo throughout Ricky's life. For example, racial tensions in his home and school communities are something Ricky feels strongly enough to state that they are one of the central causes for his fighting. Similarly, Ricky's daily life is racialized to a point where he does not object to or otherwise reject Ms. Whaley's characterizations of his life at home as "a regular ol' white boy" or her reasoning that his parents' displeasure at finding that Ricky has many black friends as a reason why he chooses to keep his home and school lives separate.

Consider Jared and Ricky's relationship for example. Although Ricky and Jared were quite close the year before, I never heard either boy speak about the

time spent at each other's houses—it was always each youth telling stories about home to the other. Similarly, Ricky and Jared's friendship grew apart not because they had a falling out but because they had less time together at school. While the ebb and flow of school friendships often follows a pattern of the classes students attend, students I have taught and other students I worked with at Ricky's school maintained their friendships over multiple years and summers by hanging out after school. However, middle school students don't drive, so parents are often be involved in their friendships outside of school in ways that they are not involved in the lives of older high school students—another indicator of how Ricky kept his home and school lives separate and the ways in which race played a factor in his life.

Additionally, there is Ricky's conversation with Jared about how Jared helped Ricky stay out of trouble. Part of the difference can be attributed to the ways in which each of their fathers parent and expectations for grades at home, as can be heard in Ricky's "wow" after Jared explains that he gets in trouble for getting a B. Yet, it would seem that another part of Ricky's difficulties might lie in his in-between status, an Anglo boy who interacts quite differently at home than the distinctly socioculturally Anglo life he leads at home. In his comments to Jared and Jared's comments in return, it sounds quite a lot like Ricky cannot readily tell the difference between a peer giving him a hard time in a fairly typical African-American manner and someone disrespecting him. For example, where Ricky states that anyone "talking smack is gonna get hit," Jared says that "if they talking junk, they just talkin...but I'm not gonna let anyone disrespect me." It therefore may well be the case that part of the way in which Jared kept Ricky out of trouble was by delineating talking junk from disrespect. When placed along side the rest of the sounds in this sonic map, it is clear that Ricky's relationship to race is a central aspect of his identity, both as an Anglo kid who readily goes against the norm and hangs out with African American peers and in his relationship to home and school.

A curriculum of violence also pervades Ricky's life. His fighting reveals not only racial tensions in classroom, school, and home communities but also an acceptance of violence by the youth in those communities. Ms. Whaley, Jared, Ricky, and all the other kids at their school thought fighting should be avoided but was nonetheless inevitable. Not simply a boys-will-be-boys kind of attitude, but more a resignation to the fact that kids will fight, often and hard. Ricky's suspensions for fighting were a source of pride for him and gained him respect in his school, so much so that he was eventually suspended for the end of the school year for fighting. What makes this story slightly different is that it inverts a general narrative about race, violence and schools in which African-American students are marginalized and get into fights due at least in part to their racial identities. Here it is Ricky, an Anglo boy in a school that has a majority African-American population, who is othered and violent due at least in part to race.

Along similar lines, Ricky does not object to the idea that Ms. Whaley thinks that at home he "catches hell" and often talked about how strict the men in his

family were. This can also be seen in his talk about his uncle, of how Ricky would rather get in trouble with his uncle because the worst thing he's [uncle] going to do is yell at you a bit. In this way, the violence in Ricky's life is a curriculum, a way of knowing and being that connects his home and school life. It is a constant in both contexts and, perhaps, even one of the ways in which he negotiates the tensions to each of these central places in his life.

Finally, there is the constant presence of the formal curriculum, of science content. While it is not always explicit in Ricky and other's talk, the sounds that form the backdrop for their conversations are the sonic ebb and flow of Ms. Whaley's science classroom. Additionally, as I address below, Ricky claims that science is his favorite subject, content that he not only finds interesting but also ideas that he connects to learning with his father. In short, just as this is sonic cartography of the place that is the classroom where Ms. Whaley teaches, it is also a sound mapping of science curriculum, formal, hidden, and otherwise.

Interpreting Educational Sounds

Although there are many possible avenues for considering this piece of sonic cartography through the lens of interpretive research in education, I focus here on Ricky's identity in relation to home and school. To begin, the case of Ricky complicates commonly held understandings about the nature of differences as deficits, particularly as it relates to questions of differences between home and school communities. When differences between home and school are cast as deficits, it is most often then the case that the student is a non-mainstream person (person of color, queer, speaks a language other than English in her home/community) whose differences in her life at home are recast as deficits in her role as student, etc., at school (e.g., Heath, 1983; Valenzuela, 2005). While this is the case for Ricky, the contexts are reversed. Here, an Anglo male student's differences at home are a deficit in his majority African American school, both socially and academically.

Socially, as noted in the previous section, Ricky is located between Anglo and African American students. Yet he does not fit in with either group completely. As an Anglo kid with African American friends, he is occasionally ostracized as in the case of Ms. Whaley's story about a girl he was interested in at the beginning of the year—a teasing, often from Anglo girls, I also witnessed in my time with Ricky. Similarly, he does not seem to fully understand the differences between playful jawing and disrespect on one hand and occasionally has to fight to prove his toughness to African American boys on the other.

Academically, Ricky's studenting is much closer to his African American than his Anglo peers. Even in Ms. Whaley's class—a place where a bi-racial teacher who tends to think of herself as black is explicitly aware of how differences can become deficits and works hard to help ensure that such practices are not enacted in her classroom—Ms. Whaley talks about Ricky “peacocking around” like his African-American peers “when he wants something.”

Ricky's discussion of how he is often in trouble for things he did not do and of his teachers' (not Ms. Whaley's) often strong reactions to minor infractions are in many ways parallel to discussions of how non-mainstream students are treated in school (cf. Foley, 2010). To be clear, Ricky's behavior would be interrupting regardless of his race and it is not unusual for African-American students to be in trouble at a school that has a majority African-American student population. However, it was not unusual for me to hear other teachers in the halls, Anglo and African American alike, talk about the "trouble teaching these kids, from this neighborhood." In this way, interacting in class in ways that were more similar to his more outspoken African-American peers, rather than his Black friends like Jared, also negatively impacted his academic role as student.

Next, this piece demonstrates the complicated nature of the relationship between the ways in which social actors' lives are simultaneously constrained yet not determined by their contexts (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009; MacLoed, 1995; Page, 1991). Ricky could be understood as another generation of fighters like his uncle and father before him or as a person who makes poor social choices in school. Yet, as he says, Ricky is a person who is trying to make good on his family name, wants to do well in science, and wants to be taken seriously as a person who thinks rather than a person who should be told the same idea day in and day out. He wants to but ultimately does not.

In a very visceral fashion, I witnessed Ricky almost be given a safe space, to return to work with Ms. Whaley and me for the 2010-2011 academic year, only to have Ricky lose that opportunity in being suspended the last ten days of school for fighting. Not unlike Willis' (1977) lads, Ricky's decision to fight created a context where he is more likely to repeat his father and uncle's patterns in school, smart but seen as a delinquent due to his choices to fight frequently.

Finally, similar to comments about sound curriculum above, mapping sounds helps render these complex and often difficult to examine concepts more readily available. Listening to ideas and ideals from the actors provides an embodied means for conceptualizing their lives that is often missed in text. As the sounds enter the listener's body the listener can hear for those ideas for herself, the subtlety of phrasing and tone, the ebb and flow of classroom sounds.

A Critical Geography of Ricky

This map, as Helfenbein (2009) notes, is a question of scale and leaky, speaking spaces. It is at once a cartography of Ricky's identity according to Ricky and others who know him, a resonance of a specific place, the classroom in which Ms. Whaley teaches science, and a map of racial tensions in the school and home spaces that inform that classroom place. It can indeed be heard as the sound field that is Ms. Whaley's classroom, as all the sounds were recorded in her room. This sonic map also brings to the fore the complicated nature of scale, that although one layer can and does inform the next, these successive layers are neither determinate nor

determining—social actors interact in accordance with and against the norms and values of contextualizing layers of meaning.

Similarly, this sonic cartography points to the porous nature of spaces, places, and identities. Ricky's talk about home is in relation to his talk about school and his talk about science and school is related to his thoughts about his father and home. Yet he strives to keep his home and school separate so that his family cannot see the person he is at school, academically and socially. Space in places, places in spaces, and identity in relation to both space and place.

Furthermore, this map also points to the complexly interwoven nature of scholarship in the spaces that are curriculum studies, interpretive research in education, and critical geography as applied to educational contexts. It is a messy narrative cartography in which each has their own history, tenets, and perspectives, the spaces between them overlap in such a way that there can be curriculum places in interpretive spaces and critical cartographies of interpreted places.

Conclusion

As I have documented, sounds help us understand ourselves and our relations to others as well as our relationships to local and less local ecologies. Mapping sound fields, the sounds of specific places and spaces, can not only make often-implicit ideas and ideals explicit but can also create a means through which relationships between various layers of space, place, and identity can be critically examined. This is also a move from curriculum mapping to mapping curriculum. As such it can be understood as a movement from prescribing what students and teachers in educational contexts will consider and the ways in which those possibilities will be approached to the cartography of the explicit and implicit meanings that emerge through local actors' sounds, in this case through their talk.

Additionally, this sonic cartography is an example of the practical possibilities of a critical aesthetics, an understanding that lines of power and sociocultural precepts are inseparable from questions of perception and the sensual (cf. DuBois, 1926; Gershon, 2011c; Panagia, 2009; Roelofs, 2009; Young & Braziel, 2007). It is a reminder that identity is indeed relational, based on a combination of personal predilections, available choices, and the sociocultural contexts that inform social actors' daily interactions.

However, this sonic cartography is also limited in its focus on talk. Although it does open the door for the broader sonic mapping of sound ecologies—what would a sound map conducted by students parallel to the kinds of maps that Nespor (1997) utilizes look like and reveal for example—it also is missing its focus on how educational sounds shape local interactions. For example, what is the role and impact of the movie that plays in the background during part of my talk with Ricky? Can such sounds be rendered sonically and analyzed? If so, how might such an analysis look and function beyond previous transcriptions of educational contexts (Erickson, 1982, 2003; Gershon, 2006)?

Additionally, in part due to the nature of the ways in which scholarly focus falsely parses one set of possibilities from another and in part due to the available space provided here, there are important aspects of Ricky's identity that were not presented. For example, relationships between gender and violence, or sexuality and performance of self were largely overlooked. What might a sonic cartography of a first generation Latina sound like in a particular context? How might it sound different if she was a member of the LGBTQ community?

Nonetheless, sonic cartography also raises questions for other sensual mapping. What would a cartography of smell look like and how would it function? Building on Springgay's (2008) haptic curricular foundation, how might touch be mapped and what might be gained through such a cartography? What could such cartographies bring to discussions of interpretive research in education and how might they expand or otherwise impact conceptualizations of critical geography both in and out of education?

In the end, this map articulates the complicated, complex, and necessarily incomplete nature of how a person conceives of himself and the contexts that inform those understandings of self in relation to others. Along the way, it provides an opportunity to consider the relationships between Ricky and his life at home and school, the racial tensions in his community that contextualize his daily interactions, and the ways in which Ricky uses his available resources to negotiate his identity within these spaces and places. It is in this way that sounds perhaps enunciate that which text and image cannot, the ephemeral flux of daily interactions and the nested meanings that simultaneously frame and emerge in the process.

Notes

¹ Here I use the term sound field rather than Schafer (1978) and others' (see Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, & Porcello) use of the term soundscape for it tends to miss the social actors for the sound environment. Similarly, while Feld's (1990, 1996, 2000) term acoustemology, acoustic epistemology, is much closer to the idea I have in mind in its connections to the political and between person and environment, his term most often applies to musical events and ideas. Sound field, the term I am using here to indicate the sounds of a particular place, is closer to what I have in mind. I take it to mean literally all the sounds in a particular acoustic ecology, regardless of their origin or perceived musicality.

² My human subjects approval for this project grants me permission to use students' and teachers' names with the proper parental consent and student assent (for students) and the teacher's consent. In this case, Ricky stated he preferred that I use his real name. Because he, Jared, and other students' use Ms. Whaley's name in the sound files, and she similarly granted consent to use her real name, I have elected to use their names but not the name of either their school or their district in this article.

³ Other than Ricky, Jared, Adam, and Ms. Whaley, all other names are pseudonyms.

⁴ Prosody is the musical aspects of talk such as rhythm, pitch, and tone (see Erickson, 2003). I use the term here in both sociolinguistic and colloquial terms, as a linguistic indicator and to mean "noticeably different."

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