Review: Reading Students' Lives: Literacy Learning Across Time By Catherine Compton-Lilly. New York: Routledge, 2017. 140 pp.

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"We construct meaning of our lives...across multiple timescales of action and activity, from the blink of an eye to the work of a lifetime" (Lemke, 2005, p. 110).

How does time add up in students' literate lives? How do students construct meanings "not only at particular points in time, but also across time" (Compton-Lilly, 2017, p. 122) as they move through school? If students spend more time in school, will they be better readers and writers? Some students may feel that schools control the ways they use time. Some notions of time take into account students' literacy practices situated within and across time. Every second, minute, day, week, and year, students use their experiences to make sense of their worlds. Compton-Lilly's *Reading Students' Lives* (2017) is an invaluable book for exploring how students become literate and make sense of their worlds over time.

Reading Students' Lives is Compton-Lilly's fourth book in a series published over the two last decades; the first three books invite researchers and practitioners to rethink students' literacy development and their literate lives as they move through school. In the first, *Reading Families* (2003), Compton-Lilly interviewed her first-grade students and their parents and grandparents in order to learn how reading fits into their lives and their families, ultimately challenging the widespread misconception that urban parents rarely care about their children's literacy skills and education. In her second book, *Re-Reading Families* (2007), Compton-Lilly returned to the same students (then fourth and fifth graders) and their families in order to analyze various forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and explore the literacy learning of those living in a high-poverty community. In her third book, *Reading Time* (2012), Compton-Lilly explicitly highlights time as a theoretical construct and practical consideration to explore how students make meaning of their literate lives within and beyond the classroom.

The most recent addition to this longitudinal qualitative series, *Reading Students' Lives* (2017), offers a richer and more nuanced understanding of the school trajectories and literate lives of eight students and their families over a ten-year period: Marvin, David, Bradford, Alicia, Peter, Jermaine, Angela, and Christy. Compton-Lilly revisits her longitudinal data to further challenge pervasive misconceptions about the reading practices and assumptions about urban and high-poverty families. By providing a stunning backdrop for teachers, practitioners, and literacy and language researchers, she focuses on students' experiences of schooling, gender, immigration, high-stakes testing, and technology. Furthermore, she provides thoughtful insights into the literate lives of children and young people by drawing on three theoretical lenses that recognize temporality (Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1990; Lemke, 2000; Lemke, 2005) and by applying temporal discourse analysis techniques (Compton-Lilly, 2015; Compton-Lilly & Halverson, 2014).

The book is divided into eight chapters that guide the readers through the children's lives and their literacy learning. In each chapter, Compton-Lilly invites researchers, teachers, and practitioners to reason in innovative ways about case studies in order to make sense of literacy learning over time by providing an in-depth analysis of qualitative data and supports the plea for more qualitative longitudinal studies. Temporal discourse analysis and longitudinal qualitative research offer productive possibilities for understanding how students live out long-term situations in high-poverty communities and poorly funded schools. Her book's consistent attentiveness to the longitudinal literate lives of children, their older siblings, and family members models a research approach that probes students' literacy learning experiences.

Chapter 1 serves as a comprehensive introduction to the concept of *time*. Here, Compton-Lilly takes a deeper dive into her personal and professional experiences to explore how time has generally been recognized in educational research and practice. While educational scholars typically treat time as duration, ages, intervals, length, and amount in their studies, Compton-Lilly proposes "a vision of time" (p. 5) that recognizes history (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and is informed by life story research (McAdams, 2001; Wortham, 2006) to show how people make sense of selves and their worlds.

In Chapter 2, Compton-Lilly highlights three theoretical frameworks related to time to explore the evolving and complex nature of being a student. Applying Lemke's *timescales*, Compton-Lilly explores how meanings are simultaneously grounded in past experiences of family members, personal histories, ongoing experiences, and possible futures. For example, Marvin and his family drew on past and ongoing experiences concerning the "library" as an icon of possibility and hope for Marvin's future. To be specific, Marvin's accounts of the library reference his enthusiasm to get his life "back on track" after dropping out of high school. His grandfather, Mr. Sherwood, also marked the library as a resource for literacy learning as he drew upon his own childhood experiences. To explore how Marvin makes sense of his experiences, acts in his everyday life, and contemplates his future, Compton-Lilly illuminates chronotopic motifs (Bakhtin, 1981; Bakhtin, 1986) that operate in schools: failing standards-based English Language Arts examinations, promotion/retention, meeting grade-level standards, and experiencing special education. Each chronotopic motif is associated with meanings that closely interweave and contradict in complex interrelationships. For example, Marvin drew upon the meanings that disrupted his intention to graduate from high school. Bakhtin's chronotope plays a critical role in understanding how Marvin and other students operate within institutions including schools that impose temporal expectations.

Chapter 3 draws on temporal discourse analysis (Compton-Lilly, 2014, 2015) to highlight time "as a constructive dimension of experience that people use to conceptualize their encounters with literacy, schooling, and identity" (p. 28). The focus of this chapter is how three children--David, Bradford, and Angela--and their families attend to time by using *now/then* discourses to compare intergenerational experiences of growing up. For example, David's mother related to recent social changes and the dangers of gun violence by referencing "in the day and age," "nowadays," and "that's the day and age." Ironically, David made sense of a dangerous present with the hope of entering the military and making money after finishing school. Bradford's experiences of time were affected by the official time frames of school and incarceration. Once away from his special education placement, Bradford eventually felt confident and made academic progress during his incarceration. Angela highlighted a favorite teacher, Ms. Foster, for making sense of her own experiences with reading and writing. Repetitive accounts about this first grade

teacher cement her concepts related texts and reading. Among other lessons, attention to the markers of time with these three focal students provides spaces for teachers and school leadership to reflect on how schools can make time for students to learn.

Lemke's three timescales--historical timescales, familial timescales, and ongoing timescales--provide Compton-Lilly with constructs to capture how languages circulate and operate within families. In Chapter 4, she revisits Alicia's case to examine a set of repetitive discourses regarding schooling and Alicia's identities as a student. Compton-Lilly found that Alicia's family drew upon their past experiences and traditional discourses which affected the way Alicia made sense of school and teachers. Most importantly, Alicia's discourses and her literacy practices across time reveal that she fully engaged in familial reading practices with a diverse range of books featuring African-American characters and teen girls. Historical accounts of people and events were intermingled with Alicia's familial timescales, which contributed to how Alicia voices resistance not to be positioned as a gang member and assigned to long-term suspension.

Chapter 5 explores the complex interactions that contribute to Peter's desire to become a writer and his process toward achieving this goal. As understood through Bourdieu's notion of *fields* (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), spaces are connected to social, economic, and other types of capital that privilege certain students more than others. Peter's story emphasizes the knowledge and power required to negotiate successfully through the fields that students face throughout their educational experiences. Compton-Lilly's analysis of what changed in the fields that Peter encountered during the ten years of her study illuminates the challenges faced by students living in egregious poverty, especially in terms of college preparation. She concludes that Peter's severely limited access to the rules of the field of higher education, not his lack of writing abilities, contributed to his failing to meet his goals of attending a top-tier undergraduate journalism program.

Compton-Lilly's obvious commitment to the focal students and their families is conveyed through the rich details about students' lives, attentive research questions, and intentional avoidance of generalizing data and analysis other than to assert statements of

exigency. When such researchers generalize findings as connected to a system--for example, "[u]nderstanding literate trajectories is particularly pertinent in communities that historically have been poorly served by schools" (p. 87)--readers are motivated to reason more broadly about how societal inequities impact individual students. Throughout Jermaine's case study in Chapter 6, attentive readers notice a systemic analysis. Jermaine's difficulties in keeping up with classroom pacing, such as when he states that students in his fourth grade class were "only give[n] five minutes to do something" (p. 93), were addressed when he was enrolled in a computerized, individualized canned-curriculum that the company purported would remediate and strengthen particular skills. However, the longitudinal scope of this study reveals the opposite to be true: Jermaine fell further behind his mainstream peers. Compton-Lilly's application of chronotopic analysis considers how "school events become trajectories" (p. 95). Jermaine's case offers educators opportunities to understand the long-term effects of interventions and policies that, while well intended, impact students in unintended ways.

In Chapter 7, Compton-Lilly's review of her field notes as Christy's teacher unfolds the compounding impact of lack of neighborhood resources such as grocery stores and libraries in inner city neighborhoods with standards-based emphasis on schools, represented by condescending in-service leaders, unsupportive administration, and competition between colleagues for test score improvement. Christy especially reinforces the prominent yet often unrecognized role of diverse relationships in the trajectory of students' literacy learning. When Compton-Lilly concludes that her field notes were filled with "impositions placed on me as a teacher" (p. 108), readers realize that physical objects and spaces influence students' reading skills just much as teachers, other adults, and the students themselves.

Reading Students' Lives provides a valuable opportunity for fellow educators to look into how one researcher's awareness of time shapes her interpretation of the literacy lives of low-income students and their families. As a ground-breaking longitudinal study of ten years, *Reading Students' Lives* promotes a rethinking of time as Compton-Lilly provides critical insights on how to consider students as beings who bring rich sets of temporally

valued experiences and knowledge to classrooms and other spaces. The generalizations are not geared toward convincing educators and researchers to adopt a best-practices strategies or to teach according to research-based pedagogies. Instead, Compton-Lilly helps readers understand how systemic issues significantly impact students' lives. Throughout the book, recognition of the complex tensions that students experience while developing their literacy skills and identities culminates into a conclusion, which ties together Compton-Lilly's temporal notions, critiques of systemic inequities that impact individuals, and students' literacy learning to provide insights into students' long-term trajectories.

Reading Students' Lives advocates for social justice through a wake-up call that allows for silent students' voices to be heard across the trajectory of their educational careers. Throughout her longitudinal works, Compton-Lilly listens closely to the voices of her students and their families, which allows her to reveal complexities that previously published works often ignore. Her compelling narratives of the lively voices of students and their families inspire us to read our students' lives and their literacy learning across time in order to mitigate and decrease further academic debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Researchers, teachers, and other individuals working with schools and families can read Compton-Lilly's books to garner a "collective hope and possibility and a critical social imagination" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 154) for social justice and equity in American schools.

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