As theorization of multimodal text processes and productions continues to outpace classroom practices, research that contributes understandings of how composers are living out multimodal processes is needed. In response, we turn to thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as both a methodological and an analytic approach to understand how multimodal composing processes and products come to be. We provide strategic sketches (Leander & Boldt, 2013) focused on third graders “Efrain” and “Trinidad,” not aiming to display the data in a traditional sense, but instead to ask of ourselves, the data, and theory: What material intra-actions emerge among two young picture book makers? What social, cultural, and material worlds are performed in their final picture book productions? Thinking with theory and data was an effort to experience some of the moment-to-moment nuances of young children’s multimodal processes, to appreciate the lived social, cultural, and material realities animated in their picture books, and to develop sensitivities to the possibilities of the material turn in post-humanist studies for literacy research. The analytic questions produced point to the saliency of diverse literature as aesthetic inspirations for multimodal texts, and of improvisations with varied art tools and media as openings for multimodal processes. This paper advances previous related scholarship through strategic sketches that invite readers to experience the complexity and the cultural significance of the multimodal processes and products that emerge when classroom expectations of a proficient writer include the ability to improvise and become with diverse materials and meanings, not just to command “standardized written English.”

The two young Mexican-American picture book makers featured in this research composed in a classroom where diverse materials, including digital images, paint, scrapbooking paper, and crayons, were readily available for improvisation. As a part of their classroom study of learning to read and make culturally specific picture books, it was not uncommon for students and materials to coexist, interact,
no clear border between the two. The children exerted force on art media such as oil pastels. The oil pastels melted color on the page, nudging these young artists to continue pushing on the pastel to blanket the paper with color to create a silky surface. The force of the materials and children’s hands overlapped and extended onto and into one another and often, but not always, resulted in two-dimensional scenes and textures that evoked real, three-dimensional landscapes—much like the one these young artists inhabited. In this becoming, or intra-action (Barad, 2003), between human and nonhuman materials, we are reminded that materials do indeed matter and have real consequences for the moment-by-moment multimodal, material processes and products that unfold and come to be in classrooms. For this research, we return to the previously produced data of two picture book makers, Trinidad and Efrain (all names are pseudonyms), to understand the ways materials and children intra-act across a classroom time and space, and to experience how, in turn, lived realities can be produced. Through strategic sketches (Leander & Boldt, 2013), we argue for the complexity and the cultural significance of the multimodal processes and products that emerge when classroom expectations of a proficient writer include the ability to improvise and become with diverse materials and meanings, not just to command “standard written English” (Orzulak, 2015).

Composition studies have increasingly recognized the ways twenty-first-century writers orchestrate a diverse array of resources (material and discursive) for text construction: Englishes and other sign systems (Canagarajah, 2013), digital tools (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008), materials (Kuby, Gutshall Rucker, & Kirchofer, 2015), contexts (Leonard, 2013), and lifeworlds (Skerrett & Bomer, 2013). The resulting designs (Kress, 2000) often reflect creative, intellectual, and multimodal innovations in writing and identity performance (Honeyford, 2014; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010). Rowsell and Decoste (2012) expressed concern for finding pedagogies that apply design principles to composition learning, and called for more research on the moment-to-moment shifts from one mode to the next to help grow understandings of these processes for students and teachers. As theorization of multimodal text processes and productions continues to outpace classroom practices, research that contributes understandings of how composers are living out multimodal processes is needed (Shanahan, 2013). In response, we turn to thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as both a methodological and an analytic approach to understand how multimodal composing processes and products come to be.

We turn to thinking with theory as a methodological approach as we ground knowledge construction in an onto-epistemology, or knowing in being. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) explained, “We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming” (p. 120). In the intra-active reading of the data and theories, we do not seek to understand why but how agency is distributed between human and nonhuman materials and what is simultaneously materially and discursively produced. In sum, thinking with theory as a methodological approach allows us to open our inquiry to the ways materials (human and nonhuman) shape and are shaped by one another to produce new meanings.
Thinking with theories and data as a methodological approach requires nontraditional approaches to conducting and reporting research. Reentering the previously collected data of Trinidad and Efrain is as much about how we, the researchers, and you, the readers, are intra-actively produced with the data as it is about what the young picture book makers say and do as they become. This can make for a difficult balancing act when writing to bring academic audiences into our reading across data and theory. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) expressed similar challenges in their own writing and noted the tensions between writing to be accessible, useful, and informative for those new to the methodology and resisting “lines of flight that were tempting to take us to other concepts, other theorists, other data” (p. 139). Like Jackson and Mazzei, we chose to write linearly about something that happens simultaneously in order to reach the broadest audience possible. While this approach is not without its tensions, we rely on familiar schematic cues for our readers, such as headings, signals of sections and organization of the paper, and exhaustive uses of examples and explanations to convey the rigor of our research and meet the demands of the analytic questions produced: How did material intra-actions emerge with/through two young, Mexican-American picture book makers (inquiring into process)? How were these students’ social, cultural, and material worlds produced with/through their final picture book productions (inquiring into product)?

**Thinking with Post-Humanist Perspectives**

We think with theories of emergence and intra-activity to understand how material improvisations among young composers of multimodal texts, specifically picture books, are produced. Some (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Collier, Moffatt, & Perry, 2015; Leander & Rowe, 2006) have emphasized a need to expand analytic frames in qualitative research to gain more insight and grow knowledge of the processes of text production. Leander and Boldt (2013) similarly argued that a focus on products fails to capture the real, improvisational processes that emerge to produce texts; they asserted that although texts can be artifacts of literacy practice, they are not descriptive of the practice itself. Situating their work in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) emergence perspectives, Leander and Boldt (2013) turned toward nonrepresentational analytic models to frame text processes as a state of constant, unpredictable emergences. By problematizing the dominance of representational approaches of social practice theories, Leander and Boldt help us understand the affordance of analytic frames that assume material processes as improvisational and affectively driven. Analysis that sheds light on the unpredictable links that unfold in the moment can contribute to researcher/teacher understandings and appreciations for material, multimodal connections that deviate from our expectations of “what will be represented, what actually happened, or to locate causality in the subject or the event” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 25). In this way, emergence perspectives are less a frame for interpretation and more a philosophy of growing knowledge to inform the literacy field and classroom practice.
We also think with Barad’s (2003) notion of intra-activity to understand the multimodal, material processes among young picture book makers. The differences between the young picture book maker and the art media/tools are not fixed, absolute, or inherent; the two have a space to become as they collide. As Kuby et al. (2015) explained, “The focus of analysis therefore is neither on the child nor the material, but the in-between or the entangled becomings” (p. 404). These entanglements can be understood to form an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), a social performance of forces and flows (distribution of energy and intensities), improvisations and connections that emerge and inform intra-actions among material objects, bodies, desires, and other affective histories (Ehret & Hollett, 2014; Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2015; Leander & Rowe, 2006), and the new ways of being and doing that come to be. This dynamic conceptualization of multimodal composition affords insight into how all available material resources and histories (both from home and school) intra-act and allows us to experience how “doing” with materials is also a process of “being” with materials.

Although material intra-actions do not always result in finished, concrete artifacts, the resulting material products, like picture books, allow composers to perform lived realities in ways that written language alone cannot. Picture books are recognized as multimodal texts with a long tradition of curricular integration in schools that demand material, illustration, and print be read together (Roser, 2012; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). We recognize that much of the work in multimodal composition has focused on digital and networked technologies. We give attention to the material processes and productions of picture books as a potentially more equitable approach to multimodal composition, given the limited digital technology access in some schools, and to support familiar pedagogical materials for teachers (Bomer, Zoch, David, & Ok, 2010). We specifically conceptualize the picture book in two distinct ways: (a) the picture book as a material object with peritextual features that fold into the narrative (Sipe & McGuire, 2006; Ramos & Ramos, 2011); and (b) the picture book as performing material landscapes, evoking lived realities. The picture book form is structured in part by its physicality and affords a tremendous opportunity to explore the boundaries and possibilities of books as material objects. The overall design and art of the picture book can help us understand it as a material object, and envision its material potential shaping the narrative plot and the reader’s response. Picture books also have the material reality of stories (Bomer, 2010) and real lives in them. Do Rozario (2012) characterized the picture book as a text that also recalls lived experiences in an act of mimesis (Warner, 2009), an evocation of the real world in art or literature. She suggested that the two-dimensional material and symbolic landscapes evident in picture books conjure real three-dimensional social, cultural, and material realities. In Latino children’s picture books, for example, to perform a dynamic, animated “Latino”-specific world within each publication, certain hues, language, lines, cultural motifs, and patterns intersect to evoke a specific cultural provenance (Cowan, 2008; Zapata, 2013) or cultural history—each time a new and thoughtful mix of materials becomes in an act of mimesis. This in itself is a significant becoming of
material: what is newly remixed evokes a sociocultural landscape and history with the intention of animating a narrative and suggesting an established cultural past, which in turn performs an ideal and material landscape. Our analysis has been shaped by these related theories and the relevant research history that follows.

Relevant Research History

We encountered tension between/with the previously produced data and the new onto-epistemological stance brought to this research. We acknowledge our own evolution as researchers seeking new analytic frames to support a “continual progression of inquiry” (Latour, 1993, p. 121, as cited in Brandt & Clinton, 2002). This analysis resulted from a growing interest in the materiality of picture book making and an exploration of post-structural theory. After recursive efforts to examine the data and after consulting with colleagues, a turn toward post-structural theory proved to be generative methodologically and analytically. To help readers reenter the data with more context, we provide the relevant research history.

The data for this paper are drawn from a larger, yearlong design-based research project (Bradley et al., 2012) conducted in collaboration with two teachers of multilingual, elementary classrooms (Zapata, Valdez-Gainer, & Haworth, 2015). Mrs. Prado and her third-grade students, eight girls and fifteen boys between the ages of 9 and 10, were invited to participate due to a shared research history with Angie, the first author. The data produced with two of Mrs. Prado’s students, Trinidad and Efrain, are the focus of this analysis. Trinidad’s and Efrain’s histories were shaped by transnational experiences between the United States and Mexico and membership in the 1.5 generation (Roberge, 2002)—students born in their heritage country, but who have lived the majority of their lives and schooling in United States (in this case) and thus often live in ways that are in-between their heritage country and their peer affiliations. During ongoing analysis, the material intra-actions of Trinidad and Efrain were theoretically sampled by Angie from the larger corpus of data, as they offered salient portraits of how materials serve multimodal composition, an identified theme at the time. Data sampling also reflected the overrepresentation of males in the classroom.

Our collaborative research team designed and refined, and Mrs. Prado enacted, a picture book study of culturally and linguistically diverse literature. Our pedagogical goal, a demand of design-based research, was to support students’ uses of cultural and linguistic resources for reading and composing. We participated in daily debriefings of the data produced that day, and analytic conversations that informed modifications to the curriculum and instruction. These conversations and curriculum modifications were documented in field notes. Data production occurred intensely during the 6-week enactment of the curriculum and instruction. Before and after curriculum enactment, Angie conducted annotated picture book interviews (Farrell, Arizpe, & McAdam, 2010) designed to provide baseline and end-of-unit assessment data for each student (see Appendix A). During student and teacher picture book production, Angie also conducted stimulated recall interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000) to gain insights into the reading and composing
processes unfolding (see Appendix B). Photo and video documentation of the material processes and products in this classroom were produced during this phase of data production, as were daily field notes and analytic memos, all of which served as material to think with for this new analysis.

Distinct from applied theory approaches, onto-epistemological methodology requires analytic lenses that recognize data as actors themselves (Barad, 2007; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described the analytic process of thinking with theory as entering a threshold: “We are brought into a threshold where we become aware of how theory and data constitute or make one another and how, in the threshold, the divisions among and definitions of theory and data collapse” (p. 137). And in this process, we as researchers are reconstituted, forever changed and entangled in the multidirectional openings for inquiry and what it produces within us. This approach to analysis engages our own encounter with the data (what it provokes and what we understand) and can be characterized as an intra-action between/with previous related research (Zapata, 2013; Zapata et al., 2015; Zapata & Laman, 2016), histories (including our own understanding and experiences of multimodality), theory, the data, and the production of analytic questions (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Mapping analytic thinking**
Two overlapping and intertwined analytic questions were drawn out to guide the inquiry. Theories of intra-activity and emergence perspectives informed the inquiry into the material intra-actions of picture book making (inquiring into process), and the literature on the materiality of picture books highlighted the performative aspects of students’ picture book productions (inquiring into product).

What is presented in the rest of this paper, then, is what Leander and Boldt (2013) termed a strategic sketch of the data sampled. We put forth these strategic sketches as an “invitation to an alternate means of experiencing data—to think and feel within the possibilities of the data and not ‘over’ them toward conclusion” (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 26). According to Leander and Boldt (2013), “this is not only intellectually honest; it also allows us to experience or productively imagine emergence” (p. 35). We return first to the broader context for the material intra-actions, detailing the actors (human and nonhuman) to better understand the temporal spaces of these performances.

**The Social Space with/in the Collective Performances**

Here we elaborate on some of the pedagogical, material, and social-emotional spaces that shaped the material intra-actions in Mrs. Prado’s classroom. These historical sketches are of dynamic social/cultural forces that fluidly moved through/with the material intra-actions in the classroom. We interpret these spaces here as openings and pathways toward material becomings, new emergences for material intra-actions. Although written in this section as distinct, these social spaces fold into and onto one another.

**Becoming Picture Book Makers: Openings for Material Intra-actions and Performances**

Previous to this research, Mrs. Prado was already committed to engaging students’ cultural and linguistic resources within/through her teaching. She explained, “When I teach, I want to listen, I have to listen to my kids more. I have to slow down and listen to who they are.” Her beliefs and ideologies (Zapata & Laman, 2016) about diversity in the classroom informed her pedagogical decision-making, including the diverse literature she made available through “book flood” experiences (immersing children in a large collection of literature). Mrs. Prado made literature available for children to enjoy and as mentor texts for their own picture book productions. Traditionally, in the process of relying on mentor texts, writers identify a text with the purpose of transforming their own writing (Fletcher, 2011). More recently, children’s picture books in the elementary classroom have been taken up as tools to “use” rather than art to inspire, explore, and consider. That is, more and more the notion of mentoring children’s compositions with picture books has been focused on the written text and enacted as a process of appropriating print-centric conventions (i.e., appropriating leads, dialogue, organization). Mrs. Prado instead chose to engage literature as art to respond to and feel. Mrs. Prado asked students to use their “picture book maker eyes” and to “lift a design” to identify illustrator craft that they admired, to note how the designs “made them feel something in
their hearts.” Students were then invited to collect these designs into their artists’ notebook and to note why they selected them. It is important to make clear that Mrs. Prado did not necessarily place emphasis on students’ appropriation of these self-selected designs for final publications. Instead, she expected students to consider illustrator technique/style and reflect on how the art made them “feel” as readers in the moment. She considered this to be the work of becoming a picture book maker and the work of a writer’s developing craft. The picture books thus served as art to respond to and mentors to inspire other affective texts, products of material intra-actions, rather than models of written craft to adopt. The space and time to self-select picture book mentors with “picture book maker eyes” served as potential fissures, or openings for emergence, for future material becomings.

To support the picture book production phase of the classroom study, Mrs. Prado also made available an array of illustrating tools. Students had access to blank, bound books for their final picture book productions, in addition to watercolor paper and loose blank paper. The pre-bound, hardcover books were shaped and sized in a way that fit the larger and detailed illustrations of little hands, and the smooth feel of the paper within the books allowed the children to layer on their own textures with the art media available. There were also limitations to this decision, among them the fact that only certain kinds of art media could be used on the slick, hard cover. The books came with a predetermined number of pages, and the water-based media at times seeped through the pages. As part of the picture book production phase of the unit, the children had free access to diverse art media, tools, and adhesives (see Table 1).

Rather than demonstrate each tool’s function one by one, Mrs. Prado invited children to consider the limitations and affordances of some, not all, of the illustrating tools. For example, students were invited to carefully examine and talk through the different sizes and shapes of the brushes available. Students concluded that they liked having different kinds of brushes to try out different kinds of textures and shapes. In an effort to dig deeper into the conversations about tools and to help students develop habits of thinking with tools, Mrs. Prado also spoke with students as one artist to another. In one whole-group discussion, for example, Mrs. Prado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Watercolor paints, multicultural map pencils, map pencils, oil pastels,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crayons, markers, tempera paint, drawing pencils, scrapbooking paper,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>digital images, string, pens, sticky notes, magazines, yarn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting tools</td>
<td>Scissors, digital software, a printer, blank books, varied brushes, fingers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sticker paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhesives</td>
<td>Tape, glue sticks, Elmer’s glue, staplers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom items</td>
<td>Tissues, paper towels, cleaning supplies, desks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
engaged students in the work of blending pastels to achieve different textures. There was no real purpose to “make” or represent something on the paper; instead, this was a space for Mrs. Prado to explore the multiplicities produced with/through the tools and the children.

As we read the theory and data on Efrain and Trinidad, we also read Latino children’s literature, diverse tools, and the teacher’s thoughtful instruction in relation to the ongoing work of becoming picture book makers in Mrs. Prado’s classroom. The process of self-selecting mentor literature, developing reflective habits of mind with different tools, Mrs. Prado’s commitment to students’ diverse resources, and the value placed on material intra-actions opened time and spaces for material emergences. Students were not bound to the functions and purposes of using materials and children’s picture books in expected ways for writing. Instead, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) would say, students could respond to the energy of the moment to see what would happen. The affective, pedagogical, and material forces and flows informed a time and space where material intra-actions could emerge and students’ lived realities could be performed. The strategic sketches that follow invite readers to experience the ways Trinidad and Efrain took up these openings, the material intra-actions that unfolded, and the text productions that came to be.

Trinidad Doing, Being, and Feeling “Smooth”

During one of the book flood experiences in Mrs. Prado’s classroom, Trinidad self-selected *Colors! ¡Colores!* (2008), written by Jorge Luján and illustrated by Piet Grobler. The picture book is filled with fine prose, in English and in Spanish, and is a celebration of the inherent qualities and emotions of nature’s hues. The illustrations, the material worlds and textures performed in the book, were closely examined by Trinidad. He inspected the cool hues and watercolor scenes in each double-page spread, tracing the lines of the horizons and the sun with his fingers as he lingered over the pages. During a whole-class discussion where students shared designs from the literature collection, Trinidad opened *Colors! ¡Colores!* and emphasized how peaceful the illustrations made him feel.

After 10 minutes of transacting (Rosenblatt, 1982) with this unfamiliar book independently, Trinidad grabbed his pencil and his artist’s notebook. The book lay flat on his desk, open to a two-page image of a large yellow sunset and a flock of birds. Trinidad placed his artist’s notebook next to the book. For almost 20 minutes, Trinidad’s gaze moved between the picture book and his artist’s notebook as he worked with the pencil to collect Grobler’s design in his notebook. Rather than holding his notebook still and tracing the outline of a circle, Trinidad shifted the amount of pressure he put on his pencil as he turned the notebook around in a circle. The pencil, in turn, left different shades of black and gray in the shape of a circle, almost in the center of the white page. Once this was completed, Trinidad angled the pencil so only the lead tip touched the paper. He then pressed on the pencil and the lead tip marked the page. At one point, Trinidad stopped working in his notebook and traced his fingers over one of the birds in Grobler’s illustration. Trinidad then returned to his pencil and notebook to finish illustrating two birds over the circular design.
Upon completing his design, Trinidad worked with his pencil to document his thoughts about the illustration he had spent so long making. He attributed the design in his notebook to the picture book mentor he had self-selected, noting the title, author, and illustrator. He then wrote about how the animated illustration was “like a warm coin” (see Figure 2).

The following day, once again during a flexible, independent work time, Trinidad continued to collect designs in his notebook. Unlike many of his peers who sought new titles or were working in their writer’s notebook to start drafting a written narrative, Trinidad returned to *Colors! ¡Colores!* On this day, Trinidad opened the picture book to a watercolor scene of a beach. On this two-page spread it read, “Rocked by the tide, beige fell asleep on the sand. / El beige se durmió en la arena de tanto que lo arrulla la marea.” Trinidad read the words and then rubbed his fingers over the image of the sand. He then got to work in his artist’s notebook.

After a few minutes of working with the pencil, Trinidad became frustrated, pushing the eraser across the page. As the eraser smudged out the pencil marks, Trinidad simultaneously let out deep sighs. He desired to achieve the same texture and mood as Grobler with a pencil alone and was not satisfied with the result. After hearing and seeing his frustrations, Mrs. Prado conferred with Trinidad to introduce him to pastels. She explained, “I haven’t shared these oil pastels with anyone else yet, but I think you’ll like what these can do.” Talking with him as one artist to another and not aiming to represent anything in particular, Mrs. Prado worked with the beige pastel to color the paper as Grobler did with watercolor. With Trinidad’s mentor text open to the beach scene, she improvised and talked through her play with the pastels as Trinidad observed (see Figure 3).

**Mrs. Prado:** It’s a very light stroke, very light. Just like that. [holding the pastel sideways and pushing it onto the paper] Now see how you keep going with your finger [finger-blending the color on the paper] . . . You see how you can get the same look and feeling?

**Trinidad:** Yeah, yeah, that’s it!
Delighted with the affordance of the pastel’s silkiness and its ability to animate the texture observed in his mentor text, Trinidad spent 20 minutes improvising with beige, white, and yellow oil pastels. Trinidad was not guided by a need to “make something,” but a desire to do and be “smooth.”

This was a material intra-action of fingers pushing color side to side, pastels melting onto fingers and paper, brown paper towel not for drying hands, but for blending and smudging color across the white canvas—materials and picture book maker intra-acting, exerting force upon one another, desiring to achieve a smooth texture, not to “represent” anything in particular, but for the sake of achieving a smooth, peaceful texture (see Figure 4).

As Trinidad and the pastels came together, Angie inquired into the spontaneous material intra-action unfolding. As they talked, Trinidad continued to improvise with/through the pastel.
ANGIE: Why wouldn’t a crayon work?
TRINIDAD: Because they’re like too rough. And I’m like a person of smoooooth. I kinda like smoooooth stuff.
ANGIE: Would map pencils work? Why?
TRINIDAD: Pencil is lead and lead is something that is hard and I could use it good.
ANGIE: So when do you think you might use pastels then?
TRINIDAD: To make smooth stuff.
ANGIE: Like what?
TRINIDAD: Like, for example, like if you’re going to make a sandy beach, you’ll kinda use something SMOOOOOTH, [moves hands back and forth horizontally to emphasize the texture] like a beach of beads.

As he spoke, Trinidad stopped working with the pastels on the paper only to animate the word “smooth” with his hands.

Trinidad’s self-selection of Colors! ¡Colores! unexpectedly opened an investigation into the materiality of picture book illustration. Texture in particular is difficult to animate in two-dimensional picture books, but the performance of a texture and mood in three dimensions—as rough or smooth, hard or soft, peaceful or dark, happy or sad—was made possible by a time and space to intra-act with diverse art materials. For Trinidad, the physicality of externalizing his emerging understanding of texture and its affective qualities was spontaneous and unplanned, a material improvisation among pastels, hands, and paper towel to do and be “smooth” and peaceful.

The movements with/through the work of reading, writing, collecting, talking, observing, examining and all the other parts of Trinidad’s repeated engagement with Colors! ¡Colores! were never bound to a particular sequence. Instead, these activities were often in-the-moment decisions, openings to multiple material intra-
actions among Trinidad-picture books-pencils-different colored oil pastels. The assemblage that makes the final work in Trinidad’s artist’s notebook (the smooth beige texture) real and salient is a dynamic distribution of textures, art media, bodies, and pedagogical invitations, all related to Trinidad’s appreciation for Grobler’s watercolor scenes and his desire to do and be “smooth” and peaceful. Trinidad’s body was in a state of constant change and emergence with the assemblage of time, place, and materials, and through the work of becoming a picture book maker.

From the material intra-actions, a new way of being a picture book maker had emerged. Trinidad viewed himself and was received by his classmates as an efficient and strategic blender of/with oil pastels. Space to “become” with the pastel allowed him to explore the multiplicities of the materials, contributing to his future efficiency and status as a picture book maker. The material intra-actions also opened Trinidad to a particular illustration style for his picture book. Specifically, he chose to animate “smooth” backdrops for each of the illustrations in his final picture book.

Performing the Social, Cultural, and Material Worlds of Pranksters

Material intra-actions can generate expressive multimodal texts that transfer meaning with as much validity as written texts (Kuby et al., 2015). Although not all material intra-actions result in finished, concrete products, the space and time for material intra-actions in Mrs. Prado’s classroom generated a performance text for Trinidad—one that animated a social and material world of pranksters. In school, Trinidad identified strongly as a prankster and was very public about his admiration for innocent mischief. During a stimulated recall interview about the material processes unfolding in the moment, Trinidad named pranksters as his “mentor text” and expressed a clear distinction between a prankster, a jester of sorts, and a bully, one who causes harm to another:

ANGIE: Tell me about what’s happening here.
TRINIDAD: I wanted to make it [the end paper] nice. As you know, he [pointing to the character on the left] is not a bully, he is a prankster. And he likes to pranks other kids. So you see here he’s throwing spitballs and hits him in the head and it shows motion like that and then BAM! and he says, “Owwww!” [points to the character on the right]

During his end-of-unit interview, Trinidad further explained that he had crafted a picture book to “show your reader that you have a great sense of humor . . . that you’re smart . . . that you’re a prankster, not a bully.” This tension between being a bully and being a prankster was a real, social world Trinidad lived out in his classroom daily as he walked the fine line between practical joker and mischievous instigator.

In Trinidad’s picture book, identifying and performing as a prankster had negative consequences. In his front end-papers (see Figure 5), the prankster throws spitballs and causes harm to another. This main character is quickly given a taste of his own medicine after the characters in the book respond by “pranking” him in return. Upon reflection, the main character repents and offers an apology.
This apology is performed in the only two-page spread in Trinidad’s final picture book (see Figure 6). The vibrant yellow and peach colors blend smoothly in the background, enhancing the intense close-up view of repentant eyes and a sincere expression. To achieve that background, Trinidad asked the student teacher in Mrs. Prado’s classroom to help him look for colors and materials that evoked the same “peaceful” feeling he had uncovered in the initial material intra-action documented in the previous strategic sketch. The affective quality attached to the smooth, yellow background is strategically performed only once in Trinidad’s entire picture book, a powerful complement to the apology enacted in the climax of the narrative.
That he selected “smooth, peaceful” textures to complement the prankster performance in his picture book was very effective, and made for a powerful synergy between the mischievous prankster narrative and the deeply caring social world that was produced. Through the materiality (i.e., textures, size, layout, art media) of the picture book, Trinidad lived out implicit and explicit social expressions to his readers. These expressions reflected views and assumptions about “social organization and norms of behavior, moral principles, questions of good or evil, right and wrong, and what is important in life” (Sutherland, 1985, p. 143). While there are multiple, complex layers to the social world Trinidad performed in his picture book, we focus on his picture book as a product of the openings Trinidad himself set in motion through a series of material intra-actions. Although some written text was used, it was the visual and material aspects of his picture book that framed it as a material product of desiring to do and be “smooth” and to do and be a prankster. These were desires (Ehret & Hollett, 2014; Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2015) and performances that could not have been realized as dynamically through print alone.

**Efrain Doing and Being Origami**

Efrain also self-selected picture books from the literature collection in his classroom. After looking through three different books, Efrain sat silently on the floor with a book by award-winning, transnational picture book maker Duncan Tonatiuh. Tonatiuh’s illustration style is recognized for the unique way he remixes digitized images of real textures with a pre-Columbian codex style, resulting in a very modern, two-dimensional look. Efrain spent almost 20 minutes reading Tonatiuh’s debut picture book, *Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin* (2010). In this 2011 Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor book, cousins Charlie and Carlitos discover through an exchange of letters that although they live in different places, they have more in common than they realize. As Efrain read, one other child asked to read the book after him and he agreed to share the book with his peer upon finishing. This was the only time Efrain looked up as he read. Efrain spent almost half of the 20 minutes on the same page of this book. He inspected the page that animated the social, cultural, and material world of hip-hop. Efrain pulled the book close to his face and then placed it back on the floor as he went back and forth between an up-close and distant reading of the text (visual and print). He rubbed his fingers on the digitized images of bandana patterns and asphalt.

Three days later, during an interview with Angie, Efrain returned to this page again and explained his personal connection to the break-dancers, graffiti, and boom boxes animated in Tonatiuh’s illustration.

**Efrain:** I’d stop right here to talk about this because, because my brother, he’s like these people. He likes to rap and all that. [pointing finger to characters with bandanas] And then I beatbox for him.

**Angie:** Will you do a little bit for me?
And he did, laying down seamless and steady beats, conveying rhythms that would be experienced and sophisticated for any beatboxer, let alone a 9-year-old. Efrain further explained, “My big brother, like this guy, sometimes he wears bandanas. Sometimes he wears caps, like to the side or in the back. But this dude is wearing it in the back” (see Figure 7).

In addition to his history as a beatboxer, Efrain’s history as an origamist, someone interested in the art of origami, weaved into/through the work of becoming a picture book maker. Efrain favored making crabs, claws, and mini-footballs (the kind you flick across a table as part of a football punting game) out of paper, even when he was not supposed to. When Angie inquired into his facility and favor for crafting with paper, he said, “I love art and origami.”

**Efrain:** You can make lots of things out of it, a wolverine kinda claw thing, a samurai sword. . . .

**Angie:** How did you learn to do all that?

**Efrain:** From YouTube.

His origami expertise developed as a self-taught endeavor with additional help from books he checked out of the library to practice.

During a flexible picture-book-making time, Efrain perused the scrapbooking paper stacked on the back table. He selected some of these papers and brought them back to his desk. He opened up his artist’s sketchbook to a blank page. When Angie asked him what he was making with the paper, he shrugged and explained,
“I don’t know, I was just trying to fold.” In the moment that followed, one square, red, bandana-patterned paper floated and folded delicately in Efrain’s hands, becoming different shapes. He used his fingers, pressing and scoring the paper to make neat edges, at times pressing on the paper along the edge of his desk. The paper bent and became a different shape as well. Delighted with the new shape, Efrain repeated the process with other paper. The four differently sized and colored papers became four different, miniature do-rags, a piece of cloth folded or tied to cover one’s head (see Figure 8).

Some of these miniature, paper do-rags he handed to friends, some ended up in his pocket, and some were later pasted into his final picture book illustration, animated as do-rags on characters. During his exit interview, Angie asked Efrain how he knew to fold the paper that way; he explained, “My grandma taught me how to fold do-rags and tie them tight so that they don’t fall off.” Efrain elaborated on how his grandma had also taught him to tightly tie bandanas around his head to keep the sweat from his brow away from his eyes. However, he then pointed to the miniature do-rags in his own picture book and explained, “I put them here, but I didn’t really tighten them. I folded them.”

During these initial improvisations with paper, Sean, one of Efrain’s peers, observed carefully. After watching the material intra-action unfolding next to him, Sean expressed a desire to do the same thing. Efrain agreed to help him. Efrain watched as Sean’s fingers and the papers pushed and resisted one another. Noting how the paper resisted being torn, Efrain licked the paper and the paper became wet enough to tear easily. Afterwards, Efrain showed Sean how he pushed his fingers on the paper and how the paper folded into itself to become a do-rag. Sean then began the process again on his own with a new piece of paper (see Figure 9).

While it was no surprise that Efrain had an affinity for the scrapbooking paper, it is important to note that he did not always have an idea about what he was making with it. This multimodal process was initiated by “just folding.” Mrs. Prado never taught her students how to use paper, but made it available as a tool for picture book production. The dedicated time and space for these material emergences

**Figure 8. Efrain’s improvisations with paper**
also spontaneously opened Efrain to another social, cultural, and material way of knowing and doing from home—how his grandmother had taught him to fold bandanas. Moreover, the emergence of Efrain’s do-rags opened other students, like Sean, to material improvisations as well.

The forces and flows of a time and space where reading Tonatiuh’s unique illustration with picture-book-maker eyes and improvising with materials were expected activities entangled Efrain into paper becomings. The emergence of a material process whereby scrapbooking paper became do-rags was unplanned and propelled in part by Efrain’s desire to do and be origami. No longer was he asked to put the paper away. Instead, the emergence of this material process was received as purposeful craft. Although the unit of study enacted in Mrs. Prado’s classroom was designed to elicit students’ cultural knowing in their final products, that Efrain’s family and origami history was folded into the material processes that emerged was not by design. The material intra-actions with/through Efrain’s work of becoming a picture book maker and his repeated inspection of Tonatiuh’s illustration style were spontaneous. These repeated emergences also served as a rehearsal space for Efrain to develop more efficient material processes for his final picture book.

**Performing the Social, Cultural, and Material Worlds of Being a Beatboxer**

Efrain’s final picture book was a concrete product of material, pedagogical, personal, and cultural forces and flows colliding together. Efrain’s history as a brother and participation in rap and hip-hop culture was evoked and folded into/through this assemblage and became a present and central social, cultural, and material reality performed in his final picture book. As we read the data on Efrain’s picture
book and the theory together, we see that his performance of doing and being a beatboxer remained constant.

When Angie asked Efrain about the nature of his final picture book during the end-of-unit interview, he explained that in this book he wanted “to show me and my big brother.” In his picture book, Efrain recounts the memories of his older brother, John G., going to jail. The book begins as Efrain drops a beat for his brother outside of their home, not far from his public library and favorite tree. Across the pages, the story of John G.’s arrest and incarceration unfold, culminating in a heartfelt letter to John G. to “never do bad again.” This is the context of Efrain’s story world, one that evolves as thoughtfully visually as it is does in print. Together, the text and the illustrations convey the darkness of the night of John G.’s arrest, depict the grim glare of John G.’s eyes on the other side of the jail cell, and express the hopefulness a sunset can bring as Efrain makes a wish for his brother to never go through this again.

During the same interview, Angie asked Efrain to talk about his favorite spread or one-page opening in his picture book:

**Efrain:** It’s my first two pages. Well, my first page. It’s a spread. I love it because it shows my brother rapping and I’m beatboxing for him. I was trying to show that me and my big brother, we’re standing on grass [points to illustration of grass], and this, this road right here [points to illustration of road] is supposed to be in back of us [turns around to point to imaginary road behind him], like that line [uses his hand to draw an imaginary horizon behind him]. And then, it’s more farther back [uses his hands to signal distance behind him], more farther back than that line there [returns to imaginary horizon]. And there’s a library with somebody checking out a book [returns to illustration in book]. And a tree, and the sky and there’s a cloud and an airplane.

**Angie:** Is that what you typically see in your day?

**Efrain:** The library is one of my favorite places of all time, I like the trees and they help you breathe and it’s really peaceful [pointing to the trees in the background]. You can just sit under a tree in a shady spot and it makes me feel really good on the inside. I see the clouds and airplane I see on most days [pointing to the clouds and airplane in the horizon of his illustration]. I see and hear airplanes sometimes in the air and every day I see clouds in the sky. It reminds me of my big brother and me rapping.

In this double-page spread of his final picture book (see Figure 10), Efrain expresses beatboxing as a personally meaningful practice and social space shared with his brother. John G. speaks through a speech bubble, saying, “Ay, give me a beat” and Efrain responds, “O.k.” A single sentence on the right side of the spread reads, “I have a big brother named John G.” The two characters are located centrally in the foreground. John G. wears one of the origami do-rags that had emerged from previous material intra-actions.
It can be easy to miss the material reality of his illustration and only interpret his illustrations as an illusion of concreteness on a two-dimensional page. However, the landscape and character conjure a three-dimensional scene (one that Efrain animated through gesture and talk in his interview), a neighborhood on the “east side, the hood,” as he explained later. In Efrain’s picture book, his “hood” is not performed as “the wrong side of the tracks.” Instead, this is a neighborhood with a library, airplanes flying, a busy street in the distance, favorite trees to read under, and hazy skies, one where two brothers can drop a beat and rap on green grass. Yes, the visual landscape he performs is a material object and a concrete product of crayon, a baseball cap printed on a page, and an origami do-rag, glued on top of another layer of color. However, Efrain’s effort to perform a three-dimensional world evokes a real neighborhood with real families, produces material effects, and animates a real setting and tone for his narrative.

A dedicated time and space to improvise with scrapbooking paper and experience Tonatiuh’s illustration style carved an opening for Efrain to do and be origami and to perform the social, cultural, and material world of being a beatboxer. The landscape performed in Efrain’s picture book is likely closer to the daily realities he lives outside of school than those in other “standard written English” texts.

Discussion
In this paper, we reentered the data as qualitative researchers interested in the multimodal processes of picture book making and the expressive products that can result. We provided strategic sketches, not aiming to examine the data in a traditional sense, but instead to ask of ourselves, the data, and theory, What material intra-actions emerge among these two young picture book makers? What social, cultural, and material worlds are performed in their final picture book productions?
Framing this reading across theory and data was an effort to experience some of the moment-to-moment nuances of young children’s multimodal processes, to appreciate the lived realities animated in their picture books, and to develop sensitivities to the possibilities of the material turn in post-humanist studies for literacy research. Attention to material intra-actions highlighted how Trinidad and Efrain followed spontaneous openings toward material improvisations (i.e., how pastels become textures; how paper becomes do-rags). The assemblage of personal connections, pedagogy, materials, desires, and aesthetic forces and flows often, but not always, resulted in specific spatial performance and concrete artifacts animating students’ lived realities (i.e., doing and being a prankster; doing and being a beatboxer).

These observations are not intended as findings in and of themselves to be replicated in other settings. Instead, we pose them as theoretical and pedagogical openings to grow understandings of multimodal composing processes and to consider these understandings’ implications for all writers who come to the task of multimodal composition with rich personal, cultural, and literate lives. The material processes Efrain and Trinidad used to produce multimodal texts were primarily spontaneous and unplanned and were not bound by a preplanned sequence that Mrs. Prado expected of her students. In the ebb and flow of composing with/through materials, Mrs. Prado expected, encouraged, and taught students to self-select and experience Latino children’s literature and diverse illustrating tools. In doing so, Trinidad and Efrain felt the freedom to enter into material becomings and perform social, cultural, and material realities in the process. Material and multimodal processes and products were not always about being and meaning, but about becoming and improvising.

If we understand multimodal and material processes as spontaneous and unplanned and as openings for students’ social and cultural resources, how do classroom contexts that are ripe with opportunities for material intra-actions come to be? We specifically inquire into the multiplicities of culturally specific picture books and diverse composing materials to conclude this paper.

**Culturally Specific Picture Books as Aesthetic Possibilities**

With some exceptions (i.e., Martens, Martens, Doyle, Loomis, & Aghalarov, 2012; Ray, 2010; Zapata, 2013), explorations of the literary and aesthetic possibilities in picture book illustration as they relate to multimodal composition have not been fully examined. Latino children’s literature as an actor in the work of becoming a picture book maker is brought out in the strategic sketches as we trace the aesthetic and cultural possibilities students carried with/through self-selected mentor texts. Students simultaneously developed an affinity for/with certain picture books and pursued spontaneous lines of inquiry into the materiality of picture book making. Trinidad’s desire to do and be “smooth” like Grobler and Efrain’s desire to do and be “origami” with/through Tonatiuh were shaped by an expectation of using “picture-book-maker eyes” to become a picture book maker.

The work of becoming a picture book maker through/with Latino children’s picture books also evoked certain lived social, cultural, and material processes and
realities from Trinidad’s and Efrain’s social and cultural histories. Luján’s peaceful affect and Tonatiuh’s hip-hop performances were aesthetic and affective realities that were folded over and into Trinidad’s and Efrain’s material improvisations and ultimately performed in their final picture book productions. In these students’ thinking through/with the Latino children’s picture book, innovative and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) multimodal processes and products emerged. Moreover, the final picture book productions contributed to the larger textual ecology of culturally responsive literature in their classroom and in the world. In a time when more and more picture books are taken up only as tools to be used to teach skills and calls for more diverse literature are increasing (i.e., #weneeddiversebooks; New York Times essays by Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers), Trinidad and Efrain remind us of the tremendous aesthetic and culturally responsive possibilities of diverse picture books for/with students’ multimodal and material processes. Further pedagogical and theoretical explorations of not using, but responding to and experiencing diverse children’s picture books as aesthetic and culturally specific actors in the classroom are needed to further consider the full potential of this approach for multimodal composition and culturally responsive literacy instruction.

Experiencing Diverse Tools and Materials as Openings
The picture book making tools and materials in Mrs. Prado’s classroom were primarily designed with particular functions in mind (i.e., scrapbooking paper for scrapbooks; paper towel for drying hands). In/through the material improvisations in Mrs. Prado’s classroom, many of these same materials opened to new material becomings. Where pastels, paper, hands, and desires came together and dictated new forms, paper became a do-rag on a rapper, pastels became a desired texture and feeling. Efrain and Trinidad entered a time and space where materials transformed into something new, something that could change minds and reflect sociocultural ways of doing and being.

This analysis opens up questions of how children can improvise with/through diverse materials to craft multimodal texts in ways that meet the intellectual and affective demand of the moment. Trinidad’s and Efrain’s experiences with/through the tools and materials in the classroom are significant, as they animate material improvisations as spontaneous and culturally significant acts of composition. Moreover, they suggest that experiencing diverse tools and materials can be generative in the public school writing classroom, not just for after-school enrichment opportunities or early childhood settings. Continued research into material becomings across K–12 settings is needed in order to more robustly consider the promise of intra-activity as multimodal composition.

Conclusion
Aiming to unsettle the emphasis on “standard written English” composition and to contribute to the research on multimodal composition, this paper argues that materials do matter in writing classrooms and can engage students’ social, cultural, and material realities for multimodal text processes and productions. We explored
the promise of thinking with theory to contribute needed insights into the material processes and products of multimodal composition. In reentering the data in this way, we were able to experience intra-activity not only as an issue of what materials form assemblages in classrooms, but also as a function of students’ and teachers’ intentions, desires, and sociocultural histories. Among the most salient emergences weaving through the multimodal composing processes presented were Mrs. Prado’s intentions and thoughtful instruction and Trinidad’s and Efrain’s desires to do and be their social, cultural, and material realities. This paper has implications for writing pedagogy and research that value students’ desires to perform aspects of their personal histories, and calls for assessments that also recognize how proficient writers flexibly improvise with diverse materials, not just command letters and genres. The findings produced by this analysis remind us of the infinite openings and inquiries that are possible when teachers and students alike envision and live out multimodal composition as a material process of emergence and emotion, of doing and being who they are in their everyday worlds.

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APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED PICTURE BOOK TASK

Dr. Zapata leaned on the work of Farrell, Arizpe, and McAdam (2010) to design an annotated picture book task as a baseline and end-of-unit interview. As part of the annotated picture book interview, each of Mrs. Prado’s students was separately presented with three preselected, two-page spreads from three different pieces of diverse, quality literature. Each of these spreads was selected for the strong relationship between the visual and the written text, for unique mixed language use, and because each conveyed illustrated representations of culturally and linguistically diverse experiences.

Following Dr. Zapata’s own think-aloud demonstration, she asked each student to select one spread at a time to interpret aloud. As a part of the 20-minute interview, she invited each student to talk through her questions, noticing, connections, opinions, and feelings about anything in the spread (Chambers, 1993). She used a collection of prepared questions to elicit talk from the children. Questions included: “What catches your eye first?” “What else?” “How does the illustration make you feel?” “What in the picture might be helping you feel that way?” “Why do you think the illustrator chose some of the materials and colors he/she did?” and “What are you wondering about this spread?” These questions, adapted from Eeds and Peterson’s (1991) vision of approaching books as art museum curators, were designed particularly for noting, wondering, and conjecturing about the narrative, form, illustration style, and materiality of the book. To account for cultural and language connections in both the illustration and print, the researcher asked questions such as: “Does this remind you of anyone (or anything) you know?” “Has something similar happened to you?” “Where might an illustration like this happen?” “What makes you think so?” and “What
languages might you have to know to write and read a book like this?” Together, these questions encouraged each student to extend initial responses and observations of the spread, and delve into literary, artistic, and sociocultural conceptualizations of the picture book.

**APPENDIX B: STIMULATED RECALL INTERVIEWS**

Using stimulated recall methods (Gass & Mackey, 2000), the researcher approached students to ask that they recall their picture book making process orally as they worked independently. Stimulated recall methods seek to uncover cognitive processes that are not evident through observation alone, and allow researchers to inquire into students’ composing and production resources. To begin the interview, Dr. Zapata sat next to a child during her independent picture book reading or picture book production. She typically began the interview by saying, “Tell me about what you were just working on.” At times, questions became more specific based on observation. For instance, if a student was working on a storyboard or consulting a mentor text, she also posed questions such as: “It looks as though you’re planning your storyboard. Can you tell me how you’re deciding what goes on each page?” “I notice that you are looking at this picture book. What are you hoping to find?” “How is this picture book you have opened on your desk helping you to make your book?” “You are writing some words in Spanish on your paper. Who are you writing for?” “How did you decide that word would be in Spanish and the other in English?” “Where are you getting your ideas?” or “I see you have drawn a picture of a _____ in the center of your picture. Tell me about that.” The quantity and nature of the questions Author 1 posed depended on the brevity of the student’s response and how engrossed the student was in her work. These interactions were brief in duration (5–10 minutes) and occurred intermittently so as to limit any disruption to the flow of students’ processes.

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