5-5-2010

Structure and Flow: Toward an Organic Approach to Critical Multiliteracies in a Writing Workshop

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STRUCTURE AND FLOW: TOWARD AN ORGANIC APPROACH TO CRITICAL MULTILITERACIES IN A WRITING WORKSHOP

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in the Graduate School of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2010

St. Louis, Missouri
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

GRADUATE SCHOOL

April 13, 2010

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Entitled:

STRUCTURE AND FLOW:
TOWARD AN ORGANIC APPROACH TO CRITICAL MULTILITERACIES
IN A WRITING WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study reports on a three-year writing enrichment program among second, third, and fourth graders at a public urban elementary school in a medium-sized midwestern city. Designed as teacher research, the inquiry is a phenomenological examination of the experience of the workshop for its participants, including more than one hundred African American students and a White, female teacher-researcher. Teaching methods, classroom activities and material culture, student and teacher talk, and student compositions were subjected to a variety of analytic approaches and methods, including qualitative textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, and individual case study, in order to disclose and interpret the workshop experience over time with respect to multiliteracies pedagogy. The combination and juxtaposition of these lenses offer a trustworthy representation of the workshop's lifeworld.

Analysis showed that the most salient qualities of the workshop were the affective relationships among its participants, particularly between teacher and students; its flexibility and adaptiveness to emotional circumstance and social purpose, and commitment to student empowerment through an emphasis on the writer's identity and practice made possible by an apprentice model of pedagogy. The study concluded that language arts educators in the primary grades, especially those who will be drawing upon the writing workshop model and teaching across sociocultural boundaries, must actively engage the multiple relational and affective communicative modes at play in their
classrooms in order to deepen the enriching experience of composing in a variety of ways that will matter to students, lead to academic achievement, and break open fixed arrangements of power in the classroom setting.

The study also concludes that the three most crucial goals for anyone aiming to conduct a multiliteracies writing workshop among students in the primary grades include:

1. imparting a critical awareness of history with respect to language use; 2. committing to the program across years in order to build trust, relationships, and to see growth in a meaningful community of participants; and 3. creating curricular openings that allow teacher and students to construct identities as literary artists, and to enact roles that are hybrid, adaptive to change, critically self-reflective, dialogic, and collaborative.

This study ends with a discussion of how the teacher-researcher's experience of inquiry-as-practice might be conceptualized in the broader context of educational theory over the last century, and what this suggests for future practice and future research.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Had I not been offered the opportunity to become a writing enrichment specialist, I would never have begun to wonder about some of the questions that concern this project. I therefore thank Sally Van Doren, who show me how to be the kind of writer who teaches too. I also thank Martha Stegmaier, Shellie Hexter, and Barbara Carswell; my teaching colleagues in enrichment; and all of the classroom teachers and administrators who welcomed me into their buildings and among their students.

I also thank all of the students I have taught since 2002, all whom were active co-constructors of my identity as a teacher. Every single day I spent with these students deepened my appreciation for the need to pay close attention to the moment-by-moment experiences that individual children have in school. To those whom I got to know very well, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. It is no exaggeration to say that this study only exists because of you.

I thank the late E. Desmond Lee, whose dedication to applied scholarship crossed boundaries of discipline, geography, and institution, and continues to make possible the fruitful interplay of ideas and actions. I benefited greatly from his financial support.

Under the leadership of Joel Glassman, the Center for International Studies provided me with the time, space, and financial support to complete this project in a
timely manner, and to get to know a wonderful group of people. I cherished my time in the Resource Library.

I am deeply grateful to the faculty at the University of Missouri, St. Louis' College of Education and Department of English, especially Wolfgang Althof, John Dalton, Kathleen Haywood, Virginia Navarro, Joe Polman, Becky Rogers, Nancy Singer, Ben Torbert, Mary Troy, Eric Turley, Laura Westhof, and Jane Zeni; outside of UMSL, I would like to pay tribute to teaching scholars Mary Ann Dzuback and Irving Seidman. To all of you: thank you for generously sharing your wisdom, time, experience, and expertise with me. I have learned so much from each of you, and will do my best to teach others as you have taught me.

I thank Julie Landsman, who read a working draft of chapter 5, and demonstrates how to walk the critical path with grace and humility. JoBeth Allen offered me a crucial bit of wisdom in February 2009 when she encouraged me to view the writer and the researcher as allies in the composition of this study. I had long tried to keep each of those personae minding their own business. I also thank John Baugh, a powerful voice in the field, for reading an early version of chapter 2 and sending words of encouragement.

I am grateful to have had the support and encouragement of a dedicated and engaged dissertation committee: a heartfelt thank-you to Rebecca Rogers, Benjamin Torbert, Eric Turley, Jane Zeni, and super committee chair Wendy Saul.

I owe a special thanks to my peers in the College of Education—especially, Rob Good, Kelly Grigsby, Subi Lakshmanan —whose friendship, encouragement, critical and insightful feedback, and good humor made every stage of being a doctoral student (especially the final one) a true pleasure. Jeff Hirsch, Brent Sodman, and Aimee Ward
offered cheerful and talented technical support in the creation of this study as a text-on-paper: I thank you all.

I am indebted to Susan and Jack Rudin, for enthusiastically endowing certain aspects of my life in a way that has permitted me to extend my teacher-scholar apprenticeship almost to the half-century mark. I still scramble, but thanks to you I scramble in security.

As a role model, friend, professional guide, visionary editor, and all-around paragon of the scholar who manages to harmonize thought, heart, and action, Wendy Saul is unmatched. I thank you, Wendy, for helping me to see how this could be done, and seeing me through the doing of it.

Finally, I thank my husband, Michael Dee, and our children, Stella Dee, Pepper Dee, and Nathan Dee, for making the individual and collective adjustments and accommodations necessary for me to complete this program of study. As you all know, it was always hard to leave the house to go to class. It was always wonderful to come home. Thank you for humoring my highly unscientific at-home teaching-and-learning experiments. Your love, understanding, encouragement, competence, resourcefulness, and patience made this study possible. And as for teaching, well, Mr. Dee ever shows the way.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An Initial Whisper

"Shut up, don't y'all hear Ms. Schaenen voice about to go out?"

Angel, a fourth grader, was right. On November 14, 2007, for the first time in my life, I had laryngitis. Even if I tried, I could produce no sound. I had thought about staying home that morning, but other than rendered silent I felt perfectly fine. Moreover, I could not resist finding out what might happen if a writing teacher interested in opening her classroom to multiple voices and culturally responsive teaching practices showed up in school with no voice. As a teacher researcher reviewing tapes of my classroom interactions, I was always struck and annoyed by my tendency to talk too much; what would happen in my classroom if I could not say a word?

At school, I waved my greetings. I wrote out my medical condition on the board for all the students to read. Then I invited each class to write something in a genre of their choice. It turned out that the fourth graders really wanted to write plays, one of the genres we had been talking about and working in. Without my giving any instructions, they broke into two groups and began drafting collaboratively. Three boys formed one group; the larger group included four girls and two boys. At the time, I was amazed and delighted to see how little I had to inject my own words into what I might call our
compositional lifeworld. If I really needed to communicate something as they worked, I whispered into the ear of a student and asked her (or him: throughout this study I will use pronouns interchangeably) to repeat the comment or direction aloud for all to hear. At times I snapped my fingers to call group attention to something I scribbled hastily on the board. I went around the room watching and listening, every so often jotting something on the small yellow pad I carried around, tearing off the page for this person or that person. The student would read aloud what I had written, nod, and act upon what I suggested. That I could rely upon the affection, respect, and trust that my students and I had nurtured over time enabled me to relinquish a great deal of control. Such foundational trust and fond feeling allowed me to play the role of observer of a student-led process of composition, and to be a genuine audience to the concluding performances.

The boy's group had asked me if they could write something with gangsters.

“Nothing violent,” I whispered.

“Ms. Schaenen, there ain't gonna be no shootin or nothin,” Harrison said.

After the group had composed a few lines, James said, "Let's see how it's turnin out," at which point they stood up and performed the script-in-progress. Then they sat back down and continued writing. The boys repeated this pattern—sitting at desks to compose and standing to act out their work—several times. The boys' play turned out to be a long scene involving an argument over which was a better part of town—the east side, the west side, or the south side. A policeman appeared and hauled someone off to jail. A trial ensued.

The mostly girls group composed a complicated play about relationships—who "fell deeply in love" with whom, who intervened, whose relationship worked out and
whose did not. One of the characters was a maid who worked for "a lady." The maid eventually quit because she was tired of being a maid. In the process of writing, this group carried on a discussion about word choice. ("Should it be girl or lady or woman?" "What do you think she would say?") They also worked hard negotiating so that every character had at least two lines to say in the performance to come. ("I didn't get no two turns.")

Within each of the groups, each of the students wrote identical scripts. The handwriting was their own, but the compositions were entirely co-authored. Once a line was agreed upon, everyone wrote it down verbatim. At the end of class, the two groups took turns acting out their plays. After reaching the end of their written work, the boys' group continued the play in character, ad libbing lines until they reached a rousing and inspiring conclusion. I and the rest of the class, watching attentively, gave them a lively and heartfelt applause.

I dwell on The Day My Voice Was Gone because it speaks to every one of the themes and concepts I will be discussing in this study: the relationships among multiliteracies, identity, the teaching and learning of writing across different social landscapes, classroom relationships and feelings, and power. In addition to all of this, it was a day among many that I will always cherish.

Orientation

In the fall of 2002, I walked into a classroom as a teaching artist, a writer who wanted to teach writing. It sounds simple. It was not. As "Ms. Schaenen, language arts enrichment specialist," I found myself teaching across boundaries of social class, race, power, culture, age, religion, language, and neighborhood. Born in Texas and raised in
New York City, I am a Jewish woman of the upper middle class who wound up, for reasons I will discuss in chapter 2, teaching for St. Louis Public Schools during a time of extreme district instability. Many St. Louis schools were located in the de-facto segregated African American communities of north St. Louis. Everyone who spent their days in these buildings—classroom teachers, students, building staff, custodians, administrators, and enrichment people like me—were well aware of the system-wide realities that affected us all. In particular, we contended with volatile district leadership; rapid turnover of superintendents; shrinking financial resources; a mandated curriculum imposed by a chief academic officer, one which had been at the bottom of the recommended list voted on by the district’s teachers; unpredictable student attendance; state and federal demands for measured demonstrations of academic achievement; uneven teacher morale; and the erratic and disruptive behavior of some students. However we situated ourselves as individuals in relation to the expectations that came from on high, we all seemed to be participating in a shared attempt to construct these schools as places of learning and order.

Over time I became (in addition to a teaching artist) a teacher researcher investigating my own practice. Right now, in the summer of 2009, as I try to make sense out of the pages upon pages of student writing, my own journals and field notes, audio tapes of classroom conversation, videotape, and the ambient posters and books used in the workshop I taught (a quantity and quality of data, presented in appendix A, that seems truly daunting in its richness and meaning), it occurs to me that I am going to have to bring my chain of roles full circle and become, for the composition of this study, an artist researcher. Taken together, these pairs of words have become, as a group, a
comprehensive representation of my shifting identities with respect to writing, teaching, and thinking about teaching and writing. (I have arranged their relationship visually in figure 1.) The various ways of valuing, knowing, seeing, speaking, behaving, interacting, thinking, believing, reading and writing that are entailed by these overlapping identities will shape the story I tell in multiple ways (Gee, 1996). For this reason, I take each word to heart:

Teaching Artist

Teacher Researcher

Artist Researcher

As a researcher, I know that what matters are questions, inquiry design, data, interpretations, and the knowledge claims these utterances call into being. As a White
teacher among African American students, I am aware of my power (and the limitations of my power) in the classroom, and of the many kinds of ways I can interact with students, ways that do and do not lead to learning. I also know that in order to make their way toward full participation as citizens, my students will have to contend with state and federal standards. They must therefore expand the boundaries of their own verbal repertoire (Hymes, 1977) in order to make room for the rules and customs of mainstream American English. As an artist, I know that my creative method depends upon closely attending and observing the lifeworld around me (Husserl, 1970), and then distilling those observations through processes of structural and discursive selection in order to construct a meaning or effect of some kind in the mind of the reader.

The following story, then, a longitudinal case study, is the product of a Teacher-Researcher-Artist. Composed in the sweet spot represented in figure 1, it is my attempt to account for what happened in a writing workshop I taught for three years in one particular school. While I know about teaching, writing, and research, what I believe I know best is what happened in my classroom among my students with respect to teaching, writing, and researching among them. As a participant and a witness, I claim this study to be, in a manner of speaking, my testimony. To testify about what happened is not to say that I know everything that happened (no teacher knows that!), or everything about the meaning about what happened, or to suggest that what I did exemplifies anything that might be termed "best practices." Like other teacher researchers who write about similar experiences, I was simply sticking with a particular bunch of kids in particular program, and trying to do my best by them and by it.
Furthermore, this is not a global catalogue of the significance of all the lessons, activities, and products of the workshop. In the first place, I gleaned many of my lessons and activities from books, other teachers, and people who had attended other kinds of workshops. In the second place, in this study, I am above all interested in what our "products" suggest about the nature of our experience. This is therefore a selective, purposeful account: through the lens of my hybrid perspective, I would like the reader to be able to feel something of the experience of the workshop for its participants, with special attention paid to the practices and concepts of bidialectalism and multiliteracies. I will be returning repeatedly to these ideas, and each time I do so will be from a different perspective. A brief history is therefore in order here.

For decades, scholars have called upon teachers and researchers to foreground, to differing degrees, bidialectal and socioculturally responsive approaches in research and practice (Ball, 2006; Baugh, 1979; Bohn, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meier, 2008; Reed, 1972; Smitherman, 1977; Smitherman, 2000; Taylor, 1989). Over time, a strict attention to contrastive analysis (with its pedagogical roots in teaching English as a second language) has evolved in ways that invite educators to incorporate more expanded ways of understanding communicative practices. Through dialect awareness programs and other forms of outreach, sociolinguists call for teachers to understand all dialects as rich, ever-changing, cultural treasures; as representations of identity, of history, of communal affiliation. (See www.as.wvu.edu/dialect/ to view a site set up by sociolinguist Kirk Hazen, based at West Virginia University; and Denham & Lobeck, 2005, for ideas about strategies for bringing linguistic knowledge into K-12 classrooms.) Everyone speaks dialects. The dialect known as Standard (or mainstream) English is characterized
by a lack of stigmatized features, and there is no such thing as a “pure” Standard English. The variety of English (the dialect) called African American English (AAE) includes the ways in which, in addition to using words, a speaker uses body language, gesture, tone, and immediate circumstances (or field) in order to convey a specific meaning. In print, AAE draws upon a rich and deeply significant heritage that takes up forms like the political jeremiad, the religious sermon, and others in order to shape the rhetorical style of the text (Meier, 2008; Richardson, 2003; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1977). Bidialectal teaching draws upon the communicative practices of two different dialects. For White teachers working among African American students, the calibration of bidialectal practice can be difficult. Not simply honoring AAE in the classroom, but actually centering it, while also acknowledging students' need to master additional codes of power, and also teaching those codes, requires an ability to shift fluidly from stance to stance, to see around the next expressive corner at all times: what's OK here is not going to work so well there, we say, and vice versa. At least not yet.

The ideas around bidialectalism are both obvious and delicate. The ideas are obvious because, well, who does not know that in this or that situation one cannot talk or write such-and-such a way to such-and-such a person? The ideas are delicate because the reasons you cannot do such things involve power and feelings, two of the most complicated aspects to human interactions. Because there are very few multi-year studies of the effects of bidialectal practices in primary classrooms when the teacher and students are from different ethnic backgrounds, or of bidialectal teaching among younger students, or of White teachers scrutinizing their own language, attitudes, and behavior among
African American students\(^1\), this study inhabits a gap in the literature on this subject, and aims to invite far more longitudinal research in the field. Such research might include inquiry into other writing programs, and/or research across existing cases of writing workshops.

Because I strongly agree with those who argue for teachers and schools to practice an ethic of care among students (Noddings, 2005), as well as with those who call for practices that lead students to become competent, healthy, and moral (Dyson, 2003), I made particular decisions with regard to what kinds of talk and writing I welcomed and encouraged in my classroom. I wanted our talk to matter to all of us. Furthermore, as a working writer accustomed to facing touchy subjects head-on, I neither feared nor avoided the possibility of getting caught up in topics that seemed inappropriate or impertinent; figuring out how to speak and write about tough subjects is, after all, what writers do. In conversations and in compositions, therefore, my students and I together ventured deeply and explicitly into the heart of some of the most complicated subjects that often go undiscussed—identity, power, race, culture, language, and individual agency—what Lisa Delpit (2006) has called "the deep moral issues" (p. xvi). Once we were there as a group, in the heart of this or that touchy subject, it sometimes happened that I might have to steer us back out. Where we were going was not always clear from the beginning. And at the end of our time together each week, as my students returned to their regular classrooms, I was often left wondering what had just happened, and what I should do next. With respect to language arts, what would be the right next step for

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\(^1\) For shorter-term studies, see Blackburn & Stern, 2000; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Foster, 2002; Godley & Minnici, 2008; Godley, Sweetland, et al., 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Richardson, 1997; and Wheeler & Swords, 2006.
Mohammed, a fourth grader who struggled to form and arrange letters into words on paper, but whose ideas about style shifting, orally expressed, were as sophisticated as my own? With respect to culture and identity, could I have responded better to Brianna, a second grader, after an exchange like the following, which I discuss thoroughly and in context in chapter 6:

Inda: Am I White?
Class [in Chorus]: No!!
Brianna: If you was White, well, you can't be White because, because people can be White…and you, I say that you not, like White, because like, because if I say you White, that'd be like a rude thing to say to a grown—

Coming face to face with race was not ever easy; I was often afraid of saying something wrong, and was not even sure what I meant by "wrong." For my students, on the other hand, once they realized that race and power were not taboo topics, the words flowed.

In retrospect, as I began to think about the lifeworld my students and I were co-creating, I came to view our version of a writing workshop as what Stevenson and Deasy (2005), among others, call a third space, a material and metaphorical place for transformative teaching and learning within a particular community of practice in the arts. The ways in which my students and I made meanings for each other around talk and text (the literacy arts) were a consequence of the atmosphere and relationships we constructed in the classroom. More than a celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity, more than simple apprenticeship into my way of doing things with words, and much more than the accumulation of individual or even group accomplishments and projects, our collective third space rested on theoretical assumptions about reading and writing that were deeply critical (Gutiérrez, 2008). I will return to the concept of third space in

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2 Throughout this study, all student names, teacher names, and the school name are pseudonyms.
chapter 5.

Over the course of three years in the workshop, I taught more than 100 students, ten of whom I taught for all three years (see appendix B for ages of participants and their length of time in the program). Looking back at the moments that made up those years, I realize that I have learned a great deal about language arts enrichment—and that most of what I have learned is how (and how not) to pose direct questions about what I still do not fully understand. Sharing my story is, for me, a way of sharing these questions, as well as a way of sharing my collaborative and writerly approach to answering them.

In undertaking this inquiry as a teacher researcher, my intent has been to use a variety of qualitative methods to report the experience of the workshop, thereby offering the reader a compelling account of what happened when I attempted to integrate critical pedagogy and language arts instruction in a particular community of practice. I have examined the data generated by the program in order to interpret what was going on with respect to the multiple aspects of literacy over time, and to understand and explain the processes of the program, its constitutive modes of communication, the "lived experience" of its participants. I have drawn upon a phenomenological, interpretivist approach to my data as well as aspects of educational connoisseurship and criticism as proposed by Eisner (1998). Doing so has allowed me to present interpretations in fluid and organic ways. Having been personally embedded in the setting over time, having practiced active observation in addition to interacting among students and teachers, I am in a unique position to reconstruct a trustworthy representation of our collective experience of the program. It is my hope that the following interpretations will have significant and direct applications to teaching and learning in language arts classrooms,
and to the ways we prepare pre-service teachers for work in linguistically diverse classrooms, as well as in monocultural classrooms in which there exists a linguistic mismatch between teacher and student. I envision this study as addressed to (and a resource for) arts enrichment specialists, regular classroom teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators.

This multimethodological approach can be viewed as one way of responding to the call from Duke and Mallette (2004) for "synergy across research methodologies" with respect to literacy research (p. 3). The interpretations and insights that flow from a longitudinal qualitative case study such as this can be read alongside the results of other kinds of qualitative and quantitative studies among similar samples and populations of people in order to more powerfully and fully address shared questions. I will expand upon the study's design and scope in chapter 2.

Theoretically, this inquiry is situated in the heterogeneous field of New Literacy Studies (NLS). The practice of NLS recognizes that there exist "multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power. NLS, then, takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking 'whose literacies' are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant" (Street, 2005, p. 77). I am equally interested in the related work of the genre theorists, who argue that full access to social goods and services requires the ability to design speech and written language in a variety of forms (genres) that cross boundaries of region, profession, age, dialect, gender, academic discipline, and social class (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Taken together, NLS and genre theory have resulted in a
call for a specific multiliteracies pedagogy across the curriculum, ways of teaching
grounded in four interacting and overlapping domains: situated practice, direct
instruction, critical framing, and transformed pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). With
respect to language arts enrichment, my expertise as a writer, my reliance on direct
instruction (at times), and my critical sociopolitical stance all led to new and particular
ways of conducting a writing workshop.

Multiliteracies are both multilayered and multifunctional. Any one writer can
choose among discursive options; any one option conveys more than a single meaning;
all meaning depends on context (Barton, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 1996;
Street, 1995). As a teacher, I acted on the work of these scholars; I put their ideas into
play. As a researcher, I aim to demonstrate, first, that the soundest approach to teaching
and learning critical multiliteracies in a language arts program is a holistic one. By
holistic, I mean approach that reckons with the complexities, oppositions, contradictions
and inconsistencies that make us human. Any given moment in our workshop was
experienced by all of us in and through layers of temperament, perception, response,
power, distraction, and feeling. At all times, I was aware of the synchronic complications
embodied by the individual participants using language diachronically in a particular
space. Recognizing and accepting these complications allowed us to enact hybrid
identities and elicit hybrid voices that could collectively and collaboratively break open
fixed ways of understanding oral, written, and non-verbal expression in school.

Second, I aim to reconstruct the approaches to multiliteracy pedagogy that I
developed in practice and in analysis. In particular, I will focus on the way my students
and I entertained ideas about Standard English and African American English. As an
artist designing this reconstruction, I will select the most telling examples I can find, structure them and contextualize them in ways that will (I hope) reverberate for the readers I enumerated above: enrichment specialists, classroom teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators. The methodological and discursive hybridity of teacher research as a mode of inquiry in general, and in this study in particular, harmonizes with this overarching purpose.

A Teacher Researcher's Perspectives

For over a decade, Cochran-Smith and Lytle have described and theorized practitioner research\(^3\), establishing the ever-more-expansive construct known as *inquiry as stance*. In 1999, Cochran-Smith and Lytle wrote that "in the discourse of qualitative research, 'stance' is used to make visible and problematic the various perspectives through which researchers frame their questions, observations, and interpretations of data" (cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 120). Whether it entails the individual, the partnership, or the collaborating group, a stance suggests the physical and intellectual perspective assumed by the researcher(s). It is a way, they write, of "knowing and being in the world of educational practice" (p. viii). Before specifying the chapter-by-chapter characteristics of this study that relate to stance, it may be helpful to reflect for a moment on how the concept of stance relates to the craft of fiction-writing. After all, problematizing perspective is what fiction writers also do.

Before writing, while writing, and throughout the long process of revision, fiction writers think hard about point of view. From what perspective, we ask, is a particular

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\(^3\) For its being a more expansive and inclusive a term, these authors prefer the term *practitioner* to *teacher*; cleaving to the most specific role I played in schools, when writing about my own experience I will generally use the word *teacher*. 
story told? Sometimes we begin telling a story as a wise know-it-all, aware of all of the motives, thoughts, and behaviors of all of our characters. There is nothing that happens in these stories that we do not feign to know all about from the very beginning. English teachers call this the omniscient point of view. Think of George Eliot. Such authors tell us what we are seeing, what people saying, what things look like, smell like, and feel like. They also tell us what to think about all of this. At the other extreme is the first-person story. Here, an I releases the story to the reader. All the reader can know is what this I can (or chooses to) tell him. The writer working in first-person faces certain challenges with respect to plot and structure: in order for the narrator to be able to know certain key things, she must sometimes stumble across letters, overhear things by accident, and otherwise acquire important information that might not naturally come her way. And then she tells us what she thinks about all of this. Since the I is also a human being influenced by biases, habits, and blind spots, English teachers sometimes say that all first-person stories are told by an unreliable narrator, which is true. All of us, in telling our own stories, are unreliable narrators. Think of Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* or Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. A rollicking ride with a single voice that carries us along inside an individual mind, experiencing everything she or he does. Finally, between the first-person perspective and the third-person omniscient perspective lies a spectrum of narrative perspectives sometimes called "the close third person." Readers of contemporary fiction are most familiar with this stance. With stories told in a close third, the reader is like a little bird sitting on the shoulder of various characters as they act, speak, think, and feel. The writer is allowing us access to the inner world of the character as she tells the story, and allows herself to move from character to character. But there is
a limit (established by custom and literary fashion) governing how many characters' shoulders she can perch on, and how frequently she can bounce from shoulder to shoulder. Two authors considered contemporary masters of the craft of the close-third-person perspective are Alice Munro and William Trevor.4

The decisions a writer makes about perspective are determined by his purpose in telling the story. Different perspectives afford the reader different kinds of knowledge about the characters and the story. What can be seen varies depending on how the story is told. For instance, I often write the first draft of a story in the first person. Getting a character's voice in my head—his feelings, his way of speaking, his way of noticing things—helps me get a story off the ground. Upon revision, I sometimes realize that the story would be better served by a close third or third-person perspective. Perhaps I want to share with the reader things about the character that the character might not want anyone else to know. I might want to mention qualities about the setting (the weather, the other characters) that affect the overall tone of the story in a way that strikes me as meaningful and significant. So I go back and change the whole thing. Every so often the change makes it worse, and I change it back again.

While this study is obviously not a work of fiction, I have taken advantage of my expertise in narrative perspective in order to position myself in different ways with

4 I am omitting the least-used second-person perspective because I can establish my point without it; for the sake of completeness, however, you know you're in a second person story when the writer talks to you directly: "You haven't had a cigarette for three whole hours, and it's getting a little hard to focus. You stare at the digital clock on your desk and keep lighting your Bic over and over again." Bright Lights, Big City by Jay McInerney (1984) is one of the best known examples of an entire novel told in second person. I am also omitting the little-used collective first person, familiar to Talk of the Town readers of The New Yorker: "By the time we arrived at the party our raincoat was sopping wet, our hairdo ruined."
respect to my data. There will be times when I adopt a *just-the-facts-ma'am* tone of an FBI agent reporting a scene. Other times I will allow myself a more highly invested perspective. If my perspective as a qualitative researcher is imagined as a video camera, there will be chapters when I am hovering over the room from the ceiling, "like a helicopter," as one of my sons once put it when working on a story of his own. There will be times when I am sitting in a circle with my students, or standing at the threshold observing them. There will be occasions for me to be, rhetorically speaking, practically attached at the hip to one or more of my students, or staring at microscopically close range at something they wrote or said. And because this is a piece of writing intended for an audience of readers located far away from the people in these pages, there will be times when I stand with my back to my participants, and with the classroom window thrown open, in order to broadcast as an ally and advocate particular aspects of their story. Different knowledge is constructed from different points of view, and the structure and perspectives of this study reflect this claim.

**Structure of the Study**

In chapter 2 I will state my research questions, present the genesis of the workshop, and detail the history of my involvement in schools as well as the broader social and political context in which I was teaching. I will also situate the design of the study in the context of the relevant scholarship and define this study's key terms. In chapter 3, I describe in greater depth and specificity the people, place, practices and purposes of *Writing to Connect* as a program. My interpretations will begin in chapter 4, when I will present a deeper look at how I view the writer's identity in the field of teaching literacy. In chapter 5, in order to provide the reader with a way of seeing the workshop as an
organic whole⁵, a *third space* for arts education, I will present a visual representation developed directly out of the particulars of the workshop experience. This analytic model will allow the reader to understand the relationship among the processes and products, the themes and patterns, created in a writing environment that foregrounded critical multiliteracies pedagogy. In chapter 6, I will begin by exploring the connections and relationships among race, identity, language, and community in the talk and texts of the workshop overall. Then, using the tools and methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (Christie, 2002; Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1996; Kress, 2006; Rogers, 2004), I will focus on a particular episode among second graders. Chapter 7 will take a similar approach in order to explore multiliteracies pedagogy across three years and within a single mini-lesson. Together, chapters 6 and 7 will situate the micro-level discursive construction of identities and communicative practices among me and my students within a large, richly described macro-context of the program as a whole. In chapter 8, I will discuss the talk, texts, behavior, and growth of one particular student, and my committed and ongoing relationship with him, as he and I interacted over nearly four years.⁶

It is my belief that the combination and juxtaposition of these analytic lenses—the comprehensive descriptions presented in chapter 5; the micro-processes explored in chapters 6 and 7, and the longitudinal case study of chapter 8—will provide the reader with a trustworthy representation of the workshop's lifeworld.

⁵ By organic, I mean to suggest that I viewed each of the differentiated aspects of the workshop in systemic relation to each other, and as collectively playing vital roles in the overall experience.

⁶ Although he changed schools when Hutsch was closed, Kayode and I remained in touch by letter and a visit I made to the new school during 2008-2009. In the summer of 2009, he and I sat down at his house and, as he reviewed his entire body of writing, we talked for two hours about his experience in the program.
Finally, in chapter 9, I will summarize what I view as the essence of the experience my students and I co-constructed. I will ask how (and whether) my practices were and were not effective ways of teaching and learning critical multiliteracies in the primary grades. In opening up conversations and discourse possibilities, in making oral and written discursive choice-making explicit, did my students and I destabilize apparently fixed meanings or worlds and words (Freire, 1990) so that underlying power structures could be challenged? Further, I will address how my experience might be conceptualized in the broader context of the theorizing about education over the last century, and what it suggests for future practice and future research. Given the chance to start all over again over with the same students but with the advantage of experience, what ideas and practices would I retain? It is my hope that the analytic model I have developed for language arts enrichment across sociocultural boundaries—locally generated, responsive to participants, rooted in my values as a critic and connoisseur of multiliteracies pedagogy, and shared in a voice stronger than a whisper—will prove useful for other practitioners in the design and assessment of literacy workshops, *third spaces* in other settings.
CHAPTER 2
A WRITING PLACE

In this chapter I will describe the research site, state my research questions, present the genesis of the workshop, and detail the history of my involvement in schools as well as the broader social and political context in which I was teaching. I will also situate the design of the study in the context of the relevant scholarship and define this study's key terms.

The Room For Writing came into being in the summer of 2005. Housed in a dedicated room on the second floor of Hutsch Elementary (a pseudonym), this pilot residency program evolved out of a collaborative effort on the part of four groups of stakeholders: Springboard to Learning, the regional academic and cultural enrichment agency I had been working for since 2002⁷; the teachers and administrators at Hutsch, a public school in the St. Louis Public Schools; the second through sixth grade students there; and three professional writers, including me. Rather than continuing as itinerant teaching artists moving from classroom to classroom and school to school, we would teach in a room of our own, without the presence of a classroom teacher.⁸ Based in the

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⁷ In the last few years, Springboard to Learning, which was established in 1965, has established new collaborations and affiliations, and is now called simply Springboard. For more information, visit www.springboardstl.org.

⁸ This case study is limited to my own experience in the Room for Writing; the other two enrichment specialists worked with different groups of children at different times. As a
Room For Writing, my particular program-within-the-program was called *Writing to Connect*.

As a pilot program, Room For Writing proved a fertile environment for exploring the possibilities of an enrichment program left largely and generously to its own devices. For *Writing to Connect* (as the other writers did for their respective programs) I developed lesson plans, tested and tinkered with strategies, and tracked what happened in blogs and official reports. Over the course of three years, the students and I got to know each other very well. Our conversations ranged freely across public and private domains. Our writing traversed and blended genres. At the core of everything we did was an attempt to make explicit the choices we all make in language—how we show who we are by what we say, how we talk, and how we write, with a special emphasis on the relationship between African American English and mainstream American English. (Chapter 3 will provide a fuller description of me, the students, our environments, and *Writing to Connect* specifically.) Although I had hoped to remain in the building indefinitely, in early 2008 (much to the distress and disappointment of all the Room For Writing stakeholders—students, classroom teachers, writing specialists, and school administrators) the district decided to shut down the school at the end of that school year, in the latest round of closures that made Hutsch one of the 25 schools closed in St. Louis between 2003 and 2008.  

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9 St. Louis City has a long and vexed history of schooling its students, particularly its students of color. For histories of education in St. Louis, see Portz, Stein & Jones, 1999 and Heaney and Uchitelle, 2004. A less-heard, but equally important critical race perspective on St. Louis's move to desegregate its schools can be found in Morris, 2006.
Within the context of my large concerns relating to literacy, education, and social justice, in this study I attempt to address the following research questions: What was the nature of a writing workshop that recognized and embraced multiliteracies? What happened in the oral and written languages of a White teacher and African American students when such practices were put to use? What kinds of new ways of teaching and learning were made possible by *Writing to Connect*?

My sense of the historicity of all communicative enactments and performances, and my strongly held conviction that we cannot begin to make meaning of phenomena outside of time, place, sociocultural circumstances and other situational variables, suggest that I provide a contextual overview of the political and educational landscape in which the Room For Writing came to be, and how this inquiry flows out of the particular opportunities and constraints shaped by this context. At this point, I will trace the history of my involvement with schools, the state of the school system in which I taught, my critical stance within this context, and the design and scope of this particular inquiry.

To begin, consider this passage, an excerpt from the blog I wrote on April 30, 2007, two years into the program:

Second hour came in with an agenda: SOCIAL ANGST to straighten out. T. needed the floor, so I passed her the polished purple amethyst we use as a talking piece and away we went. There was so much anger and resentment among the girls for being "popular" or "geeky" or "nerdy," and involving putting names on the board and whatnot. I facilitated the discussion for about fifteen minutes or so—there was some crying and sharing of very personal stuff—then declared enough, it was time to get to work. A quick conversation about Ebonics, and we spoke about Barack Obama (nobody knew who he was). I told them that he was a lawyer and a politician and an African American whose mother was white and father was black and that he is running for president and that he could….CODE SWITCH JUST LIKE THEM! We got into a little more mechanical tinkering with the grammar of code switching, the way negatives are formed in standard and Ebonics. It started because someone needed a pencil:

"I ain't never got no pencil, Ms. Schaenen."
Aha! The whole idea of multiple negatives was very obvious here, so I wrote that sentence on the board under Ebonics and then wrote, "I never got a pencil, Ms. Schaenen" under Standard English.

I circled the negatives in the two sentences and we counted them up to compare. Then a few people mentioned the weird dreams they had had the night before so for a writing exercise everyone recorded a dream paragraph just to get alone with thoughts and images. Finally I passed out journals and people got to writing a little more. It was a seat-of-my-pants kind of day.

I suppose it was fairly accurate to call that hour "a seat-of-the-pants kind of day." I began by noticing and engaging the emotional baggage my students carried into the room, and led an hour's worth of literacy-oriented activities that welcomed what percolated up in conversation. On the other hand, the experience described in this small slice of life reveals the kinds of classroom practices I developed with a great deal of reflection inside and outside of the classroom over the course of the five preceding years. Rather than "seat-of-my-pants," a better description would probably be "mindfully, responsively, and purposefully free-form."

The excerpt above reveals that, as writers in a writing workshop, we acknowledged and discussed feelings. We touched on politics and current events, and spent a while learning about linguistics. The students read off the chalkboard. They wrote in two different genres on topics they found personally meaningful—an expository paragraph narrating a dream, and a personal diary entry. What we did encompassed all that real writers actually do—integrate talking, listening, thinking, and reading with writing. My goals as a writer and a teacher had been evolving over time, but by the 2005-2006 school year, I knew what I was trying to do: borrow, develop, and make use of the kinds of teaching strategies and practices that would, concurrent with instruction and practice in general American English, affirm and support the vernacular dialects my
students came to school speaking. Bidialectal teaching would encourage my students to code switch (also called style shift) as needed—orally and in writing—depending on social context and literary or academic purpose (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Baugh, 2004; Christensen, 2000, 2009; Connor, 2008; Meier, 2008; Piestrup, 1973; Rickford, 1997; Smith, 1979; Smitherman, 2000; Terry, 2008; Wheeler, 2006). My goal was for my students to progress toward fluency in the dialect known as "standard" English (a term I will revisit below) without having to reject and renounce their mother tongue, the dialect known as African American English. The decision about which dialect to speak or write, I strongly believed, should be their own, determined by their own interpretation of the social purpose of the communicative act (Gee, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Moreover, foregrounding linguistic decision-making fully accorded with current calls for pedagogical practices that embraced the concept of African American-centered literacy curricula (Richardson, 2003) and multiliteracies (Ball, 1997; Gee, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

What happened in the oral and written languages of our classroom when multiliteracies were made explicit and put to use? What might be disclosed when the oral and written languages of students and teacher are subjected to analytic scrutiny? What do bidialectal teaching practices look like and what kinds of literacies emerge from such practices? What are some of the qualities and meanings of the workshop experience as a whole for participants from differing backgrounds? More broadly significant, given that our schools will be enrolling an ever-increasing population of students of color while our colleges of education continue to graduate teachers who are predominantly White and
female\textsuperscript{10}, how can a White teacher who rejects the missionary model of education connect as an ally with students of color, in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect? Can multiliteracies pedagogy be used to break open fixed arrangements of power in the broader context of school so that students can be critical participants in shaping their own learning? With these questions in mind, I will now describe the circumstances that led to the development of Room For Writing and \textit{Writing to Connect}.

\textbf{Becoming a Teaching Artist}

Under the auspices of Springboard to Learning, I first entered a fourth grade classroom as a writing specialist. My core vocation was (and remains) writing—since 1986 I have written professionally for newspapers, for magazines, for corporations as a public relations hack, for other people as a ghost, and for myself in the form of letters, notes, lists, postcards, and all the other miscellaneous jottings required by (my particular) daily life. I also write fiction: short stories galore, middle grade fiction, and the beginnings of several literary novels, two of which I completed. (See Schaenen, 2005; Schaenen, 2007; Schaenen 2009a, 2009b, 2009c.) No matter what I have ever done in my life in addition to writing, be it vital or trivial—hawk couches at a chic furniture gallery, slice salami in a deli, marry, raise children, run errands, plant lettuce seeds—I have always felt an urgent need to leave a written trace. Furthermore, I am interested in how stories and the telling of stories explore and reveal the meanings in lives. Quite simply, I have always written. When I am not writing or thinking about writing, I am not myself.

\textsuperscript{10} According to U.S. Department of Education, in the 2003-2004 school year (the most recent data obtainable), more than 92 percent of the public school teachers in the midwestern state where this study was conducted were white; 5.4 percent were African American. In the U.S. overall, 83 percent of the public school teachers were White, and nearly 8 percent were African American (United States Dept. of Education, 2008).
The writing life can be frustrating. Everyone knows how lousy it feels to receive rejection letters. Receiving rejections can make you wonder if it’s worth it to spend hours alone writing. Writers may also worry about being self-absorbed and socially irrelevant. Such worries are not enough to keep a compulsive writer from writing, but they gnaw nonetheless. And then there’s the practical side: I used to spend a day writing a newspaper column of 750 words, for which I would be paid $50. On-line magazines might pay $250 or $500 for twice as many words. The thrill of publishing was always wonderful, and I was always grateful to sell something. But in the summer of 2002, it occurred to me that I had better prepare myself for a working day world that did not rely upon making a full living from writing. What was I inclined to do, I asked myself? I had to admit that what I loved to do was play school. I loved the people, the activities, and the materials of the primary grades—the desks, the paper, the supplies, the time in the yard, the order and the routine established by a teacher in the front of the room. But what did I know about well enough to teach? The answer was obvious: Writing. And so in 2002, my assignment was to enrich the curriculum of fourth and fifth graders with respect to writing, to stimulate in my students the love for writing I felt and acted upon professionally and personally. For an hour once a week (extending the definition of enrichment) I was expected to make my students' schooling more

11 My memories of daily life in first, second, and third grade at P.S. 6 in Manhattan are among the warmest and happiest of my early life.

12 It turned out that taking on a role in the wider world, putting eggs in another sort of basket, was a good thing. Like the woman who becomes pregnant once she has committed to the adoption of a particular child, I no sooner began teaching than I began to break into the fiction market in a meaningful way, selling four young adult novels in two years, and finally beginning to get short stories published in literary journals.
meaningful and more rewarding; to add to the beauty and character of their experience of school. This was the dawn of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), when teachers and administrators in public schools were under extreme pressure to see that their students tested adequately on standardized tests. In preparation for our work as guest educators, Springboard to Learning offered novice and veteran specialists day-long professional development seminars four times a year. Experienced teachers and researchers explained to us that the public school students we would be teaching were trapped (as were their teachers) in a mandated curriculum that left very little room for unscripted, authentic ways of expression and almost no opportunities for critical thinking. Springboard’s science and math specialists had a roaring vacuum to fill, because the mandated curriculum, which focused round-the-clock on communication arts, left scant time for science, math, history, physical education, geography, art, or music. Even recess was cut short. In chapter 4, I will more fully describe the nature of the specific programs in place at Hutsch.

Teaching Across Cultural and Institutional Boundaries

Over the following six years, the way I understood the very concept of enrichment changed considerably. In the beginning, I marched off to school rather confidently, fully inspired by the underlying theory of most arts-in-education organizations: there are certain aspects of the making and understanding of art that artists themselves can convey better than anyone else. Artists can describe the creative process in their art form, elucidate the quality involved in professional production, and give students real-life experience of the arts as they are actually practiced (Fowler, 1988). Over time, however, I grew troubled by the idea that what I was doing was supplemental to and disconnected
from the regular curriculum. I was also troubled by what seemed to be the underlying and unquestioned assumption that my own expertise as a writer needed to be somehow transmitted wholesale to my students, as if the writerliness of a Jewish woman from New York City could, like icing on a cake, be spread over the experience, knowledge, and cultural collateral already possessed by the midwestern African American elementary students I was teaching. Shouldn't my students have their own ways of being as writers? Shouldn't my task be to help them find their way into those ways of being? As a teaching artist, a writer who happened into teaching, I was mindful of both my limitations and my dependence on the classroom teachers who spent so much more time with the students than I did.

And, of course, I couldn't help wonder: what about grammar? What was the sensitive, "right" way to teach mainstream American ("standard") English to speakers of African American English? As an enrichment specialist, was that something I should even be thinking about? I had watched in pain when my students, proud of a piece of writing they had done "for" me, showed their work to a teacher or administrator, only to have that teacher frown and, red pen in hand, cross through a word or phrase I had particularly praised saying, "That's wrong. Change that into proper English." But who was I to question these teachers? Of course I understood that we all wanted the best for our students. We all knew they needed to be able to write in Standard English (what I would now call instead mainstream American English). I had no intention of keeping my students away from the codes of power in which I had been marinating for so long. But it seemed harsh (at best) and self-defeating (at worst) to do all that scolding and red-lining, to attempt to extinguish and obliterate the language that came out of young would-be
writers left to their own means of expression. I was beginning to feel what I would later recognize as "critical dissonance," (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 25), the awareness of an incongruity based on a newly sensitized perspective. It seemed to me even then that mastery of a second dialect should be a staged process. If young children are happy and feel good in school, they will want to stay in school, and eventually in school (and through other media like television, books, music, and teachers from various linguistic backgrounds) they will acquire the ability to manipulate additional forms of the language. In the moment, however, I felt myself to hold minimal rank and authority in the classroom. In the early years, I was unfamiliar with the scholarship that would back my instincts and practice. Mostly I sat silent, and felt ashamed.

Fascinated by teaching and learning processes and frustrated with my lack of foundation with respect to pedagogy, in 2004 I entered a doctoral program at the University of Missouri, St. Louis in order to study education. Slowly, the things I read began to seep into the way I taught. The pedagogical approaches and strategies proposed in the work of scholars like Courtney Cazden (1999), Lisa Delpit (1995), Theresa Perry (1998), Gary Howard (1999), and Rosina Lippi-Green (1997) began to inform the ways I interacted with both students and classroom teachers—those supportive of what I was up to with their students, and those suspicious and even hostile. My understanding of the interpenetrating layers of literacies became more sophisticated (Street, 2005). Sociocultural and genre theory, along with the concepts of funds of knowledge and critical pedagogy in the sociocultural and theoretical work of Volosinov (1929), Dewey (1938), Gee (1996), Freire (1990), Vygotsky (1934), and Cope and Kalantzis (2000), eventually came to ground my thinking, my practice, and my analyses of both. I began to
view and experience my program, which I had been calling *Writing to Connect*, as a community of practice (Gee, 2000; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a site of participatory engagement, a dialogic *third space* where my students and I actively negotiated our identities as socially constructed users of language across boundaries of culture and power.

**Widening the Lens: Enrichment for Social Justice**

The history of education in the United States reveals the ways in which various institutions (colonial families, dame schools, day schools, one-room schools, normal schools, common schools, vocational schools, age-sorted schools, daycare centers, modern-day home schools, religious environments, experimental charter schools, playgrounds, and so forth) have been educationally instrumental with respect to the acculturation of children all along, and to what purposes and outcomes. I thought about the connections between early 20th century behaviorist ideas about learning, as investigated and represented by Thorndike (1913) and social and political contexts. What did the mechanization and industrialization of production have to do with Thorndike's ways of trying to understand how humans learn? And how was it possible that a century after Fordist models of manufacture were first transposed onto and into schools, the environment of Hutsch would look perfectly familiar to Thorndike, that the majority public and private schools were still processing children as if it were possible to produce a standard human being whose achievements and aptitudes could (like those of a Chevy Malibu) be measured at one highly charged moment in time? Reading Dewey (1938), Addams (1912), and the other progressives of the early twentieth century, I began to question my own assumptions about how a so-called real school should be, and could be,
imagined. The very systems that came to signify school, what Tyack and Cuban (1995) call the "grammar of schooling" (graded classrooms, departmentalized instruction, standardized assessing processes—all of which constitute the organizational structures that govern instruction) were (and remain) social constructions, rooted in particular histories of particular groups, and designed to accomplish particular purposes. Commonly held assumptions about school delineate just one way some schools happened to have developed in this country over a particular stretch of time and among certain sorts of people. In a nation as heterogeneous as the United States, children from differing sociocultural and economic backgrounds eventually and "naturally" got different kinds of schools.

What my students got was a particular form of a starved-for-resources public school system, complete with bells, units, grades, forms, lines, measurements, behaviorist incentives, punishments and tests. Like Fordist plant-managers from bygone days of manufacturing, my students' classroom teachers were under ever-increasing pressure to "get" students to "test well" in high-stakes performances. Our entire district of roughly 25,600 students experienced frequent and convulsive changes in top-level management, administration, and curricular requirements. Vast numbers of students were being pulled out of the public schools and enrolled in the multiplying numbers of newly established charter schools around St. Louis, many of which were supported by funds by local universities and other private enterprise, and also by the political support of the mayor.

13 One hundred years post-Thorndike, we might ask what reigning socioeconomic concepts like globalization, "global competitiveness", neo-liberalism, and "the new service-based, high-tech economy" have to do with ideas about cognition and learning today. For answers, peek in any primary grade classroom in just about any elite independent school and watch the collaboration, critical thinking, and computer-supported ways of inquiry that are nurtured across the curriculum.
other elected officials, institutions of higher learning, and business leaders. (As I write, charter schools are expected to enroll 10,458 students in St. Louis in the 2010-2011 school year.) Apart from the challenges presented by the school system, my students contended with extracurricular concerns—aggressive dogs roaming the streets; school dropouts and truants threatening them on the walk home; gang- and drug-related violence distracting them from school work; family-wide economic, medical, and personal struggles. These factors contributed to an environment where nearly all of the critical thinking and authentic self-expression was happening outside of school. My students thought long and hard about the complicated reasons that things were the way they were in our community. They thought long and hard about the quality of the interpersonal and intergenerational relationships that mattered to them. They developed interesting theories about why the people they called "White kids in the county" had nicer schools, better equipment, and tastier lunches than they did. By contrast, school was for easy answers. Like an assembly line, school was a place where simple inputs led to simple outcomes.

Working inside this system, at least in my city, in my time, and among my students, I was dismayed and outraged. The public school system, as realized in the elementary schools in which I taught, was obviously ill-serving its population of children. Under the 2001 federal mandate of No Child Left Behind, and as a result of years of "the reading reform" movement, the daily curriculum had been stripped to the very barest bones of uncritical reading: decoding texts was both process and goal. Other subjects—Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Geography, Art, and Physical Education—had all
but vanished. Students were being taught (and teachers were expected to teach) in lockstep. In St. Louis, the year-long march led straight to April, when students would spend three weeks in silence behind a shut door participating in the state-mandated, high-stakes Missouri Assessment Program known locally as "the MAP test." This is what school was. And like so many teaching artists (and certain classroom teachers who resisted the system behind a closed door of their own), I came to redefine my stance as an enrichment specialist, shifting into a posture of interrogation and challenge: as a professional writer who practiced critical thinking, I re-conceptualized the essence and goal of my practice in order to nurture critical thinking among my students, and critical thinking was a direct challenge to the system as it was. It had to be! Advocacy groups were warning that NCLB was threatening to "increase the growing dropout and pushout rates for students of color, ultimately reducing access to education for these students" (Meier & Wood, 2004). Taking up the concept of liberation pedagogy (Freire, 1990; McLaren, 1998), I mustered everything I could within my program to counter the pernicious effects of this law.

I remember a passing conversation with a third grade teacher—an African American man in his thirties—serving in a neglected, dysfunctional school (now shuttered). Respected and liked by his colleagues and his students, this teacher was known for his high standards and expectations. We got to talking one day about the way things were, how insidious the mandated curriculum was, how difficult it was to generate

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14 The neglect of all of these content areas was distressing, but I always found my students' unawareness of basic geographical knowledge especially upsetting. Not to know the conceptual relationships between and among cities, states, nations, continents, and hemispheres was not to know the world. It was to be limited to non-participation and isolation in space.
the test scores required by the unfunded mandate of No Child Left Behind. He said, "But this place is doing what it's designed to do—churn out hamburger flippers. This economy needs a whole bunch of extra people who never get past elementary school to do those low-skill jobs. That's what schools like this are designed to do and expected to produce."

The most stunning aspect of this exchange was not its statement of a truth about capitalism as an economic system requiring a surplus of laborers at all times. Rather, and most bluntly, I was reminded again of the shameful injustice of the inequitable distribution of public resources revealed by the way, as a nation, we manage our schools. Along with Kozol (2005) I ask: Why should the hamburger-flipping population be generated and drawn exclusively from poor, under-resourced communities? There is not inherently any less dignity in non-professional or manual labor, but I knew I was teaching children with the aptitude to become neuroscientists, lawyers, and linguists; just as I knew that, without their family and social resources, many of the highly-endowed peers of my own children would be best suited, by both skill and inclination, for non-professional work. Also, these words were uttered by an educator working in direct opposition to the system's purpose as he understood that purpose. This teacher faced cynical hypocrisy at the highest levels of policy, and managed to teach children in spite of this awareness. Federal rhetoric may have been decrying asymmetries in academic achievement (down with the achievement gap!), but the fact remained that the system was producing exactly the kind of student and person the economy required loads of: people who would follow directions, walk in silent lines, fill in answers on answer sheets, accept the overall plan uncritically, and face prison-like separation and banishment (to the hall,
to the principal's office, to the in-school-suspension room, to the streets) as the consequence for most infractions.

Here in the belly of the beast, so to speak, I realized that I and this teacher (along with so many other teachers I have encountered in other schools) were trying to confound what school seemed to be aiming to accomplish. We wanted our students to resist becoming what the school, as a system part of a larger system, was trying to make of them: people who were simple and simply useful. (See Moyenda, 2008, for an inspiring declaration of an empowered pedagogical stance among African American students.) In the urban primary school classroom, I began to try to figure out ways of teaching and learning that I could feel good about, a kind of pedagogy that would embrace the cultural gifts and resources my students brought to school even as it affirmed the benefits of acquiring new skills, new ways of speaking, new ways of interacting that would benefit long-term educational careers, careers that would, eventually, lead them across sociocultural boundaries into new and unfamiliar cultural terrain where they might participate fully in civil society. From the very start, such practices were designed to be both racially and culturally competent (Teel & Obidah, 2008) and transformative (Ares, 2006; Giroux, 1988; Gutiérrez, 2008).

The Present Study: Inquiry Design

As I described briefly in chapter 1, I have designed this teacher research project under the expansive, commodious shelter offered by qualitative inquiry, which Saul (2008) has defined as:

an umbrella term for various philosophical orientations to interpretive research. Ethnography, case study, phenomenology, educational criticism, discourse analysis, and action research among others are examples of what we call qualitative research. Qualitative research uses in-depth studies of small groups of
people to guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive. Qualitative researchers seek to embrace ambiguities, uncertainties, and diversities of human experience through their work (E. W. Saul, personal communication, 2008).

As suggested by Maxwell (2005), this study has come into being as an "integrated and interacting whole" (p. 4) rather than as a linear progression of steps or stages. Over time, my conceptual framework, my purpose, my questions, and my analyses have shifted with respect to each other. Within the model of qualitative case study design, I have engaged in action research. As a mode of inquiry, action research can be broadly defined as "a continuous and participative learning process" that dates from work done by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 18). In its earliest forms, action research called for the researcher to bring together the experimental models and methods of social science investigation and social programs designed to address particular problems. Today, action research is enacted across disciplines, and may be described as systematic, reflexive, critical and self-critical inquiry into social phenomena or practice for the sake of changing that phenomena or practice (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996, p. 3).

In education, the practice is also known as teacher (or practitioner) research, and is about unpacking the everyday, seemingly naturalized baggage in the life of education and seeing what kind of complicated historical and ideological stuff has been hidden away (Noffke, 1995, p. 5). A clear and concise recent history of practitioner research as a field and an approach to inquiry in the context of scientism and neo-objectivist reforms in

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15 Descriptions and examples of teacher research are detailed in Goswami & Stillman (1987). Other examples and descriptions of teacher inquiry in urban classrooms and elsewhere can be reviewed in Fecho (2004), Ballenger (2009), Meier (1997), and MacLean & Mohr (1999).
education can be found in Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, pp. 8-11). In this volume, Cochran-Smith and Lytle also include many studies, projects, groups, and transnational efforts that make use of practitioner research approaches (2009, pp. 12-26); and share exemplars of practitioner research studies. With respect to early childhood through high school students, exemplary accounts of intercultural practice by White female teacher-researchers include work by Ballenger (1999), Christensen (2000, 2009), Landsman (2009), and Gussin Paley (2000). In a single volume, and with theoretical and methodological foundations similar to those undergirding this study, Mahiri (2000) explores the relationship between literacy learning and communication practices outside of the classroom (such as among sports teams) and inside of the classroom (such as in composition and literature classes). Mahiri concludes that 21st century classrooms must be sites where students and teachers co-create curricula in dialogic, culturally responsive ways. A related and important study by Rogers (2003) makes use of both ethnographic methods and critical discourse analysis, wide-angle and narrow lenses, in order to describe and interpret the literacies practiced by the members of an individual family across the domains of school and home.

At times I assigned myself the role of classroom microethnographer, as modeled a generation ago by Smith and Geoffrey (1968). Even more narrowly, I was also an ethnographer of classroom communication, which Gumperz (1986) defines as someone who takes "an inductive, empirical approach, starting with the description of natural speech in what is usually a single social group, as it varies from speaker to speaker and situation to situation" (p. 54). My own writing, speaking, enactments and subjectivities will be subjected to analysis and woven into all of my interpretations, with the ultimate
goal of improving my future practice, and ideally, the practice of other teachers. As
Noffke (1995) suggests, "this continual revisiting of issues and practices builds a new
kind of theory-practice relationship, one in which our understanding of education is
always partially correct and partially in need of revision" (p. 5).

I have taken up a phenomenological approach to both inquiry and data analysis
because I am interested in the experience of Writing to Connect as a whole. As a teacher,
I attempted every single day to maintain a thoughtful stance with respect to my students;
as a writer-researcher reconstructing the experience of the life-world my students and I
co-constructed, I attempt an equally thoughtful stance. This study begins and ends with
the lived experience of the Writing to Connect program: the words spoken, written, and
enacted by me and my students in a room of our own. What I heard, saw, and read in
these verbal and non-verbal experiences guided the shaping of my interpretations in
accordance with the principles of phenomenological interpretation in educational settings
(Eisner, 1998).

Thus I approached my data not with an intention to prove anything about
multiliteracies pedagogy, nor to gloat over the successful activities, nor to wallow in
shame over the less-than-perfect practices, but rather to see what actually happened in a
program that attempted to put critical multiliteracies into play (Seidman, 2006; van
Manen, 1990). In other words, although my mind was not devoid of ideas and theories
about what may have been going on in Writing to Connect, for the purposes of
trustworthy disclosure of patterns and themes, I attempted to cleave to my own data with
as open a perspective as possible. In the following section I will sketch my general
approach to qualitative textual analysis. More specific and detailed descriptions of my analytic processes will be included as needed in the chapters that follow.

I began to code by noting instantiations of particular patterns and themes (for example, "affect/emotionality," "visual design salience," "skin," or "power"). I traced these patterns and themes from example to example, and compared how the examples were similar and how different. In memos and charts, I listed the properties and exemplars of these themes (for example, which data showed me that a student was appealing to (or communicating by) feeling; or demonstrating visual layout awareness). Next I compared data from one domain to another (say, from writing to conversation), and built up a stronger, more layered sense of the explanatory possibilities. Sometimes, multiple themes collapsed into a single, more commodious term that seemed a better holding pen for that bundle of evidence. This process, known as reduction in grounded theory, is actually one of consolidation. A complete list of coding terms can be found in appendix C. A log that charts my analytic procedures step by step can be found in appendix D.

With respect to coding for composition-related qualities in particular, I will turn to the work of composition and assessment theorists Brian Huot (2002) and Bob Broad (2003), who argue in favor of embracing the complexities inherent in literacy-related inquiry. "Everything depends on being true to the data collected, yet analysis also invites participants to perceive, interpret, judge, and compose meaningful findings out of those data" (Broad, 2003, p. 132). Here Broad is referring to teachers and writing program

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16 I am deliberately avoiding use of the words “concept” and “category” so as not to blur and confound methodological boundaries, particularly those described in formal grounded theory methods as theorized by Glaser and Strauss (1967). On the other hand, in developing my initial coding procedures, I owe a great deal to that seminal text.
administrators; yet because he likens his proposed approach to writing assessment to the approach of qualitative research, the implications are applicable to literacy researchers more broadly. Broad's work sensitized my analyses to ways of being interpretively flexible and data-responsive. From the data, I developed lists of qualities that I valued in student writing, student behavior, in the program overall, in its relationship with the school, in my own classroom performance as a teacher and a writer, and other categories.

For procedures for examining and analyzing non-verbal qualities of composition and oral design I turned to the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001), and The New London Group (as presented in Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) who collectively offer a way to approach the multimodal, "integrated meaning making systems" available to all (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 26). More specifically, all of us in the Writing to Connect made use of modes that drew upon attributes and qualities of linguistic design, audio design, gestural design, visual design, and spatial design. The marginalia and illustrations around the borders of a composition, for example, offer insight into a student’s meaningmaking intentions; the darkness and stability of a pencil line reveals meaning about confidence. In what spirit are questions asked and how does a student like to arrange herself at a desk? What meanings seem to be conveyed by a gaze in a particular direction, by a smile, or by rhythmic bobbing? How were certain words stressed by physical moves or gestures, and what might this have to do with more general questions concerning teaching and learning? These moments—captured on videotape, audiotape, or in field notes—all reveal meaning and present opportunities for fruitful analysis.
Analysis of textual and visual design as described by Kress (2006) and multimodal discourse analysis as described by Norris (2004) offer approaches to these sorts of data, and offer an open field in which to situate the ever-expanding, multidisciplinary work of New Literacy Studies, described in chapter 1. Merging the recognition of a plurality of communicative systems (multimodality and multiliteracies) with the social account of literacy offered by New Literacy Studies is described and demonstrated in Pahl and Rowsell (2006). In particular, because African American English is a Discourse that draws upon so many meta-linguistic communicative modes (Rickford, 1999; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1977), multimodality necessarily lay at the heart of Writing to Connect. It therefore also lies at the heart of the following interpretations, which will take advantage of an array of channels into analysis that make room for all the ways my students and I communicated.

A final important dimension of the analytic procedures includes the means for addressing issues of power and empowerment in the classroom. By power, I mean most generally the actual or perceived ability of an individual or group of individuals to accomplish a conceived purpose. (I will refine my usage of the word power in chapter 4 when describing it as a domain of interpretation.) How power was distributed, contested, shaped, reshaped, negotiated, and (at times) left unexamined among participants can be revealed by analytic methods of critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2004), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1990; Giroux, 1988), and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Macedo, 2006; Marx, 2008; McClaren, 1998; Sleeter, 2008; and West, 1994). I agree with McLaren that observations are never theoretically neutral, never speak for themselves; and that
descriptions are loaded with ideology, and freighted with intertextual meanings (McLaren, 1998, p. xiv). In narrating and analyzing my place in the program, I have attempted to reckon candidly with the contingency of my own authority (ibid, p. 248). With respect to critical race theory and critical pedagogy, I approached the analytic enterprise from a stance that is critical, self-reflective, and reflexive.

In thinking about power, I was also aware of the vulnerability of young students with respect to adult researching practices and interests. I therefore conducted this study in accordance with the ethical considerations and constraints proposed and detailed by Zeni (2001, p. 153-165), which assert, among other considerations, the importance of making explicit the researcher’s own relationship to the participants. In this regard, my students and I clearly experienced our shared time from different sociocultural and socioeconomic perspectives. At times, calling overt attention to my researcher’s interest in getting a passing comment on record, I reminded students of my study and their role in it, and at times asked for them to repeat themselves once I had a notebook or tape recorder in hand. During conversations and discussions, I heard what my students said the way they said it, and made no attempt (unless "going explicit" seemed pedagogically called for) to call attention to our dialects one way or another. With respect to our explicit bidialectal activities, I regularly praised and affirmed their ways of speaking and writing, and openly speculated about the ways in which being able to move easily between and among forms of expression might help them do better in school. In our classroom talk, I might remark that in understanding style shifting, "you know something that most people

17 Copies of the Consent and Assent Forms I prepared for and obtained from all participants and submitted for Institutional Review Board approval can be seen in appendix E.
don't know" (chapter 7, p. 277).

Furthermore, as an adult with considerable professional expertise, I embodied and enacted authority throughout our encounters. Power in the classroom was not evenly distributed. Although the student participants had some agency in our shared classroom experience, and were often encouraged to identify and implement alternatives (Mirón & Lauria, 1998) when working on assignments or responding to me, we all knew that they were expected to do what I said, to follow directions, and to behave appropriately according to my sense of that word. For my students, participation in the Room For Writing was a privilege that could be revoked. At any time I could, should I deem it necessary, send them back to their regular classroom.

In accordance with what Cope and Kalantzis (1993) outline as one among their five “Basic Principles of an Explicit Pedagogy for Inclusion and Access” (p. 78), I customarily and intentionally situated myself as a person who knew some things about the world that were, to my students, worth knowing. I spoke with authority. I expected to be treated with respect. Furthermore, I took it upon myself to play a normative role with respect to how the students related to each other, and to each other's texts. Although I tried to make room for expressions of authentic feeling and conflict, I simultaneously insisted that the Room For Writing be a place of peace (Lensmire, 1997). In our community of writers, feelings mattered.

On the other hand, and concurrently, my age, ethnicity, formal schooling, and access to social goods situated me as a person with very limited knowledge with respect to the experiences of my students outside the classroom. I routinely acknowledged my lack of expertise in this regard, and deferred to the knowledge of my students, welcoming
opportunities for them to explain to me something outside the range of my knowledge. And yet even this reciprocity was fraught with complication: I was aware of the possibility that my students would feel that their stories might impress me with their shock value. I was aware of composing my face and body so as not to seem to be overreacting to their accounts. I was also aware of (and made use of) my classroom power to close or redirect a discussion that was heading too deeply and too irretrievably astray from my purposes of the moment.

In short, becoming a writer in my classroom was a consciousness raising enterprise. But because consciousness tends to want to gallop rather than walk, I viewed regulating our pace as part of my job, and was ever alert to the political consequences of my doing so. With Freire (1990) and Freire and Macedo (1987), I self-consciously and critically examined my practice in situ and re-examined my practice upon reflection in order to transform the lifeworld of the classroom for the better; this was my praxis. Such a process on my part would lead, I hoped, to greater agency on the part of my students, to a deepening sense in them of their own empowerment as learners. Subjecting all the language and behavior in the classroom—my own as well as that of the student-participants—to analysis was vital to this process. In the interpretations to come, I will be tracing whose expertise and power was privileged when, and with what results.

Overall, in the study as a whole, I will draw upon my rich array of data to disclose the workshop's processes as well as its products, the ways we got things written in context (see Geertz, 1973, for the necessity of construing meaning as nested within complex contexts), as well as the ways we communicated with each other before and after things got written. I will convey the look and feel of our day-to-day experience in
order to expose and articulate the ways in which my program both was and was not effective by its own terms; the analyses will reveal the power and potential of an emancipatory approach to literacy instruction and practice in its deep complexity.

Among students who participated in *Writing to Connect*, regular classroom teachers were often able to build across the curriculum on the trust, freedom of expression, and fluency nurtured in the program. Second graders who, in their homerooms, were loathe to put a single word on a page returned from Room From Writing (I was informed by their teachers) eager to write paragraphs and pages. One second grader went home and collected blank paper into a binder for a homemade journal. At the very least, if all we have to work with is test scores, style shifting "necessitates self-monitoring and self-evaluation, competencies that support the test-taking skills of Ebonics-speaking and other children" (Go-Paul-McNicol, Reid, & Wisdom, 1998) In practice, it was my belief that students who had even limited exposure to more open and flexible pedagogical practices in language arts might be (would be?) more inclined to make the personal and individual concessions demanded by the bureaucratic and administrative constraints of a school held hostage by the pressures to standardize and test. When the need to shift between language practices is transparent and made explicit, honest and complex learning can (will?) happen. Here, doubt and complication lie in the modals. Where my students are concerned, I cannot help but wonder with respect to each and every one of them, what instrumental role might I have played in the gray space between possibility and certainty? What kinds of new practices might be developed out of my interpretations that will expand the pedagogical repertoire available to other teachers situated in other spaces?
Scope

True to the nature of case study methods described by Merriam (1998), Dyson and Genishi (2005), and Stake (1995) among others, this inquiry is restricted to exploring and analyzing the processes and products of a single bounded and complex system: the writing program I taught for three years. My students and I created a classroom culture that created and was in turn constrained by its particular habits and customs. We had ways of speaking, ways of being, ways of "doing" a writing workshop that were particular to ourselves, a consequence of our multilayered interactions as socially situated individuals. This is not to say that I and my students were cut off from the world of the rest of the school. On a regular basis I had formal and informal encounters with classroom teachers, sometimes to check for their perspective on a particular student or a class dynamic. I routinely observed practices in the regular classrooms, generally before and after Writing to Connect sessions, but sometimes at unplanned moments of the day. My journals and field notes record adult-to-adult conversations with school administrators and staff such as the school custodians, the secretary, the cafeteria workers, the principal, and literacy coaches, as well as observations of daily life in and around the school building throughout the day. (Because I was frequently lugging a large box of classroom materials, parents walking their children to school typically held the door for me, allowing for impromptu friendly exchanges.) All of these interactions deepened my experience and practice as an enrichment specialist; they helped me do my
job better. In this study, however, I will be limiting the data I interpret to that which was generated in my classroom.\textsuperscript{18}

This study is limited in another way, too. In the context of teaching in real time, I read and responded to student writing first and foremost for meaning. Comprehending what my students were trying to express was paramount and primary; depending on the assignment or activity, formal or generic considerations were of variable importance. As I mentioned in chapter 1, this inquiry is not a global representation of all of the compositions of all of the students. That said, one of the reasons I have included a case study of a particular student in chapter 8 was so that I might, without restricting myself to the bidialectal and multiliteracies lens, think about every single piece of writing one student composed over three years. In approaching my data (as I will describe in chapter 3), I read through everything everyone wrote many times. In telling this overarching story, however, and with the exception of how I approached chapter 8, I will be training a high beam on the particular data which helped me address my research questions.

Registers, Tense, and Meanings

Wherever possible, I will tune my writing register to a pitch accessible to as many readers as possible. By register, I mean "the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type" (Solano-Flores, 2006, p. 6; see also Halliday, 1994). Above all, I will strive for a clarity of expression that conveys my presence in the data, analysis, and interpretation. To name but one feature of this discursive style, I will make use of the active (rather than passive voice) in order to make

\textsuperscript{18} The exceptions here are the ongoing relationships I have sustained with two individual students and their families. In addition to casual communicating by letter, telephone, and visits, I formally interviewed Angel and Kayode in their homes during the summer of 2009, and talked with their mothers, who were present throughout these visits.
explicit the agency of any action I report. (Compare "it was observed by the researcher that the students were reluctant to participate" with "I saw that my students had put down their pencils and were shaking their heads.") Such discursive choices have a long history in qualitative research, where researchers are at once participants and observers, and do not (on epistemological and methodological grounds) ever pretend that they could be just anyone or no one (Berg, 2005; Eisner, 1998; Zeni, 1985) Indeed, while I certainly value the findings of well-designed quantitative research, I consider absurd the notion that pure objectivity in teacher research, as a particular qualitative method, is possible. With Guba and Lincoln (1989) I agree that

Where the inquired into . . . is a human, or a human characteristic, the existence of interconnectedness is inescapable, even if only at so primitive a level as the well-known phenomenon of reactivity. Further, to suggest that it is possible for a human investigator to step outside his or her own humanness, for example, by disregarding one's own value, experiences, and constructions, is to believe in magic" (p. 67).

But above and beyond all of these reasons, I will write as interestingly and compellingly as I can because, to my way of thinking, that’s the writer’s job.

At times, however, particularly when parsing existing theory and developing new concepts, I will shift the lexical and syntactical aspects of my writing into a noticeably more academic register. Style shifting for my own expressive purposes—as I do in this study, and as I demonstrated in the classroom—was, incidentally and importantly, a crucial way I modeled for my students the transcendent message of Writing to Connect, one consistent with The Multiliteracies Project: an expanded array of literacies to choose from expands communicative ability and opportunity for participation in a greater number of environments.
As recommended by Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003), when describing and detailing the written and oral data of the study, as well as some aspects of context, I will use present tense in the conventional style of the literary or art critic, under the assumption that these data collectively constitute a relatively stable artifact for analysis and interpretation. However, when analyzing and interpreting the language, behavior, and character of the participants outside of the data, I will switch to the past tense. As Gutiérrez and Rogoff suggest, the present tense conveys a sense that this is just the way things are and will always be with respect to individuals. Using the past tense in an analysis locates the actions and lifeworlds of the participants in a definite time, and allows for the possibility that people and environments may be very different some other time.

Finally, although wherever possible I will rely on the everyday meanings of everyday words, a significant aspect to this study is its attempt to disrupt and dislodge particular meanings of particular words in order to disclose what kinds of discriminatory and harmful assumptions are locked into common usage. The following words or terms will be most salient.

*Language; Dialect*

Languages in use (as opposed to "dead" languages like Latin) are living, ever-evolving symbolic systems of thought and expression. I apply the concept of orderly heterogeneity from descriptive linguistics (Weinreich, U., Labov, W., & Herzog, M. 1968) in order to neutrally view all varieties of linguistic expression—whether we call the variety a language or a dialect (and I consider the terms interchangeable)—as patterned, rule-governed, and equally legitimate; and to accept that, for complicated
sociopolitical reasons, dialects lie along a continuum from socially privileged (prestige dialects), through neutrally accepted, to socially stigmatized. Sociopolitical power, in other words, determines whose ways of speaking get valorized. More simply put: "Everyone speaks dialects" (Preston, 1993, p. 4).

Furthermore, my working concept of the terms language and dialect includes the layers of verbal communication detailed by linguists, who suggest that any and all languages/dialects are constituted by phonetics (the associations of sounds with symbols), phonology (pronunciation), morphology (the way words are formed from their meaningful parts), syntax (the arrangement of words in larger units like sentences); lexicosemantics (word meaning); and pragmatics (how words are used to accomplish particular outcomes or convey particular meanings in context). This study will be returning repeatedly to this value-neutral way of understanding verbal expression.

*Standard English; Mainstream American English; General American English; Language of Wider Communication; hegemonic English*

The prestige dialect in the United States (what might be heard on the evening news) is also called informal Standard English, and will be defined here as a variety of English characterized by the relative absence of stigmatized features. In this study I will use the term "mainstream American English" (MAE). With my students, I used the term Standard English (SE), simply because that was the term they were already accustomed to hearing in other school domains and elsewhere.

*African American English; African American Vernacular English; Black Vernacular English; Black English; Ebonics; Black American English Black Communications; African American Language*
There has been debate in the scholarship concerning how to name this language—whether to call it a vernacular form of English, a dialect of English, or an African Language System. Linguists who study African American Vernacular English understand it to be a language realized in multiple ways and styles depending on speaker, audience, and social purpose (Smitherman, 1977; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006). Other scholars (Dandy, 1991; Meier, 2008) use the term "Black Communications" to embrace the complex web of communication that includes the codes, acts, styles, nonverbal behaviors, special discursive behaviors, sociolinguistic rules, and moral teachings available to any AAE speaker. Ernie Smith writes that Ebonics "represents an underlying psychological thought process. Hence, the non-verbal sounds, cues, gestures, and so on that are systematically used in the process of communication by African-American people [phonological and pragmatic features] are encompassed by the term as well" (E. Smith in Perry & Delpit, 1998, p. 54).

While there are differences in nuance and connotation among the various labels, in this study I will use the term African American English (AAE), currently in favor among many scholars of color and eminent sociolinguists such as Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006). Direct citations will of course retain the author's own way of denoting the language. In my classroom with students, however, I used the word Ebonics. I did so because of the way in which the word Ebonics, coined by Robert L. Williams in St. Louis, Missouri, at a 1973 conference, suggests a rich set of meanings, literally "black sounds" (R. Williams, 1975). Furthermore, my students often knew at least one person whose name was Ebony, and the conversations that arose out of semantic considerations—what is the linguistic root of the name Ebony? what kind of tree is an
ebony tree? where does it grow? what color is it? why would people choose to name a child after this tree?—helped them establish a sociocultural connection to the very name we used for their own speech patterns.

Bidialectal

Bidialectal is a form of discourse characterized by the familiarity with and usage of two dialects. The bidialectal teaching practices in this study make use of both MAE and AAE. The term bidialectal has been around and used by scholars for decades (Meier, 2008; Smitherman, 1977; H. Taylor, 1979). I used it while conducting the study; I used it when talking about the study. For the sake of continuity in scholarship, I will use it throughout this study. On the other hand, during the process of writing up my research and reading in the literature, I began to feel deeply constrained by the limitations that "two-ness" embeds in the word. Two dialects are simply not enough; teaching and learning in two dialects does not reflect the sense of the plurality of Discourses (the multiliteracies) I was hoping to make available to my students. And of course, any given speaker can make use of features from both AAE and MAE in any one utterance; the language of an utterance is, in a manner of speaking, constructed along a continuum. Syntax can reflect MAE, while lexicon remains AAE, or vice versa. A sentence can start off fully MAE and wind up, for the sake of making a point, in AAE. There is no such thing as an essentially pure dialect. Furthermore, all of my practice in schools took place in what Guerra (1998) calls the volatile frontier, what I might call a zone of transcultural communication. My classroom was a place where dialects came into contact with each other and generated hybrid ways of communicating. Even in the hallway, where I might
chat informally with teachers, I was aware of how my discursive habits might strike those from backgrounds that differed from my own.

An important and countervailing voice in the historical conversations around bidialectalism a generation ago was that of White linguist James Sledd, who rejected bidialectalism outright. In his view, imposing and expecting MAE fluency on and from AAE-speakers was caving into the demands of a hegemonic linguistic majority, if not notions of White supremacy. Why, Sledd asked, should anyone have to master a second Discourse in order to gain access to social goods and other social benefits (Sledd, 1969, 1973, 1983). Many African American and White scholars countered Sledd's argument with everyday exigencies; unless and until the racial landscape in the United States was thoroughly and radically transformed, denying African Americans access to the reigning code of power (mainstream American English) was impossible and unjust. Along with these scholars, I stand by the principles of bidialectalism as a pedagogical practice; on the other hand, I agree with Sledd that in a utopia—a genuinely pluralistic civic world—all communicative practices would be able to rely on fair and equitable ways of being heard. It is too bad that Sledd did not live to hear the first African American President of the United States shaping certain phrases of his inaugural address with preacherly rhetorical flourishes. For all of the above reasons, I use bidialectal with reservations.

*Style Shifting*

For this study, I propose that style shifting refer to a speaker or writer making adjustments in his/her communicative act that reflects changes in one or more levels (lexical, phonological, syntactic, semantic, etc.) between one dialect and another. Speakers may shift piecemeal and recursively between AAE and MAE, for example,
depending on social context and rhetorical purpose moment to moment. In this sense, I will rely on style shifting in lieu of code switching, the more familiar term. I prefer the more fluid, contingent connotation of shift for describing what we do when we move between and among Discourses. To my ear, the word switch suggests a more binary, final, lock-stock-and-barrel change.

**Discourse (with a capital D)**

I borrow the definition of Discourse directly from Gee (1996), according to whom the word refers to the ways "of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people" (p. viii). Language per se is only one aspect of Discourse (albeit a complex one). As Gee theorizes, all humans raised among other humans will make use of what Gee calls a primary Discourse.

**Literacy/Literacies/Multiliteracies**

I take up Street's (1995) use of "literacy" as meaning "the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (p. 1). In doing so, I follow Street in rejecting conceptualizations of literacy as something autonomous, a self-contained body of skills to be captured, taught, and learned in a set of lessons. I have responded to the position statement on literacies adopted by the National Council of Teachers of English, which asserts that literacies are "multiple, dynamic, and malleable," that they are "inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups" (2008). Finally, I will also rely upon Gee's description of literacy as "mastery of a second Discourse...Literacy is always plural: literacies" (2006, p. 143). While secondary Discourses (literacies) can be acquired/learned anywhere, one place they
certainly can be (and are often) acquired/learned is school. Multiliteracies refers to the multiple ways an individual can make meaning within a particular language depending on place and purpose, and also to the ways literacies can differ and range across different languages/dialects.

Writing Workshop

I consider a writing workshop to be a place where, following the guidance of a writer or teacher, people can cultivate meaningful identities as authors. A writing workshop makes time and space for all of the various activities that authors engage in: talking, thinking, reading, acknowledging feelings, moving around a room, sharing work, and revising. Before ever beginning to teach, I was indebted to the models suggested a generation ago by people like Peter Elbow (1973), Lucy Calkins (1986), Donald Graves (1991) and Nancie Atwell (1987). However, I must also note (not for the first time) that while I began my work in schools as a practitioner and leader of what might be termed the typical process-centered writing workshop, which I will describe in chapter 3, my experiences from 2002 to 2005 and the experience of Writing to Connect that followed transformed me into a more hybrid kind of practitioner. In many ways I allied myself theoretically with African American scholars and critical pedagogy theorists in order to push against some of the more open-ended workshop customs; as a person who feels herself to have many voices, I generally resisted the "find your individual voice" spirit some White teachers proposed for nonmainstream students, and favored literacy activities and practices that were more communal, contextual, polyphonic and collaborative than those which tend to romanticize the lone, individualistic writer. (See Dressman, 1993, for a critique of those he terms "the cultural romantics of literacy workshops" and of effects
of 1980s-style writing workshop methods on nonmainstream students.) *Writing to Connect* was truly a collective third space, one that mixed and blended traditional, progressive, and process-centered methods of instruction with boundary-blurring activities and interactions that did not seem to be one thing or another, but something else that, in the chapters that follow, I will describe.

*Race/Racial*

Other than to denote a socially constructed category based on various appearance-related features, I wholeheartedly reject the usage of these words that understands them as signifying a physiological or biological trait or set of traits that can be used to classify human beings below the level of species. In so doing, I recruit the findings of current scientific inquiry in the field of molecular genetic research (Templeton, 2003). There are no subspecies (or races) of humans; we are a remarkably genetically homogeneous life form, with no sharp boundaries marking genetic variation. Chimps may be said to have races; even Ozark lizards have races. But human beings, who began migrating out of (and back into) Africa nearly two million years ago, eventually spreading populations (and DNA) through Europe, Asia, through the Pacific Islands, and into the Americas, are simply too recursively mobile to have evolved in "branches." We humans are, however, variable at the level of the individual. Molecular geneticists explain genetic differences by looking at geography, at where people live. Discarding the word *race* as both misunderstood and misused in current common parlance, I will aim for more semantically precise ways of noting cultural and ethnic distinctions.

On the other hand, in spite of the general misunderstanding constructed and sustained around the word *race*, I understand the word as having a denotative and
connotative history, and do not mean to suggest that it does not. I will continue to call
the blunt fact of the social problem that we call racism *racism*. I will take up the
definition of racism offered by Spears (1999), who defines racism as a set of "behaviors
which indirectly or directly support the inequality of racial hierarchy" (p. 21). I also
accept the concept of "racialized identities" as used in Critical Race Theory (Ladson-
Billings & Tate, 1995; McLaren, 1998). Although the historical and historiographical
constructions around race and racism are beyond the scope of this study, I am interested
in the work of scholars whose accounts unfix and destabilize the meanings that have been
attached to these words over time (Greer, Mignolo, & Quilligan, 2007, pp. 1-15 and 188-
202).

*Black/White*

Although I will be using these words as descriptors of appearance and apparent
ethnicity, I must also declare them to be semiotically and semantically problematic.
Human beings do not come in white or black like patent leather purses or Mary Janes.
From time to time I called attention to this problem in class, when as a class we were
discussing the relationship among skin color, ethnicity, and identity. I would hold a piece
of copy machine paper next to my arm and ask a student if the paper was the same color
as my arm. The answer was always no. On the other hand, there is surely is a *we* that
accepts (a capitalized version of) White and Black as validly connoting something about
who *we* are. Although his father was White, Frederick Douglass was enslaved and Black.
President Obama is Black (even though his mother was White and his "Blackness" was
called into question by some people). Oprah is Black. Hillary Clinton is White. In this
sense, I am White, even though my skin in winter is more or less the color of a popsicle
stick, and only a shade lighter than the lightest-skinned student I taught, and there was once a time when Jewish people in America (like people from Ireland, Italy, and other immigrant populations) were not considered to be White.¹⁹ And what does it mean, anyway, when fourth graders, children who have known me for three years, say, "You ain't White, Ms. Schaenen."

"What am I?" I ask.

"You mixed."

Scholars who draw upon Critical Race Theory and the field of White Studies have a great deal to say about why "White" (with a capital W) must be conceptualized as a marked ethnicity just as Black (with a capital B), Latino or any other ethnic descriptor (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Marx, 2008; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1993; Solórzano; 1997). For an especially rich discussion of the construction and explication of the meanings of Whiteness, see McLaren (1998, pp. 280-290). I am keenly aware of the call for teachers to put race and ethnicity (including their own) on the table for classroom discussion (Christensen, 2000, 2009; Howard, 1999; Landsman, 2009; Landsman & Lewis, 2006); in practice, I do. Indeed, in chapter 6, I will take up concepts of power, identity, and emotionality/relationships to discuss why my students might have felt the need to assure me that I was not White. For the moment, it is sufficient to state that I will use the capitalized versions of White and Black to mean what readers generally accept them to mean, but that I do so with sharp reservations.

¹⁹ See Brodkin (2006). For additional historical insight into the words and rhetorical metaphors surrounding ethnic difference, see Carstarphen (1999).
Keeping It Real

Finally, I have scooped into each chapter large spoonfuls of raw data. In the first place, as a reader of teacher research, I know that I always enjoy perusing the unfiltered transcripts and texts drawn from other people's classrooms. Reading these texts is as close as outsiders can come to being flies on the wall, co-witnesses of classroom experiences. Second, I believe that the reader benefits from having even partial, limited, and framed access to the unmediated interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences shared by a study's participants. Third, presenting raw data leaves my experience open to alternative interpretations; in an ideally democratic world of scholarship, I welcome the voices of those who might read the world of Writing to Connect differently than I have. Fourth, mindful of the significance of authenticity in self-expression and discursive intercourse so important to my students, it is my hope that exposure to and reminders of the fresh, intimate ways my students and I formed a community of writers—and the ways we reflected upon moments that mattered—will sound and sustain an appropriate underlying chord throughout the analysis and interpretation that follows.

"Listen when you talk," writes Herbert Kohl (in Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2002). "Understand that you are listened to as well as talking to your students. And sometimes laugh at the things you’ve said under pressure and share that laughter with your students and talk, talk, talk about how people speak and listen. We have to become a more literate society and I think literacy will not come through testing and an obsession with standards, but through patient, intelligent, and sensitive speaking, reading, and listening” (p. 161). Kohl's advice for teachers seems apt for writers, too. Whatever else this study
may be, it is certainly—at heart—talk, talk, talk about how people speak, listen, read, feel, and write.

Indeed, this study may be regarded as addressing the final sentence of the Students' Right to Their Own Language resolution passed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1974 and reaffirmed in 2003 (which I quote in full in chapter 5): if, as the resolution reads, "teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language," what can teacher educators do to help in this aspirational process? All teachers learn from examples, from stories from the field. This case study offers a story for the primary grade classroom teacher, one that reveals how a classroom that respects dialect diversity is co-created by teacher and students. It is my hope that this longitudinal study will enliven, advance and deepen the conversation about the practical applications and efficacy of bidialectal pedagogy, specifically as practiced by a White teacher in the primary grades among African American students.20

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20 This claim also signals a limitation of the study: I can only speak about a writing workshop in which the teacher was female and White and the students all African American. Although I have conducted itinerant writing workshops in more diverse classrooms, I have not drawn upon the specific data generated from that experience.
CHAPTER 3
WHERE WE WERE, WHO WE WERE, AND WHAT WE DID

I am a writer. I suppose I think that the highest gift that man has is art, and I am audacious enough to think of myself as an artist—that there is both joy and beauty and illumination and communion between people to be achieved through the dissection of personality. That's what I want to do. I want to reach a little closer to the world, which is to speak to people, and see if we can share some illuminations together about each other.

—words by playwright Lorraine Hansberry posted on the door of the Room For Writing

In this chapter I will describe the setting of Writing to Connect and the people involved in the program. I will also describe the way I conducted a writing workshop, and some of the literacy scholarship that supported the reasons I did so.

Our Places

As I have mentioned, Hutsch Elementary was located on the north side (locally known as the African American side) of St. Louis. In the heart of a neighborhood "characterized by intense disadvantage" (Miller, 2008, p. 3), the property was tucked a few blocks inside the intersection of two large commercial boulevards. Hutsch was a neighborhood school, part of a city-wide district whose enrollment dropped from 117,000 students in the late 1960s to about 25,600 students in the 2008-2009 school year. The

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imposing three-story brick building, designed by a highly regarded architect of school buildings in the last century, opened its doors at the dawn of the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{22} Rising above the surrounding homes, the front of the school building faced east. A grass lawn was maintained by the building custodian. Three raised garden beds indicated a project once begun but now abandoned. Behind the school was a large paved yard used for recess. White lines used for arranging the students into rows and lines were painted onto the asphalt. Adjacent to the yard behind hurricane fencing was a parking area for teachers (although I always parked along the sidewalk right in front of the building). The north side of the property was undeveloped. Next door to the school on the north side was a fenced-in, grass-covered sinkhole about a block square. Perhaps this was once a reservoir. I have never seen anyone on or near this property. The south side ran along a small side street. An emergency exit door where we gathered during fire drills opened onto this street, but otherwise nobody went there.

The homes around Hutsch were generally modest two-story bungalows, also of brick (river towns make use of mud). Some were in good repair, with well-tended front yards and tidy porches; other houses were in poor condition, with broken windows, dented roofs, evidence of fire damage, litter, and other indicators of a neighborhood riddled with poverty, social isolation, low socioeconomic status, and residential transience. My students tended to refer to their neighborhood as "the 'hood" or "the ghetto."

\textsuperscript{22} A photograph of the exterior of the school building can be seen in appendix F.
For the population of people living in the Hutsch zip code, the average income (in 2008)\textsuperscript{23} was just over $20,000 (compared with the St. Louis median income of $34,000). The average home in the neighborhood was worth just under $38,000 (far less than the median home value of $64,000 for a home in St. Louis City.) More than 25 percent of the neighborhood's population lived below the poverty line. Many neighborhood residents were characterized as "the working poor."\textsuperscript{24} Within two blocks of school was one small storefront, a local source (not on the major commercial strip) for sweets, snacks, sodas, and limited household staples.

I lived with my family in the leafy western edge of town in a three-story brick Edwardian house built just after the World's Fair hosted by St. Louis in 1904. Within a quarter-mile of my house was the campus of a large private research university, whose grounds were kept by a host of landscapers. Our immediate neighborhood was residential, within walking distance of shops, restaurants, movie theaters, cafés, concert venues, and other bustling commercial sites. From my house, it was a twelve-minute drive to Hutsch; on school mornings I took Dr. Martin Luther King Drive\textsuperscript{25} east before turning north.

\textsuperscript{23} Demographic data was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 2 (SF 2) and Summary File 4 (SF 4) and www.zip-codes.com.
\textsuperscript{24} The father of one of my students held two jobs: one as a salesperson at Toys-R-Us and another at Wal-Mart; the grandmother of another student worked at Burlington Coat Factory.
\textsuperscript{25} Street names in United States cities suggest a neighborhood's sociocultural identity: about 730 thoroughfares are named for Dr. King in 39 states. Place name scholars point out the complexity of MLK-named streets as a marker in African American neighborhoods, one which can denote a mixture of qualities, including community pride, inequitably racialized space, failure, promise, and hope (Alderman, 2006).
People

The student body at Hutsch was 100 percent African American. Teachers and administrators, however, were of mixed ethnic and cultural background; about half would have been considered White. Student participants in this study included more than 100 second, third, and fourth grade children who came to the Room For Writing between September 2005 and May 2008 in order to participate in my program, Writing to Connect. Each class of about ten students was scheduled to meet once a week for one hour, although frequently we ran over, and occasionally we ran under. The students who came to the room were chosen in collaboration with the classroom teachers, who selected the students because of what we perceived to be their individual aptitude and need for opportunities to explore modes of verbal practices not available to them in the regular classroom environment.

When selecting participants in the program, classroom teachers also considered the benefits to the students who did not come to the Room For Writing. The students who remained in the classroom were able to receive concentrated, individual, and often remedial attention from their teachers. For some grades during some years, however, on account of diminishing school population, I was able to invite all of the students in a given grade to the Room For Writing program. Of my 103 total student sample, I taught 10 students for three consecutive years; 18 for two years, and 75 for a single year.

The sample for this study is a fair representation of the Hutsch student population as a whole, and, even more generally, a fair representation of the wider community of the city's north side. These were children who, for the most part, tried to do their school work, tried to pay attention, played when given the chance, sought kindness and
understanding among teachers, and felt love and loyalty for the people who cared for them. With the help of family, friends, and adults at school, many had developed positive protective strategies and attitudes of resilience (including pride in their own style and artistry, spiritual sustenance, and critical awareness of historical realities) that led to successful coping with the expectations of school (Spencer & Tinsley, 2008). I will also describe children who came to the Writing to Connect in spite of classroom reputations as troublemakers and/or underachievers. Finally, the student population described here is also a typical subset of the entire public school population of St. Louis. A 2006-2007 study in our city of 162 children ages six to thirteen found that these public school children experienced serious psychological effects of community violence and violence in school. The symptoms they reported, including sleep problems, fears, depression, and disordered behavior, were consistent with the symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Shields, N., Pierce, L., Nadasen, K., 2009). The talk, texts, and behavior I observed (or heard about from classroom teachers) and discipline reports corroborated this finding.

The dialect spoken by most of my students most of the time was both phonologically and syntactically African American English (AAE). There were times, however, when their spoken language would be mainstream American English (MAE) syntactically and AAE phonologically. (Two of the student participants in this study spoke primarily MAE, an interesting exception which I will discuss in chapter 6). All of the students in this study aurally understood both AAE and MAE, and many of the students could and did write in MAE. With respect to reading development, I take up the terms "emergent," "beginning," and "fluent." used by literacy educators such as
Tompkins (2007). My second grade students were generally beginning readers, while those in grades 3 and 4 generally ranged from late beginning to fluent. In chapter 7, when I explore multiliteracies in depth, I will take up detailed examination of how the various levels of language construction affected teaching and learning.

Teacher participants include four classroom educators. Although I worked with several cooperating teachers during my years at Hutsch, four in particular consented to participate in this study. Three of these teachers (including me) were White; two were African American. No teachers turned down the invitation to participate in the research. In soliciting perspectives from teachers, I approached those with whom I had a particularly interactive and collaborative relationship. The language of the classroom teachers varied considerably along a continuum marked by features of AAE, MAE, and variations of Southern (or rural) English.

From each of my participants, students and teachers, I obtained (and retain on file) signed assent and consent forms that accord with the national and university standards established with respect to the conduct of ethical research on human subjects. The participating students and their parents all read and understood detailed descriptions of this study; students signed their forms during class time; parents gave passive consent. The teachers read, understood, and signed informed consent forms during school hours. (All of these forms are shown in appendix E.)

For the most part, my spoken language in class conformed to the morphosyntactic patterns of MAE, although close scrutiny will disclose exceptions to the general pattern. With respect to written forms, I am capable of composing texts in a wide range of genres. I was raised in New York City among a privileged, semi-observant Jewish family that
provided me with various enrichment activities valued in that social milieu—thrice-weekly religious school; music lessons; books and a room of my own; sleepaway camp; tickets to plays, ballets, musicals, and operettas; country retreats; travel abroad; and athletic opportunities. As a child and young adult, I always knew that I did not do anything to deserve the wealth and privilege I was born into. Ever since, it has seemed to me that fate, luck, personal connections, and timing have very much to do with determining outcomes in life. A bossy first-born, I was the child who was always claiming this or that parental decision to be "fair" or "no fair." My parents divorced when I was ten years old. Although my father played a significant role in the lives of my sister and me (we had regularly scheduled visits with him), our mother is the one who assumed primary responsibility for raising us. Among the many differences between me and my students, the experience of a matriarchal home life was something I had in common with many of them.

In the 1990s, I happily spent six years entirely out of the paid workforce in order to take full-time care of my three young children; indeed, I never did go back to work full time, but managed to wedge what might be termed my professional life of teaching and writing into the hours my children were either in school or asleep. When graduate school, meetings, or other work-related obligations increasingly required my absence, my husband was generally available to provide care and attention (although by then our children were capable of staying home alone, which they did). My husband, a high school English teacher, provided the lion's share of our household income; and my mother helped us financially all along the way.
I mention these years at home with my children for two related reasons. First, the kind of at-home mother I was trained me to pay attention to the overall experiences of developing children in school in a comprehensive and theoretical way. I had taken, it might be said, a close personal interest in the psychosocial and psycholinguistic development of three people from birth on. I tended to reflect upon the meaning of the experiences my children did and did not have (to the extent of at times practicing the benign neglect I knew was necessary for growth). I watched and noted how gross motor developments (deictic gestures, body positioning, facial expression, and so forth) related to verbal accomplishment. I paid attention to the ways in which physical needs (for food and sleep) related to emotional and intellectual development. I valued feelings and communication. I made time for free, unstructured play. As much as I could, I resisted and publicly challenged in my writing for newspapers, books, and on-line magazines the 1990s trend that kept very young children busy and overcommitted in activities, sports, and scheduled play dates. I limited television watching. (See Schaenen, 2001; Schaenen, 2006.) Most relevant to this study, I both nurtured and witnessed the emergence of my children's literacy: I was present for the initial scribbles, the turning of language in time into language in space.

For this reason, the at-home experience (although informal) was foundational with respect to the development of my abilities and identities as an observer and nurturer of the developing literacies of young people who were not my children. In manifold ways, I fashioned my identity as a writing enrichment specialist (as described in chapter 2 and chapter 4) in a classroom with other people's children out of what I had done in my own home with my own children: enjoying their company, caring about our time
together, talking, reading, responding to the unsaid as well as to the said, conscious of the possibility of words to harm as well as help (Delpit, 1995). While in the classroom I took into account the interesting and significant cultural differences between my students and my children (not to mention differences in ways of mothering); I certainly also drew upon the roots of impulses and insights I had as a mother: the quality of our shared classroom experience very much mattered to me.

I would be remiss not to reflect upon my motives for remaining engaged in and committed to a community so different from the one in which I was raised, so different from the one in which I was raising my children. What was I doing with other people’s children? Coles (1986) raised a version of this question when trying to understand the motives of young White civil rights workers who chose to remain human rights activists in the south long after their peers from the north had gone back home. What pressing need of my own did teaching in an urban school fulfill? Without airing unduly the private matters of my heart and spirit, I can say that I take quite seriously the examples set by Jewish activist/thinkers/writers, people like Abraham Joshua Heschel, Grace Paley, Rabbi Michael Lerner, and even Emma Goldman (although I do not favor violence as a means toward progress). Although my children were raised in the security of home, education, and financial means, I always believed, and I still do, that it is not enough for my own children to be assured of having their needs met. To paraphrase a slogan that is nonetheless true for being a slogan: until we are all free, none of us are truly free. I entered the urban schools because that is where Springboard put me; I stayed because I

26 For a critical analysis of “mothering discourse” as revealed by middle class parent-education measurement instruments, see Prins & Toso (2008); for a discussion of normative empathy in the African American community as a concept relevant to mothering and caregiving, see McDonald (1997).
felt (and continue to feel) outrage with respect to injustices in education, and because I felt that I could be useful there.

And finally, of course, there is the principal fact of my being a writer, which I enlarged upon in chapter 2 and will return to in chapter 4. As a writer, I am especially interested in the details that reveal how people both shape and are shaped by the larger world. I enjoy thinking about how characters make things happen, and how they respond when things happen to them. It seems to me that writerliness requires linguistic flexibility, dexterity, adaptability, and self-consciousness. Reflexivity is evident throughout my data (for example, when reflecting upon a week's work in the blog I raise questions about my motives or my practice, and voice ideas about changing approaches from week to week); it is also evident in the analyses that will follow. Indeed, throughout the program and this lengthy reflection upon the program I maintained a dual consciousness that allowed me to engage in a particular practice and reflect upon that practice. Should future opportunities arise to conduct workshops, reflexivity will remain central to my practice because reflexivity is central to me.

Program

The Room For Writing was located on the top floor in the northeast corner of the building. (A floor plan of the room and photographs of its interior can be found in appendix G.) I had taught in the school's regular classrooms the previous school year, and Hutsch administrators had given me freedom to arrange and decorate the room in whatever way I saw fit. As the lead specialist involved in launching the program, I knew I wanted to create a feeling of spaciousness, of air and light and movement. (I had been in too many classrooms where towers of textbooks, workbooks, and dusty unused
equipment blocked students’ views of each other and of the teacher.)\textsuperscript{27} I consequently designed the space to be as clutter-resistant as possible. I wanted a space that would accommodate talking, reading, writing, lounging, playing games, and storing files and books. The educative effects of the environment were imagined at every stage (Dewey, 1944/1916, p. 19).

The summer before the opening of the Room For Writing, I recruited my family to help me move in. With their help, I constructed and installed the signature feature of the space: a window treatment for the nine-foot double hung windows along the 20-foot eastern wall of the classroom. Panels of sheer translucent silk, each a different color and about 36 inches wide, hung independently from a single light crosspiece. When one or more windows were open, the breeze blew these curtains in or out depending on the air currents and whether or not our room door was open or closed. (When they were drawn outside, anyone on the street saw multicolored, flag-like shapes fluttering against the sky.) Nearly all of the three other walls of the room were covered with slate chalkboard. The chalkboards on the western wall were divided into panels affixed to six closet doors that rotated open in unison by means of a brass handle on the far left. Open, these six doors revealed a wide shallow cloak room. This architectural feature of the room, one of my favorites, became integral to many of the activities and lessons I planned. With the panels fully opened, the six individual segments of chalkboard were perpendicular to the room. Half of the students could be writing on the chalkboard without the rest of us seeing what was written. When the closet doors were rotated closed, the whole class could see the now-assembled board as a whole.

\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, it was my complaint about this particular feature of certain classroom environments that inspired my advisor, Wendy Saul, to coin the name, Room for Writing.
Bookshelves lay along the eastern wall under the window. Three months into the program, I set up a single computer and printer in the southeastern corner. A bean bag chair and a carpet invited lounging with books, and served as a place where we could play games, read aloud, or simply chat informally. Generally, I arranged the child-size desk-and-chair units in a circle in the center of the room and occupied one myself, squeezing in and under as best I could. A large teacher's desk stood perpendicular to the southern wall of the room. File cabinets stored papers and supplies. Just inside the door of the room a bulletin board bore selected newspaper clippings (including those by me), and any letters or notes we received from others. In the hall outside the room we posted and taped samples of student work. A detailed description of the material culture of the room will follow when I describe the nature of the data.

Very often, when the windows were open, sounds of neighborhood activity entered our learning space. Drivers of cars typically sped down what was a residential street, engines revving at full blast, often with radios blaring. Dogs barked. The monthly street sweeper always came through on my teaching day, temporarily drowning out for a minute or so the sound of our voices. If our room door was open, from the classroom across the hall we could hear a teacher speaking forcefully to her students, reminding them to focus, get it right, or just simply behave themselves. Sounds, room temperature, and the intense morning sunlight that streamed into our top floor room were often subjects of group discussion and negotiation as we raised or lowered windows and shades, and open or closed our door.
Processes

I confess I like to label and count things. Names and numbers help me tell stories. So even though I was running a writing program, there were times when I counted. I could, for example, keep track of how many times each of my students had ever seen a handgun (for most, many times) and compare this amount to the times I had (zero); I could count how many students lived in rental apartments rather than owned homes; I could count how many times a student used African American English (AAE) features in a given piece of writing. I could count how many times during a particular class I said gonna instead of going to. I could look up census data to tell me the median income of people living within the zip code of Hutsch ($27,300). And while I have taken these numbers in account in my interpretations, the story I tell here will mostly rely upon what got said and written in Writing to Connect; what got written, and also how it came to be written—out of what processes. For this reason, I will now describe the theories and methods out of which I designed my lesson plans and classroom activities generally, before detailing the bidialectal practices more specifically.

Writing Workshop

In chapter 2, I defined a writing workshop as a place where, with the guidance of a writer or teacher, people can cultivate meaningful identities as authors. I will expand upon the kind of writing identity I valued in chapter 4. For now, however, I will simply say that a writing workshop makes time and space for all of the various activities becoming an author entails, including reading, talking, thinking, acknowledging feelings, moving around, sharing work, and revising. The supreme goal of Writing to Connect was
to instill and nurture in all students a sense of joy in the process of writing and an awareness of the power that comes with the ability to engage skillfully and meaningfully in all forms of written communication. Thinking, writing, re-thinking, re-writing, (re-thinking and re-writing as necessary), editing, and publishing: these are but metamorphic stages of thoughts and feelings, attitudes and values, becoming a piece of writing. For every child, the program aimed to set in motion an “authoring cycle” in skill-supportive ways. Harste, Short, and Burke (1988) identified seven kinds of activities that allow all students to “experience authorship” in these modes. These authors suggest that all lessons:

1. be functional;
2. encourage social interaction;
3. be rich in texts and contexts;
4. encourage cross-curricular understanding;
5. link conventional forms to their particular uses, helping students recognize and negotiate style and custom;
6. provide a variety of audiences for student authors;
7. allow learners to explore the complexity of natural communication.

As these authors write, "Reading and writing…involve authoring. They are processes in which we originate, negotiate, and revise ideas. For us, meaning generation is the essence of learning. This belief has led us to propose that a curricular model that highlights authoring will also facilitate learning” (p. 5). Underscoring the importance of publishing to fully realized authorship, my fellow specialists and I produced a Room For Writing anthology at the end of every year. Every student who participated in the program
contributed a piece of writing to this book and received a copy of it. We usually spent our final day of class reading through it proudly.28

The basic instructional model for the workshop was assembled from three principal sources: Creating Classrooms for Authors: The Reading Writing Connection (Harste, Short, Burke 1988, cited above); Writing Essentials: Raising Expectations and Results While Simplifying Teaching (Routman 2005); and Nancie Atwell's classic writing workshop text, In the Middle (1998). In general I tried to move every single student into a frame of mind in which he or she wrote for specific readers and meaningful purposes; embraced language in the fullest possible sense, and grew comfortable with the practice of revision (Routman, 2005). At the same time, however, recalling the work of Dressman (1993) and others, I was ever mindful of the tendency of White middle class teachers to strive for what I might call the lovey-dovey, anything goes workshop, where romantic notions of free and unfettered expression and highly individualized conferencing create a highly individualized writing environment; apart from neglecting the richly social (shared, collaborative, communal and dialogic) African American literacies theorized by Richardson (2003) and others, such individual and unfettered practices are but a piece of what nonmainstream students from under-resourced communities require and deserve from formal schooling. For me, the pedagogic art in leading the writing workshop lay in

28 In Writing to Connect, I generally allowed my students to select their own writing sample for the anthology. At the close of first year, however, this led to tension with program outsiders who questioned our affirmation and inclusion of writing in African American English. In response to these voices of concern, I drafted a "note on the text" which appears in appendix H.
the effort to bring together formal instruction, individual effort and achievement, and communal, collaborative experiences.\textsuperscript{29}

My guiding conviction was that as students created and shaped an authentic and personally meaningful piece of writing in whole, the parts (spelling, diction, punctuation, grammar) would be mastered more naturally and effectively for long term use. Working from whole to part to whole reflected my practice as a professional writer, and was supported by the research on composition and reading strategies (Strickland, Ganske, \& Monroe, 2006). In general, my year-long syllabus progressed from activities that explored concepts of self and identity, to broader ideas that connected the writing self to the outside world. I designed lessons about writing dialogue, about observation and description, about genre in general and particular genres like epistolary form, science writing, legal argument, and poetry.

All \textit{Writing to Connect} classes began in the same way, with a circle time conversation in our chairs. I took my seat in the circle, and wrote down the name of every student who was present in my notebook (down the left margin, and leaving plenty of space between names.) Our discussion was often a free-ranging "catch up on the news of each other" kind of discussion. Sometimes it involved social problem-solving; sometimes we would talk about something as seemingly meaningless as the style of my shoes. Perhaps the most important quality of this moment was its regularity as ritual: circle time helped me center myself and take account of who was there, while also addressing one of the "Five Rs" of culturally relevant pedagogy in classrooms with African American

\textsuperscript{29} Published after my years at Hutsch, \textit{Creating Critical Classrooms} (Lewison, Leland, \& Harste, 2008), is chock-full of theory and activities, and would have been an invaluable resource for developing \textit{Writing to Connect} curriculum.
students: Circle time was our Ritual. Circle time also allowed me to sense the affective temperature of the class that day. Knowing this helped me co-construct with my students a friendly, cheerful yet seriously engaged environment. As Craig (1983) writes, "for nonstandard-speaking learners, interest in English will depend on how closely the topics and subject matter of English-teaching activity are concerned with the culture, emotive, and cognitive experiences of the learners" (p. 72). I was therefore mindful of nurturing classroom attitudes, and attended to my students' moods, facial expressions, body movements, and inter-student communications, putting such observations as I deemed relevant to the moment into words.

Next I would introduce the day's activity. If it called for modeling, I would model the assignment on the chalkboard or aloud. Over time, however, I learned to limit the extent to which and frequency with which I modeled assignments. As I will discuss in chapter 5 when take up the practice of copying, my students took models very seriously. If I wrote an example on the board, or passed out an example in writing, my students reinscribed a great deal of the example wholesale in their own work, perhaps tweaking it here or there to make it a personal text. Therefore, if there was any way I could convey the purpose and compositional goal of the lesson without showing them an example, I often tried to do so. In avoiding setting the example, I had a hunch that I was perhaps resisting a cultural practice (creative collaboration, reliance on a trusted elder) and imposing an alien one (valuing the individual effort). But I was not sure about this hunch. What if my students had simply grown accustomed to templated methods of instruction, had come to rely on clear, straightforward explanations and exemplars? If this

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30 In addition to Ritual, the other four Rs include Rhythm, Repetition, Recitation, and Relationships (see Foster & Peele, 1999).
were the case, I wanted them to have to think hard about how they might approach the activity without an example to follow. Because of questions like these, even a taken-for-granted aspect of writing instruction, presenting a model, was fraught with tension for me: To model or not to model.

After describing the activity, I fielded questions. Then the students were expected to be silent and write, usually for fifteen minutes or so. I might sit still and take notes, do the assignment myself (I would share mine at the end), go around the room quietly peeking over shoulders, or some combination of all three. Generally, then, the students would take turns reading aloud for the class, receiving feedback and affirmation. If time remained, they might revise, or we might play a word game, or a language-related board game. As we moved into the school year, sometimes I designed into the program a day where the students might choose the writing-related activity. Throughout the hour, I maintained a log of our activities down the right side of the notebook page upon which I had taken roll. Comments, behaviors, or actions of individual students who did or said something I found noteworthy I wrote down in the generous space I had left under and around their name. These notebooks are what I am referring to when I use the term "field notes." Later on, at home, I typed up class summaries and reflections which I then posted on the Room For Writing blog. This blog was closed to everyone except for program administrators with the enrichment organization, my academic advisor, my fellow teaching specialists, and our cooperating classroom teachers.

**Bidialectalism and Multiliteracies Overview**

What distinguished *Writing to Connect* from the prototypical writing workshop were the ways I incorporated bidialectal teaching practices into nearly every aspect of our
literacy-related activities. Before generally describing these ways, I will review some of the history of bidialectalism and sociocultural responsiveness in scholarship and in practice so that my choices and lessons pertaining to dialect (and this study itself which reflects on these experiences) can be seen and understood in historical context. Following this discussion, I will resume describing how I practiced bidialectalism in *Writing to Connect*.

A decade ago, Gilyard (1999) traced a comprehensive history of the contributions made by African American scholars to composition theory and practice. Noting the three vital strands of rhetorical practice in the African American experience (urgent, preacherly sermonizing; slave narratives that linked literacy with freedom; and secular jeremiads which encoded protest), Gilyard's purpose was to clarify through time the line of thought that emphasized critical pedagogy and valued African American culture.

In addition to Gilyard's work, considerable scholarship written over the last generation has called for further research into how bidialectal pedagogies might be practiced at the college, high school, and grade school levels (Ball & Lardner, 2005; Baugh, 1979; Champion, 2003; Craig & Washington, 2000; Mays, 1977; Meier, 2008; Richardson, 2003; Smitherman, 2000; O. Taylor, 1983; Wheeler and Swords, 2006). An attempt in 1983 to survey bidialectal programs nationwide netted merely 14 such programs at any grade level (Taylor, Payne, & Cole, 1983).

However, there were very few case studies of bidialectal programs practiced over periods of time longer than a year at any grade level. Most studies took up processes among older students. The few studies set among grade school students, while
encouraging and informative, did not follow their participant students for longer than a year (Dyson, 1992; Bohn, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Wheeler and Swords, 2006); did not deeply scrutinize the languages, attitudes, and behaviors of a White teacher interacting with African American students for longer than a year; and offered no cross-student comparisons. As I mentioned in chapter 1, it is my hope that this study, in doing all of these things, will break new ground in the design of longitudinal teacher research.

Over the last 30 years, there have been two particularly dramatic events that heightened broad public awareness of bidialectal pedagogy. In 1979, the Ann Arbor, Michigan school board mandated that teachers "be instructed on the nature of students' home language, and how that knowledge might be used to teach the children to read" (Taylor, Payne, & Cole, 1983, p. 44). And in 1997, the Linguistic Society of America's issued a resolution on Ebonics that emerged out of the public outcry over the Oakland, California schools' proposal to make use of AAE in bidialectal practice.

While these developments raised the profile of bidialectalism as a practice, they did not really budge the design and implementation of language arts curricula on a national scale. This is, to say the least, particularly frustrating in the context of the tremendous amount of evidence generated over more than half a century by researchers, linguists, and educators with respect to bidialectal, culturally responsive teaching (Ball and Lardner, 2005; Bohn, 2003; Cheavens, 1957; Connor, 2008; DeStefano, 1970; Fogel & Ehri, 2006; Foster and Peele; 1999; Godley, Carpenter, & Werner, 2007; Gutiérrez and

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31 An exception is the experience of veteran teacher Carrie Secret, described at length in chapter 9.
32 The resolution, the complete text of which can be found at www.stanford.edu/~rickford/ebonics, concludes that "the Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound."
In spite of studies that show what does and does not lead to fluency in more than one dialect, there continues to be no systematic approach to either educating pre-service teachers about bidialectalism or implementing effective bidialectal practices in urban schools nationwide.

In particular, my purposes heeded the call of Howard (1999), Marback (2001), Delpit (1995), and Marzluf (2006), who caution teachers (particularly White, progressive teachers) not to further isolate and exoticize students' vernaculars for the sake of "helping them find their voice." In my view, our students' voices (if listened to) speak loud and clear. Rather, it is our job as language arts educators to help our students find additional voices. I agree with these scholars who, along with the genre theorists, suggest that educators must make explicit for students the ongoing negotiation of oral and written forms of languages in the greater public domain. The goal is to add to their linguistic buffet and indicate how and when to partake of it, not to restrict them (albeit with good intentions) to one kind of dish or another, however delicious that dish might be. Setting students up for academic achievement can be viewed as matter of expanding students' abilities, stimulating and nurturing their willingness to make an effort, and opening up opportunities for greater academic participation as a result of expanded abilities and sustained effort (Sorensen & Hallinan, 1977). Infuriatingly, a teacher's push to open, expand, widen, deepen, and complicate what students think about, learn, and do is often
thwarted by institutional structures and practices that narrow, confine, and limit such curricular projects.

As I suggested in chapter 2, urban educators in the United States often work in monocultural classrooms (falsely labeled *diverse*) under what Jonathan Kozol (2005) has called apartheid conditions. In these predominantly African American classrooms, students are officially expected to speak and to write in mainstream American English (MAE). They are certainly tested in MAE. One way of navigating these linguistical straits is to play with notions of speech genres, social languages, and what Gee (1996) calls Discourses, or "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people" (p. viii). As I have discussed earlier, making students aware of their own agency with respect to their language use and stimulating metalinguistic awareness with respect to the intertextuality of language are theoretical matters addressed in the work of both Bakhtin (see Holquist, 2002), and Kozulin (1993), among others. To the extent that instruction by teachers guides students in the process of deepening and sharpening their metalinguistic awareness, scaffolding them toward an understanding of the higher concepts, a bidialectal approach operates within Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, the learning place that lies between what a student can understand on her own and what she can understand with the help or instruction of a teacher or more experienced peer. Indeed, I came at the practice of teaching writing from the first principle that "all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (p. 57). The visual representation I will present in chapter 5 affirms the

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33 Gee distinguishes Discourses (with a capital D) from discourses, which are understood to be language bits, words and parts of words.
salience of the actual relations between the human individuals who made up the program. I understood composition as a process that constructs meanings that are negotiated among people and for people (Flower, 1994).

**Bidialectalism and Multiliteracies in Practice**

Now I will return to describing the ways I enacted bidialectalism in my own practice. This section paints my approach with a broad brush. More detailed descriptions of our classroom experience—specific lessons and activities and their results—will follow in later chapters.

Routinely, I explicitly taught and repeatedly reiterated the concept that the language we use is the language we choose, and that we have a right (the authority as authors) to make the choices we make based on where we are and with whom. Whether we were reading, writing, "doing" a project, or simply engaging in conversation, I attended to moments in which I might call attention to the similarities and differences between AAE and MAE as dialects. With younger students, I read aloud from books such as *Nettie Jo's Friend's* (McKissack, 1989), *Flossie & the Fox* (McKissack, 1986), or *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (McKissock, 1988), all of which made use of AAE in either dialogue, narration, or both. With older students I read Langston Hughes' short story, "Thank You, Ma'am," which also features characters who speak AAE. As my reading voice "shifted" to reflect aloud the dialect rendered on the page, students might giggle, saying something like "you don't sound like yourself, Ms. Schaenen." At this I would pause. "What sounds 'not like me?'" I asked. "How do I normally sound? How would I say that, do you think?" Thus might begin a second grader's metacognitive thought about
language. Reading books aloud opened the door into conversations that used contrastive analysis (making linguistic differences and similarities explicit) effectively.

Play-acting and role playing offered countless opportunities to style shift between AAE and MAE. Labeling one corner of the room "the park" and another corner "the principal's office," the students might take turns telling the same story in different contexts. Then we would discuss as a class what we noticed about the choices the "actor" made. (In chapters 5 and 7, I will go into greater detail with respect to bidialectal teaching practices and activities.)

One year, the fourth grade class collaborated in the writing of a radio play, titled "Superswitcher to the Rescue." The plot revolved around two children moving through their day—from school, to home, to the park, to a store, to the hospital to visit an ill grandma, and back to school. The superhero, Superswitcher, appeared whenever the children were in doubt about which dialect to use. The process of composition allowed time for the students to debate notions of "appropriateness," a theoretically and morally complicated one. Although there was consensus about school requiring the characters to shift out of the vernacular and speak in MAE, we always returned to the question of why this was so. (Usually one or two students had the sophistication and insight to pose it.)

Openly troubled by this very question myself, I acknowledged the legitimacy of the question, and simply said that the reasons for this were political and social. In class I did not want to seem to be inciting righteous or resentful anger (this would have betrayed my role as an enriching guest in the school). What I believe is what Smitherman (2000) writes, that "it is axiomatic that if Black people were in power in this country, Black

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34 Brenda Smith (1979) offers effective strategies for role playing and other techniques for making linguistic choices explicit.
English would be the prestige idiom" (p. 128). I tried to confine the purpose of my practice to the practical considerations of the benefits of knowing multiple codes (including the variety of codes of power likely to matter very much in the lives and fortunes of my students).

In addition to contrastive analysis, and as I mentioned in chapter 2, I openly embraced and privileged in Writing to Connect the full range of what classroom teachers and linguists call "African American language styles" (Wheeler and Swords, 2006, p. 42) or "Black Communications" (Dandy, 1991; Meier, 2008). The rich communicative repertoire that my students brought into the classroom—their gestures, facial expression, intonation, feelings, and overall body language told me things, and I responded to this information explicitly. "Erika, I might say, you really look angry about something. What's going on?" Or, "Diamond, I see you rolled your eyes at Terrell. What's bugging you?" If I interpreted a non-verbal message incorrectly, the students would tell me. If I attempted to convey something non-verbally myself, we discussed it. The meaning of a shrug, for example, might be a topic of conversation. What I did not do, in other words, was rely on the concept of school as a site for de-contextualized learning and meaning-making exclusively. I celebrated African American expressiveness and invited socioculturally-shaped mediational means (Wertsch, 1991) to enter the classroom and to matter.

Finally, in ways suggested by the relevant literature (Ball and Lardner, 2005; Baugh, 1979; Champion, 2003; Craig and Washington, 2000; Mays, 1977; Meier, 2008; Smitherman, 1977; O. Taylor, 1983; Wheeler and Swords, 2006; White, 2006), I embraced and attempted to make use of at least some of the wide variety of styles and
manners (Discourses) available to speakers of AAE. Such features that were especially meaningful in practice included call-and-response, choral performance, assertion and affirmation of my students' abilities, and routinely testifying to my belief in them. I also maintained (when appropriate) a close physical proximity when talking or writing or playing. I tried to live up to an image of "authority" in matters relating to my expertise without losing my temperamental liveliness, looseness, and energy. Most of all, I sustained a genuine regard for their emotional lives. I tried to make it very clear to the students that their performance and behavior mattered to me personally, which it did. Unfortunately, this is an uncommon attitude among non-African American teachers teaching African American students, but one which the most effective White teachers adopt.\textsuperscript{35}

And now, finally, I am ready to invite the reader into Room 203 on the second floor of Hutsch Elementary. Welcome. We have only one rule here: respect yourself and everyone else.

\textsuperscript{35} See Landsman & Lewis (2006) for a host of ideas, attitudes, and practices White teachers can adopt among students of color.
As I have said, I entered my first classroom as a writer first, a teacher second. Novice and seasoned teachers alike can imagine the vast amount of pedagogical technique and art I had to acquire in order to preside effectively (at least most of the time!) over a room of my own. What may be less obvious are the ways in which my tendencies and predilections as a writer came into play with respect to my approach to literacy. What I sought, valued, taught, overlooked, and encouraged among the students in *Writing to Connect* was primarily shaped by two factors: first, my personal experience, expertise, and habits as a writer (a different writer would bring along a different set of baggage); and second, the reading and writing experience of my students in their regular classroom environment as mandated by the literacy curriculum at Hutsch during my years there. In this chapter, keeping both of these factors in mind, along with the needs of the regular classroom teacher, I will address two sets of questions:

- What does it mean to me to be a writer? What kind of writer am I? What do I value in the writer, the process of writing, and the products of writing?
• How did I translate what I value into teaching middle grade students to be writers? What kinds of things did we do and say that directly addressed these values in the context of a balanced and comprehensive approach to teaching literacy?

In addressing these questions, my purpose is to suggest how any language arts teacher may cultivate the identity of the writer, for himself and his students. In *Teachers as Intellectuals*, Henry Giroux (1988) argues that if the classroom teacher uses her room to create space and time for counterhegemonic pedagogies, and uses her intellect to do so, students can emulate the habit of reading the world in resistant ways. Students can learn how to participate in the thinking-about-things that the teacher-as-intellectual makes possible. Because one way of reading the world is to view it artistically, it seems to me no less possible to imagine a set of practices for the teacher-as-artist. Given a complicated poetic form, given insufficient light upon a still-life, given a character whose motives and patterns are hard to explain, given a dance step that requires a bend in the leg that simply cannot be accomplished, given a piece of music that requires impossible finger speed, given a piece of marble with hairline fractures, what does the artist do? The artist approaches the problem critically, analyzes possibilities, and does something transformative, something that embeds the constraints and challenges into the solution. Seeing classroom-wide, school-wide, or district-wide constraints as opportunities transforms the teacher into the artist. Creatively contending with constraints is what nearly every teacher I encountered had to do already. I therefore believe that it lies within
any teacher's power to model artistry for students, and the critical thinking entailed by artistry. ³⁶

I will therefore describe some of the lessons and activities that brought me and my students face to face with the questions I listed above, with the assumption that any literacy educator can make use of some of the attitudes and dispositions that can help apprentice students into the ways of being enacted by a professional writer. If I can become a writer who teaches, any literacy educator can certainly become a teacher who writes. Before I begin, however, I will take a moment to more fully describe the nature of the literacy curriculum I was hired to supplement and enrich.

Curricular Context

I will introduce and briefly describe three of the commercial literacy programs and assessment instruments my students experienced in their regular classrooms during the years I was at Hutsch. These programs included SRA Open Court Reading®, DIBELS®, and Step Up to Writing®. On November 1, 2004, Hutsch, like the rest of the schools in our district, adopted and introduced for grades Pre-K through 5 a comprehensive elementary basal reading program called Open Court Reading. Produced and sold by SRA/McGraw Hill, Open Court Reading described itself in its materials, website, and brochures as a program of “systematic instruction” grounded in “40-plus years of research-validated results.” ³⁷ Teachers and literacy coaches working in the district’s elementary schools all participated in the professional development and training

³⁶ I thank Rob Good, a paragon of a social studies teacher who teaches for social justice, who reminded me of just how frustrating it can be for a classroom teacher to read about the teaching artist's freedom, and suggested I think of ways that Giroux's ideas might be relevant to the message of this study.
programs offered by the district, but frequent turnover at the highest levels of district administration, including superintendent, meant that follow-up studies and oversight of curricular implementation from school to school was sporadic or non-existent. Students deemed at-risk participated in a supplemental SRA literacy intervention called “Kaleidoscope.” Because these curricula were based on what the United States Department of Education called “scientifically-based reading research” (see www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/index.html for a current policy statement), schools using Open Court qualified for Reading First funds, money allocated from the federal government.

In addition to Kaleidoscope and Open Court, Hutsch teachers were expected to perform regular and frequent assessments of developing reading skills using a trademarked measurement instrument called Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, or DIBELS. When a classroom teacher was in the process of what we all referred to as DIBELing, I would wait in the hall and watch as, stopwatch in hand, she performed the series of several measures designed to be “indicators of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy, and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary.” DIBELS was designed in the 1970s and 1980s by Roland Good, III and Ruth Kaminski, who were interested in establishing “economical and efficient indicators of a student’s progress toward achieving a general outcome,” according to the Dynamic Measurement Group website (www.dibels.com). When scheduling students for their weekly hour in Room For Writing, we always respected the significant blocks of time teachers required for Open Court and DIBELing.
Step Up to Writing® was the primary curricular program Hutsch teachers used for fundamental writing instruction. Authored by Colorado-based Maureen Auman and marketed through Sopris West Educational Services (www.sopriswest.com), Step Up to Writing offered standardized forms, templates, and protocols for the composition of narratives, personal narratives, and expository papers. In any piece of writing, students were instructed to color topic sentences green (for GO!); reasons, details and facts yellow (for SLOW DOWN!); explanations and examples red (for STOP!), and concluding sentences green (for GO BACK!), under the assumption that the final sentences were meant as restatements of the original topic sentence. The capitalized commands and exclamation marks appeared on all of Step Up’s templates.

When I read the color-coded student compositions tacked on the hallway bulletin boards, I had trouble distinguishing the categorical and conceptual differences between details and facts (coded yellow for SLOW DOWN!) and explanations and examples (coded red for STOP!). I had a hard time imagining the second grader who could establish, during the writing process, the meaningful difference between an example and a fact. Don't explanations themselves contain details, facts, and examples? Was it at all reasonable to expect a first or second grader to sort their words this way? Simply thinking about writing in terms of these commands and definitions made my head hurt. Perhaps, I remember thinking, the traffic analogy works for minds that are in some way disordered or disabled. In saying this, it is not my intention to discredit Step Up to Writing, simply to reflect that I cannot imagine myself or any writer I know setting about working this way: thinking about slowing down, and mentally shuffling for the kind of "detail or fact" that would do so, then thinking about stopping, and coming up with an "explanation or
example" that would make me STOP! The program does not seem to be designed to help students write well; it seems to be designed to make students compose the kinds of texts that can be efficiently assessed in accordance with a checklist.

Indeed, many of the compositions I saw early on in Writing to Connect featured indented arrows pointing at the first word, and lists of numbered sentences below that. When I heard a student say "How many sentences you want, Ms. Schaenen," I knew they were transferring practices from a classroom where Step Up was used. On Maureen Auman's internet home page (www.readwriteconnect.com, retrieved on January 10, 2010) I read that Step Up to Writing "makes teaching and learning literacy skills easy."

In my view, this statement is misleading on at least two levels: first, as I observed in chapter 2, I do not conceptualize "literacy skills" as a decontextualized, autonomous set of techniques that can be simply transmitted wholesale from teacher to student. Second, the reading and writing I know something about it is not at all easy to learn or to teach. Reading and writing are complex and social practices around language.

While commenting on the ultimate and particular efficacy of Open Court, DIBELS, and Step Up lies beyond my expertise and experience, I suggest that all three of these programs seem to adhere to what Gutiérrez (2008), in conceptualizing a new paradigm for education, refers as "business principles of efficiency, accountability, quality, and choice" (p. 148). And I should further mention that in August 2008, the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences itself reported on the effectiveness of Open Court Reading through the What Works Clearinghouse. After evaluating 30 studies of Open Court published between 1985 and 2007, the WWC reported:
No studies of Open Court Reading © that fall within the scope of the Beginning Reading Review meet WWC evidence standards. The lack of studies meeting WWS evidence means that, at this time, the WWC is unable to draw any conclusions based on research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of Open Court Reading ©.

Because there are no formal, valid, or reliable conclusions to be drawn about the success or failure of Open Court to date, and the educational quality of life in urban public schools remains (from my perspective) severely constrained by the sheer number of hours required by comprehensive programs like Open Court, I argue that there is plenty of room in the development of curriculum and instruction for both conducting and assessing literacy education in more meaningful and realistic ways, ways that connect rather than alienate students and teachers from the processes and products of schooling, ways that might develop and sustain what Gutiérrez (2008) calls the Third Space, a transformed and transformative education paradigm. My personal encounters with classroom practices involving Open Court, DIBELS, and Step Up left me feeling that a big, if tacit, piece of my purpose was to help students establish some critical distance from such programs, even as they did their best to “nail” the correct answers for the sake of the good that might result from achieving higher scores down the line.

Often, when visiting a classroom teacher, I would look down on her desk to see the grid of the curriculum’s lesson planner laid open. On day 1 of lesson 1 of unit 1, for example, grade 2 would have a pre-test, an “entry assessment.” The sounds of the week were ee and ooh. Some of the “blended sounds” that week were bl, gl, pl, and dge. Other activities in the week included some read-alouds, “Getting Ideas” for writing, “Word Analysis,” and “Penmanship,” among other bulleted items on the checklist provided by the planner. Having spent years working with Open Court, one of my cooperating
teachers said, "I feel like these [standardized] tests are setting me up to fail. The kids come up with good ideas that don't translate to the tests. [Our principal] says there's no pattern to the failure, and I'm beginning to question the tests." After conversations like these, I concluded that this teacher was as alienated from the curriculum as her students. Burdened by the daily requirements of the curriculum, crushed by the ceaseless paperwork and monitoring that came from above, professionally injured day in and day out by the need to implement, measure, and test using pre-made instruments designed by outsiders to their classrooms, the teachers I knew often seemed defeated, cynical, bitter, angry, or exhausted. The energetic teachers, an exceptional bunch, found ways to close their doors and connect with their students in personally meaningful ways.

In the context of Open Court and Step Up, my conceptions about learning to read and write were rather like a Jackson Pollack painting overlaid upon a sheet of graph paper, or like a root ball compared to a yard stick. The root ball may be clumped with soil and tangled, but the healthy plant is nourished by it; the yard stick, on the other hand, is a device for quantifying objects in space in accordance with generalized standards. There are things I like to do with yard sticks (draw a straight line; measure distance or height), but such things do not include teaching someone to read and write. And while the yardstick can measure the diameter and height of the root ball, it cannot tell us anything about what’s going on inside it, where fine living filaments stretch, loop, and twist around each other, absorbing water and minerals from soil. Where Open Court claimed to provide a “logical progression of skill-building,” with writing sitting like a capstone atop all sorts of bits of decoding skills conceived as prerequisitional, I see the act of writing as emerging from social transactions, talk, and expressions of purpose, something that can
and does happen along with learning to read: in short, a swirling, complex endeavor. In my view, talking, reading, thinking, and the effects of social interactions upon all of these acts are integrated in the processes of literacy from the very beginning.

When my daughter was a toddler, I papered over a corner of her room and gave her a bunch of crayons. Although we certainly spent time together “reading,” with her in my lap looking at books of all kinds, she had no phonemic awareness, no ability to blend sounds, so sense of the relationship between letters and sounds, and zero ability to decode, all of which are conceived as the foundation and building blocks of writing and literacy, according to Open Court. On the other hand, in going about our daily lives, my daughter routinely laid eyes upon all kinds of shapes and patterns of marks: on cereal boxes, on huge signs at the gas station, on magazines and catalogues lying around. She saw that I paid attention to these shapes: I looked at them with great attention. (See Read, 1986, p. 35.) Furthermore, my daughter had observed me using long pointy things to make shapes and marks of my own on pieces of paper. As a result of all of this experience in her lifeworld, when I handed her some long pointy things of her own and invited her to mark upon the white paper taped to the wall, a place I labeled “Scribble Corner,” she certainly knew what to do, and she did it with glee. Those swirls, spirals, and markings reflect what Read calls her "conceptions of written language" at that moment in time (1986, p. 99), what might be termed "emergent literacy" today. In making this case, or citing my personal experience with my daughter, I am by no means out on a theoretical limb with respect to engaging in a balanced and comprehensive literacy program in the early grades. Phonics on its own is not a problem: Of course it is important that young readers come to know what sounds the letters of our alphabet make.
And I do respect and admire instructional methods texts that take the full range of the reading and writing experience into account (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, Freppon, 2005; Tompkins, 2007). I am simply arguing that literacy curricula that break the process of reading and writing into pieces and are entirely extraneous to the lived lives of students and teachers and the world of their classrooms lead to a deeply flawed and limited kind of literacy learning.

The Writing to Connect Writer

Tuning myself as an enrichment specialist in the context of Hutsch’s commitment to Open Court and Step Up was a challenge. Whenever I could, I found myself developing and stating aloud explicit descriptions and assertions about what "real" readers and writers do, which often seemed to be at odds with what Open Court asserted. Open Court suggested a linear model of learning; I celebrated a recursive one. Open Court asked teachers to follow rules; I tended to follow some rules, break other rules, and establish new sets of rules. In this section, I will enumerate the qualities of my writerliness I found most important to emphasize among my students. What I emphasized to my students bears repeating here: there are all sorts of writers. People who write go about writing in all different ways. Our practices differ because our values, interests, and temperaments differ; with respect to writing as a profession, there are very few universals.

As my writing apprentices, so to speak, my students learned what I personally value: among a host of practices, I value paying attention, sustaining awareness, attending to the details and particulars of my subject, choosing words carefully to create a clear image or picture in my reader’s mind, and suiting the form of the text to its purpose.
Furthermore, I tend to be rather an unromantic, workmanlike writer. I am not the writer who, in order to face the terror of the blank page, chain-smokes and knocks back shots of whiskey. I tend to just sit down after my morning coffee and write. When what I write is lousy, I either drop it or revise. (The revision handout I used in *Writing to Connect* is shown in appendix I.) When facing deadlines for articles or books, I write a daily quota and then stop. Artistically and professionally, my concern is with precision, stylishness, and truth. I view the accumulation of written words as the basis for the reader’s process of inferring meaning over time. As I wrote in my journal in the fall of 2005, Room For Writing’s first year: “Laying the groundwork for true literacy will take some time as the younger children begin to feel more and more comfortable connecting oral conversation, regular verbal interaction, and reading with writing. Right now I encourage and draw out any and all efforts at getting things down.” Yes, the one thing a writer has to do is get things written down! To cite just one example, "getting things down" is third-grader Angelo writing a check, making a facsimile of a bank check, and being so tickled by his work that his classmates, seeing his amusement, decide that they want to write checks too. Suddenly, we have a roomful of people who are using writing to play at “doing business.” To me, this is authentic, purposeful writing pedagogy. As I read through my journals, I am struck by the moments in which I comment on students’ writerliness:

“…writing I am so pleased to see. It’s real, meaningful, and connected to something D knows about.”
“That was exactly what writers do.”
“I noticed that Harold [in Harold and the Purple Crayon] is making up a story as he goes along ‘just like we did when we made our puppet show.’ What a great connection!”
“Fantastic sentences!”
In the subsections that follow, I will elaborate on the qualities of the writing identity I tried to model, and provide examples of classroom moments when students were enacting identities of the kind of writer I was encouraging them to be.

_Self-Awareness_

Writers think about people in particular situations. For many writers, the person we can know best is ourself. In order to be self-critical and self-reflective, we have to see ourselves as clearly as we can, warts and all. We need to be able to describe and interpret our experiences (and eventually, those of others) in ways that are meaningful, interesting, and true. Two particular activities helped my youngest students along this path: The Identity Molecule and The Lifeline. For the Identity Molecule, which I sometimes called "A Map of Me," the students begin by drawing a big circle in the center of their page. Inside this circle they write down a word that represents the role they play which they view as most important (Girl, Boy, Brother, Cousin, Student, Daughter, Friend, etc). Many of my students (as I do) fill this central bubble with more than one word. Then they draw lines radiating out from this circle, lines which will connect to other, smaller circles containing subordinate roles (Singer, Reader, Jump-Roper, Cat Love, Dog Hater, etc). If necessary, these smaller circles can be connected to still other circles with other roles.

Once the molecule or map is complete, I ask them to spend a little time writing some sentences about just one of the bubbles: what makes them a jump-roper, or reader, or cousin? Tell me something, I say, that shows me what you mean when you put that word in that bubble. The following passage was written by Montel, a third grade boy, who put the word _actor_ in one of his circles:

One of my favorite things to do is to be an actor. I wish I could play as Shrek and Donkey. I wish I could play as Pinocchio. I wish I could play as Ms. Schaenen. I
wish I could play as Goofie. I wish I could play as Donald Duck. I wish these things because I want to be rich rich rich I tell you. I want to be rich because I can get anything I want and need and I could buy stuff for my family. I wish I could play as Tinkiewinky. I wish [a girl in the class] would shut the heck up.

Just about any writing evaluator would call the first sentence of this paragraph a perfect topic sentence. The next five sentences, however, require a sensitive eye for appreciation. One might expect, from the topic sentence, that Montel would go on to explain why one of his "favorite things to do it to be an actor." He does not. He skips over the why, which in his opinion can go without saying for the moment, in order to convey to the reader some of the roles he wishes he could play. One of them, I see, is me, squeezed in between Pinocchio and Goofie. My name in this paragraph tells me that Montel is playing with me, toying with the role I play, situating my role as just another role in the wished-for repertoire. After doing so, he returns to a sense of cause-and-effect: "I wish these things because. . ." And then he deploys a rhetorical borrowing, something I sense he has heard from a cartoon or movie: "I want to be rich rich rich I tell you." A serious reflection follows this whimsical sentence, as he explains why he would want to be rich ("I could buy stuff for my family"). Montel concludes by carrying his list of wishes right up and out of the abstraction of the decontextualized essay form in order to mention a "live" experience, the fact that one of his classmates is bugging him and distracting the class with her talking. In unpacking a this short sample, my intent is to reveal something about the way even a small exercise can accomplish more than one purpose: Montel has taught me something interesting about his identity as a would-be actor, and also something about the way he shapes his identity into written form, ie, with humor, care, and detail. In reading for meaning, I am treating Montel as a writer (not as a kid doing an assignment), which means I can assess his product that day as a piece of writing. If we had had time to
revise this paragraph, I would have suggested that Montel delete or transpose his penultimate sentence about Tinkiewinkie: it is both unnecessary and out of place at that point in the paragraph. But in the larger picture, this one writing sample helped me know Montel better. Orally, Montel spoke slowly, often with a halting stammer; he had a hard time getting words out of his mouth. The smooth, fluent voice at play in his identity molecule paragraph offered me another way to hear this child.

Thinking about the events in their lives in chronological order, and sorting good experiences from not-so-good ones was made possible by The Lifeline, an activity which I will return to in chapter 5. Generally, I introduced this lesson by drawing a long horizontal line across the chalkboard. On the left end, I wrote 1960. On the right end I made an arrow to indicate that the line did not yet have an end.

"What do you think happened in 1960?" I ask.

"There were no microwave ovens!" a second grader says.

"There was none of the stuff we have nowadays," suggests another.

"There was no country called the United States."

"Actually," I say, "1960 is the year I was born. Writers keep track of the things that happen to them. It's impossible to keep track of everything, but this Lifeline will help. Some people keep track of events, some of feelings. But it is necessary to keep track of something. Writers do our best to remember."

And so I mark a few significant ages on my Lifeline. I put the good things on top of the line, and some not-so-good things on the bottom. We talk about some of these experiences in my life. And then I handout copies of blank Lifelines. I invite the students
to write down their positive experiences on top of the timeline, marked from zero to nine (the age of my oldest students), and their "not-so-good" experiences below the line.

For second graders, simply thinking through their lives objectively, sorting good from bad, and getting these experiences written on the correct point on the line can occupy a whole lesson. In the fall of 2005, Kayode, then a second grader, started to cry when he heard what I was asking him to do. He said he could not remember anything at all. In the fall of 2007, Niya, a second grader with clearly expressed intentions to be "an author and illustrator like Eric Carle," heard me explain the activity and despaired: "I don't know anything about me," she said. Eventually, with encouragement and support, both Kayode and Niya got their Lifelines completed. As with any fruitful lesson, The Lifeline elicited more than one kind of thinking. First, it helped students think about themselves objectively as people with histories; in doing so, it served the young writer's interest. Second, it exercised their ability to sort and organize what might have been conceived as a huge grab bag of life experience (what cognition theory calls declarative knowledge) into an orderly structure (across the X-axis of time and along the Y-axis of quality). In this way, the activity helped with procedural knowledge, the cognitive storing of information and content. Third, it offered many different topics for subsequent writing, since I always asked the students to pick one of the items on either side of the Lifeline and write more about it. Fourth, it helped my student writers access the emotions they experienced at particular moments in their lives.

Because self-awareness is something I modeled and valued, I was always on the lookout for moments when students verbalized thoughts about their own behavior and attitude. One of my three-year participants, Diamond, was a highly emotional person.
Superstitious and spiritual, Diamond was by turns fearful, sweet, sensitive, dreamy, and aggressive; always candid about how she felt at any given moment, Diamond cried often. One of her classmates, Ebony, cared a great deal for Diamond and looked out for her. At times, it seemed like Ebony had cast herself as Diamond's guardian angel and interpreter. One day, Diamond heaved a sigh and threw her head down on her desk.

"I'm not behaving well," she said.

"That's OK," I said.

"She say she ain't behaving well," Ebony said, making sure I understood what Diamond had said.

This small exchange made it into my fieldnotes, into my journal, and into this chapter because it poignantly reminds me of the double consciousness I shared with my students. We were there to write, to "do" school; but I was ever ready to pause for the sake of the expression of a genuine feeling. When they voiced an awareness of a shift in their own attitude or that of a classmate, I paid attention. I tried not to overlook emotional moments. (In chapter 5 I will address at length the effect of emotionality in the workshop environment.) And I did this not only because "that's what writers do," I did it also because I knew that in their regular classrooms, under constant pressure to get through the curriculum, their regular teachers had to suppress much of what children need to do: let someone else know how they feel. On account of her susceptibility to the slightest perceived insult, eyeroll, or wisecrack, Diamond knew that she could think better if she sat with her desk facing a corner. Knowing in what contextual conditions she wrote best was key to Diamond's development as a writer. Indeed, discovering her own best practices rendered Diamond capable of offering advice to a classmate. Another of my
three-year participants, Darrion, was in the same class as Diamond. Easily distracted, Darrion one day complained that his head hurt, that he couldn't settle down to work. "Just take three deep breaths and concentrate," Diamond suggested to him. "That's what I do." I view this exchange as evidence that Diamond is peer scaffolding Darrion into an identity as a writer.

With respect to the development of the writer's mind, I also tried to make room for the kind of mental wandering and wondering that leads to genuine inquiry. One boy, a polite newcomer to fourth grade named Travion, had just moved to our city after the winter break. One day the class and I were having a loaded and meaty discussion about slavery, and the current relationship between Blacks and Whites. A few of his classmates were growing angry. The emotional temperature in the room was getting hotter. Travion was not participating in the conversation, and I assumed he was simply listening, trying to figure out our rules of engagement around a sensitive topic. I was wrong. Travion raised his hand and I called on him.

"Ms. Schaenen," he asked. "When bats hang upside down, why do the blood not pound in their head?"

Obviously, Travion had been following a train of thought, traveling a very different set of tracks than the one rest of us were on. Instead of chastising him for not listening well, or reminding him that he needed to be part of the group, I judged it best at that moment to let him be. Indeed, I switched tracks myself.

"You know," I said. "I have no idea how bat circulation works. That's an interesting question." Over time, I witnessed enough of Travion's in-class effort to know that he could definitely follow a group activity. It was just that one time, really, when he
seemed to slip away into a wholly different mental domain. For some reason, whether
because the conversation was too intense, or because he was still too new, or because he
simply had bats on his mind from something he had learned outside of the Room For
Writing, Travion needed to speak up from left field. As a writer and teacher, I knew
better than to scold a person for transferring learning from one domain to another.

*Attentiveness to Complex Environments and People*

As I mentioned earlier, good writing features details. Writers who observe the
world closely are in a better position to describe it in detail. Thus, I urged Mohammed (a
third grader with a quick mind but delayed mechanics) to think harder about what he
consumed during a dinner out with his family, finally spurring him to specify root beer
instead of soda as his beverage that night. Another third grader, Anita, was one day
composing a comparison of Hutsc food with the food at a certain restaurant chain.
Arguing that the school food was worse, she wrote that the cafeteria served "crusty old
cheeseburgers" and "old smelly hot chocolate milk." The restaurant, on the other hand,
served "fresh good cold milk." I praised Anita for these phrases, which were highly
descriptive, meaningful, interesting, and funny. I liked the way she piled up those
adjectives before the nouns; I liked the rhythm of the phrases; the essay's success derived
from Anita's close familiarity with her subject. She had paid attention to the food in both
places.

In addition to noticing details in settings, good writers watch the people around
them. In chapter 5 I will enlarge upon the ways in which my students had highly
sophisticated patterns and customs of attending to the behavior and feelings of other
people. Bringing guests and visitors into the classroom often led to wonderful
observations and writing. After the guest had left, apart from discussing the content of his presentation, my students often had insightful comments and remarks to make about the person as an individual. As I writer myself, I made no attempt to pretend that a person's presentation could be abstracted from their embodied reality as an individual. How did he stand? What was her hair like? Remember what the sensei did when he demonstrated that punch block? Or how he lowered his voice when telling that part of the story? I hasten to add, in mentioning this practice, that I am fully aware of the possibility that I was encouraging something slightly transgressive. "Regular" teachers, and teachers in mainstream classrooms especially, tend to foster a distanced relationship between the self and the world. Writers, ever on the lookout for insights and connections, tend to break down these formal barriers, sometimes at the expense of social expectations and politeness conventions. In order to say what has not been said (or write what has not been written) writers can be subversive and invasive. Although I tried hard not to cross into such dangerous practices, I did allow us to roam far more freely and speculatively, perhaps, than a non-writer language arts specialist might have.

*Attentiveness in and through Language*

Paying attention to language usage is essential to the writer. Syntax, dialect, accent, vocabulary, dysfluencies, pauses, pace, rhythm: the qualities of the ways individual people can and do speak and report speech is integral to writing. Certainly it is necessary for rendering dialogue. When I read student writing, I was always looking for the ways in which my students handled dialogue. Following the day a local sensei came to visit, I asked my students to write about that experience. The sensei had told them
some remarkable stories about his time as a soldier in Vietnam. Notice how two different
students "wrote up" the one of the most climactic moments in the sensei's story:

And he told us this man was on the roof and the man that was on the top of the
roof said I can fly Mr. C. said get down the man was up there smoking and when
he landed on his face and Mr. C. went over there where was the man was at and
the man said I can't fly. (Lexus)

Mr. C told us that the last time he did drugs was when his friend was smoking and
his friend got on top of a roof and called down to Mr. C. and said that he could
fly then Mr. C said get down from there man then his friend took one more sniff
on the cigarette then he flew down and landed on his face. (Cheryl)

Reporting speech in a narrative form is a complicated matter. The writer can position
herself between the event and the reader ("and then he said that he could fly") or use
standard dialogue reporting technique (and then Mr. C. said, "Get down from there,
man!") to make the dialogue in scene more dramatic and immediate. In both of the
examples above, the girls used both ways. From the writer’s perspective, a next step
would be to make explicit for them the effects of these choices, and eventually to teach
them the conventions that govern dialogue punctuation.

Information Gathering/Shaping/Revising

In addition to observation, writers (like qualitative researchers, I might add) rely
upon interviewing and conversation for gathering information and details about someone
or something. The artful arrangement of collected impressions is, in many respects, all
that writing is. In the chapters that follow I will illustrate the many different ways in
which my students shaped their impressions in and through language. One typical lesson
involved pairing off into interview partnerships. Notepad in hand, one person would ask
questions of the other person, inquiries designed to elicit interesting information. Then
the partners would switch. Next the partners would take some time to write up in a
paragraph what they had learned. When writing about Cheryl in third grade, Angel mentioned the kind of braids that Cheryl favored. This lead to a class-wide conversation about all the different kinds of braids. My students explained that there were five sorts of braids: plats, pixies, French braids, micros, and two-string twists. Immediately I went to the board and wrote the word BRAID. Underneath, I made five lines, each one leading to the words or phrases that denoted a particular type of braid. My intention here was to model for my students the way I was organizing this new (for me) information in my mind. As with The Lifeline, this gesture demonstrated how declarative knowledge might be organized (procedural knowledge). The writer’s task, in a manner of speaking, is acting on strategic knowledge: knowing when and to what purpose it is necessary to retrieve a piece of known information and situate it in a verbal expression. Someday I might need a character to wear her hair in pixies; for now, I simply needed to know how to put that word in my mind in such a way that I would be able to retrieve it in the future.

Suiting the Form/Style to the Purpose

Determining what forms and styles are suitable for particular verbal expressions is a matter of decision-making. A writer can flow with convention; a writer can resist convention, and there are consequences for either stance. The straight-A high school student attending an elite private school has generally figured out how to write a conventional five-paragraph essay that will satisfy her teachers. If you ask one of these students to explain the point of a conclusion that is simply a rehash of the phrases and ideas established in the introduction, that student is likely to say, “I don’t know. But it’s what my teacher wants.” The consequences here: another A! But should that student flaunt the conventions, write against the grain of the expected five-paragraph essay,
happen to figure out something genuinely original, and end the essay someplace new, the A is less certain. And this is in an elite institution. In the world of Open Court, the unconventional essay is unlikely to be written. In the world of Open Court, students know there are rules, and know that they have to follow them or risk getting poor scores. I always felt obliged to teach my students that rules are made by people. They are not extrinsic to the relations between people; they are a consequence of those relationships. This was, for me, a way of making explicit the consequences of discursive choices. I routinely used Writing to Connect as a platform for experimenting with shaping writing into different forms. Chapter 7 will present an in-depth look at some of the ways in which my students and I played around with style, structure, genre, and discursive purpose.

*Playfulness*

Whenever possible, my goal was to make the experience of writing fun for my students, as fun for them as it is for me. It is usually possible to tell when a writer is having fun; the writing a playful writer produces is fun to read. Stimulating their natural inclination to play (these were young children, after all) was not at all difficult. I usually began by establishing the rules for the game (rules which the students often modified or added to as we played). With second graders one day, I wrote a word on the board. The word was TREE. I asked them to copy down the word on their own paper and make their own associations in order to create a list of words. “Write down a word that pops into your head that relates to the word above it,” I said. Once they had a list, I asked them to compose a paragraph using all the words in order. “It can be silly or straight,” I said. As they wrote, most of the students were giggling. This seemed like a good sign. They could hardly wait to read their stories aloud. Here are two (I have edited for spelling):
Today I saw an alien and he was eating strawberries from a tree and he ate them all and went to the other tree to eat bananas and he ate all and he went to a magical tree with strawberries, bananas apples oranges and ate it all up and did not leave none for me and he got a wish and wish he was big.

One day a little girl named Inda Schaenen she climbed a tree with a t-shirt on. Then she saw some girls one was a black girl and one was a fat girl Inda asked them to play but they were eating chocolate ice cream mixed with strawberry but they were running. The End. By Montel Illustrated by Montel [with a drawing of me and the tree]

Lensmire (1994) has written about young students writing each other as characters into their stories, and the worrisome classroom politics such practices can disclose. In the example above, Montel has written me into his story, has turned his teacher into a character, a little girl in fact. Doing this, Montel has asserting a kind of power over my identity (shrinking it into a form he can control). In this writing, he is quite literally role playing. As in the writing of Montel’s I quoted earlier (“rich rich rich I tell you”) the story of me climbing a tree and trying to befriend two girls more interested in ice cream and running shows a writer able to connect his sense of humor and play in words.

Late in third grade, Kenneth used a simple report on his family’s spring break overnight at a hotel to convey a sense of playful verbal sophistication to his reader, whom he addressed as “you”:

My cousin got sick by the food and you do not want to know how it was. But she got better.

In addition to displaying a personal awareness of the reader, of addressing himself to a particular audience, Kenneth is shaping his sentences with a sense of play. In a roundabout way, he is suggesting, but not fully detailing, just how sick his cousin got. The reader can infer by Kenneth’s word choice that his cousin perhaps threw up, and that
it was quite a scene, or at least a mess. Imagine how much less interesting this story would be if Kenneth had simply written: “My cousin got sick by the food, but she got better.” Sadly, this drained expression is the version that is more likely to be valued in Open Court world. *Writing to Connect* allowed me the freedom to praise the better expression, not only for Kenneth’s benefit, but for everyone’s.

Teaching Writerliness

How did I translate what I value in writing into writing pedagogy among second through fourth grade students? What kinds of things did we do and say that directly addressed these values? In the section above, in order to introduce the qualities of the writer’s stance, I mentioned several of the most effective activities that elicited qualities of the writer's identity I value. In this section I will focus less on identity and attitude, and more on the pedagogy that led to students' workshop participation as writers. For the most part, in the creation and establishment of my pedagogic stance, I was deeply influenced by theories of reflective community of practice (Gee, 2001), situated learning (Lave, 1996), and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). With respect to assessment and evaluation of the processes and products of these classroom practices, including the multiple and hybrid genres of talk and print, I will take up the subject of this chapter again in chapter 5, when I present a conceptual tool that can be used for both analysis and assessment of any writing workshop.

As a teaching artist, an outsider, a writer in a school, and a person dedicated to working toward social justice, I took learning to be, as Lave (1996) wrote, "an aspect of changing participation in changing practices" (p. 161). In their participation in the *Writing to Connect* program, I viewed my students as engaged in identity-making
activities. As a person likewise engaged by these processes and practices, I allowed my own identity to be shaped and shifted by the experience of teaching these particular students. Furthermore, in understanding learning to be an aspect of social practice, I was able to frame my program goals and my daily experience in terms of shaping the kinds of people who write. I strove to utterly imbue the *Writing to Connect* experience with the practices entailed by writerliness. As I will show in chapter 5, this sometimes meant that I was very strict about maintaining silence during writing. At other times it meant that our room was a scene of apparent mayhem, a place where individuals clashed, made up, and wrote about it.

To reiterate somewhat from the opening of this chapter: I viewed my purpose in *Writing to Connect* in two parts. Part one was to present for my students and cultivate in them the kind of self- and environmental-awareness necessary to the writer. The kinds of things we did taught them how to pay attention to their identities, their worlds, and their experiences, to really think about what they were experiencing day to day, with no taboo. Part two was to verbalize, to get all this stuff down in writing. For this aspect we considered how and when to write, in what particular style (taking up dialect), and in what manner (taking up approaches like journal-keeping, emulations, collaborations, sharing with others (reading aloud or publishing). We also took up the idea of genres, or forms of writing. In the process of verbalizing, my students became writers, and came to know themselves as writers. The following subsections will describe just a few the most effective activities we did.
Self-Awareness

As described above, the Identity Molecule and The Lifeline were both highly generative activities. Another fruitful lesson was an ice-breaker activity called Two Truths and a Lie. Each person (including me) writes three sentences: one is true, two are untrue. After reading your sentences aloud, the rest of the class tries to guess the true one. The trick here is for the writer to compose the false sentences in such a way that people might believe they are true. Playfulness, conversation, and discussion always followed each writer's read-aloud. Furthermore, in the next week's lesson, I always asked the students to select one of his or her true sentences and expand upon it, to tell us more. In this way, the true sentence was turned into a topic sentence for an interesting paragraph "filled with details."

Agency, Choice, and Control

As I noted above, I always tried to emphasize the choice-making required by good writing. Decisions about form and language lie with the writer; although influenced by others, and reliant on intertextual and intervocal influences and models, the writer is ultimately the one who assembles the language on the page. In order to make this idea concrete for second graders, I one day brought in a real reflex hammer, the kind used by doctors during check-ups. At the beginning of our hour I held it up.

"Has anyone ever seen anything like this?"

A few students had.

"What's it called?" I asked.

"A knee tapper?"
"That's a good name for it but it has another name, too." There was a pause.

"What does it look like?" I asked.

"A hammer?"

In this way we worked our way toward the phrase reflex hammer.

"And what is a reflex?" I asked.

"A kind of reaction," Niya said.

"Fantastic," I said. "A reaction that we cannot control. Something we have no choice about doing."

I passed the reflex hammer around and we talked about how the doctor uses it to make sure our reflexes are working. This led to a conversation about how there are some things we have no control over and some things we do have control over, some things in our lives we have a choice about, and other things we have no choice about. If a person did not like their hair color, one student remarked, she could always dye it. If a person did not like her height, another student said, she could wear heels.

"I can control my feelings," T'Anna said. "Like when I start to cry, I stop."

After a brief discussion, we agreed (actually, I got T'Anna to agree with me) that some feelings a person can control and others a person cannot control—like crying at a funeral, say.

"I went crazy at my grandpa's funeral," Marquez said, by way of illustration, adding that he also has no choice about driving a car, listening to the principal, going to school, listening to his mother, listening to his father, or doing his school work.

Following this conversation, I asked the students to take a piece of paper and make two lists side by side on the page. In the first column they should write down the
things they felt they had some choice about, and in the second column they should list the things they felt they had no choice about. As with The Lifeline, apart from encouraging critical thinking, this exercise offered the students an opportunity to sort concepts relating to choice/no-choice in meaningful ways. The room fell quiet for fifteen minutes. At one point, I heard Darron say, "Wow, I have a lot of choices." It was very interesting to me to see how what some students listed in the CHOICE column others listed in the NO CHOICE column. Interestingly, presumably as a result of our discussion, T'Anna put feelings in both columns. For the most part, however, I saw that my students generally understood themselves to be responsible for their behavior and performance.

On the back of his paper, as he reflected on his list, Darron wrote:

I have a choice about which color I should get red first blue second. If somebody pushes you I have a choice to tell the teacher not to hit back. Everybody have a choice of how they speak. I have a choice to get new friends.

Johnetta was also impressed by the things she had a say about:

I have no choice to eat or not eat. I have a choice to listen to my mom every day and Ms. C [her classroom teacher]. I have a choice to walk or ride the bus. I have a choice to make friends and have good time.

In my view, Johnetta's passage reveals a very strong sense of personal agency: All she really has no choice about is the biological imperative to eat. Her classmate, Marquez wrote:

I don't have a choice to cuss. I don't have a choice to sky diving and whatever your mama put food on the table you got to eat it. I have a choice to go to school and watch TV and get presents for my birthday and Christmas. I have a choice to eat or play at home. And we have a choice when a person push you have a choice to push him back or tell on the person.
Marquez cannot curse. And he must eat the food his mother serves him. But Marquez has written that he has lots of room for independent thinking when it comes to the other items in this paragraph, concluding with the choice about how to respond to an aggressor.

Another classmate, LeKisha, composed two columns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO CHOICE</th>
<th>CHOICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high diving</td>
<td>doing homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swimming in sea</td>
<td>going to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not listening to teacher</td>
<td>doing the right thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go to Dad's house</td>
<td>listening to the principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>listen to everyone that's older than me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how you speak to someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, I looked closely for replies that indicated that the students felt that how they spoke and how they wrote—how they used language—was a matter of choice. For those students, I knew I could build on this assumption with respect to bidialectal practices. For those who did not yet perceive language use as a matter of choice, I knew there was work to do on that score.

In contrast to all of his classmates, Lamarius had a preponderance of items in his NO CHOICE column, including what to wear, when to ride his bike, what to watch on TV, what to eat, what to feel. The only item in his CHOICE column was "to pick my friends." When I asked him about his chart, Lamarius said that his mom decided everything for him at all times. He has no choice about walking versus riding the school bus, he said, because his mom's afraid he will get lost. Lamarius was always so quiet, and seemed to lack confidence in his abilities; I was not surprised to learn about his apparent passivity in the face of his mother's decision-making. But what could I do? After this class I went to his classroom teacher and raised my concern about Lamarius.
Evidently, Lamarius's mother had come into school not long before, and seemed extremely distracted and upset by all of the things in her life she had no control over. Ms. C. said that, based on her experience, she had concluded that the less control a parent had over daily life, the more control they sometimes exerted over their children. Walking away, I realized that what we had done in class had exposed a quality of Lamarius' life that deeply affected his performance in school. Knowing this much more about him, I began to look for ways to give him some say in what he did.

Noticing

All good writers are impressionable. That is, the sensational, phenomenal world makes an impression on them. Different writers notice different kinds of qualities, and it is important for novice writers to be deliberate about their noticing. But any given "slice" of reality offers a tremendous amount of sights, sounds, smells, and other sensory data (so to speak). In May, 1986, when I was applying for my first job at a community weekly, the editor asked me as a kind of audition to cover a county fair and write a feature about it. He offered me no single angle, or even a set of angles, from which to write the story. When I arrived at the fair, I saw thousands of people, rides, games, animals, contests, and all of the other bustling and lively activities realized at county fairs. In order to write a thousand words about this experience, I had to find a way "in." Although I wandered around the fair with my eyes wide open, ultimately I had to create some kind of boundaries with respect to my subject. I had to discriminate among the perceptions. I had to make choices about what I would write about.

With elementary students, I found that laminated photographs helped set limits on the noticing I asked them to do. In particular, I really like using the portraits done by
Richard Avedon. Rendered in black and white, these images are dramatic and moving expressions of individual human characters. I introduced this activity by reminding the students that as writers, they have to train themselves to be good see-ers. One way of learning how to see is to pay attention how photographers see, and how they show us what and how they see. I explain that it is the job of a photographer to see. Then I set up my students in pairs, and give each pair a photograph to study and talk about together.

"I want you to help each other see as much as you can in each of these pictures," I say. "Then write up your thoughts and observations on paper."

"Why do you think he dress different?" I heard a third grader ask her partner.

Eventually they write about it, describing what they see and suspect about the person in the picture. From the image, too, they infer things about the feelings of the subject:

On this picture this man look like he has pain on the inside. (Ezra Pound)
The picture looks proud because he has accomplished a lifetime goal. (Lew Alcindor)

A half hour later, after much talking and writing, we read the compositions aloud and all look at the pictures together.

Sometimes, in order to facilitate my student's natural observational skills, I used myself as a walking and talking prompt. One day I dressed myself in the most colorful outfit I could put together: A multi-colored scarf, a purple vest, blue bangle bracelets, and bright dangly earrings.

"What do you guys notice about me today?" I asked.

Naturally, they remarked that I had a lot of colors on. I showed them a book about the artist Paul Klee. We looked at some of Klee's paintings, and read what he had to say
about making visual art, that his aim was to paint the truth inside of appearances. What
might that mean? A few of my students mentioned right away that painting could express
the way a person felt about what they saw, their own thoughts and ideas. Then the
students generated "color words," which I wrote on the chalkboard. And then they wrote:

Red sometimes makes me angry. (Marcus)

Yellow is a fun color to me. Blue is a sad color to me. Red is a evil color to me
because it look like fire. Purple is a deep fun color and my mom loves purple.
Green to me is a rich color and fun color and one of my favorite colors. (Kayode)

Relating to these exercises, I kept on hand a deck of cards that featured the art of African
American artists and painters. The painting or drawing was on one side, and information
about the artist was on the other. I passed out these cards to build in a variety of ways
upon the "noticing activities." Furthermore, using objects, music, food, and instruments, I
designed lessons around paying attention to what we perceived from our other senses as
well: taste, smell, hearing, and touch. Beyond the five senses, I also added intuition as a
source for material, too, defining it and discussing it in lengthy conversations. What we
had hunches about mattered, I told my students.

Language Off-Page to On-Page

Because I view oral ways with words as essential and integral to written ways
with words, I routinely looked for ways in which my students might tap their oral gifts in
service to writerly activities and products. In later chapters I will present and interpret a
great deal of the typical oral interaction, both in transcripts and excerpts, I shared with
my students. For now, I will but briefly mention the kind of lesson that can evolve when
orality is valued and nurtured in a language arts classroom. In the fall of 2006, due to
illness and suspensions, I found myself with only three second graders in the room:
Bonnie, Rhonda, and Jefferson. These were not three of the highest performing students. Small motor control, spelling, mechanics, and other concerns were, for them, obstacles to fluency in print. Instead of proceeding with the lesson I had planned for the day, I pulled out a pile of hand puppets and asked them each to pick one and put on a show for me. Together we shoved around the furniture and turned a hip-high bookshelf into a puppet stage. Notebook in hand, I took a seat, while the students arranged themselves behind the shelf, dipping down out of the range of my sight. Their puppets popped up and the show began. Without a pause, using the language that came to them in this impromptu fashion, these two girls and one boy set about creating characters, setting, and plot. The girls created a Miss Kim, age 30, and a Marlisha, age 25. These two young women interacted with Little Leon, who was 19, and played by Jefferson. Kim, I learned, liked to dance. Other qualities of the story seemed to derive from fairy tales the students were familiar with: Miss Kim was heading off to a ball to dance with the royal prince. On the way, the three had to cross a dangerous ocean that nearly drowned Little Leon. In the commotion, someone stole Miss Kim’s jewelry. Miss Kim was very upset:

I’m going to my room and squeeze the tears out my eyes because she was my bestest bestest friend and she stole my jewelry and I am mad.

When the first show came to an end, I asked them to put on a second one. Now the characters were Mama, Daughter, and Blind Brother Leon. I really love the first line, which at once establishes both the relationship among three characters and the plot, including an opening for possible conflict:

Mama, I’m going to the ball with my blind brother. Blind Brother, do you want to go to the ball with me?
Will Mama say no? Will Blind Brother want to go? Soon enough, Mama places a call to Daddy on the phone, with Daughter listening in. I suspect that some of this dialogue is borrowed from, has materialized out of, the real life of the performer:

    Unless you gonna buy their clothes you not their Daddy any more. Unless you don’t have nothing to say to your daughter and your son you’re not their Daddy anymore.

Interestingly, the single boy Jefferson, who in class was typically a little sarcastic and wise-cracking, even a little domineering, seemed in this situation to take orders from Bonnie, who was typically quiet and deferential in the larger class environment. It was she who named the characters, and she who directed and redirected the plot. Some elements of the second play, including the names of the characters, I recognized as having been drawn from *Mirandy and Brother Wind*, a picture book we had read as a class (which I discussed in chapter 3 in the context of AAE and bidialectal texts). At one point, Daughter says, “I’m gonna write Blind Brother and Brother Wind.” Sitting in the audience, I admired the intertextuality at play in this moment, the way the performers borrowed a character from a storybook, Brother Wind, and partnered him with a character of their own invention, Blind Brother. And of course I was gratified to hear that in her desperation, Daughter was going to *write* for help (neither call nor run).

Following the second show, I invited all three students back to our circle of desks and asked them to write about the experience they had just had. Jefferson, the lone boy who had been a somewhat passive dramaturg, was now very excited. He wrote the first sentence of the following paragraph, then asked to dictate because he had so much more he wanted to say and getting it written was just too hard.
I’m Blind Brother Leon and I act blind and I’m not blind. And he fell in the ocean and he fell in the wooden blocks and he hurt hisself. And he almost died by an accident cause he was acting blind and he was not real good at blind and he was acting blind. And so now he sat down and he didn’t think about what he done today and he was looking at TV and he went back outside to play with his blocks and he ran and he caught asthma and he got sick because he was in the rain and he didn’t have no coat. And he went back outside and went to get wet and it was summertime. He was outside getting wet and he had drowned in the water and the Jacuzzi and the swimming pool and then he got out breathing hard. And the show was good.

Notice the way Jefferson begins in the first person, identifying with the character he was playing. This is the only sentence he wrote himself, and I suspect that when he outsourced the scribing to me, he experienced a distancing from the role-playing, because from then on he discussed Blind Brother Leon in the third person. I confess that I was and remain confused by the “acting blind” business. Obviously, Jefferson was keen on making sure his reader knew that he himself was merely pretending to be blind, that he is not really blind. But was Blind Brother Leon merely pretending to be blind, too? Was he no good at acting blind, or was he really blind and then somehow became sighted enough to watch TV and have all those experiences out in the rain and water.

Bonnie wrote her reflection all by herself:

I am Sister Marlisha and I have a blind brother and I have a mother and we played in a show. It was a talk show and we had fun. And I act like the queen with the prince. I went to the ball with my blind brother Leon.

Like Jefferson, Bonnie identifies with the character she played, declaring that she is Sister Marlisha. This writing reads the way I have heard actors speak when discussing their roles during an interview, as in, “I play a woman who one day while her kids are at school decides to give everything in her house to the Salvation Army.” The one exception to this generic classification is Bonnie’s reflection that she and her classmates had fun.
As a reader and teacher, I was pleased to see Bonnie’s rhetorical move away from describing the experience to revealing how she felt about it. That she could do so in writing offered me an instant assessment (from her perspective) of the success of the activity. Encouraging my students to flow from oral to printed ways with words always elucidated something I found worth knowing about the text-making habits of my students.

_Routine_

Perhaps the most important message I tried to convey throughout my entire time at Hutsch was that writers write, period. Establishing writing as a personal routine (rather than as an activity one primarily did for school or for teachers, required a regular modeling and demonstrating of what I meant by routine. I found that one of the most powerful lessons designed with this goal in mind began with Anne Frank and her diary. Sitting in a small, intimate circle on the floor, I introduced Anne and her world. I passed around _The Diary of a Young Girl_, careful to explain that this book in our hands was not the actual book she wrote in (as some children believed), but a published version of that diary. In a tone more grave than my customary one, I explained that Anne had relied on her diary, which she had named Kitty, for emotional and spiritual survival. Anne hid for more than two years in a secret annex, I explained, where she faced the threat of danger and death daily and still managed to seem (through her writing) like a girl just trying to grow up. Given how little history my students knew, I fielded questions as best I could. My students were always moved by the story, and felt tremendous empathy for Anne Frank. James, third grader, stared for a long time at the black and white photo of the Amsterdam office building as I spoke.
In this context I dragged over the backpack I carried every single day, the one my students saw me coming and going with. There and then I unpacked it item by item. My planner, my wallet, the book I happened to be reading at the time, my pencil case, my journal, which I flipped through quickly just so they could see that there was writing inside.

“What you write in there, Ms. Schaenen?”

“Well, I keep track of ideas for stories. I write down things that happen that seem interesting to me from day to day. Feelings. Notes. Whatever I feel like writing down. It’s private, though, so I’d prefer you not read it.”

And with this I handed out the materials for student journal keeping. Younger students used crayons, markers, and stickers to decorate a journal folder. Older students received blank books. I reminded them that they got to decide whether their journals would be private or whether they wanted to share any entries with me. Anne Frank’s giving her diary a name was obviously inspiring to more than one of my students. Kenneth named his King. Marcus named his Martin. Cheryl named hers Princess. Angel’s diary was called Beautiful. From the moment the students had journals to keep, I tried to build time into each hour for journal keeping.

*Communicative Purpose*

An assumption I have discussed and will return to again and again is my view of writing as a communicative act. In written language we communicate with ourselves and each other in order to make meaning, to gain insight, to relate more knowingly with our world. Some of the most precise, specific, detailed, clear, communicative writing my students produced was in a game called Chalkboard Password. As I described in chapter
3 when discussing the layout of our room, our western wall was divided into five panels of chalkboard that rotated in synchrony with the twist of a single knob. For Chalkboard Password, I wrote five different words on index cards and passed them out to five different students. We rotated the panels open so that the audience could not see what they were writing. Each student writer slipped in front of a panel and wrote clues (either in sentence or phrase form, depending on the day and age) to help the audience guess their word. When all the writers were done, we closed the panels and the game began.

It is red and black and shaped like a sea horse. (BBQ shrimp)

It has a T on the top of it. It is a big building and people pray in it. (A church: the T is the cross, I believe.)

Old. Your mother came from her. She need help. She in a wheelchair. In the store she stay a long time. She breathe through a machine. Somebody drive her. (Grandmother)

I must comment on this last clue. The second grade girl who composed this clue had before her the abstract noun grandmother. The grandmother described in the clue, however, is very clearly a particular woman with a specific set of needs and habits. We know that it is the writer’s maternal grandmother. From the statements in the clue we know that she may suffer from a disease like emphysema, or some other debilitating condition that requires her to “breathe through a machine.” She is driven around. She is dependent on others. But I think my favorite image in this brief character study (which is what this small composition really is) is the sentence that tells us that this person stays a long time in stores. I love this line because it reveals reality from the perspective of the author: to the young girl, the granddaughter, the grandmother is a person who stays a long time in stores. We can imagine the writer’s impatience, at times, with the need to wait and wait while her grandmother finishes up her shopping. The grandmother’s
dependence on others sits alongside her still-strong customs as an individual, and the writing has registered both of these qualities for the reader to interpret.

A slight variation of this game enabled me to illustrate for the third graders something about how all of our minds are both related and unique. Instead of passing out clues to only one half of the class, I passed out sets of duplicate words, one to a chalkboarder and one to a desk-sitter. (This new version also gave the “audience” something to do while the chalkboarders were writing.) After the board person had enjoyed her turn (with her matching-word partner sitting out the guessing) I asked the desk-sitter, in this case Tremaine, to read his clues for the same word. Here is what two different people produced for the word *sheep*.

It is white. It has fur. It has four legs. It lives in a farm and a farmer take care of it and it is an animal. (Chalkboard person)

It says bahhh and it eats grass and it has lots of fur. It is white and it makes milk. It lives in a farm. They live in group. (Tremaine)

In terms of meaning-making and the objective quality of the writing, I believe Tremaine’s set of clues are more likely to convey the concept of sheep than the first one (the sound of bahhh and living in groups are excellent clues; also, the plentiful white “fur” and the milk they produce give more concrete information). In discussing the two sets of clues with the class, however, I emphasized that “every mind is unique,” that “one person may think certain things about sheep while another person focuses on other aspects of sheep. This,” I would say, “is what makes writers different from one another.”

*Sociocultural Attunement*

As I have said, I agree with Dressman (1993), who argues that nonmainstream students “do” literacy in far more communal and contextual ways than do white, middle
class (ie, mainstream) students, who tend to be accustomed to and schooled in the
individualist, romantic model of The Writer, a person who solely, abstractly, and
autonomously produces work in a Voice. I believe writers have many voices. And I
believe that cultural practices matter in verbal composition. I never forgot that I was
teaching young African American writers, and what that might entail with respect to how
their writing came to be written. I also never forgot that regular school expected certain
abilities and skills from them, abilities and skills which might be at odds with the verbal
practices which came easy. “Playing the game,” was a strategy my students were mostly
familiar with.

In later chapters I will expand upon the various ways in which I tried to make
room for collaborative activities that drew upon multiple authorship and cooperative
learning. For now, I will simply note that my students often had a say in how they
composed (in pairs, groups, or alone) and how they shared their work aloud for everyone.
A visitor might hear two students reading in chorus from a paper they had written
together, each student writing out the whole paper on their own page. On the same day,
for the same assignment, the visitor might hear two different students taking turns line by
line during the read-aloud. Or one student might read the first half of the paper while the
second student might read the second half.

Collaborative writing was nearly always perceived as a treat. In one activity, we
played writing “telephone,” initiating a story on one page, then passing our papers to the
left for the next person to continue the story. And so on around the circle. The suspense
and glee were palpable as the papers made the rounds. “Ooh,” Niya burst in second
grade, “I can’t wait to see what y’all wrote on mine.”
Teaching writing among my students, I was ever aware of the powerful effects of contextual qualities in the room at all times. Mood, gesture, facial expression, body language, and whatever experiences came along with the children from outside the classroom influenced whether they wrote, what they wrote, and how they wrote.
CHAPTER 5
SEEING IT WHOLE

For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it, and centrally and simply, without either dissection into science, or digestion into art, but with the whole of consciousness, seeking to perceive it as it stands: so that the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can: and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.

—James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

In this chapter I will present a visual representation of what I believe must be noticed about the *Writing to Connect* program as a whole. Grounded in data, this model of the whole program has helped to guide and inform my understanding of the program as a third space, a concept I introduced in chapter 1. The term *third space* evolved out of art criticism, where *first space* signifies the viewer, and *second space*, the work of art. The *third space* is the interaction, the dialogic relationship, between the viewer and the viewed object. To call *Writing to Connect* a third space is to take up the metaphorical extension of the concept as theoretically modeled by Stevenson and Deasy (2005) and Gutiérrez (2008) among others, who view third spaces as places where sets of relationships and new ways of teaching and learning are made possible by particular ways of engaging in various practices, including arts practices. As a third space, *Writing*
to Connect was a dynamic place, a place of flux, of interplay. As an analytic tool, therefore, the visual representation I will present has helped me organize, summarize, and make meaningful interpretations about the complex qualitative data generated by this inquiry into the nature of a third space. With respect to the program, when I ask what happened here?, this model will also direct the reader's attention to ways of constructing answers that integrate data collected over time and across participants. In creating a model of this study's units of analysis, my goal was to preserve "in a microcosm (Vygotsky, 1986) as many dimensions of the general phenomenon under consideration (Writing to Connect) as possible, thereby allowing me to move from one dimension to another without losing sight of how they fit together into a more complex whole" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 121). In making meaning out of a complex system, knowing what to attend to is key. My intention is to help the reader, an outsider to Writing to Connect, pay attention as an insider would—as I would and did. It may help to imagine an inquiry situated in an entirely different discipline.

If you should park me in a field under a vast, star-filled night sky and tell me to look up and describe what I was looking at, I would probably say something like: “I see lots of stars, some close together, others far apart from each other, some brighter, others dimmer, some bigger, and some tinier.” I might be able to discern the Big Dipper, and maybe even the belt of Orion. I could take a guess at the North Star. But that would be about it. Astronomically speaking, I simply do not know what to look for; the patterns formed by the features of the night sky, which themselves (I happen to know) wheel in constant motion according to certain knowable trajectories, are unknown to me. Without knowing what to look for, without a sense of the flux of the layout of the sky from
horizon to horizon, my descriptions are crude and unsophisticated; while they might be interesting to another lay person, they are all but meaningless to those who know a thing or two about astronomy. In other words, my account reflects what I see given my severe limitations as an observer, my outsider status with respect to astronomy. What I notice is not necessarily anything interesting about what’s “out there” to be seen.

Now returning to *Writing to Connect*, I claim that my experience, and my reflection upon my experience, has made me a person who knows what to look for, and who (even more important!) knows what to be on guard against overlooking. In the sections to follow, I will begin by describing the fluidity, flow and dynamic meaning-making that characterized the physical, emotional, and cognitive relationships among all of the workshop's participants. In particular, I will describe and interpret the multiliteracies, emotionality, and relations of power my students and I enacted and experienced.

**Bodies in Motion**

Because a writing workshop is an ever-evolving experience among people also changing in time, a trustworthy representation must allow for the dynamic interactions, identity-constructions, and situated meanings at play in a particular context. Within a single structured hour in *Writing to Connect*, for example, a student might be an expert explainer telling me how a certain word in AAE is used, a humble protégé trying her hand at writing a line of dialogue in MAE as per my directions, or a third-party

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*Cognitive psychologists call this inattention blindness. When driving a car while talking on a cell phone, for example, our minds may be so occupied by thinking about what the person on the phone is saying that we become unable to "see" the fallen tree across the road right in front of our eyes. The image simply does not register in our brains.*
conciliator negotiating a truce between two riled-up classmates. As students and I flowed through such roles, I attempted to explicitly describe our language and other modes of meaning-making as “dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5), albeit in age-appropriate ways.

Our discursive mobility was rooted in the ways we literally moved around and positioned ourselves, managed our arms and legs and torsos, within the room itself. While I will discuss the ways I encouraged the students to be very still when writing, at other times our bodies came into play. Erika and Kayode, for instance, liked to sit at my desk to write or read. Some people liked to sit under the desks. Others preferred the bean bag. Darrion, a wiry, energetic boy who was easily distracted, liked to turn his desk to face a chalkboard. In second grade, I even let him wear my husband's spare ear protectors, the ones he uses for chain-sawing, which I kept in the room for just such a purpose. Sometimes a student wanted to show me a cheer. Other times we were all spread on the floor as I read aloud or we played a board game. We tended to shove desks around to make space for physical enactments of one kind or another. One activity, which the students loved, began with my donning a blindfold and being led by two volunteers to a metal cabinet, where I would randomly pluck two magnetic words of the hundred or so stuck there. Taking off the blindfold, my challenge was to form a meaningful sentence using both words and write it on the chalkboard. The whole class then took turns being "blind," being led, leading, and writing.

Setting bodies into motion is neither new nor innovative in elementary school teaching; young children move, and teachers of young children try to take advantage of
this energy. What was new for me was the extent to which I analyzed the pedagogical implications of putting myself in this or that place in relation to these particular students. And every so often, the things going on with our bodies made me think about the sociocultural differences between us. One day when he was in second grade, Marcus was struggling to concentrate. Never knowing what might be causing the distraction, I asked. Sometimes a child hadn't gotten enough sleep. Sometimes he or she had had a fight with a sibling. Maybe someone at home was ill. It turned out that the dozens of rubber bands knotting Marcus's hair were too tight and giving him a headache. He asked me to loosen them. I paused. Was it OK or not OK to put my fingers in a second grader's hair? Should I send him to the nurse, or would doing so suggest that he and I could not relate to one another on that level of intimacy? Was that the message I wanted to convey? Not at that moment. "Intimacy is not created by a particular language," writes Watkins-Goffman (2001), "it is created by intimates" (p. 32). I loosened the knots so that Marcus could write.

Another day later that first year, I was sitting at the computer surrounded by third graders. As I typed their play, they watched the words appear on the screen, revising as they composed. We were all bunched very close together and concentrating on the text in progress. Suddenly I felt a few hands touching my hair. Among White people, there is nothing special about my hair; it's slightly wavy and brown, and cut in a longish shag. But up on the second floor of Hutsch, centered in a cluster of African American students, there was something special about my hair. To them, it was different. I was different.

"You smell good, Ms. Schaenen," Julius said.

As with Marcus, I wasn't quite sure what to do in this moment. I knew that my
students were simply expressing affection and interest. On the other hand, as a result of
the close physical proximity I had allowed us to establish, I felt more like an exotic
creature than a teacher. It felt not quite right to be touched and smelled. On the other
hand, these were third graders. The moment passed. I do not remember exactly what
happened. Perhaps I shifted in my seat just a bit. All I remember (and have a record of in
my field notes) is the feeling I had that the most important aspect to that lesson was the
way the act of composition was entwined with a genuinely affectionate and intimate
moment. If my person wasn't entirely off-limits, surely the way I spoke and wrote didn't
have to be, either.

Even our eyes made commitments. "Look in my eyes!" I might demand of a student
who was misbehaving, or whose attitude had gone dead. Often, the student would keep
looking away before I was through talking, Squatting low, face to face, I would repeat
myself several times. "Look in my eyes. I need to see your eyes." In such moment I was
fully aware of my power, fully aware of the challenge I was posing, one that might be
perceived as profoundly intolerable if it were happening on the street between peers.
Furthermore, for all I knew, my students were raised never to look in the eye of an adult
who was chastising them for something. I had no way of knowing this. Such moments
did not happen often, but they delivered a potent message: I am here with you, I care
about this moment, and I care about how you act. In my world, according to my rules in
this place, this means I need to establish eye contact with you.

The Egg

Such classroom dynamism, the sense of fluidity between and among discursive
modes and identities, among ways of moving and acting in my classroom, begs for an
analytic tool designed to reckon with data that we value. For all of the reasons I have described relating to being a writer, I really value the highly unstable data human beings generate, embody, and present, and for this reason sought to design a visual representation that would have room for everything we experienced. I am calling it The Egg, in part because of the rich connotations of the word egg: alive, self-sustaining, in-a-process-of-becoming. Furthermore, as I mentioned in chapter 2, this model of our particular third space will allow me to turn to the investigatory methodological concepts theorized by Eisner (1998), who suggests that connoisseurship and criticism are particularly fruitful features of inquiry in arts education. As the art of appreciation, connoisseurship requires the practice of acute perceiving and "fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities" (Eisner, 1998, p. 63). To appreciate an object, situation, or event is to view it in context and in relation to antecedent instantiations of similar objects, situations or events. Connoisseurship is itself embedded in criticism, which Eisner suggests is an act of disclosure with four dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. Criticism, which cannot happen apart from appreciation, helps make an object, situation, or event visible. An approach to inquiry rooted in a respect for the critical thinking made possible by education in the arts has also been modeled by researchers at Project Zero, founded in 1967 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Current Project Zero studies include developing curricula that teach elementary students about appreciating and experiencing art (not only making it); and exploring thinking dispositions and interdisciplinary learning processes, among others.39 For a Project Zero analysis of particular themes and patterns across several arts

39 For more information on Project Zero, see http://www.pz.harvard.edu/index.cfm

I will now present The Egg, shown in appendix J, describing its components, features and some of the sociocultural theory that informed my thinking and practice with respect to the various domains of analysis. Ideally (to recall the astronomy analogy above), the following representation would be as three-dimensional as a model of the Earth in space: an ovoid-shaped body set into rotation about an axis and moved along a slightly spiraling elliptical course that itself (as the solar system within the Milky Way galaxy) zooms through the observable universe. This model of movement nested within movement, of change happening in an ever-changing environment—with random gaseous or solid bodies exerting the force of gravity upon each other, and every so often shooting from one place to another—seems analogous to the teaching and learning experiences created in Writing to Connect. Given the constraints of a piece of paper, however, what appears in appendix J is the best I can do for now. Imagine inflating the figure's two-dimensionality into an oblate spheroid.

As I discuss each element of The Egg, I will present telling examples to help illustrate the qualities and characteristics of that element, and indicate how I might assess pedagogical outcomes based on these criteria using the concepts of appreciating (connoisseurship) and seeing (criticism).

Multiliteracies

At the beating heart of Writing to Connect was the concept of multimodality and multiliteracies. As expert communicators in AAE, my students were well versed in
drawing upon various ways of expressing and encoding meaning. But what does this mean in terms of a writing workshop? A temporary sidetrack in this discussion will help me expose the kind of wordwork I believe multiliteracies entails.

A few years ago, on a purposeful lark, I asked a dear friend—medical doctor who works and teaches at a prestigious hospital and university—to sit down and write everything he knew about shells. My friend inhabits a highly specialized, valued and privileged realm; he is White and male, healthy and well-traveled; born and bred in a family of engineers raised to achieve academic and professional success. He does science. He speaks mainstream American English. He is fluent in French, and is currently learning Spanish. He considers himself a stickler for grammar, and works at being less of one. He reads widely; he think critically about politics, film, and art. He earns a good income. He enjoys professional respect and high social status. In a manner of speaking, I think of my friend as a triangulator-par-excellence; although (regrettably) I do not have any access to how he might have thought about the word shell when he was in grade school, from his current position he offers me the perspective of a person who uses languages from a particularly empowered set of identities. Why do I introduce an outsider at this moment when discussing multiliteracies? The answer is this: If what I am doing in my classroom does not point my students in a direction that, if followed, will give them a fair chance of availing themselves of a similar set of literacies and identities should they choose to do so, then I feel I am doing something wrong. Here is what my friend wrote, in his meticulous cursive hand (see appendix K for the original composition), in five or ten minutes:

Shells are mineral "covers" made by invertebrates such as clams to "house" and protect them throughout their lives. We also use the word shell to describe the
hard covering of arthropods such as lobsters. "Shell" is also used metaphorically
to describe any hard, protective casing. Metaphorically, it also describes an
emotional barrier that others may sense around a person who has withdrawn
socially. [Below the paragraph, he sketched a fairly detailed picture of a snail.]

In relating "what he knew about shells," my physician friend drew upon the vocabulary
of biology and the humanities; he expressed his knowledge in declarative verbs, and
spoke for a collective "we" who use the word shell in shared ways. He attempts to
account for as many meanings as he can, and even borrows a dictionary form of discourse
when illustrating, or showing multimodally (in this case, visually), an example of one
kind of shell (among many). Something of his responsive process is revealed by his
crossing out of the word metaphorically: when he realized that he had an intermediate
concept to express before he got to the metaphorical meaning, he used a single pencil line
to revise and continue writing.

Everything about this writing sample tells me that this is a person who has spent a
great deal of time in school; it displays a mastery of "ways of doing literacy" according to
the evaluative standards of academic discourse. As Street (1984) writes, "It is clearly a
product of specific circumstances and needs, and it makes variable and often distinctive
use of particular language forms, functions, and characteristics (p. 76). Even a cursory
(and admittedly summative) analysis of this text reveals the socially situated nature of its
production. It is bound by prescriptive grammatical rules of mainstream American
English, and by generic expectations concerning the discursive field of definition-
making. My friend has represented himself, in this text, as a person who knows the voices
that inform the act of description making and can share (re-voice) this knowledge with
others on demand. In other words, he can play along with a decontextualized experiment
having to do with language just for the fun of it. These are skills and attitudes my
students practice in some contexts but not in others. What do I mean by this? Below is a
text produced by Angel when she was in third grade.

Hi. my name is Angel and I think the word nigar [sic] is a word that is used to
make a black person feel like he or she doesn't belong. I think that every person
should not be judged by the skin color but by their personality. But do you know
that the word nigar was not always bad it also was another word for black but it
become a bad word from the Laitin people I think it's O.K. to say the word at
times but when your [sic] using it to ofind [offend] or heart [hurt] someone it's not
O.K. and I think everyone knows that. The word nigar is some kind of word but
the word nigar could heart [sic] someone so badly that it makes you not want to
know of a word like that as you could see the word nigar is use 75 percent of the
black people say the word when they are angry and when they sometimes think
it's cool you might hear me say it but not to hurt someone.

In the composition above—one student's attempt to make sense of a word freighted with
highly charged meaning—I hear echoes of Martin Luther King, Jr. Like Dr. King, Angel
thinks people should not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their
cracter (in Angel's words, "their personality"). I also hear myself. After all, I was the
one who had introduced the idea that we could talk about the word-in-use. In so doing, I
had taught Angel and the rest of the class about the root of the word nigger: the word
Negro, I had explained, came from the Latin word for the color black, niger. During this
same lesson, the students taught me about the difference in meaning between the word
nigger and the word nigga, as they understood it. (Additional details and ramifications of
this lesson will be described at length in chapter 6.) And throughout the paragraph I hear
Angel herself, who (after personally greeting the reader with the salutation "hi") has
looked around her world and observed on her own that people tend to use the word
"when they are angry" or when they think it's cool. This text also shows Angel's
intraspection as she reflects upon her own customs. She writes that "you might hear me
say it, but not to hurt someone." In merely ten lines, this passage demonstrates the heteroglossia, what I might term (along with Wertsch, 1991) the multivoicedness inherent in Angel's authorship. Furthermore, in taking up her role as a participant in a meaningful and culturally salient conversation, Angel is placing her text in explicit dialogue with other conversations about its subject (Bakhtin, 1981). The layered literacies exhibited in Angel's writing on a topic that meant a great deal to her contrast sharply with the literacies on display when I asked her, two years later, to write down what she knew about shells.

Below is Angel's response to the invitation to write down what she knew about shells. We were not in school, were simply socializing in her home one spring day. (Punctuation and spacing are precisely as they appear on the lined paper she used.)

Shells
1) Gas
2) Sea shells
3) Oceans
4) Sand
5) beaches
6) Beautiful skys
7) Pretty birds

What might be the meaning of this response with respect to Angel's way of enacting multiliteracies in this situation as compared to my doctor friend's way, and as compared to the complex text she composed on the subject of the word nigger? First, Angel complied with my request, no questions asked. In this regard, she was just like the doctor, willing to give it a try. Unlike my friend the doctor, she did not respond in full sentences, but made a numbered list. Of course, dictionaries also offer lists of meanings, even numbered lists, but Angel's list of "what she knew" was a series of words that apparently
popped into her head when she heard the word shell. Angel free-associated, beginning with the first shell image she could think of, the logo of a gasoline purveyor. Four terms associated with arthropods followed. Beautiful skys came to her mind after beaches, for obvious reasons. But then, after a larger spatial interval on the page, comes pretty birds, which stems from beautiful skys and seems to have little to do with shells except through this semantic chain. (I could be wrong, and I ought to have asked, but I do not think that Angel was thinking of sea gulls, which are not especially pretty; knowing Angel, I believe she was thinking of different sorts of pretty birds that are in beautiful skies in general.) By writing a free-associative list, Angel showed me that her habit of written response to decontextualized requests been schooled in a particularly structured kind of way, and yet also remains shaped by personal modes of self-expression, what in Bakhtinian terms would be called a non-scientific speech genre. She did not compose within the generic discourse of definition-making, which limits the text-maker to objective statements of absolute meanings; rather she composed her own personal list of associations.

One other aspect to notice: Angel's attention to the details of her numbering—setting them off with a close parenthesis, and even (for good measure!) with both a period and a close parenthesis—reveal literacy practices closely tied to quantification. List-making and itemization were the default form into which she placed her response.40

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40 I often asked students to stop numbering their sentences when writing, a habit they transferred from their regular classroom instruction in language arts, where the scripted curriculum used composition templates that included numbers, checkpoints, and other means that implicitly construed writing as a mechanical assembling of parts into a whole. (See chapter 4.)
Our classroom talk and writing, like all talk and writing, did not happen in a vacuum.

Words, phrases, ideas, intonations, gestures, expressive forms of all kinds were always "out there," available for us to borrow and use whole, or to ventriloquate more subtly and obliquely, rendering us (as Bakhtin argued) co-authors of all utterances (Holquist, 2002).

I have spent considerable time analyzing these examples because they steer me to key questions about multiliteracies that relate to this study as a whole: how do the socially and politically situated literacies realized by my doctor friend and Angel (and all my students) relate to broader concepts of literacies as theorized in contemporary research? How can we reframe what my friend can do in ways that relax the normative pressure it exerts on all the other ways people can and do make meaning, and yet render it available to those who already have multiple (if less valued) ways of doing literacy? How can we mindfully, sensitively, and skillfully heighten the awareness of Angel and her peers to the consequences of their linguistic choices, and enable them to read and write in the codes of academic power when and if they want to? In Writing to Connect, multiliteracies pedagogy nested within a sociocultural framework. Looking back across time at sociocultural perspectives on language, literacy, and education can therefore help address these questions.

Sociocultural Approach to Language Arts Teaching and Learning

It seems to me that knowing the history of the sociocultural perspective on language arts education is necessary in all schools, crucial in school environments where two or more cultures comes into direct contact, and particularly crucial when one language, for complex political, economic, social, or cultural reasons, is considered to be better or more proper than another; or when one language recruits a greater variety of
expressive and communicative modes than another, as does African American English compared to mainstream American English (Rickford, 1999; Smitherman, 1977).

In the first quarter of the 20th century, writing as a literary critic and philosopher in what was then the Soviet Union, Bakhtin\(^{41}\) suggested that writing and reading are dialogic processes of making meaning from words in multiple, dynamic, and transformative ways. “The actual reality of language-speech is . . .the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances” (Volosinov, 1973). Along with Vygotsky, whose sociocultural theories were derived from his designed experiments with young children, Bakhtin's work continues to ground sociocultural approaches to language arts education.

A half-century ago, Cheavens (1957) offered one of the earliest and broadest examinations of the meeting place of languages asymmetrically valorized when he traced the role and scope of vernacular languages in education through time—from ancient Sumer and Babylonia through the twentieth century—and across geopolitical regions. The immense range of Cheavens’ study renders its conclusion especially powerful. “Neglect of native languages, or worse still, their suppression, has spelled educational failure repeatedly” (p. 5). In the fifty years since Cheavens’s study, researchers working in sociolinguistics, literacy, and education have confirmed his conclusions (Alim & Baugh, 2007; Ball, 1996; Baugh, 1999; Delpit, 1998; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1972; Rickford, 1997; Smitherman, 1977; Street, 2005; Wenger, 1998; Wolfram & Christian, 2005).

\(^{41}\)The complicated political environment of the Soviet Union in the 1920s caused Bakhtin to publish his work under three different names in addition to his own (Medvedev, Volosinov, and Kanaev). For my own understandings of Bakhtin's work I rely on the interpretations of Holquist (2002) and Bakhtin's own text (Volosinov, 1973/1929).
Ignoring, silencing, suppressing, and insulting home cultures and dialects hinders students from gaining fluency in a (dominant) standard language; Adler (1993) argues that such practices do far worse, and stands by a views he held in 1979, namely that "to eliminate, or correct as a deficiency, any aspect of a cultural linguistic pattern is a form of cultural genocide and should be recognized as such" (p. 9). Rickford (1997) writes that current curricula and classroom practices (not to mention severe underfunding of public schools) have resulted in “massive educational failure with the African-American community,” and adds that the longer African-American students remain in school, the worse they perform (p. 2). Rickford suggests several modes of instruction that provide pluralistic, socioculturally aware methods. Linguistically informed instruction, contrastive analysis, and creating the space and time for gradual transitions from vernaculars to mainstream dialects in the classroom are all pieces of the bidialectal process described by Rickford and others, both in the United States and elsewhere, such as the West Indies, where related scholarship tells a similar story (Craig, 1983).

In 1974, as I mentioned in chapter 2, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) passed a resolution, Students' Rights to Their Own Language. A product of the conversations, debates, and infighting among linguists, English teachers, composition professors, and others active in the language arts fray, the resolution reads:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and
uphold the right of students to their own language.42

Smitherman (2003) details the nature of the conversation about linguistic rights leading up to and following the passage of the resolution, a conversation that began in 1951 with, as she reports, one particular linguist sticking up for the rights of people who spoke a rural, working class dialect. Perhaps, then, we can date the dawn of what might be termed the dialect diversity movement with the salvo of the 1974 proposition.

For 25 years, Street (1984) has argued that literacy ought to be understood as a mode of language that has social functions. In this sense, literacy cannot be defined, only described. Literacy, Street writes, "is a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes" (p. 97). Other scholars and researchers (Cook-Gumperz, 1986; J. Gumperz, 1986; Flower, 1994; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981) have theorized literacy and composition in similarly sociocultural ways, and much of this work in the sociocultural aspects of literacy since 1980 is discussed comprehensively by Barton (2007), who frames a broad conceptualization of literacy in terms of ecology—the interrelationship between and among the reading and writing that people do and their environments. Barton describes the collective work of the literacy scholars of the last generation as New Literacy Studies (NLS). Street (2003) describes NLS as a field which entails the recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power. NLS, then, takes nothing for granted with respect to literacy and the social practices with which it becomes associated, problematizing what counts as literacy at any time and place and asking 'whose literacies' are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant" (p. 77).

42 For a detailed history of the composition and reception of the resolution, see Smitherman and Villanueva, 2003, pp. 7-39. Monumentally influential in the field as a linguist, Smitherman was a member of the committee that drafted the resolution.
In the last two decades, Gee (1990/1996) has argued forcefully for opening the
discursive aperture in classroom practice.

Schools ought to allow students to juxtapose diverse Discourses to each other so
that they can understand them at a meta-level through a more encompassing
language of reflection. Schools ought to allow all students to acquire, not just
learn about, Discourses that lead to effectiveness in their society, should they wish
to do so. Schools ought to allow students to transform and vary their Discourses,
based on larger cultural and historical understandings, to create new Discourses,
and to imagine better and more socially just ways of being in the world. From this
perspective, the exclusion of certain students’ Discourses from the classroom
seriously cheats and damages everyone. It lessens the map, loses chances from
reflection and meta-level thought and language, and impoverishes the imagination
of all” (p. 190).

In a passage like the one quoted above, Gee's Discourse reveals a moral urgency about
these matters. With those repeated oughts, that insistence that schools are cheating
students, Gee has shifted from objective academic to outraged advocate, a position I
openly follow as a teacher researcher.

In looking back through a century of scholarship, I have presented but a quick
review of the literature on the sociocultural approaches to language arts education; it
seems to me, however, enough evidence to render appalling the fact that, well into the
21st century, urban public schools are the way they are with respect to policing the
languages of speakers from non-dominant communities. It also seems to me that
respecting diversity (making room for non-mainstream forms of linguistic expression) is
not sufficient. Contemporary research on language and learning emphasizes that the twin
realities of "local diversity and global connectedness. . . mean that the most important
skill students need to learn is to negotiate regional, ethnic, or class-based variations in
register that occur according to social context; hybrid crossover discourses; the code
switching often to be found within a text among different languages, dialects or registers; different visual and iconic meanings; and variations in the gestural relationships among people, language, and material objects" (The New London Group, in Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 14). Writing to Connect took to heart this call, as well. My students were largely already familiar with ways in which people they knew shifted from one way of speaking to another; several students reported listening to family members answer the telephone and speak AAE with a family member and MAE with, say, a representative from the electric company or an employer. My intention, in the name of "linguistic and cultural pluralism" (p. 15) was to make this practice explicit, to give it a name and to render it, for my students, a matter of choice and design.

_Bidialectal Pedagogy in Practice_

In The Egg I have designed a set of pulsing rays to suggest the way that the concept of multiliteracies/bidialectalism infused all of our activities. As indicated by the pulses, the current in which concept flowed infused the program in a wave-like manner. At times I called upon it; other times a student brought it up, as in the example below, taken from a transcript of the first moments of the class:

Inda: G’morning. I walked in, when we were all just coming in right now I heard somebody say “what we doin today. ”Who said that?
Student: Harrison.
Inda: Harrison?
Inda: Oh, hold on Diamond. What did you just say?
Diamond: Always, er, Harrison always use Ebonics.
Inda: What do you mean by Ebonics, what did you hear that was Ebonics?
Diamond: He said what y'all doin, I mean what we doin,
Inda: And what makes that Ebonics? Raise your hand so I can have you on tape.
  What makes, what we doin today Ebonics, Marcus?
Marcus: What we doin.
Inda: If you wanted to switch that into Standard English, what would you say?
Marcus: What are we doin today?

As I mentioned in chapter 2, it was difficult at times to know how and when to inject bidialectal concepts into a particular class, and at what “pulse level.” This was a matter of constant calibration. I did not want to overdo it, although sometimes I am sure that I did. Indeed, I definitely sensed in Angel a certain boredom with the concept during the class from which the transcript above was taken. For some students, the concept was already known, and known well. Keeping it fresh them while maintaining an instructional base for the others, who came to understanding more slowly, was not easy. For my own sense of sociocultural clarity with respect to perceiving the various features of the dialects at play in my classroom, I relied especially on Rickford (1999) and Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006). As a domain of analysis, multiliteracies/bidialectalism offers a crucial way of looking for patterns across all of my data; multimodal analysis of classroom behavior (Norris, 2004) offers tools and methods for doing so.43

In Writing to Connect, "taking nothing for granted" meant (among other things) that I was ever on-the-lookout for my own tendency, as a highly schooled person, to make unfounded claims about the importance and significance of becoming fluent in MAE. In the first place, given systemic social, political, and economic inequities, there are limits to what reading and writing alone can accomplish (Graff, 1979). Furthermore, as Street writes, "claims are made for English, not unlike those formerly made for Latin or for certain styles of French, that it is better suited to particular intellectual or scientific purposes, notably in the current situation, those for which consumers want to buy

43 I will subject this excerpt (and the rest of that day's class) to detailed analysis in chapter 7.
languages" (p. 74). English is a *lingua mundi*, with more than a billion people making use of its forms and customs in ways that would be comprehended as English. However, there is nothing inherent in my version of English (I told my students) that makes it better than other languages or other dialects of English; it is the social clout my English happens to have (because of global distributions of power, wealth, status, economic, and other factors) that renders it "valuable." But how does one go about routinely embedding this concept into a writing program and conveying it during one hour a week among second, third, and fourth graders?

I will return to the subject of multiliteracies yet again in chapter 7 when I look closely at student written work. For now, I will detail some of the ways in which I took up bidialectal pedagogy day to day.

Whenever possible I emphasized to my students that all oral and written discursive choices were a function of social purpose. Bidialectal practices shaped or informed everything we did, and was especially valued by me as a teacher. Style shifting and thinking metacognitively about language choices were consequently often at the center of conversation and reflection. If all utterances are social events among individuals speaking the same language, what was going on in communicative events (exchanges of utterances) where speakers of more than one language or dialect (like me and my students) were interacting? I viewed bidialectal pedagogy as one important way of setting up the direct instruction, situated practice, and critical framing recommended by Cope and Kalantzis (2000). Teaching and learning about dialect difference in all its social and linguistic dimensions would, I believe, expand my students' ability to speak and write in "hybrid, crossover discourses."
At its introduction, bidialectal pedagogy sounded like a Socratic conversation. One day, after reading *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (McKissock, 1988), a story written in AAE, my second grade class and I had the following exchange.

Student: Ms. Schaenen, you sound like you talkin country.
Inda: Do you know people who talk like this?
Student: Yes.
Inda: Do they live in the country?
Student: No.
Inda: Then could it be something other than being in the country or the city that makes people sound like this?
Student: It's from another country. It's Africa.
Inda: Are we in Africa? Who do you know that talks like this?  

The conversation continued in this vein until we had determined that there were different forms of English, some used by some people in some places and other forms used by other people in other places.

A week later, second grader Lemarius mentioned during circle time that he had heard some Ebonics since we had met last.

"Cool!" I said. "What did you hear?"

"My cousin said, 'What you doin'."

"And what would that be in Standard English?" I asked.

"What are you doing," he said, without skipping a beat. A classmate blurted the same thing.

Jada said she, too, had heard an example, and told us that a woman on TV had said something like, "he not going there." When I asked how that was different from Standard English, she said, "It's missing some of the verb."

I was extremely impressed by this level of analysis among second graders who had

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44 This exchange occurred in the second grade in April 2006.
just recently been introduced to the concept. It was one thing to be able to shift dialects; it was quite another to know what had changed in the grammatical structure of the sentence. (This was not the time to address what I interpreted as a perception of deficiency in the AAE; "missing" suggests that something that ought to be there is not.) I took the moment to discuss where Ebonics was spoken.

"Africa and China," Lemarius said.

"But Lemarius, your cousin and the woman on TV were not in China," I said, which led us into talk about community, race, and dialect.

When I introduced the concept of dialects and style shifting to third graders, the conversation sounded somewhat different. We had begun by talking about how everybody speaks in different ways depending on where they are. As an example, I asked about recess. One student, a girl, told me that at recess she might say, "they be yellin and runnin around." Another student, when I asked how that same idea might be expressed in class, said, "They were yelling and running around." I wrote both of these sentences on the board. I repeated the first one aloud and asked if I sounded like me. The students laughed and said I sounded "weird." I asked which way they would say the sentence at home in their kitchens. Over and over again, I asked why I sounded weird when I was saying the very same thing they would say in their kitchens.

"Because you're not like us," said one.

"Because you're not from the same place as us," said another.

I continued to ask what that meant in terms of the way I spoke. After fifteen minutes, two girls finally couldn't take it anymore and blurted:

"Because you not black, Ms. Schaenen," Anita said.
"Exactly," I said.

"Don't nobody wanted to say that, Ms. Schaeen," Keona said.

"We're all supposed to be brothers and sisters," said a boy, rolling his eyes at the cliché sentiment.

"I know we're all brothers and sisters," I said, "But that doesn't mean we all look alike, or speak alike, all the time."

Eventually, thanks to role playing, impersonation, reading, discussion, and contrastive analysis (Wheeler, 2008), a process that makes explicit the syntactical differences between one dialect and another, many students were eventually able to write sentence-pairs that meant the same thing, but were expressed in either African American English (AAE) or mainstream American English (MAE). Other students grasped the concept whole and took it home with them, as revealed in the following text, written by Nieta, a third grader:

When I went home that day I told my family that I knew another word for colored people talking and they said no and I said it is called Ebonics. Then, my family said that someone told me that someone else told me that. I said yes someone did tell me that my Room For Writing teacher told me that and we played a game about and my mom said "You ain't that smart" and then I said mom you just spoke Ebonics. A non-colored person would've said "You aren't that smart. The End

The following example is drawn from a single student's work on one day:

1. My mom be at work, but today she is at home. (AAE)
   My mom is always at work, but today she is at home. (MAE)
2. They be best friends. (AAE)
   They are best friends. (MAE)
3. Y'all be playing. (AAE)
   You are always playing. (MAE)
4. That kid be mean. (AAE)
   That kid is mean. (MAE)
5. That kid mean. (AAE)
   That kid is mean now. (MAE)
Reading this, I had mixed feelings. Of course I was very pleased to see a complicated idea apparently perfectly understood. On the other hand, I was made rather nervous by the gotcha aspect to Nieta's way of sharing her new knowledge with her mother. I half suspected to hear that this mother or another parent had showed up to investigate, confront, or complain. Nobody ever did, but it seems important to note that taking on the racial, cultural, and social meanings embedded in the language we use can be a risky business.

After three years, the fourth graders of 2007-2008 in particular achieved considerable critical distance on dialect construction. We openly discussed dialect difference in terms of vocabulary, phonology, syntax, morphology, and pragmatics. As a class, the students generated a running list of vocabulary in what we called Ebonics, which I kept posted on the bulletin board. Along the way, sometimes the levels of language construction blurred. For example, in third grade, Angel suggested the word moe as an example of Ebonics. She defined this word as meaning, "Having more than someone else."

"Angel," I said, "I think this word is your way of pronouncing the standard word more. That makes it an Ebonics pronunciation of the Standard word more."\footnote{46} Very casually, we talked about similar differences in pronunciation in words like floor, four, and store (which sounded in AAE like flow, foe, and stowe), and the realization of the th

\footnote{46}{I am quoting myself verbatim, but in retrospect I regret this response. It strikes me as a normative way of explaining the relationship between moe and more. What I wished I had said was something like, "Moe and moar are two different ways of saying the English word more," which would have suggested a parity between AAE and SE under the Big Tent called English.}
as *d* in words like *then* and *they* (in AAE, *dem* and *dey*). Then everyone played around with both ways of pronouncing these word sets. Everyone was laughing at how silly it felt to put our tongues in places we weren't used to. I said everyone was always free to choose which way they wanted to pronounce any word. Students in both second and third grades said the Ebonics pronunciations were both shorter and easier to say. Tyrone, then in fourth grade, was particularly tickled by this whole discussion.

"How would the world be," he asked, "if you put a T-H at the end of every sentence. Hi, everybodyth!" He and his classmates laughed at the silliness of such a world. I laughed too, even as I was thinking that asking them to think about choice-making in spoken language must seem just as arbitrary and ridiculous. On the bright side, Tyrone's silly "what if" scenario suggested that he was capable of viewing language as something malleable, something that he might play with, albeit in fantasy. With respect to language construction, Tyrone was engaging in a manner of cognitive abstraction. To me, this was a sign of intellect at work. As Moffett wrote more than forty years ago, “abstraction, by selecting and ranking the elements of experience, reduces reality to manageable summaries. To abstract is to trade a loss of reality for a gain in control” (Moffett, 1968, p. 23). Knowing Tyrone as a person who liked to adhere to strict rules with respect to his written performances, I could see why he would be attracted to the idea of making up his own rules to follow.

Another source of confusion was the sticky and pernicious idea that AAE was bad English, broken English, improper English, slang, "saying things wrong." (Christensen, 2009, p. 249, describes her strategy for handling the same misconception.)

"You know," I might say, "people who speak Standard English certainly swear, so
that's not what makes something Ebonics."

"Ms. Schaenen, do you swear?" a fourth grader asked me.

"Sometimes," I said. "But I try not to swear around my children or you students. And it usually only happens if I bump my head hard or forget something. It's not all the time."  

Underlying all of these conversations was the principal of contrastive analysis, mentioned earlier, a pedagogical practice that brought together situated practice (people using language in particular contexts), direct instruction (both dialects followed rules, which I taught), and critical framing (there were social and political reasons for knowing and using both dialects). In chapter 7, I will present and interpret the transcript of a mini-lesson on contrastive analysis.

_Bidialectalism and Writing_

Pulling back briefly from these discussions about dialects, power, and social and cultural relationships, I remind the reader that my official mandate was to be a writing teacher. But what does it mean to be a writing teacher, a teacher of writing specifically? Is it possible to teach writing in a way that does not integrate reading, thinking, talking, and listening? Does any _real_ writer over the age of four or five sit with a pencil and paper, make random symbolic marks on a page, and call that meaningful writing? As I argued in chapter 4, of course not. Writing is a way of rendering the symbol system that is oral language into a symbol system inscribed in space (Sapir, 1921) or even cyberspace. For writing to be meaningful, it must represent experience and it must be a

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47 In truth, I also use swear words if they seem to add entertaining color or rhythm to a story or description told among adults I deem accepting of such language. But this I refrained from sharing in class with my young students. It seemed enough to convey my ability to control my usage at the level I did.
way of participating in a social world that makes use of and communicates with words in
time (oral language) and words in space (written language). Writing is therefore
integrally related to thinking, speaking, listening and reading. All of these activities are
integrated in and through the practice of writing. For this reason, I have arranged around
multiliteracies what I am calling the four principal domains of literacy (thinking,
speaking/listening, reading, and writing). In developing such a schematic representation I
do not mean to suggest that literacy or literacy practices can be teased and disintegrated
into component parts. Recall the root ball I introduced in chapter 4; it is still with us as a
metaphor for literacy and literacy learning. Nor do I mean to convey anything sequential
about their relationship (although, if forced to, I would probably put speaking and
listening first). On the other hand, I do mean to suggest that there might be ways of
training the teaching eye to angle in with a purpose, to see what there is to be seen with
respect to literacy from particular perspectives. In order to visually retain the notion of
interconnectedness, however, the four domains are connected to the center and to each
other.

In terms of concept flow patterns, then, I have designed these features to be
overlapping and constantly informing each other, while also collectively contributing to
understanding of multiliteracies as a concept. (If The Egg were three-dimensional, it
would be more apparent how all four domains are open to each other.) This approach is
consistent with recent theorizing in New Literacy Studies, which, as I have said
repeatedly, calls for understanding reading and writing as socially situated practices
(Barton, 2007; Collins & Blot, 2003; Street, 1984), with a much more porous boundary
between orality and writing than earlier scholars (Ong, 1982) believed. Indeed, I
subscribe to the prevailing view among scholars such as Guerra (1992), who have moved away from conceptions of a dichotomous relationship between orality and literacy, as well as from conceptions of an oral/written continuum or a separate but interacting set of continua. Instead, Guerra (1998) argues that orality and literacy are dialectically related, mutually interferent rhetorical practices. Reading, writing, thinking, listening, and speaking were all things we did when we took up meaning-making in language in the Room For Writing.

I will now describe each domain as it was realized in Writing to Connect, and present illustrative examples. By presenting them in the following order, it is worth reiterating, I do not mean to suggest any hierarchy of importance, or genetic evolution. This study is not the place for such theorizing. And also bear in mind that into each domain pulsed the concepts relating to multiliteracies and bidialectalism. Within each one, however, certain features of multimodal expression are more salient than others. I will specify these differences below. They are indicated in The Egg by the items listed in the margins linked by lines to their respective domains. Some of the terms and concepts for this multimodal analysis I derived from Cope & Kalantzsis (2000) and Adler (1993).

Reading

I frequently read aloud from a book, play, diary, or other text I had chosen. Some books, like Mirandy and Brother Wind (McKissack, 1988) or Miss Tizzy (Gray, 1993), were chosen because they featured characters who were African American or spoke African American English. After a read-aloud, I might ask the students to compose their own story using some of the ingredients of the story they had heard. Mirandy and Brother Wind, for example, features the social goings-on in a community interacting with a
powerful but vulnerable fantasy figure derived from nature. In fact, I was using McKissack's book as what Wendy Saul has called "a mentor text." After reading the book to second grade, I wrote on the board different words that represented family relations: Sister, Auntie, Uncle, Grandma, Mama, Daddy, Brother. I also wrote a few words for aspects of Nature: Fire, Water, Earth, Wind. I asked the students to write a story using one of the words from the Family list and one of the words from the Nature side. Here is one example:

One day a little boy was trying to play basketball. He did not know how to play so he got Brother Fire. Brother Fire can do anything.

This small narrative reveals that the student fully comprehended the gist of the mentor text, in which a young girl calls upon the powers of Brother Wind to help her win a cakewalk.

Other times I handed out materials or books to the students. When everyone had a copy of a few pages from *The Miracle Worker*, for example, we could talk about how plays looked as texts, how the pages were designed specifically to suit the genre of play writing. We could take turns playing roles. Other days they could browse in the bookshelf for something interesting to read. Often they read off the chalkboard. Almost daily the students read aloud from their own work. From time to time we read aloud chorally. Sometimes, after hearing or reading a piece of writing, it was necessary to clarify the difference between a mainstream form of an expression and the AAE form; and sometimes the only way to do so was on the board, so that the students could see/read a difference they had not heard. Some students were fluent readers out loud; others

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In 2009, Wendy Saul, my advisor, coined the term to suggest those texts that teach us and guide us in the making of our own.
stumbled over words.

Given the freedom to select their own books off the shelf, the students gravitated toward particular genres. Nieta was always drawn to the medical information books that had lots of pictures of human bodies. Tremaine enjoyed more sophisticated chapter books. Kayode liked one particular book about goblins. Mohammed especially loved hearing me read aloud from Mildred Taylor's *The Well*. He followed the plot of chapter books from week to week, and was always eager to begin the day with a continuation from where we had left off. No matter where he was sitting, as I read aloud he would drift over to read the words over my shoulder. Fairy tales were always a big hit. I liked to lie on the bean bag and read from whatever story they selected. (See appendix L for a photograph of how independent, informal reading looked.) At times two or more students might read from a shared book, particularly if the book was a large information text.

Thinking

Obviously, writing requires thought. In some sense, writing *is* thinking. As Grace Paley once told *The Paris Review*, "Art comes from constant mental harassment. You're bugged" (Dee, Jones, & MacFarquhar, 1992, p. 21). How did I know what was going on in this domain? How could I know what might be bugging my students? Students sometimes would say, “Ms. Schaenen, I been thinking about what you said.” Or they would mention that they had shared something about a particular lesson with family at home. Then, of course, I would know that they had been working through ideas in their minds. Less obvious indicators of thoughtfulness, but worthy of noticing, included gaze, body positioning, and of course affect as revealed by facial expression and body position. Attending to thinking as a domain made sure I paid attention to the indications that
thinking was happening (or not happening), and note evidence.

With respect to thinking, one moment offers an interesting example of an analytic approach that takes multimodal data into account in an interpretation that allows for complexity. Darrion, a fourth grader, was struggling to answer a question I had posed. "What does genre mean?" I had asked. We had been talking about the word for many weeks, composing in various genres, and I was checking for understanding. Darrion knew that I expected him to know what the word meant. And yet, for reasons I explore elsewhere (see Schaenen, 2010, in press), he was not really capable of defining it. As he sat in front of me, struggling to come up with an answer, Darrion performed a role that might be called, "the active thinker." He squeezed his eyes shut, smiled a little, rocked back and forth, and flipped his pencil repeatedly. Every so often he opened his eyes to smile at me, then went back to his closed-eye rocking and pencil-flipping. He repeated the word genre a few times. I simply sat and watched expectantly. In that moment (a snapshot of which can be seen in appendix M) I knew Darrion was thinking, but I also realized that he was quite energetically showing me that he was thinking. He was acting like a person thinking very hard. What might that mean? It might mean that Darrion cared enough about my opinion enough to show me that he was willing to try hard to come up with an answer, even though he might have saved himself the trouble and simply said, "I have no idea what genre means."

Sometimes student writing inscribed ways of thinking that made me worry. Lexus’ writing did just that. From her earliest days in second grade, Lexus composed texts that seemed to me to reveal a mind not processing language in developmentally appropriate ways. It was not that her work was boring or simple. It was not outrageous nor
transgressive in any way. Having no training in special education, I could not say what mind-to-word process, what cognitive wiring, was causing her language to come out the way it did. I could only describe it. Lexus’ compositions were typically longer than those produced by her classmates. She wrote in a large, loopy scrawl that often filled page after page with sentences or fragments of sentences that returned over and over again to the same topic. Highly recursive, it was like Lexus suffered from a compositional stammer. Here is an example from second grade. I have standardized the spelling in order to highlight the semantics and syntax of her expression rather than the mechanical features. The only punctuation Lexus used was the period to show the abbreviation of the word *enemies*, which she did not know how to spell:

I want to be a rabbit because they run fast because they eat meat get from their em. [enemies] that how they get away now we talk Jack like to eat raspberry get away from their em. [enemies] I just like rabbit and Jack rabbit let(s) get back to the story yet we was talk about jack rabbit ever run fast if I was a Jack rabbit I would eat raspberry they are blue that I like about Jack rabbit let get back to the story again We talk about rabbit [lect?] that would I would do if I was a rabbit any kind of animal I love animals I love any thing even with other animals anything goodbye

Throughout third grade, Lexus's print got smaller on the page and more ornately rendered letter by letter. Still, the sequencing of her phrases still struck me as recursive. Moreover, it seemed to me that Lexus herself was aware of digressing from and returning to a particular idea or word. From third grade:

I love apple cider is very good and delicious and very delicious came from a farm and very delicious why do I keep said delicious OK let get back to apple cider said you love apple cider and I love it.

Lexus wonders why she keeps saying *delicious*, then nudges herself and the reader back to the subject of cider by her use of the word *let's*. I believe that she retained the fact that
I had said I love apple cider, which led her to concur—"you love apple cider and I love it"—a shared feeling that connected us. Throughout the years, I would bring my concerns to Lexus' classroom teachers, always with the caveat that I had no expertise as a cognitive diagnostician. The teachers agreed that something "seemed to be wrong," but that Lexus had not been assessed as qualifying for an Individual Educational Plan. Her standardized scores from that year measured her as reading and writing at the first grade level. On her regular midyear report card, her teacher assessed her as having zero or minimal evidence of the language arts "skills" that were tested. According to the teacher, Lexus demonstrated "inconsistent" mastery within the subsets of skills. But this kind of raw data did not seem enough to trigger an institutional intervention with respect to the kind dysfluency I sensed in her thinking as revealed in her writing. Interestingly, the art teacher claimed that Lexus had met the standards; and I could see from the way Lexus designed and printed her letters, as well as her illustrations, that her awareness of visual elements of composition was keen.

By the end of fourth grade, I saw a slight improvement. Here is an example from that year, when I asked the class to write about who they would vote for in the upcoming election.

I would vote for Hillary because she would be the first white woman all of my people please vote for Hillary Clinton and I had a dream that she would be the president. And also think that she can't stop this war and all of those people should be treat the same and I think that she should be the president and I think those people should be the democrat side it don't need to be this way. Also Obama should help us too and help us together and Obama did do something for us. And Obama and Hillary Clinton should be together

In this composition I see Lexus trying to figure out how to reconcile the two presidential contenders among the Democrats. The language is muddled, of course, but I see her mind
trying to work through a complicated idea: why should two good people have to be at odds, when they could "help us together," and "Obama and Hillary Clinton should be together." Lexus takes up the verbal construction of should be, and uses it throughout the piece to help her figure out what she believes should be. I have enlarged upon the experience of Lexus in particular (and there is more to be said) because her thinking, as revealed to me in her writing, troubled me. In Paley's words, I was bugged, and still am. In retrospect, I wish I had made more of a committed effort to bring Lexus to the attention of a person with the expertise in cognition I believe she needed. As it was, all I could do was provide her with opportunities to get her words onto paper, and then struggle through a layman's attempt to literally read her mind.

*Speaking/Listening*

My students and I talked a lot. The students talked to each other a lot. Every class meeting began with a group conversation, our desks in a circle. We took turns, sometimes with the help of a talking stone that got passed from speaker to speaker. Many times through the years I made a note of the keen listening they practiced with respect to each other's stories, particularly when those stories were about something that happened outside of school. They paid close attention to each other's words.

At times I tried to shape the subject of the conversation into a springboard to the day’s activity. Other times the students had something urgent to discuss. The most salient aspect of our conversations was respect, which I verbalized over and over again. When the students veered away from showing respect—either to themselves, to each other, or to me—I called attention to this behavior. Sometimes, when writing projects were done in collaboration with a partner or in small groups, classroom talk was loud and lively. One
of the great strengths of my students was their ability to communicate orally. I value the
art of speech, and looked to it in assessment to see what was going on in the
communicative medium in which my students were most confident.

Points to notice in this domain included the volume of the voice, the fluency of
speech, the confidence level, the manner in which the student made known that she/he
had something to say, and the gestures, gaze, facial expressions, and behaviors with
which she/he spoke. Pacing and duration of the speech act were also worth noticing. I
also looked for the ways students managed the spaces between them (proxemics) when
speaking. "Getting up in someone's face" was never a good thing. An exception here was
when a student required what I might call instant behavioral readjustment (what I
mentioned earlier with respect to eye-to-eye contact). At these times, which occurred
only rarely, I would crouch very low and very much "in someone's face." Doing so was
an indication to the student and the class as a group that I took the misbehavior or
negative attitude seriously. At close range, I would look directly into the student's eyes. I
spoke firmly and frankly about what I saw as the eventual consequences for the student
should he (or she) continue behaving the way he or she was.

Attending to spoken language was also crucial because AAE is primarily a spoken
(not written) dialect; it was absolutely necessary for me to hear phonological speech
patterns, identify the customs of individual students, and notice the ways these individual
customs were or were not translated into written work. Knowing, for example, that my
students pronounced the word "feel" to rhyme with the word "fill" helped me understand
orthographic decisions in light of dialect.

Finally, attentiveness to speech in relation to culture helped me interpret the
confounding and interesting story of a mainstream-English-speaking second grader, Niya, who came to Hutsch from what she called "a rich school in Rochester, New York."

Phenotypically, Niya appeared African American. She had lightish brown skin (a tone that one of her classmates, Brianna, described as "caramel"). Like many of her classmates, Niya's thick hair was always "done" in thick pigtails or a ponytail, clamped with colorful barrettes and rubber bands. But if we had never met in person and Niya called me up on the telephone I would have assumed she was White. At times, however, presumably in order to fit in among her peers, Niya would consciously or unconsciously shift her phonological speaking patterns for a word or two. Brianna, mentioned above, was very much attached to Niya. At times Niya appeared to resent Brianna's attentions. Brianna watched Niya's every move, always tried to sit beside her, copied some of the content of her work, and often spoke for her or about her to me. In the fine-grained analysis of chapter 6, I will take up the possible connections between Niya's speech, her written work, her personal aspirations, and her social role in the class as a whole, particularly in relation to Brianna. For now, I will note only that Niya's way of talking set her apart from her classmates socially. I always wondered about the construction of Niya's identity, as well as her aspiration to become a writer and illustrator who was, as she said, "inspired by Eric Carle" (the author/illustrator of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and other popular children’s books). What, if anything, did having gone to a "rich school," having a mother who (Niya reported) gave her extra reading and writing work to do at home, and having spent some time in Hawaii and being (as she said) "kinda half Chinese" have to do with her ideas about her own identity as a user of language? As the school year of 2008 drew to a close, I realized I might never know any of these answers.
What I did know, however, through the whole year I taught Niya, was that in her own mind, her identity was configured in patterns that were dissimilar from those of her classmates'. Niya sensed (or knew) that her heritage, her personal history, and her habits at home set her apart, and that all of this had a great deal to do with her relationship to talk and print.

**Writing**

I have described our writing processes in chapter 3. Here I will add that the writing activities were typically designed so that the students would create examples of particular genres, including fiction, autobiography, poetry, argument, dialogue, letters, diary entries, or descriptions. At times, writing activities were developed out of contextual experiences, such a class visitors, recent happenings in school or at home, or other pressing and impromptu emotional or conceptual concerns of the students. Other times writing was done publicly, on the chalkboard for instance, as we played a game such as Chalkboard Password that required both talking and writing. As with reading, it was important to note how the students were positioned when they wrote: where they sat, how they sat, and with what tools and materials. With respect to instruments and materials, my students almost always wrote with pencils on three-holed lined notebooks paper, a fresh sheet for every class, with endless supplies available should they need more. I tried to make sure all our pencils were sharpened before the students arrived, or else too much of our time together would be spent listening to the aching grind of the moribund electric sharpener on my desk. In any case, some children liked their pencils to be slightly dull, so I reserved some in this state, too. For some projects they could use crayons and cream-colored art paper, markers, or colored pencils.
Once I had a paper in hand, I read it first of all for meaning, focusing on one student at a time. I would offer the student my immediate response as a reader. If I wanted to know more, or suspected she had more to write, I asked her/him to spend a little longer with the subject. Sometimes I would ask a question to prompt more thinking and writing. Although I gave feedback to students on matters of meaning, I privately attended to the specifics of the language of the composition. I reflected upon the choices made with respect to dialect (vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, overall structure and coherence, individual style), and sheer quantity of words on the page. As I mentioned in chapter 2, this study is limited to a particular set of questions concerning bidialectal pedagogy, multiliteracies, and transcultural teaching, all of which were grounded in the more typical give and take and compositional flow characteristic of writing workshops in general.

When analyzing written work after-the-fact, I moved beyond reading for linguistic meaning in order to attend to the act of composition from the perspective suggested by the genre theorists of The New London Group (2000) and Kress (2006). In other words, I viewed the page as a product of multimodal design, one that presented visual in addition to linguistic meaning such as content in a particular genre and dialect. With respect to visual meaning, I looked at how the words were written and arranged on the page (or chalkboard), how confidently the pencil markings were made (haptics), how large the print was, and how it varied even within the same composition. I noticed the doodles, illustrations, and decorations around the border of the text or within the body of a text, and considered the possible meanings made by these elements of the composition. If a page was symmetrically designed, I would infer that student’s desire for order and
balance. Sometimes a student would turn a page sideways and write across a horizontal rectangle. Other times a student might begin writing in cursive, then get so caught up in wanting to express an idea that she would switch to print. Noticing this, I might infer that her need to communicate became in that very moment more urgent than her need to practice or impress me with her newly learned formal handwriting. The shift in hand indicated that the meaning of the words on the page became suddenly heightened, semantics privileged over appearance. When younger students colored or illustrated their work with crayons, I took note of colors chosen. I attended to the state of the paper itself—smooth or rumpled, smudged with gray or torn after a zealous erasing, or flipped to the reverse side to start fresh. Three or four times in three years I fished crumpled papers out of the trash can after the students were gone. Rejected work told me stories. When responding to a composition, in other words, I took everything about the whole page, and the experience of making it, into account.

Here I must also make a note about an important phenomenon with respect to composition and writing. Many of my students, if not most, loved to copy published texts verbatim. Copying, too, was writing, just as it had been in the earliest primary grades. Whether it was a copying a whole paragraph out of a storybook, or a piece of information about a girl growing up in China, or biographical facts copied verbatim from the back of cards showing renown African Americans, my students were extremely content for long stretches of time reproducing with their own hands the words from a published site to their own paper. Transposing words from a printed text to their own

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49 It was my advisor, Wendy Saul, who suggested that I discourage the use of erasers in the Room For Writing. When, she asked me, was the last time I had erased something when drafting a composition? Didn't I tend to cross out and keep going, or use standard editing notations? Erasing turned out to be a hard habit for my students to break.
paper strikes me as analogous to Bakhtinian notions of ventriloquation with respect to
borrowed, or re-voiced speech (Wertsch, 1991). If every utterance is authored by at least
two voices, perhaps every text is written by at least two hands. My students were simply
making this claim concrete. I was reminded of the autodidacticism of Frederick Douglass,
who secretly copied out whole texts in the unfilled spaces of the used copybooks taken
from his master's son's collection (Douglass, 1968/1845).

One day in 2007, I asked my fourth graders why copying was fun for them. They
had a variety of thoughts. Ebony replied right away, embedding the precise wording of
my question into her answer. "The reason why writing out the book is fun is it gives the
person you're writing to more details." Highly aware of the ways texts do or do not appeal
to readers, Ebony explained that copied writing was more interesting for the reader,
making it more fun "to them." Diamond agreed. "You get something to read out in front
of the class because you want other people to be likin it too." Angel liked to copy for
pleasure. "It's a fun project," she said. "It's just something for me to do. If you be bored,
you just got something to do." Dante viewed copying as a means of improving his own
compositional abilities. "It's better to copy it out because you can get better on your
writing skills."

"How?" I asked.

"Writing a lot of words," Dante said. "And getting to read books that have a lot of
pages."

Harrison had figured that copying was a strategic way of ensuring correct
responses. "Copying is better because you can just get the answer right out the story," he
said. "I just love to write stuff."
All of these replies made sense to me. Being a scrivener is being a writer, but with all of the pressure removed. The scribe literally writes, but is not responsible for the words written; someone else is. Indeed, thanks to my own background, I was already familiar with ways in which copying can be tremendously valued. In the Jewish tradition, there is a special and sacred role assigned to the person who handwrites the Torah, known also as the Five Books of Moses. By Jewish law, every single one of the 304,805 letters of the Torah must be written out by hand on parchment in order to create what devout Jews consider a living text. The process takes a year, and costs around $80,000. The Torah scribe, called the sofer, may not make a single mistake, or that Torah is ruined. As a teacher mindful of the ethical responsibilities of the scribe, I always enjoyed taking dictation from a student, whether by hand or on the computer. Taking dictation is not copying, exactly, but it is an acknowledgement that someone else has the power to decide what the words are going to be. Copying (or taking dictation) is a way of submitting to another writer's authority while maintaining a degree of participation in the writing process. I believe that my students recognized and were comforted by the greater expertise manifested in whatever they were copying from (other kinds of mentor texts). To copy the texts of others was to benefit from them. For all of these reasons, I made room for copying. And because I did so, unexpected compositions sometimes resulted.

Mohammed was a bright third grader in January 2007. As I have observed, he was orally quick, and astute about the relationship between AAE and MAE. Mohammed was able to shift dialects as he pleased. With respect to handwriting and composition,

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50 This information on Torah scribes was retrieved on January 13, 2010 from www.acfnewsourse.org/religion/torah_scribe.html; www.neilyerman.com; and www.torahsofer.com
however, he was far behind his classmates. Although he liked to draw, he seldom wrote more than a phrase or two on his paper. If I crouched down, spent minutes drawing him out, and offered to take dictation, Mohammed might tell a story. If I interviewed him on tape he would talk. But the light in his eyes came and went. Mohammed was frequently sullen. His clothes were often unwashed or torn; he seemed to be shunned by his peers, and only felt comfortable at home among family. At that point in the year, Mohammed had received two in-school suspensions and one out-of-school suspension.\(^51\) His standardized tests measured him at least two years below grade level. I could tell that he had settled on a numb, affectless demeanor to get him through his day; Mohammed seemed to me to be a hair's breadth away from throwing in his lot with those who have been given up on. In September, Mohammed had told me that he was proud of "nothing," and that "books are boring." But on January 16 he wrote about going out for pizza with his family. And a week later, Mohammed wrote more than he ever had before.

We were working in the genre of biography, and I had passed out information cards of great African Americans. Mohammed picked Richard Wright. But he did not simply copy the information on the card; he integrated the words that he found into a letter to his mother, then added a few thoughts of his own for good measure:

Dear Mom  
Richard was born on a Mississippi plantation. Richard Wrigh was the son of a farmworker, And he was born on 1908. And I am [he spelled out his own full name] and I am in Room for Wrigh. and this is Ms. Schaenen class. She helps me with my wrigh.  
from your son  
[he spelled his full name]\(^52\)

\(^{51}\) He had slapped a girl in retaliation for her touching his face. He fought a boy in music class. He disrupted his regular classroom by calling everyone "crackheads."

\(^{52}\) The text as written can be seen in appendix N.
Mohammed used the published text to scaffold his own composition and render it meaningful for his own discursive purpose: writing a letter to his mother. He begins with sentences and facts from the card I passed out, but then the new text moves away from the old. Mohammed used the spelling of Richard Wright's last name to suggest the word "write." And with declarative dignity he asserts who he is, where he is, and what I do with him in what context. He signs off with equal formality. Below the signature he drew a picture of Richard Wright. I have no doubt that the opportunity to copy was at the root of Mohammed's successful performance that day. And when he was finished, Mohammed felt so proud of what he had done that he asked me to make a copy of his paper so he could take it home to give his mother. Which I did. A year later, as the program drew to a close, Mohammed wrote the longest paragraph he had since I had known him, all in his own, heavy-lined print:

I used to speak ebonics wen I was in frist grade. Wen I got home I would speak Standard english. So I was cod swiching. Wen I was six I got into a lot of fights. I am different form five year ago because I don't get into as many fights. I like to play football an eat shrimp.

From the first moment I knew him, Mohammed's intelligence and aptitude were obvious to me. In contradiction to everything formal schooling "said" about him, Mohammed's mind was lively, responsive, and retentive, and this final piece of writing told me so.

Affect, Feeling, Emotionality

The title of The Egg is *Writing to Connect: Processes and Products*. As suggested by these plural forms, I have tried to create a model that accounts for the plurality of what we did, what we wrote, and what we valued. I also understand that each of the domains, represented by the five shapes inside the largest shape, can only be interpreted in
negotiation with each other and within the omnipresent, amniotic-fluid-like element of affect (which includes emotion, interpersonal relationships, and intrapersonal states of mind and feeling). That cognition and emotionality are fundamentally integrated with respect to learning, literacy learning in particular, in and out of school has been argued by DiPardo and Schnack (2004), who locate the theoretical roots of viewing affect as indispensible to rationality in Vygotsky (1932) and the work of recent scholars (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001). DiPardo and Schnack argue that effects of emotion, including levels of involvement and participation, must be viewed as inherent in literacy practices.

Affect, relationships, and feeling were essential to the experience of Writing to Connect for two main reasons: First, there was my own temperament, one which happens to be (most of the time) highly attuned to the emotionality of myself and others. As a child, I was a laugher when happy, a crier when sad, and (at times, in the safety of home) a door-slammer when angry. Easy access to emotionality was nurtured by my earliest familial experiences. As very young girls, raised in a home with parents who later acknowledged that they seldom spoke meaningfully to each other about the most crucial subjects, my younger sister and I sustained and nurtured a separate and intimate relationship with each other. Even in the middle of a passing "silent treatment," we always paid attention to each other's feelings and interpretations. When our parents divorced, my sister and I at the ages of seven and ten talked through the behavior and emotions of the adults in our lives in ways that I now realize, in retrospect, were analytically sophisticated. Our ways with words (Heath, 1983) were always interconnected with our ways with feelings. Indeed, there were certain adults in our lives
who (familiar with or actual practitioners of psychotherapy) held us openly accountable for the effects of our behavior on their feelings, calling attention to the ways in which certain unconscious behaviors of ours were actually examples of "acting out," hostile acts with social consequences. Many of our peers in Manhattan, Jewish Upper West Siders in the 1970s, were subjected to similar psychological probing. Of course this sounds rather ridiculous from the vantage point of the present, and I do not mean to suggest deterministically that there was a brass chain of cause-and-effect that kept me the feeling-centered person I am today. However, when I apply a critical frame of mind to the reasons for which I seem, as a teacher, so comfortable talking about feelings, thinking about feelings, and letting feelings matter in a classroom setting, I cannot avoid plunging into such arcane memories. Growing up in my home, in the 1970s, among the people who raised me, I wound up a person who tends to parse emotions.

Consider the following excerpt from one of my contributions to the 2006-2007 blog. I have put in bold the terms that indicate the presence of my own feelings in order to emphasize their import:

A kind of weird and disturbing thing: DR wrote a made-up story about her mother speaking Ebonics. At first I was a little worried because the paragraph began, “At home I don’t like when my mother talks in Ebonix because it don’t sound right and I just walk away and then she says why are you walking away and then I says I don’t like it when you speak in Ebonix and then she tell me to go to my room and then she says you don’t ever walk away from me.” So I read this and of course crouched down for a little tête-a-tête. I was very concerned that somehow this whole Ebonics stuff was backfiring and making the kids think that the language they heard at home was bad/wrong – exactly the opposite of what I’m trying to convey, which is that it is a way of speaking that is appropriate in some places with some people at some times. And that it was causing some kind of intrafamily rift or problem. Well, DR tells me that no, she is making this whole thing up, that this conversation/episode with her mother did not really happen. But of course I am still concerned that DR saw/felt my concern and then worried that maybe the story (if true) was bad somehow, which is why she then told me she had made it up. Ugh. So anyway, I did reiterate some more of the Ebonics lesson, and
suggested that if this were a piece of fiction she should let me (her reader) know that. So she added several lines down, “I made this up!!!!” I’m not sure what to think, now. I think it’s an example of muddying the waters in order to get to the bottom of things.

In my recollection of the classroom scene, I use the word "concerned" three times, and the word "worried" twice. I describe the moment as weird and disturbing. I am aware of how, in unverbalized ways, the student and I seem to be communicating in ways that reckon with each other's expectations and feelings. We are both noticing the possibilities of unspoken, but deeply felt, meanings.

Second, even before I was familiar with the large body of scholarly work that stresses the importance of affect in the learning among students raised in African American homes and communities (Bohn, 2003; Meier, 2008) I realized that my students, like me, experienced all social interaction as embedded in affective, relational qualities. How we all felt from moment to moment was quite plain, and how we felt often got talked and written about. My students were as much noticers and critics of emotionality as I was. My own facial and body expressions were habitually and candidly watched for signs that someone's misbehavior was going to "make Ms. Schaenen mad," or for how I was going to respond to someone using a loaded term like "White people" in class discussion. The fact that I seemed to my students to smile a lot was often noted in their texts and journals.

One day in second grade, Kayode felt sad about his inability to concentrate on his work because of talking in the room. He started to cry silently. I did not realize he was crying until big tears dripped onto his paper. I asked him to try to write something about how he was feeling. He wrote:
I fill like I am sad because I can not concentrate.⁵³

On a separate piece of paper he wrote:

I am cry because I cannot finish my work.

Sometimes the need to communicate a feeling to me meant that a student grabbed the first piece of paper around and scribbled a hasty note, as in the examples (from fourth grade girls) below:

On a shocking pink post-it:

"I need to talk to you It's URGENT, Angel Please"

On a white index card:

"Dear, Ms. Shannon I got to talk to you private to tell you. I need to talk to you It's URGENT. Diamond" [she drew a smiley face beside her name]

From the very first weeks of the program's existence, it was clear to me that all of us, me and my students, were going to be sensitive to emotion. An entry from the October 2005 journal, an account of a second grade class, reads:

I had noticed when picking them up outside their classroom that they all looked a little "down." When we got down to the Room For Writing I asked them to get comfortable on and around the bean bag chair. At first I was concerned that this would escalate into a rowdy time, but they finally found some place to sit. . . . I began by observing that they all seemed to be wearing "mad" expressions, and I asked why. They told me about having to practice their lining up instead of going out to recess. I simply listened. And then we all talked about feelings, and how writers all try to understand feelings. We talked about the kinds of things that make people mad and/or sad. G. mentioned that being in the gym and not outside made her sad. . . .Z. mentioned that when his new baby sister cries in the night, that makes him mad. Again, I simply register these reports with a word or two and then move on. So then we moved to our writing desk circle and brainstormed other feelings, which I wrote on the board—Mad, Sad, Confused, Happy, Upset, Surprised, Scared. And the students came up with examples of what happens to make a person

⁵³ Note that orthographically, the word "fill" here shows phonological interference between AAE and MAE: in AAE, "eel" rhymes with "ill."
feel the various feelings. (Ice cream makes a lot of people happy!) I passed out paper and asked them to write a few words about feelings.

Sherelle, a second grader, approached the assignment with analytic rigor. She divided her piece of lined paper down the middle vertically. Then she drew two horizontal lines from left to right so that she had six even boxes: two symmetrical columns, each with three rows. She titled the boxes down the left-hand column: Upset, Surprised, and Confused. Down the right-hand column was Angry/Mad, Sad, and Happy. Under each of these words she then wrote a sentence beginning with "I was" in order to illustrate what kind of experience made her feel each of these particular feelings. ("I was surprised when my mom gave me twenty dollars for my birthday while I was in trouble. I was upset when my sister told I hit her but she hit me first and I still got in trouble.")

My hunch is that this abstract, feeling-related writing activity alerted the students to the fact that feelings were going to be acknowledged in Writing to Connect. From the very start of the program, I tried to pave the way for the urgent expressions of "live" emotion. One day, as the fourth grade was composing in the genre of biography, I noticed that Angel was sniffing and crying as she wrote. I went over to console her, and Angel explained that she was writing about her grandfather, and that a particular memory was making her cry. I brought over a box of Kleenex and Angel continued to write (and cry). This is what she wrote:

He lived from 1926 through 2006. He died September 16, 2006. I was so sad that day and he is my granddaddy. The day he died was the most terrifying day of my life. He might not be important to you but he was important to me and [I] was there on his wake but when his funeral came I was not there I was at school tryin to get an better ejacication I was not there I still remember when he use to give us his Pepsis and he use to talk to me and give me ideas for when I was sad and feeling like doing the wrong thing. He was so important to me it's like I remember when he would help me Learn about the World I just want him to R.I.P
This passage begins like a straight-forward, dry biography: what could be more generic than birth and death dates? In drilling down to the particular day, however, the second sentence, reveals more of the author's investment in the material, and by the third sentence, the reader knows how she feels, and who the subject of the biography was in relation to her. Angel even distances herself from the reader ("he might not be important to you. . .") in order to center her composition around the theme of the depth of her feelings for her granddaddy, and the complex feelings she had about missing his funeral.

Although not designed to elicit emotion in class, one activity that often did was called The Lifeline, which I introduced in chapter 4. (See appendix O for a completed example of the worksheet that launched the lesson.) Students would write down their positive experiences on top of the timeline, and their "not-so-good" experiences below the line. For second graders, simply thinking through their lives objectively, sorting good from bad, and getting these experiences written on the correct point on the line took a whole lesson. The next week, I asked the students to pick just one of the items on their Lifeline—good or not-so-good—and write more about it. One day, peering over a second grader's shoulder, I saw that she had written "have no friend" under her line. Below that, she wrote, "I said that becuas peploe hate me!" [sic]. After reading this, I noticed that the student was crying. I crouched beside her and put my arm around her but she didn't want to talk. Instead I wrote: "Who do you think hates you?" She wrote a name of a classmate. So I talked a little more and said that I was her teacher and that I liked her. I also wrote some silly messages and stick-figure drawings for her to read and respond to only in writing. Eventually she smiled a tiny bit because we were now obviously playing. I also
wrote a suggestion for how she might tell the named person that her feelings were hurt so they could make up. The next week, when the class was expanding on one of the items from their lifelines, this student wrote:

Dear Ms. Schaenen,
I love my momy and my dady. What I dot [don't] like about school is peploe be mean to me evry single day When I come to school and I have lots of friends but they said they is not my friend because they is not my friend and Ms. T— is the best teacher!

As I read this passage, it occurred to me that what I was really doing in my classroom was showing them that language was more than a school skill. Language is a way to live, to express feelings, solve problems, respond and communicate. We live in our language and through our language. If in the process of doing an activity it became clear that talking was more necessary than writing, or that reading was more necessary than talking, we simply switched modes. That very day, one of this student's classmates noticed that her friend was upset again. At the end of her formal response, she skipped several lines and wrote to me personally: "I feel bad for J—."

The place and importance I reserved for feeling might, I was well aware, have led me into ethically questionable terrain. Indeed, one result of the first feeling activity I described was particularly uncharted. As I was copying onto the chalkboard the lists of experiences that made them feel this or that emotion, one student mentioned aloud that another thing that made her mad was "getting a whoopin." Pausing with the chalk in my hand, I realized that I had no idea how I ought to spell "whoopin." I wasn't even sure I ought to be writing such a word on the board. What if another teacher came in? What if the principal stopped by? At a loss, and remaining emotively neutral, I turned to the class and asked, "How should we spell whoopin?" We then had a conversation about that, and
how writers could use an apostrophe to stand in for a G. Collectively, they came up with "woopen'. Although I was unaware of her work at the time, looking back now I take heart from Julie Landsman's suggestion that "effective teaching must contain an element of the subversive" (Landsman & Lewis, 2006, p. 221). In moments like this, I certainly felt myself to be acting subversively. Furthermore, given my location in St. Louis, I was well aware of the nationally publicized story of Cissy Lacks, a White teacher in predominantly African American high school in St. Louis County not far from Hutsch. In 1995, Lacks was fired by her district for allowing her students to write drama exercises in which characters spoke in the actual, “heard” language, dialogue uncensored for school purposes. I had been cautioned more than once by my Springboard supervisors with respect to this particular matter, and Cissy Lacks’s name and lengthy first amendment court case came up time and time again in this regard.

In walking this fine line with respect to freedom of expression, one which could have serious legal consequences were I to err in one way or another, and also to guard against violating the privacy of my students, it always seemed vitally important to make it as clear as possible that I viewed our conversations as feeding into the classroom concept of writerliness I detailed in chapter 4. I was not a school counselor. I was not there to explicitly do anything therapeutic with the feelings that students identified and articulated, or to take a position on corporal punishment. Still, the extent to which writerliness is saturated in human feeling cannot be overestimated; and the notion that writing about feelings can be therapeutic is a familiar one to composition teachers.
everywhere.\textsuperscript{54} I have shaded gray the entire area of The Egg in order to convey the sense of the omnipresent effect of emotionality in the room. Everything we did, wrote, or said was done, written, and said within what might be called a culture of affect. Mood and feeling, mine and the students’, swirled around all aspects of writing process, and were valued as relational experience that mattered.

Feelings were also what, I expect, will have long term after-effects. More than a year after our last class together, I visited Angel at her home. I was interested in her memories of our experience together, and had brought along all of her work in order to jog her reflections. Now going into seventh grade (she had skipped from fourth to sixth in 2008-2009), Angel was very much a pre-teen, dressed in skinny jeans and draped in silver necklaces, her hair sleekly done. As we sat on the floor together, she flipped somewhat cursorily through her folders of work. She was smiling, but I could tell she was mostly humoring me by looking at all those pages. Her thoughts and concerns were in the present as she faced the prospect of seventh grade. Nothing much caught her eye until her mother (who was sitting on the couch leafing through the folders) called our attention to an apology Angel had written me. Her mother asked what that had been about, and Angel brought instant attention and total recall to the incident.

Don't you remember, Ms. Schaeenen? That was the day Diamond and I made you so mad. We was sitting in the corner by the computer, and Diamond had slammed her hand down on the desk…”

It so happened that I did remember that moment. I \textit{had} been mad. But what struck me

\textsuperscript{54} See appendix P for the text of a memo I drafted on this topic for the other Room for Writing specialists. The memo was an attempt to help us explain to ourselves what we would/should do and not do with respect to cultural practices and writerliness. For a thoughtful account of how to safely and respectfully incorporate complex feelings, trauma, and painful experiences in the college writing classroom, see Berman (2001).
about Angel's moment of remembering that moment was the way she became, in a flash, so engaged and focused, so fluent in relating details of the incident. The episode really seemed at that moment like it had happened yesterday. The seemingly permanent impression my loss of temper had on Angel seems to me to have everything to do with the centrality of emotion and feeling in our classroom, and the authenticity of our relationships as workshop participants.

Attending to emotionality in my data, I appreciated the range and qualities of its expression in the writing classroom. As a critic, I attempted to describe and evaluate what was going on with feelings, and sought themes and patterns that helped me make meaningful interpretations about affect as a quality in my classroom. Of course, reserving such a vital conceptual place for affect does not render it non-messy. Feelings are not easily corralled.

In a classroom with such a deeply felt sense of connection among members, it was sometimes difficult for my students to shift cognitively into a private space for composing as individuals. The complex social arrangements, friendships, feuds, patterns, and politics of the students as a group, I knew, could get disruptive and distracting. Lensmire (1994), for example, offers careful, theoretical interpretations of a third grade writing workshop he taught. As a teacher-researcher, he noticed and responded to the ways in which students were taking up questions of social status in their writing, and cautions practitioners to be critically active agents in the ever-present workshop tension between individual writerliness and social community-building. In response to my own students' tendency to attend to each other at all times, I devised a ritual designed to settle them within their own mental space. Once the students were seated at their 1960s era
desks with attached seats, I would stand behind them one at a time and create an imaginary bubble around them. Laying my hands in the empty space above their heads, I would make a “blub-blub” sound and gently use my hands, always about eight inches away from their actual bodies, to contour a “sound-proof” bubble that encompassed their entire figure, including the desk, all the way to the floor. Once the bubble was complete, that student was expected to fall completely silent and get to work. The students and I found this routine both amusing and comforting. They loved to make some kind of a sound, or talk freely, and synchronize becoming quiet with the fall of my hands. Out of a sense of play, I varied the tone and pitch of my “blub-blub,” which also amused them. Finally (at their request) I put myself into a bubble of silence, which I must admit really did feel like an actual contained space. By one voice at a time, the room became quiet. Completely silent myself, I took a seat in the circle, and used these moments to observe the class, make notes in my journal, and otherwise attend to what was going on around me. Once the students understood the practice, it began to take on a discursive life of its own, and reflect a slight shift in the balance of power: suddenly my students were owning the gimmick, playing with it, breaking the concept down and reassembling it into ways that put me in the position of responding to them.

"I'm hot in this bubble," a student might complain. "I'm taking it off."

"Then I'll put on a lighter one," I said.

"Ms. Schaenen," Tyrone said one day. "My bubble came off. I need another one."

"It's time to work, Tyrone," I said. "Put it back on yourself."

Another day, when the energy in the room was distracting everyone at writing time, I attempted a shortcut: "Bubble yourselves down," I commanded, skipping the stage
where I went around the room one by one.

I emphasize this routine in such detail because it demonstrates aspects of both ritual and relationships, two important features of practices that I have mentioned, both deemed effective in classrooms with African American students (Bohn, 2003).

On the other hand, there was a countervailing, complicating effect here that I must mention: I was using a culturally sensitive routine (ritual and relationships) in order to impose a culturally determined (hegemonic) way of writing upon my students. Composition in isolation happens to be my way (and the academically expected way) of writing. The bubble routine was a friendly way, an affectively and culturally responsive way, of "getting them" to write the way I wanted them to write (and prohibiting them from interacting with each other). Although performed in a spirit of play, the silent bubble routine did the pedagogical work of the regulatory register (Christie, 2002); it taught the students how I expected them to behave in a particular moment during a particular activity.

Broadly speaking, conceptualizing affect in this way directs my attention to the aspects of the program that were most significant and potentially most ideologically fraught, for my particular group of students. As a node of assessment, affect also helps call attention to moments when respect for feelings became problematic in the classroom. At times, given the mercurial or short-wicked temperaments of some students, or the deadened, affectless, underachieving demeanor of others, I spent considerable energy addressing the management of feelings. Rarely, my advice was to “park the anger at the door;” more often I counseled a student to ignore the day’s assignment and write about

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55 Other features include rhythm, repetition, and recitation.
the problem he was having in a letter to me.

These curricular digressions could happen at the individual or group level. At the individual level, the intervention through relationship and feeling might involve playfulness. One day, for example. Marcus could not keep still and write because of what he felt were pressing conversations he had to have with a classmate. In response, I pretended in a detailed act of mime to use a glue stick to affix the bottom of his sneakers to the floor. Unorthodox, perhaps, but Marcus smiled, enacted the attempt to lift his feet up, pretended that he could not, and sat still and wrote as if he were truly attached to the floor.

A graver example of track-switching at the group level happened after spring break in 2007. My second grade lesson plan was backfiring. Students were misbehaving. Several minutes into the hour, I noticed that two students had their heads down. I stopped everything.

"Tasha, what's wrong?" I asked. "Are you sleepy? I need you to wake up and be part of this class."

"I'm not asleep, Ms. Schaenen. I'm thinking about my Daddy. He in jail."

"Have you ever met him?"

She shook her head silently, and started to weep. So I simply asked everyone to turn over their papers and write about "someone you wish you could spend more time with, or a letter to that person." Silence fell instantly. Kids started writing. A few of the children were crying as they wrote. Dahlia's grief poured out in tears and words.

I wish I could see my cousin Louis and my grandmomma and my uncle. My cousin die in the hospital. I do not know how my uncle die.
Grief and sadness over missing fathers characterized most of the writing that day. What Dr. Joseph White (2006) has said about the effect of the absence of fathers in the urban African American urban community was consistently evidenced in the highly emotional writing I read among my youngest students:

Dear Daddy,
I miss and love you. I want to come visit you all the time. I cry all the time. Sometimes I watch my favorite TV show That So Raven. I think about you all the time. I am sorry that you got in jail. I wish you did not get in jail. I wish you can get out of jail. Sometimes I make up my own games. I made a game about you.
Love,

I wish I saw my dad in his home where I can see him every day for he can come and get me some time for we can go to the park with him. Swing, paint, color, draw, make puppet, make plants, make maps, make clothes, make colors.

I wish I can see my Daddy more often. I think he died but I don't know for sure.

Such father-texts were nothing new. My older students had long ago confided in me. I knew, for example, that Marcus' father had been jailed for mentioning that he was in a particular gang while standing near a police officer. Darrion's father was convicted and jailed for accidentally shooting a friend in the back while "playing" with their guns. Aware of the way the ideas and memories of fathers could elicit extreme emotion, I was mindful of approaching the subject of fathers with extreme caution. It occurs to me now that I learned to never ask anyone about their "parents." If life outside of school came up, I would asked about "family," or "adults at home." I learned to keep track of the children who spoke about their fathers. Kenneth, for example, was proud of his father, who was a preacher. On the other hand, when my students themselves introduced a text or story as a
witness and sufferer, I did not exclude the subject or censor them. The writing and talking was all; it seemed both a process and the product. I simply listened or read.

Power

The final key component of our classroom culture was power. In this study, I use the word power to mean the actual or perceived ability to accomplish a conceived purpose. In this sense, power is a property. However, along with Cherryholmes (1988), who traces the concept of power in modern political thought back to Locke (among others), I view power-the-property as always enmeshed in social relations: "power is a relation" (p. 5, italics in the text). Arrangements of power are rendered asymmetrical because arrangements of people are asymmetrical. Distributions of social goods and benefits are not uniform; some people have far less than others. In Cherryholmes's words, "Some people are indulged and rewarded and others sanctioned and deprived" (p. 5). Given asymmetries of distribution, people will use thought and language to explain and justify why things are the way they are, at times resisting and at other times accepting any salient power arrangement. As Cherryholmes notes, explaining the effects of power is where ideology and power intertwine. He expands upon the work of Foucault, whose explorations of power in the histories of particular places such as medical clinics, prisons, and schools led him to explorations of power in the discourse practices used to frame such places. Cherryholmes paraphrases Foucault's assumptions about discourse: "Power precedes speech because utterances are located within existing social institutions whose rules, power configuration, norms, commitments, and interests determine what can and
cannot be said and what utterances count as" (p. 59). This passage precisely describes the experience of Writing to Connect, a place where my rules, norms, commitments and interests sometimes differed from the school's rules, norms, etcetera; and those from the students' individual and collective rules, etcetera; which differed sometimes from their family's rules, etcetera. Institutionally, I was free from the state-mandated Grade Level Expectations, those (GLEs) that regular teachers had to answer to. We were, it bears repeating, a third space. Therefore, I will take my basic definition of power into the messy world of the human participants in this study. Now power can be defined as the actual or perceived ability of the individual or group of individuals to accomplish a conceived purpose at the individual, group, or institutional level. Obviously, this is a much more open-ended and subjective definition. It makes room for a student to perceive that she has an ability to accomplish a purpose before, in actuality, she does. It also makes room for a student to access his power to, for example, resolve a conflict with a classmate (at the individual level), and for another to use power at the institutional level to, for example, challenge the school district by means of a letter not to shut down Hutsch.

As shown by the distribution of the asterisks and small circles in The Egg, power was not shared equally by all the participants in Writing to Connect. As the only teacher and adult in the room, I embodied and enacted the lion’s share of power and authority, particularly with respect to behavior and curriculum. Doing so, I situated myself as a person with school-valued knowledge and control over what would happen when. The genre theorists call upon teachers to assume this authority, arguing that a third-rail

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56 For a detailed history of the way power has been conceived, theorized, and neglected in social science, see Cherryholmes, 1988, pp. 191-194.
pedagogy that brings together progressive and traditional practices will achieve optimal outcomes for students (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 6). Furthermore, if *Writing to Connect* is conceived as a community of practice, I also embodied the identity of the “expert writer,” enacting the various ways I went about being writer. Exposed to my ways, my students were expected to absorb and appropriate something of my writerly identity for themselves (as I described in chapter 4). As apprentice writers in that particular place and time, my students were subordinate to me.

And yet the hierarchy was unstable. Quite frequently, in the course of a discussion, I would find the bulk of my institutional power thinned to a wafer, and just as easily snapped. One April day, for example, a group of fourth graders started complaining about the upcoming standardized tests. They thought it was unfair that they were not allowed to ask a single question, not even to clarify how to go about determining an answer. In my reply, aware of Freire's call to raise awareness and engage criticism of power structures outside of the classroom (Freire, 1998; Milner, 2006), I attempted to make explicit the values and ideologies embedded in these ways of assessment. I explained that a particular group of "they," which included testmakers, testgivers, and state policymakers, happened to really value the idea of independent work and individual achievement. For that reason, this "they" set about assessing students in ways that measured an individual's ability to do work without social interaction. Because it is often left tacit who has the power and authority to make these decisions, where they make these decisions, for what purpose they do, and how they came to be the ones with the power/authority to shape people’s lives this way, I attempted to spell it all out. There were political and social reasons for this, I said. My students and I might not like them,
could challenge them at times, but we also had to recognize that we had to find ways of living in the given world even as we worked toward a fairer one.

I must add that these conversations were fraught with complexity. As I noted in chapter 2, I was aware of being a guest in the school, and sensitive to what this meant with respect to my classroom choices. I did not want to be kicked out of Hutsch for fomenting and inciting a mutinous band of fourth graders who would return to their classrooms, break their Number 2 pencils, and insist on collaborating with each other during the state-wide standardized tests. I was constantly aware of finely calibrating the level of criticism I allowed myself and my students to express. After all, I wanted them to stay in school; I knew their families wanted them to stay in school; the people who worked in the school wanted them to stay in school. Why in the world would I undermine their sense of trust in school, even for the sake of critical pedagogy and "telling it like it is?" More than once, fearing that we might be crossing a line, I found myself backpedaling out of a discussion I myself had prompted and encouraged, declaring (in classic teacher avoidance mode) that "this was all very interesting and important but that we needed to move on now."

When I realized that the test-taking conversation was going too far, I invited the students to write about their thoughts about the test. They did so. Then I collected the papers and filed them away, fretful and fearful that somehow word would leak of my treachery to the system. Such classroom practices tinkered incrementally with status quo power arrangements: making room for challenging talk and writing empowered the students in the moment; filing the papers away in a folder did not challenge the overpowering institutional context. In the long run, however, perhaps having had that
opportunity to think and write critically about the tests would lead my students to think and act critically about other ramifications of institutional power. Time will tell.

With respect to connecting ideas about power relations and literacy, one of my favorite stories to read aloud on the first day of the year was *Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type* (2000). In this story, a group of farm animals get hold of an old typewriter, which they use to write notes. Through the notes, they present their grievances to Farmer Brown, their owner. The barn is cold. They want electric blankets. They will stop making eggs and milk unless he warms their environment. The written and peaceful protests frustrate Farmer Brown, but ultimately he meets the demands of the animals, and the story ends with the suggestion that the animals will be making additional requests. The whimsy of the plot and the rhythmic repetition of the refrain—"clack clack moo, click clack moo, clickety clack moo"—always drew my students into the read-aloud. At the end of the story, I called explicit attention to the connection between power and language (in this case, writing). The animals banded together to use their words to fight Farmer Brown's power over them. And it worked!

In-class power negotiations on the interpersonal level were always in my mind. For example, I may have gone overboard in small ways when controlling access to materials such as paper and pencils, and constraining the class unduly when it came to passing out these materials. At other times, I opened up the possibility of student decision-making, allowing them to pick one from the selection of word games we sometimes played, for example, or leaving time for a class discussion to roam according to their interests and tastes.

57 There were always students who asked whether they could be the ones to pass out the pencils and paper. Sometimes I said yes; other times it was easier for me to do it myself. There was never any way for the students to know advance which way I might rule on any given day—absolute power in this regard was always mine.
concerns. Student authority (noted as asterisks in The Egg) was more genuinely manifested when conversation turned to areas of student expertise: cultural and linguistic customs, personal stories, and regular classroom experiences. I was also aware of student agency when a student would take up a phrase of mine and re-shape it for her own purpose. As just one example, I recall the day when the second grade and I were taking a few minutes to complete a Native American dreamcatcher project that a visitor had begun the week before. The visitor had run out of time, and the students really wanted to get those projects made. We sat at the large round table together, in the center of which were dishes of supplies—feathers, string, beads, crayons, and so forth. Although I like making things, I am not particularly dextrous, and my hands were fully occupied in trying to hold my dreamcatcher-in-the-works together. Keeping my eyes on the fragile project, I let one hand go, palm up, and said to the person next to me, "Bead me." In my mind, I was playing the role of surgeon in need of a scalpel. Understanding my meaning, Johnetta laughed, reached for a bead from the dish, and lay one in my open hand.

The next thing I knew, Johnetta was opening her hand and saying to her neighbor, "Feather me." Another person said, "String me." Students were helping each other to finish the work, and using their own collective sense of verbal play to do so. Whenever something like this happened (as during those bubble exchanges), I felt less trapped by my own power, my own “conceived purposes,” and more open to the participatory agency of the students.

Student misbehavior obliged me to contend with my power (and its limitations) in a range of ways. As an enrichment specialist, I knew I could always simply send a child back to his or her regular classroom. However, I felt that taking advantage of this option
signaled a failure on my part, a reflection of my inability to resolve a problem I should have been able to resolve. Worse, it reminded me of the banishment/prison paradigm, where the wrongdoer is not rehabilitated, but simply removed, made an outcast, not unlike what happens in the criminal justice system. All those hallway-sitters looking on while the world of school passed by . . . I dreaded having to kick a kid out. Therefore, depending on the level of the infraction, the personality of the transgressor, and the general emotional tone of the moment in the class as a whole, I experimented with different types of consequences.

Tyrone, for example, had a short fuse. Tiny things would set him off. Classroom teachers often banished him to the hall, to the principal's office, or to in-school suspension, or outright suspension. One day, as Tyrone appeared to launch into a fight with a classmate, I asked him to sit down at a desk next to mine. I pretended to glue our hands together and told him that now he had to get started writing. At first he was confused. Then he smiled. Then he sat down and wrote. What was going on here with respect to power arrangements? Certainly it was clear by my demeanor that I was playing, but I was playing seriously with serious stakes. I wanted Tyrone to settle down and participate, and I wanted not to have to banish him. Still, I have to ask myself: was I using my power as a force for good, or manipulating a student to get the centripetal solution I wanted?

Another boy, a third grader named Tremaine, had been disruptive and uncooperative for several classes running. One day, at a loss, I sent him back to his classroom. A day later, I suggested a plan to his classroom teacher. She approved, and I wrote Tremaine a letter that was also a contract (see appendix Q for the text). The teacher
printed it out at school for him, Tremaine signed it, and we put the plan into action the next week. The letter is filled with demonstrations of my authority and power: twelve phrases or sentences begin with plain declarative statements of what I will do or plan to do. I state judgments about Tremaine in equally unequivocal ways. I embed a legal textual device (the signature line) to make the letter and its contents seem more "official." And yet I sign the letter "love," because, well, I wanted to signal my strong affection for him. While a complete critical discourse analysis of this letter, including the context in which the whole plan was enacted, is beyond the scope of this chapter, for the purposes of an representative tool that accounts for power, I must acknowledge that undertaking such analysis would be necessary for a full understanding of what was happening with respect to power in this instance.

The Egg shows that overt and explicit demonstrations of my power and authority ceased at the threshold of thinking; inside that domain, any authority I had was but the internalization of something I may have said or done. In general, the fine-grained tools of critical discourse analysis and critical multimodal analysis of our classroom talk and behavior throughout the program were essential to noticing the ways in which power and authority were distributed in the program among and between individuals in highly complex and contradictory ways. (In chapters 6 and 7 I will demonstrate how these analytic procedures can be applied to individual classroom episodes.)

Implications of The Egg

My purpose as a writing enrichment specialist centered around two goals. First, I wanted my students to enjoy being in the Room For Writing, to feel that as a part of the school week, the Room For Writing offered them a safe haven for personal growth and
expression, an environment in which they might experience meaningful living and
learning. Second, I wanted to co-construct with them a sense of what being a writer
entails so that they might view themselves as writers and practice the kinds of behaviors
that writers practice. I wanted them to learn how to be the kind of people who write. (One
of the most important things that writers do, of course, is pay attention to language, an
activity which led directly to all our work, talk, and thought around bidialectalism and
multiliteracies.) The Egg I have described in this chapter is a model of how the program
was realized with respect to these two main goals. By shaping the complex experience of
the workshop as revealed in the data into interpretive domains that reflect what I valued
as a teacher, this model enables me to see the macro- and micro-patterns in the program
that emerged over time. Looking ahead, I can apply it to whatever unit of analysis I
choose to take up. In chapter 8, I will select the body of work of a single student over
three years and examine it as a whole by the light of the criteria in each of the domains.
In future projects, I can use the model to approach data in another way. If, say, I should
choose to examine an individual workshop domain (like thinking) across grade levels, I
might enter into my data with this component most salient. If I want to analyze a single
hour of a single class, I will bring The Egg as a whole to bear upon the data generated as
a whole. At any of these levels, the model offers a systematic, organic structure for
organizing, coding, and drawing conclusions (even contradictory, paradoxical, and
confounding ones) about what happened in Writing to Connect.

With respect to writing and writerliness, the relationship between what I believed I
was teaching and what my students happened to be learning was complex. In its visual
representation of the interactions between the processes and products of writing, the
concept of multiliteracies, the shifting distributions of power among participants, and the culture of emotionality, The Egg allows me to reckon with complexity without giving up the ability to make claims and draw conclusions. Instead of sweeping all the messy stuff under the rug, or pretending that a root ball can be reliably and validly assessed with yard stick, meaningful and trustworthy analysis attempts to represent what's going on before the broom is brought in.
"NO OFFENSE, MS. SCHAENEN"

And what identity you have you stole.
That smile, that gesture, that quirky turn of phrase
Are just as patterned as the caracole
The rider learns to manage. All your days
You've been accumulating such displays
Of influence. It's easy enough to date
The habits of your practice, phase by phase.
You're hybrid, mongrel, patchwork, complicate,
A gallimaufry. Just be yourself? It's far too late.

—Joseph Harrison (2007)

But, um, and people probably don't think this
but I am half Chinese
and I just never said it before
and people think I'm like white
because I'm light Chinese
because some people are white there?

—Niya, second grade

Because I understand language to be central to identity construction and representation, indeed a *function* of identity construction and representation, my students and I spent a great deal of time talking about who we were (Delpit, 2008; Gee, 1996; Sprott, 2000). As a writer and a teacher, I am interested in how people in real life (and characters in fiction) are influenced to make deliberate decisions about how they speak, and how these decisions inform how they seem to themselves and to others. But in order
to get to the point where my students and I could talk about how we sounded in talk and
text, we had to know why we wanted to sound the way we sounded in this or that place
and time. In this chapter, I will give a richly described overview of the ways in which my
students and I talked, wrote, read, and thought about our racial and cultural identities.

After that, I will close in on a particular classroom conversation that explicitly took up
race, culture, community, and identity. With the help of the tools and methods of Critical
Discourse Analysis, I will slow down and open up this conversation in order to disclose
what might have been happening with respect to the meaning we all took away from this
experience.

When first meeting students at the beginning of the year, I customarily apologized
in advance for sometimes talking too quickly. I explained that some people from New
York City tended to talk fast, and that I was one of them. I then invited my students to
raise their hands and tell me to please slow down if they found it hard to understand me.

Likewise when discussing dialects, it was impossible not to discuss identity in
terms of race and racialized speech patterns (and vice versa), and the ways these patterns
were valued and not valued among different communities. As I discussed in chapter 5, it
took a great deal of patient exchange before my students would say that the reason I
sounded "weird" when speaking AAE was because I was not Black. Furthermore, and
more distressing, it was difficult to break through their false assumptions concerning
inferiority of AAE, which students were used to hearing called slang, not proper, broken,
or bad English. 58 Once we did so, a student might become angry on behalf of African

58 Writing one day in third grade, Diamond looked up and said, "Ms. Schaenen, is
retarded Ebonics or Standard English?" I replied that all languages, not only Ebonics,
Americans in general for the ways in which AAE was disrespected by the mainstream community. Angel, in particular, would preface or conclude any tirade against White people with the words, "No offense, Ms. Schaenen." With this politeness convention she alerted me to the fact that she thought of me as White. This kind of talk led me to believe that my identity in the classroom was certainly that of a White teacher. For a long time, other experiences reinforced this belief.

In April of 2007, when reading to my third graders from Mildred Taylor's The Well (1995), I became uncomfortable voicing the passages in which a villainous character, in dialogue, used the word nigger. I tried to alter my voice, disguise it in the role so that it would be very clear to the students (and to me as a text performer) that I was impersonating a character whose words were written, not using the word myself. At one point I actually broke from reading in order to speak directly to the students.

"This is hard for me to do," I said.

"What, Ms. Schaenen?"

"It's hard for me to say nigger. Even though I know it's these mean boys and their father who are saying it, it feels wrong for me to say. I would never say it in real life."

The students just looked at me. I think we were all a little uncomfortable. I might have added that I felt especially wrong saying the word nigger because I was White, but I did not do this. I figured it was obvious. I think that what I was really doing was creating a place to be safely and openly uncomfortable. Earlier in the hour, I had delivered a mini-lesson on the history of the word nigger (which I alluded to in chapter 5). On the chalkboard I wrote the word NIGER in all capital letters and labeled it as Latin. I have words that seem slang, or local and particular, or derogatory. It's not *that* that makes it Ebonics.
explained that just the way we all have ancestors, our languages do, too, and that one of the ancestors of English is an old language called Latin. Then drawing descending branches like a family tree, I wrote down some of the other languages that shared Latin as an ancestor—Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian—and wrote the words for black in those languages. A few of the students seemed to know bits of this story, but not the whole thing. Then I wrote NIGGA and NIGGAZ on the board, which is something that Smitherman (1997) calls attention to, the way African American usage of these words (the counterhegemonic usage) is different from nigger and niggers. Some students seemed interested in this; and others tuned out. In general, and as on other occasions, when the majority seemed to tune out, I dropped the subject and moved on. I had also passed around a scholarly history of the word, and we talked about how people had many different kinds of ideas about this subject, that among African Americans there was no single way of understanding how these words, which are highly salient in the auditory text of their lives, should be used or not used. When is the word meant to be funny and good-natured? When does it confer in-group solidarity? When is it cruel and racist? "Why," I asked one boy, "do you think it makes you mad to hear it from one kind of person and not mad to hear it from someone else?"

"It's just the way I am," he said.

I urged all the students to think about the word in general from now on, and to think about when they heard it and where, and why, and how they felt about it so that we

59 In not making use of the euphemism "the n-word," it is not my intention to offend anyone, but rather, for the purpose of analysis, to pin the word in place as an abstract sign that represents an idea that many people (myself included) find unconscionable and offensive. It is the meaning-in-use of the word that does harm, not the arbitrary assemblage of letters.
could talk some more about it. Angel then asked if the class could write about the word *nigger*, and I reserved the whole hour of the following week for them to do so. A collection of their writing from that day and a brief analysis of these texts can be seen in appendix R. 60

Apart from this discussion and the writing that followed, reading from *The Well* opened our classroom conversation to the concept of Black people's prejudice against White people. Nearly all of the students said they knew African American people who "didn't like White people." One girl mentioned her aunt's bad experience in a store, or a godmother's experience with the police. My students felt that their family members' prejudices grew in part from negative experiences like these.

"No offense, Ms. Schaenen," Angel said. "But I don't like White people."

The discussion remained quite clinical. Kayode drew a different kind of line between Black and White.

"Black people think before doing something," he said, not for the first time asserting cultural and racial pride. "White people just go and do it."

A classmate took the opposing position, saying that Black people were more impulsive than White people, who tended to think things through.

"Naw," said a third classmate, who added that the question isn't about skin color, it's about how you are as a person, it's how you treat people.

Everyone nodded.

60 Of course I understand why both White and Black teachers ban the word from their classrooms (See Landsman, 2006, p. 224). I never allowed it to be used as a weapon-word, or even a joking word. My purpose in the lessons described here was to "take it on" as a sign, to interrogate it, to investigate it, to face as honestly as possible what people were doing with it in use.
"So I'm hearing a couple of you saying that there are big differences in how White people and Black people act and think," I said. "and others who say it's more about how and who we are inside that matters."

While all of them had heard words like this, for many they were simply cliché, pablum, something people say but do not practice. On the other hand, the students who had White relations agreed readily. One third grader, Alyana wrote a biography of her sister, a four-year-old she described as "white on the outside and black on the inside." After reading her work, I crouched low at her side and asked Alyana what she meant by this description. Alyana explained that her sister's father was White, so that her sister was light-skinned, but acted black.

"How does she act black," I asked. "What does that mean?"

"It mean she sound black and act black," Alyana replied.

Conversations like these heightened my sensitivity to the complicated relationship between speech, appearance, identity, and community/family belonging. The next week, Alyana wrote the following paragraph, which she titled, "Sister Love."

My mom does not like my sister using the N word because she is light skinned and my mom is afraid that she is going to get beat up. I look out my sister because I don't want anything to happen to her. I love sister and she loves me too. I am her role model because she looks up to me. I used to be kind of mean to her but grandma told me that if you keep being mean to Jasmine it's going to come back on you. That's why [I'm] trying to act like a big sister and not a little sister. My brothers and my cousins act mean to her because of her skin and that's going when she grows up. And I also don't want my sister to be stupid. That's why next over at my mom's house I'm going to teach her stuff to get ready for school. I want my sister to go to the same school as me so I can protect her. That's why my mom doesn't want her to say word nigga and I don't either that's sister love.

There is a great deal to be noticed in this paragraph. The care and concern demonstrated within and between the generations is most obvious: Alyana's mother is concerned that
Jasmine's use of the word *nigger* will jeopardize her light-skinned daughter's safety. Alyana's grandmother is concerned about the relationship between her granddaughters. Alyana is concerned not only with her own identity as a role model and big sister, a transformation from being "kind of mean" to caring and instructive, but with her relationship with her sister. Alyana wants to ready her sister for Jasmine's future performance and experience in school. And all of this care and concern was triggered by thoughts about language use, skin color, and the relationship between the two. As evidenced in Alyana's writing, most of the experiences of my students have shown them that color very much determines action and speech.

**Skin and Self**

By the fall of the third year of the program, I had settled on particular texts that seemed most useful for generating meaningful conversation and writing relating to skin color. A rhythmic, rhyming picture book, *The Skin You Live In* (Tyler, 2005), is playfully written and beautifully illustrated. Children of all shades smile through the pages. Even the endpapers are patterned with colorful dots in a wide range of skin colors. In the first year of *Writing to Connect*, a third grade boy wrote the following review of the book, which I posted among other reviews in our hallway:

I like that this is talking about our culture and the color of our skin on our body. I like the pages in this story because they are talking about the color of our skin. I did like this story and it is a good story to go to other people when other people finish. This book tells people that they cannot judge anyone about the color of their skin. This book talks about culture. This is a fun book to read.

In spring of 2008, after reading the book aloud and talking about its contents and images, I asked the students to write down any questions they had relating to skin. The second graders came up with a few oral questions:
Why are scars pink instead of brown like the rest of our skin?  
Why are our palms lighter than the back of our hands?  
Why do people have different colors of skin?  

Written questions included:  

Why do we got hair on our skin?  
Why do we have eyebrows?  
How do we get the same color as our families?  
What is skin made of?  
Can skin get red or blue or even green?  

In my attempts to answer these questions, I turned to biology. I wrote the words melanin and pigment on the board. I pointed out the places on my face and arms where I have extra melanin and explain that these small patches and dots are what we call freckles. (The students were amused by this.) The only differences in skin color, I explained, are caused by different amounts of melanin, which is a pigment. My purpose here was always to challenge the idea of Whiteness as a clear-cut descriptor, along with idea that racial distinctions were based on hard and fast biological lines and boundaries. Being considered White or Black, I wanted to suggest, had to with cultural or ethnic customs combined with ways in which a superficial (literally, skin-deep) quality like pigment was distributed, which had to do with where on earth our common African ancestors migrated to. At the same time, though, as when discussing dialect and prejudice, these conversations always left me with the strong sense that my students generally understood me to be White. At least I thought they did. I should have known better. My racial identity, it turns out, was less stable than I believed it to be.
In December of 2007, in an episode I touched on in chapter 5, the fourth graders and I were discussing the pronunciation of the words *more, bath,* and *then.* Someone suggested that *moe, baff,* and *den* (the phonological expressions of these words in AAE, were simply easier to say, if not supported or encouraged in school). From here the conversation went very deep very quickly. Angel said that she felt that she was just a "normal black girl livin in the 'hood," and she didn't see why people, in challenging her language, "be wantin to take her away" from who she is. "I don't care what anyone says," she said, "I'm not turnin my back on my community." Her classmates chimed in with stories about how outraged they felt at the proposals in a nearby municipality to outlaw saggy pants, not that they approved of saggy pants, but that they did not understand why matters of style should be regulated by "outsiders." Darrion took up this idea of racialized aspect to being insiders or outsiders (criminals or law-abiding citizens) in the community:

"I don’t know if this is appropriate to say in school or not," he said, "but when White people come into our neighborhood—no offense—they be prostitutes."

"Hm," I said, listening. Angel carried on the resentment, and mentioned a few other things that "White people" do and say.

"No offense, Ms. Schaenen," she added, as always, when she was done.

"Do you think I do that?" I asked.

"No, you don't."

"You don't because you mixed," a boy said.
"Mixed how?" I replied. "What do you mean mixed? You mean like I have a Black father?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah," said a different girl in the class. "You act Black. White teachers in school and stuff, they ain't like that [like other White people] because they be hangin with Black students, coming to the neighborhood and all, and teachin us and stuff."

I was taken aback to hear that I seemed to at least one child to "act Black." I was always aware of the enormous differences between my background and that of my students. I knew the students liked me (at least most of the time), but I always assumed that they liked me given these differences, that they got a kick out of the way I spoke on account of its being amusingly different. I never tried to act Black or speak AAE as if it were my own way of using language. Indeed, I have mentioned before that I often called attention to their laughter over how "weird" I sounded when I attempted to voice AAE patterns in order to make various constructions more apparent. To think that there was some sort of consensus with this group of students that I was "one of them" was amazing to me, and also a little strange. I suspect that the affection we had developed over three years had nurtured an affinity among us. As I was increasingly invested in their well being, and they perceived me to be so, the identification among us solidified.

At the end of that day's class, as I was walking them back to their regular classroom, Cheryl said, "Yeah, White people talk funny."

"Do I talk funny?" I said.

"No, not you."

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61 I have heard plenty of White teachers use AAE in their classrooms (whether consciously or not, I'm not sure), and they do sound fairly natural.
And then she went on to impersonate a teeny-bopper "what-ever" kind of Valley Girl voice. "Like totally," Cheryl said, giggling conspiratorily. In this instance, I was White, but not White like those other, funny-talking White people.

It is important to note that when these conversations (and others like them) were happening, in the spring of 2008, Barack Obama was campaigning for president. I routinely brought in newspaper clippings and tacked them on our current events wall. Students were hearing about him at home in highly sensitized contexts. His presence in the landscape of their emotional and communicative lives outside of school juxtaposed with what we were doing in Writing to Connect in ways that demonstrated what Dyson (2003, p. 26) termed "recontextualization processes, processes of transporting and transforming cultural material across practice boundaries." Already charged with complex racial identities, my students were challenged, inspired, and troubled by the rise of an African American of such prominence and promise. An African American movie producer described his Baldwinesque Obama-related feelings this way: "I am so used to having two faces," Lee Daniels was reported to have said (Hirschberg, 2009). A face that I had for black America and a face for white America. When Obama became president, I lost both faces. Now I only have one face. But old habits dies hard, and sometimes I can't remember who I'm supposed to be." Like DuBois (1994/1903) and Fanon (1952), Daniels situated himself in a long tradition of those who have reckoned with double consciousness. Complex identities aside, during the campaign, many of my students were simply afraid on Obama's behalf. And all of these feelings came to school. Some things I heard in my classroom:
"They gonna shoot him up as soon as he step outside 'cause they don't want no Black man runnin the country."

"I want him to be president but I don't want him to die. I don't want to help kill him."

Diamond was worried about "all those White people standing behind him on TV."
She was worried that because they had easy access to him, they might easily kill him. I explained that those people were his staff, people who worked for him. Obama is their boss, I told her. Again, certain students were launched by these discussions toward anger. Cheryl wrote in a paper, "To tell the truth I am getting tired of white people. There haven't been one black president yet." Angel agreed: "White people be so jealous. I'm sick of White people in the White house." Occasionally someone would cross what I considered a line between civil critical discourse and hate speech.

"I hate White people."

"But Ms. Schaenen White."

"Ain't Ms. Schaenen mixed?"

"Ms. Schaenen ain't White. She mixed."

Thrown back into the volatile racial borderland, I nevertheless had to check their talk at the word "hate." In the heat of these conversations, as in the discussions about language noted above, my students shifted me into a blurrier racial space. When the topic drifted toward racial oppression, racial injustice, and scary thoughts about the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and anyone else, I simply could not be the empathetic outsider, the ally from the rich side of town, the nice White lady teacher. I
had to be part of the in-group ever on the lookout for Obama's safety. However I spoke, however light my skin, I had to be mixed.

Thinking and Talking Race

Inside the broad thematic framework of the examples and analyses above, I would now like to zoom in on the transcript of a single discussion I had in April of 2008 with a class of second graders. The year was drawing to a close, and we were all quite comfortable with each other. The lesson I had had in mind concerned adjectives. I had passed out to each student a copy of the first paragraph of J.R.R. Tolkien's novel, *The Hobbit* (1937). The plan was to highlight with pens all of the adjectives in the text. Introducing the activity, I reviewed what an adjective was (a word that describes a noun), and somehow we wound up talking about color (all colors are adjectives) and ethnicity. After presenting the transcript, I will subject our language and behavior to critical discourse analysis. Using the tools and methods of CDA applied in education as outlined by Rogers (2004), my purpose here will be to expose how a discussion about racial identity was constructed during this class through the representations, identities, and power relations enacted and spoken by me and my students. After conducting the analysis, I will present and interpret the writings these students composed after the discussion.

CDA as Tool, Method, and Stance

To conduct CDA is to slow down time and pay extremely close attention to a particular discursive moment (or extended moment) of interest. An analytic approach that dates as a field from the early 1990s, CDA brings together work in social theory and linguistics, and conjoins these fields in mutually informative ways (Rogers, 2004). CDA
is a method that attempts to connect "micro-level analyses with broader social forces. . . to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which discourse constructs, becomes constructed by, represents, and become represented by the social world" (p. 366). As an episode in the life of Writing to Connect, the class I have chosen to transcribe in this chapter is both telling and typical. The students and I were simply going about our business—a planned lesson—when I realized that we were sliding into a conversation having to do with race, language, and culture. I got out my small, handheld tape recorder and pressed RECORD.

When transcribing the tape in July 2009, I rendered our words and dysfluencies as accurately as I could, aware of the ways we all communicated at different linguistic levels: lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic (Ochs, 1999). Before coding the hard copy, I read through the transcript and listened to the audiotape many times over. Next, I used three different colored pencils to code the transcript for the three analytic categories (derived from systemic functional linguistics) of genre, discourse, and style—or ways of interacting, ways of representing, and ways of being. First, attending to genre, I coded the transcript for examples of spoken text—whole clauses or bits of clauses—that seemed most salient with respect to ways of interacting. Next I coded for examples of discourse, or the ways in which meaning was embedded in the choices of representing. I tracked the number of statements and questions, the use of pronouns, the formality of vocabulary, and the information about perspective and relationships conveyed by the theme and rheme (the subject and predicate) of the clauses. As with genre, I scrutinized the data for moments of interest: for example, when my linguistic choices did or did not lead to student understanding, or for the ways in which my
language influenced the clarity and shape of my teaching about the concept at hand. In the students’ language, I looked for clues and illustrations about the state of their understanding at individual turns. What was not said but might have been? Attending to style, or ways in which values and ideologies were embedded in the verbs, modals, and grammar of the language, led to many of the same points where concepts were addressed by the data’s genre and discourse—fruitful places to enter into an analysis. (For a thorough history of CDA as a tool and method, as well as a review of the literature of CDA in education, see Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; for an example of CDA in classroom inquiry, see Christie, 2002.) In the margins I elaborated upon these categories. What did it mean to interact in the manner of a master of ceremonies? Why didn’t I ask a follow-up question to this or that statement? What might be the meaning (or meanings) of the multiple repetitions of the word white by a particular speaker? When were sentences declarative, when modally mushy? And what were the consequences of these differences?

When Critical Discourse Analysis appears in the limited confines of an academic journal, it is unlikely that the full transcript of the discourse under study will be available for review by the reader. Even in book form, the transcript is likely to be in an appendix so that the main text can focus on interpretation and explanation (as in Rogers, 2004). In order to support a point, the analyst might pull illustrative chunks of transcript into the body of the text, or present exemplary data that cuts across analytic domains. In these representations, the method and the analysis are foregrounded. The discourse itself, that which is being analyzed, has been pieced out and rearranged for the sake of making key points and claims efficiently (Alvermann, 2006; Heffernan and Lewison, 2005; Rogers,
While this way of presenting CDA is both logical, practical, and effective, and convincingly represents what it purports to represent, it also privileges the rhetorical genre of academic argument-making. It seems to me that, with respect to the use of CDA, a teacher researcher (with unlimited space and an inclination to adopt a less individualistic rhetorical stance) can act on different priorities. As a teacher researcher I am less concerned here with making airtight arguments supported by strategically selected bits of data than I am in opening my classroom experience to the views and voices of others, both the other participants (my students) and outsiders (readers). What I want the reader to hear foremost is the flow of the talk from beginning to end so that divergent or different interpretations than the ones I will present might be posited. It seems to me that this study is breaking new ground with respect to subject matter and to participants, and that the least mediated presentation of data invites the most democratic ways for other teachers, scholars, and researchers to participate in a collaborative analysis after-the-fact. For all of these reasons, I am taking the unusual step of inserting the following discourse from beginning to end. Particularly in light of the previous discussion in this chapter about racial identity, language, and community, I want the discourse to come first and whole; the critical analysis that includes teased-out textual chunks will follow.

Second Grade Talking About Race: Transcript

ST indicates unidentified student voice
Stress indicated by underline
Raise in volume indicated by upper case letters
/ signifies one second of pause
= signifies chained utterance
: signifies stretched, or drawn-out word or syllable
[ indicates simultaneous speech with previous speaker
Paralinguistic features signaled by uppercase letters within double parentheses
Inda: Hi, I'm here with second grade, really smart second graders, and we began by talking about adjectives, and I had something in mind but when I asked people to describe me, an adjective that described me, Derron said (.2) at first light. Or white.

Derron: I said light and white.

Inda: Light and white. And then we started talking about white. And then we started talking about the adjective white, and some--Niya mentioned that she thought that hurt her feelings when people called her white so we've been talking about why being called white is an insult. And Brianna said ((TO BRIANNA)) say what you said about white.

Brianna: I said when people call, when people tell that other people that they're white it's kind of like me saying that they don't belong here, and that they, like, need to move out of, like, leave (.1) America. That's kind of what people sayin like when they say when they white. And some people start crying, and and go home and tell their mothers.

Inda: Ok, thank you, Brianna. And Derron said something about America and the County. What did you say?

Derron: Because white people they be, they don't belong here because because it's not like white people in our country that belong in the County with other white people that is, uh, all white Americans in the, uh, County. So that, uh, if we say they white they might get mad and tell the teacher and then they might call they mother and say, uh, the, uh, principal might call they mother
and say…and then my mama, somebody might come up here
and say why you call me white?

Inda: Right. So what I'm hearing is
the reason it hurts people's feelings is
because you're basically saying to them (.1)
you don't belong here
you're not one of us
you belong with other people who are not like us.
Is that fair to say?

Almost all: No!

A single voice: [Yes!]

Inda: Now I'm going to pass the phone to Niya.
She's had her hand up for a really long time.
But everyone will have a turn.
Johnetta started this conversation.
I promise everyone will have a turn
who wants to speak respectfully.
Niya.

Niya: I think it's mean when people call, uh
me or other people call people white,
is because, um, it makes you feel like
when a long time when they made the debate
and, uh, when people were dying
because of the white people
that were coming after the black people
and all of the, most of the black people got dead
because of them
and they just keep having war because they wanna win
and because all the black people kept winning
because they kept saying um very nice words,
and uh, then they started having a war,
and then, then they start coming after each other
but the black people they keep running
but then they just keep getting dead
so that's why I don't like when people call me white
because it feels like I'm (.1) one of them.
But, I don't like that.

Inda: You say it feels like
they're calling you
one of those bad white people
that were chasing after the black people
you mean? (SHE NODS)
And what war are you talking about
exactly?

Niya: I'm talking about the war a long time ago
about the, um, debate
that they were having?

Inda: Do you mean the Civil War?

Niya: Yeah.

Inda: Do you mean the war that ended
with Abraham Lincoln, and=

Niya: [Uh-huh

Inda: So the war kinda between the north and the south?

Niya: Yeah.

Inda: OK.
That helps us understand a lot more.
Let's see I'll go right around
Brianna had a turn.
Johnetta, this is Johnetta Henderson.

Johnetta: It hurts white people
because when you people call them white
they start pounding,
they start askin,
then they be ready to fight
when people call them white
and they be like
why you callin me white why you callin me white
then: they be like no I didn't
then she be like yes you did
then she said, then she said, then they gone say
well, den, since you wanna call me white
you're black.

Inda: And, and, and, and
what does that make you feel.

Johnetta: It makes me feel sad
because they call me fat too.

Inda: Mmn. So those are mean adjectives aren't they. You know, we began by talking about adjectives but actually it's sort of a little more important to be talking about some of these things.

T'Anna.

T'Anna: It's like Martin Luther King that when they had those, white people uh, because uh, people don't want to be called white because, uh, it like Martin Luther King when he was here, uh, when light people |?| and stuff that black people can have friends and stuff with white people, and they have |?| with white people and stuff and fountains they can't drink together no more (.5) but when Martin Luther King said, uh, we all got start to be nice respectful for each, each other. Uh uh he talked to the president, then he, then he started, then, then everybody started get along with each other once Martin Luther King die.

Inda: Uh, thank you T'Anna.

I have a question.

Sit down Niya please?

Um, here's a question.

It sounds to me like I now understand why there's an insult feel-- why it hurts people's feelings to be called white.

What in your minds is the connection between being, between is there something in your head where you hear somebody sounding white, talking white, is there such a thing like talking white?

What you think of or sounding white.

Has anybody ever heard that expression before?

ST: Yes.

Inda: And I'm, what I'm wondering is is that, does somebody feel if somebody calls, says that somebody else is talking white
is that a mean thing to say too?
That's my question.
Have you ever heard anybody say to someone you're talking white. Has anybody ever heard that?

ST: |???

Inda: You've said that?
Who have you said that to, Johnetta.

Johnetta: I said stop talkin white to Brianna.

Inda: And what, what did she say that made you feel that she was talking white?
Well, first of all, what does talking white mean?

Johnetta: Talkin white means when you when you tryin to change your voice to another person that you're not that you're not but you still tryin-a make still tryin-a make your voice go over to the other whoever talkin white |?| voice.

Inda: I see.
That's interesting.
Brianna, do you remember that time that she said you were talking white?
What were you saying?

Brianna: I, I was like really sad because I knew that some cause like sometimes my mama talk white when she talkin to business people and that's where I get the talkin white from.
And I understand because I have called because T'Anna called Niya white one time. And then I had said, she not cah, she not like white white white white white but she a little bit white
and she a little bit of caramel
and I try to tell her don't
it don't matter what they say you are
its only matter what you are.
It's, you don't have to trip offa them
because what they just
ty just might be jealous of you
because you, you, you don't know
ty might, you might have more stuff than them
you might have prettier clothes than them
you might have more money than them=

Inda: =Uh-huh=

Brianna: =You don't know what they might
what they might have so
'cause some people say it
just because they jealous
and they wanna make you mad.

Inda: Right.
What I'm hearing from you saying to me
is sometimes
there is acting white talking white and looking white
and they're all different things.
And they mean different things to different people.
Um, Darron, have you, did you ever, have you ever
heard about any of this stuff
at home or at school?

Darron: No.

Inda: ((GENTLE LAUGH))
Not at all.
So you've never heard the expression talking white
or=

Darron: =No.
When my mom,
when my mama and my daddy,
when my mama,
when my mama, um, comes over my dad's house, um,
they start, um, talking to each other,
then, my um, my um, my dad said something about her
and they started um, talking to each other
getting all mad
and getting up in they faces stuff
and then so, me and my mom and my sisters and my brothers
went all back to the house
and then my sister started talking white
and my little brother said
had slapped her in the face for doing that
because, um (.2)
I don't really know why
but he just really did that.

Inda: How old is your brother?

Darron: Four.

Inda: And how old is your sister?

Darron: Like, ten, or
I got a ten year old sister
and a fifteen year old, not fifteen, like seventeen=

Inda: =Seventeen.
And what was your sister saying
when she was talking white?

Darron: You stink, um.
I hate you.

Inda: And what's white about that.
I'm sorry
I don't understand that \///
Like what makes that talking white
I hate you, you stink, whatever
stuff like that.

Darron: I don't know
because I don't really how to,
I don't really know how to talk like that.
I just (.2)
My little brother follows my mom in her,
in the computer thing and um
he can he can read a little bit
and then he saw uh the language
and he knows it now.

Inda: And so is the
when your mom and dad are fight
when they were fighting
was one of them talking white
and the other one was not ///
is that why they were
one of the ways they were fighting?

Darron: They just (.2) no.
They just looked it up
my sister looked it up.

Inda: Um, does somebody have something to say?
Waiting patiently.
OK, let's see
I've been on this side let me bounce back to Niya.
This is back to Niya.

Niya: Um. Can I just say something.
I know people are--=

ST: |?|

Inda: Hold on. ((TO THE ST)) What.
ST: |?|

Inda: You're gonna do it
as soon as I finish this interview.
Sit down.

ST: OK.

Niya: I know people are gonna think
I'm lying about this
and I'm, and um
they're gonna um be really mad at me
and they're not gonna talk to me
but this is kinda the truth, um.
My name is Niya
and um my name is a Spanish name
and uh I have a great great cousin
and she um, she's actually half Chinese
and I'm kinda half Chinese
but I don't know how to say all the stuff.

Inda: Right.
Niya: But, um, and people probably don't think this but I am half Chinese and I just never said it before and people think I'm like white because I'm light Chinese because some people are white there?

Inda: Right.

Niya: And I don't know it's just like some people I'm, they think I'm white=

Inda: =Mmmh.

Niya: [and I think I, and I sometimes I believe in them but sometimes I don't= 318

Inda: =Mmmh

Niya: And it's just (.2) like I don't really think it's sometimes I think it really true but sometimes I think it isn't true.

Inda: Right. Here's something one thing I can tell you, is put your hands down for just a sec I'm gonna just say this on tape and to you is we're all, all of us are very complicated. We're like a cake that you bake where you put in lots and lots of ingredients. Some of them (.1) came in the other day some of them came in a long time ago some of them came in just now. Some of us if we wanna be a chocolate cake we're a chocolate cake if we wanna be any kind of cake personally, I think we're all
has anybody ever had a marble cake?

Students: ((CHORAL)) Me::: Yes:::
No::::
Me:::

Inda: What's a marble cake?

Students: ((MANY VOICES TALKING AT ONCE))

Inda: Marble cake is just
when you mix up um
light colored cake with dark colored cake
and it swirls around
and so when you cut it open
it's kinda looks a little bit yellow and a little bit brown
it looks both those colors?
I think
we're all combinations of ingredients
we might have some Chinese ingredients
we might have some African ingredients
we might have some Asian ingredients
we have some American
lots of American ingredients
and the ingredients that make up who we are
we see it in our skin,
we hear it in our language,
we see it in our hair,
we see it in our eyes,
it's all the complicated ingredients
that make us who we are
so I think
what we have to remember
when we're talking about adjectives that describe us
think about how complicated a cake is
it has lots of ingredients,

ST: Lots.

Inda: Lots of ingredients.
And try not to use words
that hurt people's feelings
the adjectives that hurt people's feelings
because you can see
they're very complicated
and our feelings are very complicated.
So I'm gonna turn this off for a second///
Johnetta don't do that.

A few minutes later

Inda: That's an interesting speech
you just made.
Say that again.

Brianna: I said
some people that's already white
they call other people white
and like some people call me duck lips
I say I glad that I got duck lips
some people say that I'm ugly
I say I'm glad that I ugly.
Am I'm ugly?
No.
Do I have duck lips?
No.
See, cuz if, if I got duck lips
my mama got duck lips
my sister got duck lips
my granddaddy got duck lips
my brother got duck lips
my daddy got duck lips
and then my cousinses have got duck lips
so if you talking about me
you must be talkin about them too
because they my family
and whatever I have
I got it from my family.

Inda: Right, right.
Here's my question to the second grade.
Am I white?

All: No:::

Brianna: If you, if you was white
if you, if you was white
well, you can't be white
because,

ST: people can be=
Brianna: 'cause people can be white and you, I say, that you not like you not like white=

Inda: Why.

Brianna: Because like, because if I say you white that'd be like a rude thing to say to a grown=

Inda: I see so you you don't want to say that because you think it's rude.

Voices: ((TALKING AT ONCE))

Inda: OK, hold on.

Darron, um, Marquez said something what did you say?

Marquez: Huh?

Inda: What did you say?

Marquez: I said you mixed?

Inda: You said I'm mixed. What does that mean?

Marquez: It means you mixed. You ain't white.

Inda: Uh-huh // Does anybody else have anything to say?

Voices: ((ALL TALKING AT ONCE))

Inda: I'll come around // what, what were you going to say?

Derron: I call you white because it's just the color of your skin and, uh, I, that's why I call you white because your, uh it's like your, uh, color of your skin is white
that's why I call=

Inda: =Right. But is it the color of your paper?

Derron: Not really, but it's just black folks got that pink |?
You just see pink
like on their face and stuff=

Inda: =Mmh-hmm.

Derron: [that's why I call you, uh,

Inda: Do you see pink in my face?

Derron: A little bit that's why I call you white.

Voices: ((ALL TALKING AT ONCE AND KEYED UP TO SPEAK))

Inda: Everybody please have a seat. ((TO A STUDENT))
Did you want to say something?
((TO ANOTHER STUDENT))
Sit, down, sit down.

Niya: I think. I think, um
the thing that, um people
I don't think that you're white
I just think that,
I was watching this show
and it was saying like
there's um a harmless thing that gets on your skin?
and it gets inside your body?
and it makes, and then it makes you like
then clear stuff gets all over you?
and then past the years
or when you get older
it starts spreading everywhere and everywhere?

Inda: Wow.

Niya: And your skin turns different color
like, um::: white=

Inda: =Oh:=

Niya: =and then
like first you're black
and then this thing,
and then it comes
and then, in a couple of years
or, um, about a month, after a month
you're white
you're all white.

Inda: Yeah. Sit down.
Thank you.
Does anybody else want to answer that question
When I said
Am I white?
And you all said no
does anybody else want to=

((SEVERAL VOICES ALOUD))

Inda: T'Anna
do you have something to add about that?
T'Anna: Yes.
Because if you was white
it wouldn’t be like the color of a paper
or:// a person's not the color of, color like a
a person's not like a color of a paper
because they cannot be this white.

Inda: Right.
And Johnetta, you /// or something?

Johnetta: Mmh-hm

Tape turned off. A few moments later.

Inda: OK
I'm with Johnetta
ask, answering the question
when I said, Am I white
and everybody seemed to go NO:::
What did you want to say to that?

Johnetta: I wanted to say
no you're not white
because I know how
I know how it feels to be called white
because some people call me black so (.3)
so I know how it feels in the inside
but sometimes it just, it just don't, um
it just don't feel good.
But as you call other people white
you shouldn't call them white
you should give respect and love
even if they're not your cousin, your uncle, whoever
you still should give them respect and love
and still love one another.

Inda: I, I agree.
I think that I hear you
lemme just say one last thing.
I hear you s-
not wanting to call me white
'cause you don't want to hurt my feelings
but what if I told you we are just
I can't help my skin
it doesn't really hurt my feelings
I can't help it
so: if you need to say
Ms. oh, Ms. Schaenen is white
that's fine, it doesn't hurt my feelings.
It's just=

ST: =?[=]

Inda: =the way I am.

((MANY VOICES AT ONCE))

Inda: Does that make=
ST: You light skinned. ((VOICES))

Inda: I'm light-skinned.

((VOICES, Inda CHUCKLES))

Brianna: Ms. Schaenen
you is, you is, you is
you is not white
see because if you was
if you was
if you was white, you white.
So why would that be a
if it's not a problem with you
why should it be a problem with us=

Inda: =Right.

Brianna: =You like the way that you is
you is,
that it don't matter how they think you is
some people say ((IN A PRETEND SCORNFUL VOICE))
you white, you don't belong here
get back where you from ((GENRAL LAUGHTER & END OF
PRETEND VOICE))
that's not right=

Inda: =Right.

Brianna: Because you white
and you still a African American.

Inda: Ahh:::

Brianna: |?| Stay in St. Louis
where you're supposed to go.

Inda: So am I both
am I white and African American?

Brianna: Yes.

Inda: Oh:::=

Brianna: =Because I think,
I don't think just black people African American.

Inda: Oh:::=

Brianna: Because, like slavery
they used to like beat on 'em with hammers
and then they and |?
let 'em |?
and they let us stink and that just die |?
and that's not right
because they don't know that while they doing that
they is, they is bl- African American too.
People don't understand
if you white
you still gone be African American automatically.

Inda: OK.
Thank you.
((GENERAL COMMOTION))
END OF TAPE

Analytic Traction

The transcript above is a big, complex piece of data. Although I believe that reading it as a whole offers a trustworthy glimpse into the lifeworld of our classroom, not every single word, line, or turn merits attention, at least right now. I will therefore be selective about what I pull out for analysis and discussion. Many of the themes I have taken up earlier in this chapter are talked through: my students' and my shifting ideas about racial identity, belonging, appearance, behavior, and speech are all evident throughout the discussion. Our talk is straightforward, but the subject is confusing and slippery to all of us. Looking back and attempting to sort through the muddle, I might frame the talk as a collaborative attempt to answer the following questions. What happens when racial categories fail to account for feelings, relationships, and experiences that confound the categories? What happens to the concept of race when a White teacher and African American students try to talk about it? First I will approach the transcript as a whole. Following that discussion, I will take up the flow of the episode in chronological order.

It seems to me that the discussion as a whole was a struggle to define and describe five sets of identities, or ways of being: ways of using the adjective White (calling someone White), ways of being White, ways of using the adjective Black (calling someone Black and/or African-American), ways of being Black (and/or African

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American) and ways of living out racial reconciliation. At times, these sets of identities overlapped; at other times, they are imagined as distinct.62

Calling someone White was likened to initiating an insult. It was an insult (“a rude thing to say,” line 424) because it established the person-called-White as an outsider (line 19), a sometimes violent outsider (line 580), someone who once did terrible things to Black people (lines 60 to 63). Using the phrase “acting white” as an insult has been discussed long before now by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who wrote about the ways in which the African American high school students they studied constructed an oppositional attitude toward an identity (White) they perceived to be anti-African American. In this sense, “acting white” may signify selling out, or joining the enemy.

In the episode at hand, the identity of “White person” was characterized by ways being that included predation, chasing Black people, and speaking a certain way that was considered ridiculous (lines 168 to 175). Aware of the connotations, a person called White would “naturally” dispute the label, might resent the allegation, be offended by being called White. On the other hand, a White person may just be born that way (lines 534-536), understand Whiteness as merely an inherited superficial trait, a physical (not social) characteristic, and not feel tainted by the negative connotations (line 540). Soberingly, if not surprisingly, none of my students voiced any idea of ways in which being a White person could be something positive or desirable. I digress for a moment to mention that literacy researchers Rogers and Mosley encountered a similar absence of positive meanings associated with Whiteness among second graders in a racially mixed classroom (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). Including stories of White anti-racists in social

62 I thank my colleague Rob Good for his in-depth and insightful reading of the transcript, one that expanded my view of the big picture.
studies and literature curricula might address the negative assumptions, these researchers suggest, particularly for White students, but only if such content does not "recenter whiteness" (p. 480). I would add that in classrooms populated with only African American students, stories of White allies and non-racists cannot squeeze out the already-slim curricular pickings which display the heroism and self-efficacy within the African American community. In any case, knowing about White allies here and there in history (this one providing shelter for the underground railroad, that one marching for Civil Rights), while better than nothing, strikes me as a band-aid on a gushing artery. My sense is that these negative conceptions of being White will begin to change only when young African American people encounter for themselves in their own experience a whole bunch of living and breathing White people who actively work day to day to break down racist institutions and entrenched systems of racial privilege. Therein lies room for hope.

Calling someone Black (or African American) underscores their belonging to a particular group, one that tends to live in one place as opposed to another. As a descriptor, it might be an insult (line 19, lines 74 to 75) or suggest a positive identity as a catch-all identity for everyone (lines 576-590). To understand oneself to be Black is to perceive both an inherited physical trait and a sense of victimhood (those historically chased, beaten and oppressed), as well as ugly (lines 390 to 393).

Our attempt to locate and describe ways of enacting racial reconciliation touched on themes I have been discussing. “Mixed” people might have mixed perspectives. If everyone were understood to be mixed (as in the extended cake metaphor), there would not be two warring camps. Short of understanding everyone as mixed (or all African American), people simply should not be judged by superficial physical characteristics.
Such qualities, particularly those associated with being Black, should not be accepted as ugly. Careful attention to language (a White person is not white like paper) can help resist easy racial categorizing. And recalling the spirit and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. continues to inspire.

At this point I would like to take up the way in which the conversation proceeded turn by turn. How were our interactional patterns regulated and controlled by me? How did the decisions I made in the moment affect the ways in which we talked about these matters? How did the ways in which the students communicated move the discussion along? As a group, did we end up in a different place from where we began? Did meaningful learning take place around concepts of race? Examining our language in terms of its orders of discourse—genre (ways of interacting), discourse (ways of representing), and style (ways of being)—will help me approach these questions.

The first moment that jumps out at me for analysis follows my summarizing "teacher talk" of lines 38 through 43. Two different students have explained why they believe calling someone White is an insult. In response, I begin my summary with a rephrasing technique (an interactive way) common to social workers, psychologists, and teachers: "What I'm hearing is…" (line 38). Then I restate the original question: "the reason it hurts people's feelings is because you're basically saying to them" (lines 39-40). After a brief but significant pause that suggests I am about to impersonate the person who calls someone White, I re-voice what my students have said that a person-calling-another-person-White is saying: "You don't belong here, you're not one of us, you belong with other people who are not like us" (lines 40 through 43). In this apparently straightforward act of summarizing just a few discussion turns, I have given voice to
three different communicative agents: myself, the two students, and the abstract person-who-calls-people-White. In other words, I am saying what the students are saying a third person is saying. Checking that I have recapitulated the discussion accurately, and expecting affirmation, I say to the class at large, "Is that fair to say?" (line 44).

"No!" they nearly all reply, loudly, in chorus. One lone voice calls out "Yes!"

What happened here? I believe that my students got caught in the third of the three voices I enacted. When I said, "Is that fair to say," I meant, "Did I rephrase and summarize the whole of your comments correctly?" And to this question I expected a rousing "Yes." But what nearly all of the students heard was the third communicative tier, my vivid impersonation of the person-being-mean. What they heard was me asking whether telling people that they don't belong is "fair." Of course it isn't! Not to most of the students, anyway. And what about that lone "Yes?" That person could have been agreeing with either one of two things: Either she was affirming (what I assumed) that, yes, I (Ms. Schaenen) had understood and reframed the comments fairly, or that yes, it is perfectly fair to imply that a person you call White does not belong among us. I will never know, because I failed to clarify the apparent misconstrual of the phrase "Is that fair to say?" What I thought I was saying is not what my students heard. I realized this but moved on anyway. Hands were up, people wanted to speak (as evident from my regulatory speech in lines 47 through 53), and it didn't, I suppose, seem all that crucial a misconception in the moment.

I stated earlier that CDA allows us to slow time in order to see things that often, in the rush of classroom practice, sweep by unnoticed or overlooked. Seemingly microscopic in the big picture of three years of interactions, the miscommunication
unpacked above is typical of the way in which my ways of communicating and my
students' ways of communicating were sometimes at odds. One difference involved our
respective usages of direct and indirect discourse. Consider the following moment, when
(hauling a huge box up the stairwell) I passed a student going in the other direction.

    Student:    Can I help you, Ms. Schaenen?
    Inda:    Thanks, I'm OK.
    Student:    Can I help you?
    Inda:    I think I've got it.
    Student:    Do you need any help?
    Inda:    No, thank you, I can manage.

In the first turn of example above, the student is asking me directly if he can do me a
favor. I mean to decline the offer. Carrying the load is a pain, but it's really no big deal
and I can manage. However, on account of my own discursive custom, I avoid making
the abrupt but clear reply that would have answered the question directly: "No, thanks."
Instead, I use an indirect construction ("Thanks, I'm OK."). Obviously, this reply has
conveyed no meaning at all to the student, who repeats his question. Again, I avoid the
direct answer, instead asserting that "I think I've got it." Only on the third try, when I
actually hear the question and reply directly to it, do we reach mutual understanding. (I
was being asked a YES/NO question; the student expected a YES/NO answer.) This is a
clear example of the way in which an identity I constructed and enacted through language
failed, at times, to communicate effectively with the identity my students constructed and
enacted.

    Think of Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Wilde, 1895),
when she poses what she probably considers a direct question: "May I ask if it is in this
house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?" First there is the politeness
convention ("May I ask?") Technically, an interlocutor could reply, simply, "No, you
may not ask." After that, there are multiple assumptions embedded in Lady Bracknell's question which might elicit any one of the following responses, all of which make sense:

"It is not in this house that he resides." (Because it is in another house.)
"Mr. Bunbury is not an invalid."
"Mr. Bunbury is not my friend."
"Mr. Bunbury is staying here for a while but he does not reside here. (Or, he doesn't reside here at the moment. Or, he once resided here but no longer does so.)

One of the most salient features of English across all of its dialects is the way in which emphasis is used to make meaning. Given our comparatively rigid syntax—word order is fairly non-negotiable within clauses—we rely on emphasis to convey meaning. How a question is heard and how much is embedded in a question will affect how it will be answered. Whenever my students and I went communicatively awry, it was generally because of my Bracknellian tendency to layer question upon question, nest voice within voice, leaving my students to respond to what they heard either most emphatically or most recently. The question my students heard me pose was this:

Is it fair to say that what I'm hearing is that the reason it hurts people's feelings is because you're basically saying to them you don't belong here, you belong with other people who are not like us?

Such a question was simply too big to digest. Those who shouted NO were, I suspect, grabbing onto the first and last pieces of this overlong question and replying to that: "No, they meant, "it is not fair (ie, nice) to say that a person does not belong here."

In spite of the "Is that fair to say?" miscommunication, the conversation flowed on. I believe that it was the desire shared by all of us to really talk meaningfully that (as

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63 Elsewhere (Schaenen, 2010 (in press), I use Critical Discourse Analysis to disclose the relationship between the ways in which I posed questions and the responses from students with respect to teaching the concept of literary genre.
it had in other instances) allowed us to roll by minor misunderstandings like these. The students could tell that I was attending to them, that I truly wanted to know what they really thought about this subject. After all, I had completely detoured from the day's lesson plan, and called attention to my doing so two times (lines 4-6; line 115 through 117). People who had something to say were allowed to speak until they were quite through expressing an idea. Looking closely at the discourse and style of these speeches is one way to understand the seriousness these second graders brought to our shared purpose. It also reveals the difficulty I had formulating clear questions. This is something I continue to struggle with to this day, and suggests very specific ways in which other White teachers can be aware of their own interactional patterns, those that muddy the communication waters.

After the exchange described above, the next explanatory turn was taken by Niya. She took her time to explain that calling people White was likening them to "the White people that were coming after the Black people" (lines 59-60). Styling herself as a knower of history in subsequent turns, Niya wanted to distance herself from the White people of Civil War days. Being called White was, for Niya, being linked with the bad guys. Once she spoke her piece, though, I moved on. I wish I had asked her about the "very nice words" (line 65) that, to paraphrase her, the Black people kept saying. Presumably Niya was thinking about speeches of some kind, but because I failed to follow up here, I will never know.

With respect to ways of being, Niya was not the only student who presented herself (in CDA terms, "styled" herself) as a person who knew things about sociology, history, psychology, and demographics. Derron, for example, was aware that in our
metropolitan area, Black people tend to live in the city, while White people live in the County (lines 28 through 32). His confidence in his understanding is revealed in the strong, declarative mood of his verbs: "Because White people…they don't belong here…It's not like White people…that belong in the county with other White people" (lines 29 to 31). Only when he shifts into speculation about what happens when "we say they white" does the modality of his verbs reflect his uncertainty about hypothetical scenarios: "If we say they white they might get mad and tell the teacher and then they might call they mother and say…the principal might call they mother and say…and then my mama, somebody might come up here and say why you call me white?" (lines 33 through 37). I have italicized the modals to show the consistent and grammatically sound structure of Derron's hypothetical proposition. Notice that the distinctive features of AAE present in these lines—zero copula ("they white"); use of "they" to mark third plural possessive ("they mother"); absence of auxiliary verb to mark past tense ("why you call me…")—have no bearing whatsoever on the complicated idea which Derron is expressing through his use of verbs.

Although the sense of her contribution in lines 119 through 133 is fairly jumbled, her expression dysfluent, and her facts inaccurate, T'Anna was consciously inserting history into this discussion. In relating what crossed her mind with respect to "calling people White, T'Anna shared what she knew about the past that seemed relevant to our discussion: Water fountains where people "can't drink together no more," Martin Luther King's voice saying that "we all got start to be nice respectful for each…other," then Dr. King talking to the president, and then a moment when "everybody started get along with each other once Martin Luther King die." Given the freedom to speak about a tough
subject, T'Anna took the opportunity to position herself in our discussion as a competent knower.

While I thanked T'Anna for her comments, I did not follow up. It seemed to me more important at that moment to shift the conversation away from calling someone White (an attention to appearance) to talking White (an attention to language). With respect to bidialectal pedagogy, I was always on the lookout for ways to challenge the idea that speaking mainstream American English had to be equated with talking White. The first step was assessing to what degree students believed this to be true.

My struggle with how to formulate the question is apparent in lines 134 through 156. I utter dysfluencies in lines 134 and 137. I break off my sentence in line 139. Finally, in line 141, I begin a posing a series of questions. Here is how they begin, one after another:

What in your minds…?
Is there something in your head…?
Is there such a thing like…?
What you think of…?
Has anybody ever heard…?

In the next five lines I hem and haw through five more questions:

And I'm, what I'm wondering is, is that, does somebody feel if somebody calls, says that somebody else is talking white, is that a mean thing to say too? That's my question. Have you ever heard anybody say to someone 'you're talking white.' Has anybody ever heard that?

In spite of the hesitant, stumbling way I pose these questions, Johnetta jumps right in with a clear reply: "I said stop talkin white to Brianna." (line 160-162). A few lines later I say, "What does talking white mean?" (line 167).
Perhaps because I have finally framed a question in the clear-cut manner (the
genre, or way of interacting) of a traditional classroom teacher, Johnetta is prompted to
take up the interactive genre of "the student" in her reply. She repeats the phrasing of my
question in her answer. "Talking white means…” (line 168). In her confident definition
of what "talking white" entails (lines 168 through 175), Johnetta repeats each of her
important phrases twice, but nevertheless conveys a strong sense of her commitment to
the answer.

Next I turn to Brianna, hoping that she will be able to recall what she was saying
when Johnetta told her to stop talking white. My direct question of line 181 ("What were
you saying?") refers back to the premature and indirect way I posed it in line 161 ("What
did she say?"). Perhaps asking the two girls directly to think back to a particular moment
is what elicited the long and fascinating monologue from Brianna. After beginning with
her own history of talking white (tracing it to the way her mother talks white to "business
people"), Brianna links her experience to that of Niya. (Dark-skinned and beautifully
expressive in AAE, Brianna was nevertheless ever on the lookout for ways she might
identify with lighter-skinned, MAE-speaking Niya.) Brianna tells us about the time she
defended Niya when T'Anna called her (Niya) white. Notice the way the accusation has
shifted back from talking white to being white. In the minds of my students, the
distinction here is not at all clear-cut. On some level, to talk white is to be white. At first,
Brianna recalls that she jumped to Niya's defense by arguing that Niya is not totally
white:

And then I had said she not cah-, she not like white white white white white,
but she a little bit white and she a little bit of caramel (lines 189-192).
But then Brianna makes an interesting turn. In telling the story, she moves from her recollection of confronting T'Anna's false assertion in order to address Niya directly. Now Brianna's claim is no longer that Niya is not "white white white white white," but that she (Niya) shouldn't worry about what other people think or say about her.

And I try to tell her don't, it don't matter what they say you are, its only matter what you are. It's, you don't have to trip offa them because what they just, they just might be jealous of you because you, you don't know they might, you might have more stuff than them, you might have prettier clothes than them, you might have more money than them. You don't know what they might, what they might have so, 'cause some people say it just because they jealous and they wanna make you mad (lines 193-208)

Throughout this pep talk, in which Brianna draws upon her sense of human psychology and behavior, Brianna suggests (through a consistent use of modals that convey a hypothetical possibility) that people call other people White just to make them mad. Examining the language at this close range and more than a year after the experience, it seems quite obvious to me that, from the perspective of my students, being White (or being called White), talking White (or being told you talk White), and actually looking White (or being told you look White), are overlapping concepts in constant tension. In the moment, however, I returned to the interactional pattern of "summarizing teacher" in my reply.

What I'm hearing from you saying to me is sometimes there is acting white talking white and looking white and they're all different things. And they mean different things to different people. (lines 210-214)

In the moment, perhaps I really did believe that this is what I was hearing, although I am not certain of this. What I am sure of is that this is what I wanted to be hearing. I wanted to be hearing that my students were beginning to separate and clarify their ideas about all of these White-related concepts. But I am not sure this was happening at all. Perhaps the
truest statement I made was when I said that these concepts "mean different things to
different people."

My inquiry into Darren’s experience (which I deliberately pursued because, like
Niya, he spoke MAE) reached a confusing dead-end. What Darron was calling "talking
white"—"you stink. I hate you" (lines 250-251)—suggested that "talking white" was
simply using mean words, fighting words. In response, I was plainly at a conceptual loss:

   And what's white about that. I'm sorry I don't understand that. Like, what makes
   that talking white, "I hate you, you stink," whatever, stuff like that (lines 252-
   257).

Darron was unable to explain it to me.

   I don't know because I don't really how to, I don't really know how to talk like
   that (lines 259-260).

In most of my students' minds, "talking white" was associated with speaking mainstream
American English. What did it mean that this child who actually spoke MAE did not
make this association? For him, talking white brought to mind domestic arguments, one
unpleasant family experience, things his brother saw on his mother's computer, and mean
language that drew upon no particular cultural baggage. By abruptly moving on and
inviting contributions from others, I conveyed the fact that this was all beyond my
comprehension. I simply could not think of anything to say, or any fruitful way of
connecting what Darron was saying to the overall sense of the discussion.

   Notice that beginning after Darren’s contribution, the class as a group began to
become increasingly verbal and active in the room. Earlier, I had to ask Niya to sit down
(line 136). But after her long explanation of her own heritage, which she shared almost
as a confession ("I know people are going to think I'm lying about this" (lines 291-292)),
as well as my long impromptu speech about marble cakes and the complicated
"ingredients that make up who we are" (line 362), the class grew more and more keyed up and excited. Evident in the transcript are many student voices talking at once, and an increased number of times I tell someone to sit down or stop doing something (lines 347, 383, 443, 449-463, 489, 496, 544, 548, 564, 593). It is interesting to me to notice the difference in my language between the times when I am struggling to phrase a genuine question, and the times when, as a teacher in charge of lively second graders, I shift automatically into the voice of command.

Sit down Niya, please (line 136)
[To a student interrupting] Hold on. What. You're gonna do it as soon as a finish this interview. Sit down. (lines 285-2890)
Johnetta don't do that. (line 383)
Everybody please have a seat. (line 460)
Sit down, sit down. (line 463)
Yeah. Sit down. (line 489)

My identity as a teacher throughout this episode (as it was throughout my experience in the program) was clearly a hybrid one. With respect to my pronouns, I tend to use “they” when talking about all those bad White people from the old days, and a community-affirming “we” when talking about how my students and I (and everyone else) are all like cakes. On the other hand, my use of “we” and the tentative, careful, sometimes stammering way I expressed a question or probed for a student's perspective contrasts sharply with the no-nonsense tone and use of the imperative in the interactional patterns above. I was always aware of classroom management, aware of how orderly or disorderly the room could feel. I was also aware that for my students, most of their regular teachers most of the time used the more commanding, authoritative voice. Tempering the exploratory, cooperative register with the firm voice, would, I suspect, have made the
students feel more at home. Making use of both voices, each in the proper time, was essential to getting done what I wanted to get done.

Indeed, the turn-taking rhythm of this class changed noticeably after line 411 with my clear and concise prompt, posed with simple formality: "Here's my question to the second grade: Am I white?"

After all the long, wordy stories that came before, the flow picks up pace, the interactions move along more swiftly. This is partly because everyone is more keyed up and interested in the topic, but partly because I am framing my questions more succinctly, more clearly.

Why? (line 422)
What did you say? (line 435)
What does that mean? (line 438)
Is it the color of your paper? (line 451)
Do you see pink in my face? (line 457)

The pace is slowed back down when I allow Niya to take her time explaining (as a sharer of what she had learned "from this show") what she knows about the skin disease that attacks skin pigment. Niya seems to be suggesting that I am not actually White, I might simply be a victim of this disease, which I assume is vitiligo. T'Anna ignores Niya's idea in order to take up my earlier challenge to Derron about clarifying the difference between the use of the word *white* as applied to a person and white as applied to a piece of paper. She says that calling a person White is not saying that they're "the color of a paper because they cannot be this white" (line 503-504). After a brief break, Johnetta argues that I am not White (or at least, that she will not call me White), because she does not want to hurt my feelings. I see by this that we have returned to the idea that being called
White is an insult, and meant as one. Johnetta, who is chubby and very dark-skinned, emphasizes the emotional impact of using Black and White as descriptors:

I know how it feels to be called White because some people call me Black so, so I know how it feels in the inside but sometimes it, it just, it just don't. it just don't feel good (lines 517-519).

She then re-voices the language of universal love and respect, or the importance of showing love and respect to anyone and everyone, which I hear in this context as the language of church and home. With this, I say I agree. But I cannot resist pushing a little harder. Although the way I pose the question is convoluted (line 534-543), I ask the students: what if being called White doesn't hurt my feelings because I just am White, and there's nothing I can do about it?

To this everyone has something to say and the class is in an uproar of wanting to share their thoughts. The turn-taking comes fast and furious. My students have a lot to say about my color status: I am light-skinned. I am White. I am African American. I am all of these, which, finally, as the discussion draws to a close, confers upon me the legitimacy (in their eyes) of belonging to the community:

Brianna: Because you White and you still a African American.
Inda: Ah!
Brianna: Stay in St. Louis where you're supposed to go. (lines 570-571)

It seems to me that Brianna has applied a careful rationale to the facts in order to come up with a conclusion that squares with social reality, feelings, and our relationship. I will now try to trace what I believe to be her logical moves.

At first, I am not White. On second thought, I may actually be White, but I cannot be labeled White explicitly, because she likes me and doesn't want to insult me or be rude to me. She also knows that calling someone White is saying that they do not belong here,
that they are not part of the community. Calling someone White, in other words, is a form a symbolic banishment. But if you actually are White, or quasi-White, and are loved in spite of it (like Niya and me) you should just ignore the people who call you White because you should recognize that they are only doing so to hurt your feelings. Furthermore, if you are White, and you yourself are not troubled by being White, that should be fine with other people, and it doesn't have to change anything anyway because no matter what you're still African American because "people don't understand if you White you still gone be African American automatically" (lines 587-590).

The Move to Paper

In 2002, when I first named what I was doing in schools Writing to Connect, those words expressed everything I felt about what writing meant to me: writing was a way to connect people to themselves (self-knowledge through writing); and to others (writing as communication and interaction). In every class, and among every kind of student, I saw these two aspects of writing enacted. Today, my sense of the meaning of the Writing to Connect has expanded to include the ways in which writing connects the different domains of literacy. What I mean is that writing both creates and exposes the connections between and among thinking, talking, listening, reading, and feeling. After the classroom discussion was over and the tape recorder was turned off, I asked the class to think again about adjectives, words that describe. After all, this had been the original intent of that hour’s lesson (we would eventually get to The Hobbit the following week.) So I asked them to write about themselves using adjectives. I will now present their written work, followed by a brief interpretation of the connections between these texts and the oral conversation they followed.
Written Self-Descriptions Using Adjectives

Johnetta

1. I am a nice African American young woman. I am black and I am proud of myself.

2. I am fat and I know I am but in my heart I don’t care if I am fat. Some people make me chase them because they call me very bad words.

3. I like to play with my best friends at home and have good times with them and my family and have little bits |?| I say.

Marquez

I have black hair. I am tall. I am a black. I pick it because I have black hair. I picked it because I am tall. I pick it because I am an American kid because I am black.

Lemarius

1. I am brown.

2. I am from St. Louis.

3. I am a America boy.

Brianna

First I am a African American I love myself. I am in the second grade. I am Brianna [she wrote her middle and last names in full]. I am the tallest in my classroom. I am light brown. That’s who I am and I love my family.

Second I like to play with my best friends named Niya and Danielle. I like playing rope with my friends. I like people that do not talk about me.

Last I love all my teachers. I love my hole family.

Darron

A striped shirt
A black clock
I holds the world
African American
Bricks
Buildings
I have a blue shirt
I have silver pants
I have black shoes on
I am brave.
I have a striped shirt at home.
I have a black clock.
The earth holds the world.
I am a American.
I love bricks because

T'Anna

I am black, I sing, and I bld leavs house. [a house out of leaves?] I am goofy I am silly I am pretty. I am kind I am funny I am smart. I am thankful I am African American I am brave I am goodful I can swim.

Derron

I am Derron. I am light. And I got short hair. I am Africa American. I pick these three because I have all those adjectives on my skin. I’m kinda white. [Below the text he drew a picture of a boy with sunglasses on and a necklace with a medallion on it; and also a car.]

Niya

I am a African American from Rochester New York and St. Louis Moissory. I am crazy colors of the world. I am a person who writes and reads.

LaKisha

Black
African American
Kind
LaKisha
Sweet

I chose these because there true about me and my teacher told me half of the words and my mom told me all of them both of them are my favorite teacher and mom. [On the back is a drawing of two smiling females, one flying a kite, in a park with a tree, grass and flowers, and clouds.]

Alexis

I am carmal.
I am funny.
I am LaKisha.
I am smart.
I am goodful.
I am African American.
I am kind.
I am thankful.
I am brave.

In addition to the addressing color/ethnicity theme that runs through this chapter, these texts are reminders of the ways that knowing yourself (and being able to describe yourself in words on paper) are key aspects to being/becoming writers as I described in chapter 4. It was clear to me, in reading these samples, that my students were careful and thoughtful about their selection of the descriptive words they chose. Marquez, for example, in repeating the word *pick* or *picked* when elaborating on his declarative sentences, reveals a deliberate process of choice-making with respect to the adjectives he chose. Likewise LaKisha, who writes, "I chose these because [they're] true about me," reveals that she was aware of the close observation and choice-making authentic writing requires. She would only choose a word if it were true, and in order to know if it was true, she had to reflect on her actual experience of herself.

Of the ten students\(^\text{64}\), all but two used the adjective “African American” to describe themselves. One of the students who did not, Marquez, wrote that he was “an American kid because I’m black,” recalling a comment made by Brianna early in the discussion when we were talking about the connections between being Black and part of the community of Americans. Like Marquez, Lamarius also called himself "a America boy."

\(^{64}\) Although there were ten students in the class that day, three students never said a word aloud: Alexis, LaKisha, and Lamarius. Alexis, it so happened, was T'Anna’s sister. Generally well-spoken and more confident than her sister, Alexis kept to herself that day and observed.
Interestingly, nine of the ten students also included a word or two describing their actual skin color. Four students used the word “black:” Johnetta, LaKisha, T'Anna, and Marquez. Lamarius called himself “brown.” Brianna called herself “light brown.” Re-voicing Brianna’s description of Niya from the discussion, Alexis called herself “caramel.” Derron, who had called me “light and white,” called himself “light,” and “kinda white.” Derron seemed to conceive of the descriptors as concrete attributes, writing, “I have all these adjectives on my skin.” Perhaps what he meant was that he had chosen to focus on words that applied to skin. Niya, having narrated the complications of her heritage as a light-skinned person who was part Chinese, poetically declared herself to be “the crazy colors of the world.” Only Darron used no color words to describe himself. My sense was that our discussion had rattled him somewhat; perhaps telling his story, or my prompting him to tell his story, had left him as confused as it had me.

By including both a cultural reference (African American) and a color adjective (or two), my students collectively and individually called attention to a distinction between cultural identity and physical appearance. This idea seemed to grow right out of the conclusion of our class discussion, which had determined that although I was White, I was also African American.

With respect to identity construction in language, I am also struck by the confidence and positive feelings of self-worth that emerge from these descriptions. Even Johnetta, who says she knows she is fat, also writes that “in my heart I don’t care.” She is resisting the idea of being judged on a physical characteristic, just as Brianna had proudly resisted being deemed ugly on account of having what she called duck lips, just as I said I didn’t care if people called me White, since I couldn’t “help my skin.” I am re-
presenting the adjectives in the texts above when I say that these students see themselves as kind, proud, tall, thankful, goodful, smart, funny, goofy, brave, and sweet.

Furthermore, it pleases me to see that LaKisha has connected me with her mother in the learning of the words she has written: “My teacher told me half of the words and my mom told me all of them both of them are my favorite teacher and mom.” To my mind, when the domains of school and home are brought together in a way that makes a student feel good, something is going right: writing has connected.

I will comment briefly on the compositional qualities of these texts. These samples exhibit four types of page layout: numbered lists, non-numbered lists; numbered paragraphs, and single body paragraphs. In general, I call a list any writing in which every new word or sentence lines up on the left-hand margin. Often students would number their lists. Numbering texts was, in my view, a practice that students transferred from the scripted curriculum of the regular classroom, where the process of composition was broken down into steps and stages, pieces and parts as discussed in chapter 4. For this reason, when I saw a list of any kind (when I had simply asked for “writing”) I knew that that student was trying to do the right thing according to regular classroom’s approach to writing. In this batch of responses, one student made a numbered list; three students made non-numbered lists; two made numbered paragraphs; three wrote “real” paragraphs, and one (LaKisha) produced a hybrid text, the top half a list and the bottom half a real paragraph.

Six weeks after the day on which this chapter reports, near the end of the school year, I asked this class (as I asked every class) to write out what they believed they would remember about the year in Room For Writing, and what they hoped I would remember
about them. Alexis, who had not said a single word during the April 2 lesson, wrote this:

I would remember when we made dream catchers. I would remember Ms. Schaenen. And Apples to Apples [a game we played]. I would remember Mary Jo [a visitor]. I would remember talking and right [writing] about white.

Dear Ms. Schaenen,
I am smart and pretty.
I am LaKisha too.
I am thankful and greatful.
And I am nice to you.

I hope that Alexis will remember "writing about white," because I agree with Bolgatz (2005) that "we learn to talk about race and racism by talking about race and racism" (p. 2). Even if the conversation is groping, muddled, unclear, and inconclusive, the talk itself can be emancipatory.
"What are some different ways of writing?" I asked my students one day in the second year of the program. Heady with the theories of the genre theorists I have referenced and discussed earlier, I was eager to plunge into an all-new, overarching multiliteracies curriculum, one in which we would deliberately learn about and produce texts in the various genres—scientific lab reports, poetry, drama, debate, argument, fiction, reportage, advertisements, biography, autobiography, and so forth. I wanted my students to understand, as I discussed in chapter 4, that there are multiple ways of constructing (or designing) any one text, that the decision-making power resides with the textmaker, and that this principle holds true for analytic essays no less than for signifyin in the recess yard. Furthermore, textmakers (writers and speakers) typically tend to draw upon more than one way of using language in any given text. "The structure of a novel or play is at least as much unique to itself as it is shared by other novels and plays. And some stories are poems, some poems stories, some plays essays, and some essays are
stories or poems . . . [genres] provide convenient rhetorical marketing bins. . . . we exaggerate greatly the formal similarities among members of the same genre (Moffett, 1968, p. 6-7). In planning my long-range genre enterprise, I sought to conflate discourse and play, ideas drawn from the classic work of Moffett (1968) and Dewey (1944/1916), as well as from the more contemporary genre theorists like Cope and Kalantzis (1993). My ultimate goal (had Hutsch remained open so that my students and I could stay together through sixth grade) envisioned the students as knowing the academic and literary genres well enough to be able to play with them. But step one, it then seemed to me, was understanding the concept of genre, and learning the basic qualities that identified a particular text as belonging to a particular genre. Through systematic study of the genres and what kinds of ways with words they each entailed, students would learn that language choices—including dialect, voice, style—are shaped by the rhetorical purpose of the text as the text unspools in time (speech) or space (writing). Genre Studies would be the perfect place, I felt, to house our bidialectal lessons. Hence my question: "What are some different ways of writing?"

"Print," said one student.

"Cursive," said another.

"You can also write on the computer," voiced a third.

True enough, literally speaking. Those were all ways of writing. Now, however, I realized that what we needed was different way of understanding what I meant by "different." Elsewhere (Schaenen, in press) I use Critical Discourse Analysis and multimodal analysis to explore the process of our conceptual construction of the meaning of the word genre. In this chapter, however, I will be concentrating on the texts and talk
that reflected a multiliteracies approach to language arts education. I will begin by sketching out two sets of ways in which we enacted multiple and mixed styles of authorship, and the kinds of texts produced by individuals across a few different genres. How comfortably did bidialectal pedagogy live in a multiliteracies approach? What kinds of tensions arose? After presenting and interpreting a broad array of examples, and within this rich context, I will narrow my focus (as I did in the previous chapter) in order to describe, interpret, and explain what was going on in the language and identity construction during a mini-lesson in contrastive analysis, which was but one way of calling attention to the formal differences between mainstream and African American English.

One Paper, Many Hands

Dyson (2003) describes and celebrates the intertextuality of young children's play and talk in school. As an observer, she caught children in the act of re-voicing and recontextualizing (playing with) what she calls the textual toys that rippled through their lives outside of school: television and movie characters, manners, plots, ideas, songs, sports, video games, wrestlers, raps, and other cultural constructions. Similarly, my aim in Writing to Connect was to highlight, privilege, and play with the intertextuality of communication in language, especially those which foregrounded more cooperative, collaborative styles of authorship, what Richardson (2003) might consider African American-centered literacies, which were often most satisfying to my students. I will describe two activities in particular.

One day in the fall of 2006, I asked the third grade to join me on the floor, where I had spread and taped a long piece of butcher paper (about six feet by two feet) to the
linoleum. In order to convey both the audience for and purpose of the writing we would be doing, I explained that the walls outside our room were too bare, that they needed some decoration that would help passersby understand what we were up to in the Room For Writing. All of us had pencils and crayons. As at a dining room table, we took seats around the perimeter of the paper (which meant that when hung, some of the texts would be upside down!). One girl wrote directly to the presumed reader:

Dear person in the hall you are so cute.

Kayode combined religious hortatory with an advertisement for the program to form a poem:

God, god, god,  
it is fun in  
writing class  
you should  
come to  
writing class  
because writing  
is the [sic] of school.

In third grade, Kayode regularly brought religious content and belief into the classroom. I will discuss this further in chapter 8, but for now I call upon this sample to illustrate the ways in which students recruited Discourses from elsewhere in their lives. This small poem starts off sounding like a prayer, and winds up an exhortation: you should come to writing class! (I only wish I had taken time to notice the missing word, and ask Kayode to fill it in.)

Tapping a different genre, Angel created a block of text that chronicled a little early history in the form of an account:

One day, there was a room called Room For Writing. People made rumors about Room For Writing then a lady came out of Room For Writing and said please don't say don't say that. We are here to be nice not mean. The End.
Around the words Angel drew a tight border in one solid line, each corner sharp and ninety degrees, and without lifting her pencil off the page. She designed her composition (at least this one; she wrote a few others as well) to resemble the page of a printed book.

In this example, Angel displayed her commitment to writerliness with respect to both visual design (the page of a book) and narrative design ("one day…The End").

Another student, whose text was unsigned, created a similarly bordered "page."

This person wrote:


come to the room for
take a journey in your mind write a long story
share your story with the class
enjoy your time at the room for writing.

I recognized where "take a journey in your mind" came from. That year, every single afternoon at about 2:50, a school administrator would read the same prescribed speech over the loudspeaker system, sending the following message into every classroom in the building:

Good Afternoon, Students. It's that time again. The more you read, the more you know. The more you know, the more you grow. Books can take you anywhere, from New York City, to a country fair. So grab a book and take a journey in your mind. It's Silent Reading Time.

Then the principal would take a seat on a chair in the hall outside the main office. Demonstrating calm composure, she would read the newspaper. On the floor in front of her would be one or two students from each classroom, each with a book. The right to sit there at that time was a privilege granted to children who had been behaving well that day. On my way out of the building, I would pass this group of silent readers and try not to distract them. If someone caught my eye, we'd smile and wave to each other. Over
time, I have to admit, the repetition of the Silent Reading Time announcement got under my skin. Clearly, though, the children responded to it as a comfortable routine. And the principal’s wonderful modeling of everyday reading was lovely to observe. Moreover, I saw evidence of the way the loudspeaker words found their way into their writing and thinking. Eventually, I came to see this re-voicing of the school's official announcement as just another example of the intertextuality of their compositional repertoire.

In the butcher paper activity, I saw plenty of flowers, hearts, and houses. There were several "roses are red" variations, including one by a girl, Renata, who wrote the following:

> Dear Mrs. Schaenen
> Room For Writing!! Roses are red violets are blue. You is the best writing teacher I ever had. We have fun altogether with us. Renata Davis 122 All love
> Sigh your name________________________

Under this text she drew a row of different-size tulips. The whole text was enclosed in a rectangle with extra vertical lines down the left margin that suggested pages. Across the top were hearts and flowers. Generically complicated, this text reveals a great deal of influence from inside and outside our classroom. By turns, this composition is a personal letter ("Dear Mrs. Schaenen"), a cheer ("Room For Writing!!"), a poem ("Roses are red violets are blue"), a declaration of affection ("You is the best…fun altogether with us"), an identity statement, and a request for official acknowledgment and appreciation of the expression as a whole. Signing my name on the long line Renata provided for me (legal

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65 At one point I planned a lesson around the creation of a new version of the Silent Reading announcement. What the students composed were clausal rearrangements of the announcement they were hearing daily, padded out with their own extra ideas. I abandoned the plan to have these remixed announcements take a turn in the rotation. Along with my students, I came to enjoy the routine choral recitation of the words of the announcement along with the voice on the loudspeaker.
contract style), I signaled our formal textual connection, one that she had created in and through her writing. On many other occasions, Renata provided me with signature lines to sign at the bottom of her written work. I think she was deeply impressed by the way in which obtaining a signed name on a document rendered that piece of paper quite literally significant: report cards, personal checks, leases, contracts. In addition to this, inviting my signature on a form of her design turned the default power arrangement on its head. For a change, the student was making the teacher do a little writing.

While I could appreciate the intertextuality of Renata's composition, a complexity and hybridity that seemed playful and appropriate for a third grader messing around on a group project, I did also wonder how I might begin teaching Renata (and others like her) about genres. She obviously had the ability to toy with them; multiliteracies was our starting point. In her four-year study of six graders’ vernacular compositions, Brown (1997) observed similar competencies among a similar sample of students. If metacognition was my ultimate goal—making students aware of their own ability to manipulate genres, voices, and styles—where and how should I begin?

In the meantime, there was always fiction, perhaps the easiest genre to play with and recognize as a literary form. In three different places on the butcher paper I began impromptu "once upon a time" stories, each one sillier than the next. After two or three sentences I stopped, and let a student take over the story. In the examples below, I have put the students's contributions in bold. (Punctuation and spelling are as they appear on the paper.)

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66 Moffett (1968) writes that storytelling, shaping experience into recountive narrative, is a child's first way of turning thought into words. Michaels (1981) draws a distinction between the topic-centered way of storytelling common to middle class White children and topic-associative way of storytelling among African American children.
Once upon a time a boy went to the park. He was so surprised when he looked up in a tree and saw a green bird who said, "Hello little boy where are you from, I am from New York City. So where are you from" said the boy. "The bird said" he was from Nort Corlina. The bird said that's not true.

Except for an unstable sense of the usage of quotation marks to represent direct discourse (I supplied the first one to scaffold the practice), this writer knows what fiction "sounds like." The rhythm is the rhythm of fiction (only in storytelling do we say "said the boy"); its genre seems to me to be fairly stable and homogeneous. This was also true for the next examples:

Once upon a time there was a very cute girl named Kardish'a. Kardish'a lived in a flower because she was only 1 inch tall. Her pet was an ant named Fred. One day Fred said, "do you think I'm cuite?" Then Kardish'a said yes I think you're cuite and he said thank you but I already knew that.

Once upon a time there was a small frog named Phyllis. Phyllis lived in a pond near Natural Bridge Road. One day a girl named Mercuria came to the pond and Phyllis said, "Hey, how are you?" Then Phyllis said, I'm fine do you want to play ask Mercuria? Yes. Come on lets play and they became friends.

Using humor, the author of the first story made Fred-the-Ant a "character." His vanity (revealed by his already knowing that he's cute) is a sophisticated hook into any story that might follow. In the second story, a girl and a frog cross boundaries of plausibility to become friends and play together. Clearly, these are writers who intuitively grasp the ways of storytelling. Their co-authored texts, produced on the spot for fun, display writerly qualities that dovetail beautifully with what scholars of AAE have described as improvisation and performativity (Spears, 2007, p. 101-104).

The following year, with both second and third grade, I took improvisation and performativity in fiction writing to a more formal level without losing the collaborative, shared-authorship process that made writing fun for all of us. On the chalkboard I wrote
an incomplete sentence on the board\textsuperscript{67}; in second grade, the sentence began: Once upon a time there was a mouse who lived. . . On papers of their own, each student copied these words down and completed the sentence any way they liked. I took a seat in the circle and wrote the sentence on my own paper, too. Then we all passed our papers to the person on our left. We read our neighbor's sentence and then added one or two more sentences. My only instruction was that the story "make sense." When we were all through, we again passed the papers to our left. "Ooh, I can't wait to see what y'all wrote on mine," Niya said. In this way, the stories grew down the page, the handwriting changing from person to person as each author moved the story around our circle. In the final round before the papers returned to the original author, everyone brought the stories to a close.

As we took turns reading the stories aloud, students could not help listening closely for the sentences they had contributed. "I wrote that," one or two people might blurt. In this kind of collaboration, individual voices were not lost. Listening to the story I had started, I noticed that someone along the way had changed the name I had assigned to the mouse. Indeed, this activity turned out to offer many places where the students and I came face to face with the terms of our classroom power. I may have started the story, but I had limited control over where it would go. With the third graders, exposing these limits became a complicated inside joke among us. Whenever I saw the plot turning too violent or gangsta-centric, I changed it drastically into something humorous or non-threatening. In the following example, I have put my contribution in bold.

\textsuperscript{67} Were I to play this game again, I might figure out a fair way to let a student compose the initial prompt.
Once upon a time there was a cat who lived in a castle. The cat was lonely until it met a female cat too. Her name was Ariel. And had a cat fight and pulled out a gun, three knives, and ?? hammers. **No, sorry, I was wrong. There were no knives, guns and hammers in the castle. Instead of fighting, the two cats ate a huge pile of fish until they were very full.** After they ate one of the cats pulled out a gun and shot the other one. It was sad and everyone got shot even everybody in the world. And popped back up and lived happily ever after. The End.

In another example, when one cat shot another, I wrote, "But, ha-ha, the gun was just a toy gun so the other cat ran away. The house cat got a band-aid for his bites and decided to go for a walk." Recalling the story of Cissy Lacks, one which was permanently lodged in the collective memory of all St. Louis-area writing teachers, I was always concerned that I might seem to be inviting too much "real life" into the classroom. I was also nervous about being the co-author of a story that featured violence; in retrospect, I think my caution and reluctance were actually perceived as censorship. Reading this new twist I imposed on the text, the boy on my left laughed and then re-revised the plot to return it to the story he and the other boys wanted. He wrote, "The cat met the other cat again then pulled out a real gun and killed the other cat…" Together, I believe we were exploring what was OK and what was not OK with respect to the subject and content (the intertextuality) of our shared composition. We were all writing at the limits of our power: I was pushing against the brute facts of the street coming into the story; the students were working hard to bring such facts in, even if only to use the power of storytelling to undo the terrible consequences (allowing everybody to "pop back up and live happily ever after"). Although the tone of the experience was playful, I had a sense that we were negotiating the stakes in a serious game. It was almost as if my students were saying to me, "This is the stuff floating around in our imaginations. It's there because of the realities we face when we are not in school. You may be trying to make it seem like it's
not there, but it's there for us no matter what you say." Shawn (Angel's brother) actually said, "Awright, awright, you want me to write white style?"

"What do you mean, white style?"

"All proper, like yes, ma'am, no ma'am."

For Shawn and others, violence in the plot of our story was both mandatory and racialized. In their minds, allowing the violence was allowing black style. A story written "white style" (what I seemed to them to be pushing for) not only did not entail violence, but needed to be written "all proper" with the politeness conventions used among people in authority. Obviously, there were miscommunications and assumptions embedded in this line of reasoning, more than I took time to unpack that day. All I said at the time was "No, that's not what I mean."

Single Hand, Plural Genres

With the fourth grade in 2007-2008, my mission was (as I have discussed) to deepen their understanding of the concept of genres and learn to write in various genres. A copy of the genre log I distributed can be found in appendix S. Because I originally wanted the students to have a say in what they produced each week, I imagined this sheet as a way to keep track of who was trying out which genre when. As it turned out, in the beginning it was mostly best for the whole class to work in the same genre from week to week. By January, however, students were making informed and deliberate choices among the genres. As I have noted, poetry, fiction, speech-making, and epistolary writing were either already a comfortable rhetorical stances for my students, or were adopted and practiced most readily. When it was time to share work, students could read their writing aloud over the classroom microphone, their voices amplified to the audience that
surrounded them. Pretending to be an old-fashioned master of ceremonies, I called this activity "Stars-R-Us," and introduced each speaker with TV flair. Such intertextual play came easy. It was a familiar kind of role playing. But what about science writing? What about the legal argument that derived from a claim? What about drama? What about all those highly specific ways of using academic language and formal registers I spoke of when describing in chapter 5 what my doctor friend could do? How did language and dialect decisions fit into decisions about form? How was my students’ access to science (and higher education in general) limited by the limited number of genres in which they could organize and express ideas and information? (Saul, 2004).

One morning, my third grade cooperating teacher handed me two unwrapped boxes containing science projects for elementary students. “Here,” she said. “You might as well take these. I have no time to do anything like this.” I accepted the box gratefully and dedicated myself to tackling the experiments it contained one by one. In order to teach my students to write like scientists, I wanted my students to be scientists, which meant that they had to be do-ers of science. Those boxes, to my mind, offered me the material resources with which my student could take on the scientist-identity and take up the scientist's generic (formal) customs (Lave, 1996). Although we had fun, I must acknowledge that the results of the science initiative were rather mixed.

One partially false start in the genre of science writing was my comment that "in lab reports, when describing what we observe, we do not use the word "I." I had passed each student a lidded can and a ruler. Inside the can was some kind of object from my kitchen. I asked the students to make a guess about the object based on the weight of the can and the sound it made when shaken. Then, after opening the lid, they got to describe
what they saw and note any further questions they still had after making this first round of observations and measurements. On the board, I wrote down the parts of the lab report we would be writing that day:

  The Introduction: Share your question.
  The Procedures: Tell what you did.
  The Findings: Describe what you noticed.

Angel was especially excited at the prospect of participating in what she called "a mystery." From the start, she imposed a dramatic narrative on the activity. To her, the fact that nobody knew what was in any of the cans was central to the experience and also to the composition. Her report:

  **Lab Report**

  When my object was a mystery to me and myself me thought that it was rice or peanuts but when me got to open the can it was really toothpicks me studied the object and me described it. It was sharp. Pointy. It was long. It also was skinny. It was wooden. It also was breakable. It was 3 centimeters long. And finally it was useful to get food from your teeth. I wanted to know how and where did the first toothpick come from but me will find that out in my next lab report.

Except for once, Angel (who always did her best to follow directions) did manage to avoid the word "I;" in order to follow the rule, she had simply substituted the direct object pronoun "me" and charged ahead. Before addressing this, I congratulated Angel on the words she used to describe exactly what she did, saw, and heard. Sentences two through nine, I told her, were clear and precise observations in the genre of a lab report. I also explained that her strategy of "avoiding I" was an interesting and creative solution. Then I explained to the whole class that I had just learned that I had not explained the genre of science writing very well. What I ought to have emphasized, I explained, was the fact that scientists try to avoid sounding personal; it is their tradition, as scientists, to
avoid sounding as if they are people doing whatever it is that that are doing. They want
the reader to think about the experiment and the thing observed, not about the scientist as
a person, and that's why science writing both avoids the use of the first person singular
pronoun, I, and tends to feature the passive voice. ("The can was shaken to determine the
weight of what was inside.")

In Angel's composition, too, it is clear from the last line that she has confused the
lab report, as a text, with the scientific process itself. As "real" scientists do, she ends
with a question yet to be answered: where did the first toothpick come from? But rather
than state that her next report will share what she will have discovered by means of
another procedure, she says that she will "find that out [where the first toothpick came
from] in my next lab report." Angel was a little embarrassed by her work, especially
when she had a look at what her best friend, Cheryl, had written about a pile of Cheerios:

It is round. It is small. You can eat it. Has bumps. It is dry. It is stale. Kind of thin.
Holy. It has black spots. Kind of crooked in the middle. White in the middle. Very
crooked. Brown spots. Looks like a ring. Small and big. it is lumpy. It doesn't
have a smell. It looks like it is cut in half.

Cheryl slipped easily into the genre. Even the next week, when she had to describe an
iced lemon-cranberry bar in such detail that a classmate could pick it out from the whole
batch of bars, the writing remained clearly centered on the bar, not herself (in spite of
using the word "I."

In creating her science text, third grader Anita assumed the role of a television
anchorperson sharing late-breaking news from the lab with her audience. We had filled a
small cup with water, nearly to the brim, and then added drops one by one. The students
made guesses about how many drops it would take to make the water spill over, and were
gripped with excitement to see how the surface tension made the water dome up over the
lip of the cup. Anita's lab report:

Anita's Report On a Water Experiment.
In the classroom of Ms. Schaenen their doing an experiment. Let's ketchup
with one of her students. The student says, "That she see's a half cup of water. She
thought that is was going to fall. And that the rim was holding it. The liquid spills
if she puts 270 drops of water it looks like this: [Anita drew a picture of water
spilling up and out of the cup]

The end.

Anita has created what I might call a multi-generic text. The title seems quite scientific.
The first two sentences are written as an on-the-spot reporter. The next three sentences
seem to be written in the form of creative non-fiction, with the author quoting the do-er
of the experiment. Then the text seems to slip into a declarative report of the results,
complete with a picture. It seems to me that, with time and direct instruction, I might
have helped Anita sort out some of these ways of using language, and which ways are
associated with which genres. Given how little time regular school devoted to the content
disciplines of geography, science, social studies, and math, I was impressed that Anita
took up new kind of voice (that of the reporter, which perhaps she had picked up from
television). On the other hand, it saddened me to see that for most of my students, being
the scientist, assuming the voice of the scientist (the do-er not the observer) would
require a great deal more science in the curriculum, a shift in the district's curricular
priorities that was, at that point, unlikely.
As a class, in addition to those of science, we also explored the forms and styles of biography, autobiography, sermons, political speeches, arguments, and debate. One memorable set of fourth grade debates turned into a kind of legal hearing, with me playing the role of judge. Some of the boys argued over which were the better types of sneakers. Others made cases for bicycles with no brakes versus those with brakes. Because the students had chosen their own topics, I often found myself knowing next to nothing about the case; my prior knowledge was sketchy and minimal. This left me, as a judge, with a mind open to the arguments. Angel and Cheryl wrote on behalf of certain hair styles. By Angel:

Curls

Curls are better than flatiron because when flatiron gets wet they fall but when culls get wet sometimes when curls get wet they fall but it's much easier to put them back up. Also curls are really useful for when your trying to look perfect and flat-iron is very simple so they don't really shine. Also some people hair is not very long and flat-iron looks better with people who has long hair but curls you could just curl the bottom and they look very pretty. So judge that's why I think curls are better than flat iron.

As evident in appendix T, Angel began her composition using cursive for the first four lines, then found it easier and swifter to switch into print. It is also evident that Angel is using the opportunity to write as an opportunity to think. In the first sentence, she begins to write an absolute statement about curls before evidently realizing that there are exceptions to this generalization and she must make discursive room for the exceptions ("when curls get wet sometimes when curls get wet . . .'). Interestingly, the very moment she amends her absolute stance is also the moment when she switches from cursive to

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68 Throughout these lessons, I had in mind the model for a process-based orientation to genre presented in Cope & Kalantzis (1993, p. 193), which refers to texts that can describe, explain, instruct, argue, and narrate.
print. Her hand seems to be responding to the flow of the moment: as the idea sorts itself out in her mind, her hand accommodates the onrush of thought by getting the words written in the swiftest way she can. The only two AAE features in this text occur toward the end ("some people hair" show the absence of possessive -s; and "people who has long hair" show a generalizing of the verb to has from have). My sense is that because Angel is thinking intently about supporting her argument, the inner pressure to write in Standard English eases. Meanwhile, Cheryl argued the other side of the case:

**Flat-irons**

Flatirons are better than curls because they last longer. Also you can do many hairstyles with them. Then you can put all kinds of head bands in your hair but with curls they would get messed up at the top of your head. When it rains and you get caught outside flat-irons don't fall they just stay the way they is but curls would fall and get ragidy [raggedy].

While it is not strictly the voice of a legal document, I do admire Cheryl's charming use of the second person as a subject (recall the variety of narrative perspectives I reviewed in chapter 1). The you managing her hair in this composition is a person the reader can easily picture. The images of this person putting in "all kinds of head bands" and getting caught in the rain are interesting and well-rendered. The image of fallen wet curls going raggedy is poetic. The only AAE feature is Cheryl's generalization of is with the third person plural subject they ("they just stay the way they is . . . ") This says to me that, like Angel, Cheryl was at that moment writing for the overriding purpose of expressing her ideas; the ideas came first, the schoolishness of the performance was secondary. It happened not to matter to see these arguments made in MAE (composing an argument to use in a debate can happen in any dialect or language); but if it had, I might have asked her to shift the feature to MAE upon revision because of the institutional expectations of
a particular context in which she would be presenting her argument, namely a court of law.

With respect to the conceits and tropes of print and television advertisement, my students were well informed. They had an easy and fun time adopting the practices of a genre that saturates their lives outside of school. Asked to create a product and an advertisement for it, their compositions ranged from CD packaging, to stores for pants, to a Soul Food Seasoning Store.

Fourth grader James used pencil and crayon to design the front and back of a DVD game. On one side of the paper he drew a 2.5-inch square, then flipped the entire sheet over to draw and fill in the same size square as the back of the package: the inscribed object was in this way identified with the material product it was meant to represent. They both had front and backs. Selecting an orange background and illustrating the back with brown-faced people, he made sure to indicate that the game was "only for age 10 and up."

Nieta and Mercedes worked together, each on her own paper using pencil and markers, to design a print advertisement for "The Mall Were [Where] we sell every thing. After writing the title across the top of the horizontal page, the girls made vertical columns down their pages to indicate the different shops within the mall. Nieta included places for clothes, purses, perfume and information. Under each shop's name Nieta drew an illustration and wrote a little text: "Perfume: smellin good rush. If you buy this you are going to be runing down the street because the boys are going to chase you." Under "Imfo," Nieta wrote:
were the shop is: 24 street. You better come down here girls, before the clothes purses, and perfume be sold out.\textsuperscript{69}

Nieta has obviously absorbed the tone and the ways with words of the people who try to get other people to do something or buy something. Appealing to the presumed desire of girls to be irresistible to boys is her approach to perfume sales. The urgency embedded in the world of advertising is plain in the information section: hurry up or you will miss your chance! Like advertising, biography, too, came easy. Many of the biographies of loved ones were extremely moving and well-reported.

As we moved along through the genres, at times I felt that we were all rather unmoored within the concept of genre as an umbrella term for all of these different forms. One day, after a lengthy discussion, I asked everyone to compose a rap that defined the word \textit{genre} and gave examples of the various genres we had been discussing and trying out for weeks. Some people worked alone; others in groups. D'Angelo sat alone, working with intense concentration. He tapped his fist on his desktop. He mouthed his words aloud. He scribbled line after line. And when he was done, and read it aloud, we all listened to a long rap about his life, his future, his personal destiny. It was serious work, but not at all what I had asked for. In the silence that followed the recitation (I wasn't sure how to respond), one of his classmates, James, blurted, "You ain't got no kind of genre in that!" I had to agree. Nothing about D'Angelo's rap had anything to do with the concept of genre. And yet I had never seen D'Angelo concentrating so hard on writing anything before, so what finally I praised and affirmed was the \textit{way} he wrote.

With respect to the concept of suiting the genre to discursive purpose, I wasn't sure what, if anything, was sticking. On an easel in plain sight I kept the running list of

\textsuperscript{69} Nieta's first word in this phrase—\textit{were}—reflects her AAE pronunciation of \textit{where}.
the different genres, there for people to refer to at any time. D'Angelo's so-called genre rap aside, I was not convinced that I was actually teaching what I intended to be teaching: that rhetorical choice is always and ever a function of social purpose. Scientists write the way they do because that is how other scientists, by shared social custom, expect them to write, not because that is the only way to report on an experiment. A sermon in an African American church will sound different than a sermon in a White Presbyterian church. All texts and utterances represent a contact point (a volatile borderland) between individual expression and social expectation. When I found myself on shaky ground, turning to role models helped.

Cory Booker, the African American mayor of Newark, New Jersey, was around this time asked to introduce Barack Obama at a rally. Together, my students and I read a report of this event in *The New Yorker*; I tacked a copy of this article on our current events board.70 The article’s author described Booker, who has light skin and green eyes, looking over a draft of his introductory speech. The draft had been written by his staff. Booker says, "Sounds very vanilla to me. I'll have to think of some chocolate, real quick. Or some Neapolitan, maybe, is the way to go. All righty! We'll wing it!"

"What," I asked my students, "does Mayor Booker mean by vanilla and chocolate? What does he mean by Neapolitan?"

Very quickly they made the connection: Booker was referring to style shifting, of course, to shaping the way he spoke from White to Black to mixed in order to suit the people he expected to encounter at the rally. He was going to mix the substance of his ideas about the need for political change with the style of what the author called "a tent

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70 See Boyer (2008).
preacher at mid-sermon." Here, I pointed out, was multiliteracies in action: African American English, mainstream English, and a deliberate blending of both. As the students all set about writing a political speech, Marcus happily declared that he was writing "in vanilla language."

Hi. My name is Hillary but you know me as Clinton. And the reason I gathered you here today because you guys should vote for me and not Obama but anyways you guys should vote for me because was there ever one time you felt like you should be in the hospital but you don't want to because you don't have a lot of money to pay the bill? Well you can with medicaid. And that is not why I want you to vote for me. I want to win this vote for Justice. I want to win this vote to stop the war. I also want to win this war for better schools. I also want to win this war for opportunity.

Perhaps Marcus considered his speech "vanilla" because its syntax, in impersonating (White) Hillary Clinton, was MAE. However, Marcus’ speech also makes use of such AAE rhetorical devices as personal appeal and repetition. It is evident that Marcus had been listening closely somewhere (at church, at home, among adults, from television) to the words and speech patterns of African American orators. At the time, I did not take a moment to ask him about his understanding of the relationship between style and syntax. What I did know was that talking about oral performance and style shifting, we were back on solid ground.

Sometimes, however, the ground was too solid. Like a parent repeating for the twentieth time the dangers of going out with a wet head, I sometimes drove my students crazy with all the talk about talk. In February of 2008, I was waiting for everyone to be done writing thank you notes for a classroom gift. When we were all finished, we could play a game they all loved: the version of chalkboard password I described in chapter 4. James, the first boy to be finished, was especially eager to get started.
James: We ready!
Inda: We ready?
Harrison: We ARE ready.
James: We ready.
Inda: We ready?
Darrion: Please don't start that.
Inda: Don't start what?
Darrion: Makin us switch it back and forth.
James: We ready!
Harrison: We ARE ready. How many time you going to say that, man?

This exchange happened very quickly, an indication of how second-nature this subject had become in the classroom conversation. Indeed, by February of 2008 (after three years) I had students like Darrion and Harrison who were utterly bored by it, as if to say, "we get it, we get it, already." Still I pushed. I pushed because it was not enough for my students to know how they shifted, or even why they shifted. I wanted them to understand in linguistic depth what was happening to their language when they shifted. In retrospect, it may have been that by fourth grade, my students were more comfortable shifting in practice than talking about shifting in the abstract.

Not So Fast: Contrastive Analysis in Slow Motion

Narrowing my attention to the conceptual relationship between shifting automatically and the underlying linguistic patterns than shifting rearranges, I will turn to a single episode that occurred early in 2008 among the fourth graders. One day, as we walked into the room at the beginning of the weekly hour, Harrison said to me, “What we doin today?” When I heard this, I decided on the spot to initiate a mini-lesson on contrastive analysis and a few follow-up conversations. Of the nine students in the room, seven offered answers to the questions I posed. The others were engaged listeners in the conversation. My goal was for the students to gain an understanding of the particular features that made "what we doin today" African American English (AAE), and what
made its mainstream American English (MAE) analog, "what are we doing today" representative of a different dialect.

As I did in the previous chapter, I will approach a transcript of this mini-lesson with the tools and methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. In order to scrutinize my own language in interaction with the students' language as we talked about language, I have transcribed this episode a little differently than I did the episode in chapter 6. Given that phonological differences are sometimes the only distinction between AAE and MAE, I believe it is important for the analyst to look very closely at pronunciations (in particular, consonant cluster reductions common to speakers of all English dialects, reduction of word-final single consonants after a vowel\(^{71}\), and realization of the final \(ng\) as \(n\) in gerunds\(^ {72}\)). The transcript reflects my attention to this level of language construction. In order to do so, I listened to the tape several times before transcribing it. When transcribing, I first attended to the semantic content of each utterance. On subsequent rounds, I listened very closely in order to transcribe those phonological markers detailed below. After presenting the transcript, I will describe how I went about coding the transcript. Then I will examine and interpret the phonology, morphosyntax, pragmatics and content of the language used during this explicit classroom discussion about dialect in order to offer the reader a more nuanced understanding of what is entailed by teaching about style shifting though contrastive analysis.

The following transcript represents two episodes taped on the same day. Episode 1 was a class-wide lesson designed to clarify and make explicit the phonological and morphosyntactic differences between a question posed in AAE and the same question

\(^{71}\) wha' and what
\(^{72}\) walkin and walking
posed in mainstream MAE. Episode 2 represents two one-on-one exchanges I had with individual students in a different class on the same day. The first exchange was very brief, the second considerably longer. In both, I posed similar questions in order to understand how these two boys—both of whom might be considered low-achieving students who have considerable strains on their socioemotional lives outside of school—defined AAE.

As I did for the discussion presented in chapter 6, I recorded both of these episodes with a small, hand-held audiocassette machine. For Episode 1, I moved around the room to capture individual turns of the students. For Episode 2, I sat face-to-face with each boy and simply moved the machine back and forth between us. For all of the reasons given in chapter 6, I include the transcripts here in the body of the text.

Fourth Grade Mini-lesson: A Transcript

Recording date: January 23, 2008
Transcribed by Inda Schaenen on March 6, 2008
Transcription conventions
underscoring indicates emphasis
::: signifies a stretched intonation
‘ indicates an elided consonant or vowel
(.x) represents fractions of seconds of pause
phonology represented in transliteration rather than international phonetic alphabet

Episode 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inda</td>
<td>It’s um nine fifteen on January twenny-third, two thousan’ eight, and um I juss wanted ta say that buhcuz now we’ll know what day it is on the tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>G’morning, Ms. Schaenen!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inda</td>
<td>G’morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I walked in, when we were all
juss coming in right now
I heard somebody say “what we doin today”
Who said that?

Student  Harrison.

Inda  Harrison?


Inda  Oh, hold on Diamond. Whuh-did you just say?

Diamond  Always, er, Harrison always use Ebonics.

Inda  Whuh-do you mean by Ebonics,
whuh-did you hear that was Ebonics?

Diamond  He said whatch’al doin, I mean whuh we doin,

Inda  And what makes that Ebonics?
Raise your hand so I can have you on tape.
What makes, what we doin today Ebonics, Marcus?

Marcus  Wha’ we doin.

... 

Inda  If you wan’ed ta switch that
into Standard English, what would you say?

Marcus  What are we doin today?

Inda  So what’s the diff’rence between what we doin—
What’s the diff’rence between what we doin today
and what are we doing today, James?

James  You used Ebonics and you didn’t use Ebonics,
you use standar’ English...

Inda  Right and what, what changed between
Harrison’s “what we doin today” and
Marcus’s “what are we doing today?”

James  He, Harrison di’ Ebonics and uh Marcus di’ um,
ah...English--
Inda - Standard

Maybe I should put it on the board
and then you can see the diff’rence.

40
Hey you guys?
Harrison said [scratching sound of chalk
on board as I write for 9 seconds]
OK that’s what Harrison said?
Somebody read that?

All (Angel very loud): What we do-in today?

45 Inda
OK, I just wanna hear one person tell me
the paddern...here comes the Standard English
you hear me drawing-on-the-board [I read what I’m
writing as I write] what we doin to-
OK, that’s what (.2) Harrison said,
this is what (.2) Marcus said, what’s the diff’rence
between the two sentences?

All [Murmuring, reading]

Inda
Ebony’s got her hand up.
What’s the diff’rence? Here I come.

55 Ebony
The diff’rence be tweens Harrison’s and Marcus
is that Harrison sai’ his in Ebonics
and Marcus sai’ his in stander’ English.

Inda
Very nice, Ebony and what’s the diff’rence
in the sentences,
what’s in one sentence--
What makes them diff’rent, Angel?

Angel
Because Harrison said do-in and um Marcus said do-ing.

Inda
Good. That’s one diff’rence.
There’s a g—

65
there’s a g-sound here [pointing with chalk]
and there’s not a g-sound here
at the end of doin and doing
What else is diff’rent between those two sentences?
Diamond.

70 Diamond
Um. The uh are,
and uh there’s no are in what.
I mean by what
and it’s a are on the stander’ English.

Inda OK, what I heard Diamond say was,
there’s an are here [pointing to board],
and there’s no are (.2) here.
In the Ebonics there’s no are
and the Standard English there’s an are.
Does everybody see that?

80 All [chorus]: Yes.

Inda This is something you know when you say it
but sometimes when you see it,
you see it, it’s very, it’s very obvious. Yes Harrison.

Harrison: My way is what, what we doin today,
but Marcus way is
what are we doin today...

... Inda Right. Exack-ly. And they both mean the exack same thing.
Those sentences mean the exack same thing, don’t they.

All Ye-es.

Inda The only thing it, that’s diff’rent—
and you know something that most people don’t know—
is that the are, you don’t have to use that are, in Ebonics,
and in Standard English, ya-have-ta use the are.
There rules in both of them, they’re both exactly the same
you juss decide where you wanna use one and where you
wanna use the other. Pardon?

Student: |?|

Inda [echoing the inaudible question] Ain’t what how what’s suppose to
be?
That, this is Darrion, by the way. What’s your question?

100: Darrion Ain’t this how iss suppose to be?

Inda Which.
Darrion: Bofe of ‘em.

Inda: Yeah, they’re both, they’re both correct. In certain places both are correct.

Where is this one correct?

Angel: In the hood. And at home.

Inda: At home, in the hood, wherever…

Student: [inaudible]

Inda: What, nah, I guess not wherever…

right, and where’s this one correct?

Angel: At school and the other proper places.

Inda: Right, and, the other what places?

Angel/Harrison: Very proper urban, suburban places

Inda: Suburban and school, Harrison says…

[General talk]

115 The public…right. And you guys know which one goes where. Right?

All: [Right.
[Uh-huh.

Inda: OK, the end of that little mini-lesson.

Episode 2

120 Inda: What is Ebonics?

Sanford: Ebonics is sum, is sumpn like [unslided i] when you talk a diff’rent language that yer use to.

Inda: Oh, what a really interesting and good definition. Ebonics is when you talk a diff’rent language that yer use to.

125 So for example, um for example, what is an example of Ebonics.
Sanford: I git money. [laughs] I git money.

Inda: Mh-hm. [2 seconds] Hm.

…

Inda: I’m over here with Mohammed now. What, when you hear the word Ebonics, when you, when you come to understand it, what does it mean to you?

Mohammed: Ebonics is a wait wait [6 seconds] Ebonics is a different kind of language (.5) from Standard English and regular English. Like when somebody comes up to you and says [10 seconds] [whispers] Wait Where my money at.

Inda: That’s an example of what.

Mohammed: Ee-bonics.

Inda: And who speaks Ebonics?

Mohammed: Me:: my brother, and dass all I know.

Inda: And how do you know when to speak Ebonics and when to speak Standard English?

Mohammed: In school if you spih, speak Ebonics they’re gonna put a B or a F on your uh language.

…

You speak it, you have to speak Ebonics at home cuz if you speak it at school you’ll get a F in language. If you speak it at home there is no grades. . .

Inda: Do you ever hear people speaking Standard English at home though?

Mohammed: Ye-es, my mother does.

Inda: Mm-hm. Does she switch back and forth?

Mohammed: N-no.

Inda: No? So she, she speaks, she speaks
Standard English at home all the time?

Mohammed Not all d’time [unglided i].

Inda Mm-hm. How do you know when she switches back and forth?

Mohammed [sing-song] I don’t kn…When she talks to my dad when they havin arguments.

Inda Which language is that? [5 seconds]

Mohammed [Dey

Inda [Does an argument happen in standard or Ebonics?

Mohammed Both.

Inda Huh. That’s interesting.

End of transcript

Approach to Coding Using CDA

Before diving into this transcript, I will take a moment to review from the previous chapter the three terms of critical discourse analysis most useful to the following interpretations: genre (ways of interacting), discourse (ways of representing), and style (ways of being).

Here I will consider levels of dialect variation primarily as markers of discourse (although these features may indicate the style of an utterance as well), understanding that lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic variants in language necessarily constitute any given way of representing. In other words, ways of representing are in part determined by the words, sounds, grammar, and pragmatics called upon either consciously or unconsciously by a speaker. Keeping these terms and
their admittedly slippery meanings in mind, I took three colored pens and coded the transcript for dialect-specific features, including:

1. phonological features, including intervocalic consonant cluster reduction, velar fronting (ex: walking to walkin), final consonant elision or reduction (ex: did to di"), and realizations of the voiced th (ex: them to dem); and the voiceless t to f (both to bofe).

2. morphosyntactic features, including inflectional s-absense in third person singular present tense, formation of possessive, existential it, use of gonna, and leveling to is in the third person plural present with existential there.

3. pragmatics of language-in-use, including meaning-making and concept construction with respect to genre, discourse, and style as these categories of analysis applied to the particular act of contrastive analysis we were engaging in.

By the time I put down my markers, certain lines had accumulated several layers of colors. The margins were full of notes and exclamation points.

What I Noticed (and Didn't): Then and Now

The genre of my language in the first episode (the way I interacted) might be described as “teacher at the head of a class.” I was attempting to get students to understand and describe aloud something that I already knew. With respect to discourse, I was therefore working within what has been described (McVitte, 2004) as the I-R-E pattern, or initiate-response-evaluation, of teacher-student talk, which called for me to continue to probe and question until someone gave me the answer “I was looking for.” I wanted the students to notice two particular differences between what we doin today? and what are we doing today?. I wanted them to see deeper into the linguistic particulars and
tell me that in the AAE version of the question, *doing* became *doin* (the velar was fronted) and that there was no *are* (that the linking verb, or copula, could be dropped).

Doing this, we would be practicing contrastive analysis, whereby the students would begin to have a metacognitive awareness of what style shifting entails. And so I posed slightly varying versions of the same question—“what’s the difference between these two ways of saying the same thing”—no fewer than eight times:

And what makes that Ebonics? (line 20)
If you wanted to switch that into Standard English, what would you say? (lines 24, 25)
So what’s the difference between what we doin—what’s the difference between what we doin today and what are we doin today? (lines 27-29)
What changed between Harrison’s. . . (line 32)
What’s the difference between the two sentences? (line 50)
What’s the difference? (line 54)
What’s the difference in the sentences? (line 58)
What makes them different, Angel? (line 61)

Clearly, something about the question in all of its forms stymied a meaningful response. The students continued to repeat versions of the same reply: the two expressions were different because. . . they were different! One was AAE, and the other was MAE. In the first four tries, various students continued to feed me what they thought I was driving at, namely, “The difference is that one way is in Standard English and one is in Ebonics.”

While this is of course true, and I affirmed it to be true, it was not the answer I wanted to hear. All eight times I posed the question (repeating the word *difference* six times) elicited the same answer from the students. For two school years we had been talking about AAE and MAE, and how there were two ways they could speak. Many of the students intuitively knew how to style shift on request, and could do so, in both directions. They could identify both versions. They knew there were differences. But now
I wanted to take them a step farther and actually practice contrastive analysis. I wanted them to begin to see the rules or patterns (the orderly heterogeneity) that governed why both dialects assumed the forms they did. At the time, I believed that making language more abstract, talking about AAE and MAE very specifically, would deepen my students’ respect for AAE as another language, not just (as they believed) “slang” or “ghetto” versions of “proper” English. I also believed that in exercising metacognition, analyzing both dialects would eventually lead my students to assume agency with respect to controlling the styles at their command; in other words, not simply shifting on demand, but shifting for the sake of their own discursive purposes. In retrospect, I am no longer sure about these assumptions, at least among such young students. Below, I will demonstrate how “natural speech” can be used to generate abstract rules and patterns that children can see. But just whether the process can go in reverse, whether abstract knowledge about grammatical patterns transfers into “naturalized” written and oral practice among AAE-speakers, remains an unanswered question for me.

In any case, only after I wrote the two phrases on the board did we begin to break out of our tautological discourse. Perhaps asking them “what changed” from one sentence to the next pushed us past the dead-end. Ultimately, although her voice revealed a certain bored impatience with the whole conversation, one of the brightest, most out-spoken students ultimately offered one of the two answers I sought:

Angel: Because Harrison said do-in and um Marcus said do-ing. (line 62)

Still practicing the I-R-E way of interacting, I instantly evaluated this reply:

Inda: Good. That’s one diff’rence.
There’s a g—
there’s a g-sound here [pointing with chalk]
and there’s not a g-sound here
Satisfied with having collectively identified the velar fronting in the vernacular form of doing, I moved toward the next feature:

Inda: What else is different between those two sentences? Diamond.

Diamond: Um. The uh are, and uh there’s no are in what. I mean by what and it’s a are on the stander’ English.

With the visual representation of the two sentences on the board, Diamond immediately identified the second feature: the are. Although she stammered somewhat over the appropriate preposition (the are is not in what, but rather by what), her use of the definite article and the way she used the existential it’s a displayed an ability to consider the use and placement of words in a sentence (the syntactic patterns) objectively rather than unconsciously. Here Diamond, who was a mild-mannered but extremely emotional and impressionable child, was practicing contrastive analysis exactly as I had hoped. She identified that AAE can do without the copula, and that MAE has a copula. I affirmed her response with the explicit language of contrastive analysis:

Inda: In the Ebonics there’s no are and [in] the Standard English there’s an are.

In fact, it was Diamond who from the very start of the mini-lesson had introduced Ebonics as a topic of conversation.

Diamond: Always, er, Harrison always use Ebonics.
Inda: Whuh-do you mean by Ebonics, whuh-did you hear that was Ebonics?
Diamond: He said whatch’ all doin, I mean whuh we doin.
She echoed, or re-voiced, precisely what she thought she heard Harrison say. Her initial attempt—“whatch’all doin”—was self-corrected to “whuh we doin,” clearly demonstrating her aural perception of the AAE pattern I was asking about. Interestingly, Diamond employed the s-absent form of the third person singular when declaring that “Harrison always use Ebonics,” itself an AAE morphosyntactic construction.

Our classroom conversation about dialect difference was complicated by the layering of dialect features in both my speech and the speech of the students. Over the course of my twenty-six speaking turns, I articulated nineteen examples of consonant cluster reduction at the end of certain words—for example, “juss coming in right now,” (line 9) “juss wanted to say” (line 5), and “the exack same thing” (line 87). In seventeen turns taken by the students as a group, there were only eight examples of consonant cluster reduction, and all of those were instances when the final consonant was dropped before a vowel—for instance “Harrison di’Ebonics,” (line 35) and “stander’ English” (line 57). As the representative of and apparent practitioner of MAE, my rate of consonant cluster reduction was higher than the rate of my students in the aggregate.

Looking again at the seventeen student turns in the aggregate, there were only seven instances where anyone used a morphosyntactic feature customary in AAE: two s-absences in first person singular (lines 14 and 16); one unmarked past tense in the second person singular of use (line 31); one use of a vernacular -s in “between” (line 55); an absent apostrophe -s to mark a possessive (lines 55 and 85); and an existential it is (line 73). In other words, while the phonology of the students’ language in both episodes marked them as speakers of AAE, their syntax on the whole did not exhibit AAE features except for these seven instances (or when explicitly, consciously quoting examples of
AAE in response to a question). In episode 2, over the course of ten turns, Mohammed only expresses two thoughts in AAE—“there is no grades” (leveling to *is*, line 150) and “when they havin arguments” (zero copula and velar fronting, line 162). Everything else he says in MAE.

In episode 2, Sanford and Mohammed offer strikingly clear definitions of Ebonics.

Sanford: Ebonics is sum, is sumpn like [unglided i] when you talk a diff’rent language that yer use to.

Mohammed: Ebonics is a differen(t) kind of language (.5) from Standard English and regular English.

As a student in school, Sanford struggled with a disposition to fight and go off track. He was often in trouble. In this moment, however, he has demonstrated mastery of the concept we had been discussing. Ebonics is indeed the "different language" that he was used to. As for Mohammed, I have discussed the ways in which his intelligence and ability to reason were untapped in the regular classroom environment. What he says about speaking Ebonics in school is therefore both insightful and chilling:

Mohammed: if you … speak Ebonics they’re gonna put a B or a F on your language. You speak it, you have to speak Ebonics at home cuz if you speak it at school you’ll get a F in language. If you speak it at home there is no grades.

As I taped this response, listened to it later, and write about it now, I heard and hear in my mind that old refrain: "No fair!" It is simply and absolutely not fair that a child should feel that his language, his way of expressing himself, his way of being, will earn him "a F in language." Mohammed's astute awareness of the consequences of his linguistic choices told me that he knew what codes belonged where, but I could not say, then or now, that
this lesson made either of us feel especially good. All we had done, it seemed, was make injustice explicit, and that did not seem like enough to me.

So What?

This close-up review of a single classroom episode suggests at least four important directions for future classroom practice and further research.

First, critical discourse analysis can be a power tool for teacher researchers. Classroom time flies by, and in the rush of the experience we do and say things that (if given the opportunity to reflect upon) we wish we did not. Simply listening to a tape can help, but having an analytic heuristic to apply to an actual transcript shows us much more. Critics of CDA have suggested that by decontextualizing chunks of texts, analysts risk seeing only a portion of a complicated system of communication. Partial vision leads to partial views of the representations, identities, and power relations constructed in classroom interactions. Any interpretations that follow from partial views, this argument runs, are therefore both contingent and limited. How does the analyst know that what she thinks she is seeing in a particular episode rings true across time? How do the meanings she unpacks relate to the experience as a whole? Teacher researchers have a ready reply: as active participants in the classroom over time, we are familiar with the diachronic experience as a whole. We know the history of what came before, and what came after, the particular episode being examined. If something about our analysis seems strange, untrue, or atypical, we can situate and report the strangeness, untruth, and atypicality in the context of what we know about other classroom experiences. On the other hand, if the analysis reveals patterns that do transfer across time, we can report that, too. This is not to say that our contextual knowledge is not limited and contingent; it is, because we are
human. But teacherly ways of knowing the ethnographic context of the classroom offer the teacher researcher a wider interpretive lens when making use of tools and methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, and ground the resulting claims in trustworthy, insider knowledge.

Second, and more specifically, future approaches to contrastive analysis might begin with the classroom teacher's recognition that his or her language patterns ought to be subjected to the same scrutiny that is applied to the language of the students. Indeed, critical language pedagogy requires that they do.

Third, teachers can and should make use of explicit lessons about levels of dialect variation. Style shifting is not something that happens in a single blanket act of translation. Not all levels of any given dialect have to change at the same time, and it is possible to call attention to the shifts made at various levels in various ways and for various purposes. This can be a gradual and staged process, with lessons designed to address some of these customs in an orderly and cumulative fashion. As Mays (1977) suggested, AAE speaking children can and do read and comprehend MAE texts without altering their spoken language patterns. In an elementary classroom, lay terms like vocabulary, sound, word and sentence structure, body/facial movement, and tone (among other descriptors) might be substituted for the argot of linguists that note lexicon, phonology, morphosyntax, and pragmatics. Once students understand that language is constituted at different levels, lessons can build directly upon this concept.

With respect to vocabulary, hybrid practices can make use of direct instruction and interactive activities in order to teach the difference between, say, “lively” (MAE) and “poppin” (AAE). Students can generate “cheat sheets” that inform readers about the
two sets of definitions. Phonological lessons can be designed in similar ways, with conversations about differences in pronunciation of vowels, of consonants, and prosodic qualities. Teachers of any ethnicity who are imagined by students to be speakers of MAE can point out instances when their own language exhibits vernacular phonological features (such as consonant cluster reduction) in common with AAE. And all of this talk can rest on a powerful motive: to destabilize and dismantle the socially constructed hierarchy of dialects that maintains mainstream American English on top.

Lessons and activities that define and describe the choices that can be made with respect to vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and non-verbal customs are well within the scope of elementary students’s zones of proximal development (Vygotsky 1934/1978), particularly when the voices of peers who "get it" are welcomed into the discussion. If I had had more time, I would have tried to bring Mohammed into a leadership role in our workshop during these discussions. I generally praised his perceptions and comments publicly, and deliberately turned to him for answers so that he might shine among his classmates, but I might have done a much better job of calling upon him as a teacher and leader in the classroom during our activities and lessons.

In addition, much like the acting exercise in which the actor utters the same word in multiple ways in order to convey a variety of emotions and meanings, students can learn to play with how phonology and prosody convey meaning and identity. Because even very young students intuitively understand that people shift around their words for socially specific reasons, learning about variation at this level can build upon prior knowledge and experience. As researchers have long proposed (Krater, Zeni, & Cason, 1994), role playing (talking like a newscaster; chatting with Grandma Henrietta on a
pretend phone; joking with a friend at recess) facilitates easy access to style shifting in unthreatening ways.

Fourth, although limited in subjects and scope, this analysis of classroom discourse demonstrates how interactional patterns between the teacher and students affect the construction of knowledge. The I-R-E pattern of interaction temporarily froze us at a conceptual dead end. It was only when I broke free of this pattern and put on the chalkboard a visual rendering of the two dialects as realized in two forms of the same question that students began to literally view the structure of language objectively as linguistic manipulatives. Students could then see for themselves the linguistic artifact under examination. Had I not externalized the utterances in this way, gotten them down in writing that could be assessed visually, we might have gone on for quite some time restating that “the difference was that they were different.” Practicing contrastive analysis requires students to be able to view language (temporarily) as a decontextualized object; for this to occur, conversation alone is not enough. Speech and inscription are interrelated. The words must be seen/read as well as heard; the students who generated meaning out of this lesson drew upon both visual and aural perceptions; our language under discussion needed to be represented in space as well as time. That my students had the patience to "hang in there with me" in spite of a temporary block was no doubt due to the affective atmosphere of the classroom co-constructed by all of us. It took me some time to sort out what was going wrong and to shift my interactional approach.

Is This Multiliteracies Pedagogy?

As literacy educators attempt to shift the emphasis toward meaning-making (and away from the metaphor of linguistic repair, ie., "fixing" an English that is "broken"),
literacy itself can be re-conceived and defined as "a myriad of discursive forms and cultural competencies that construct and make available the various relations and experiences that exist between learners and the world" (Giroux, 1987, p. 10). Promoting a multidiscursive and multimodal understanding of literacy calls for the energetic creation and implementation of classroom practices that—with the goal of optimizing academic achievement—respect and support linguistic and cultural diversity (Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006; Smitherman, 2004; Taylor, 1998; Terry, 2008).

These are long sentences that contain huge ideas. As a researcher interested in theory-building, I have to make statements like these. As a teacher, I have to ask a more particular question: Did my students and I live up to these ideas as we messed around with what I called our "different ways of writing?" Did our talking about dialect, writing across genres, playing with collaborative forms of authorship, and open negotiation with feelings, relationships, and power widen the textual horizon for my students?

As a reader reviewing the oral and printed compositions designed by my students, I conclude that these texts manifested multiple "forms" of expressing ideas and feelings before I ever said a single word about genre. Their awareness of multiliteracies was not, however, about prior knowledge; it was about prior practice. They did multiliteracies before they understood what multiliteracies meant. Here is what I am fairly sure my students did learn (allowing for the various degrees of learning at the level of the individual):

- that they had the authority, as language users, to pick and choose among the genres for expressing themselves in particular ways in print;
• what picking and choosing a literary form entailed, generally, with respect to fiction, drama, biography, sermon, letter-writing, poetry, and the political speech;
• some of what picking and choosing entailed with respect to science writing and expository (analytic) writing;
• that they had the authority, as language users, to pick and choose between African American English and mainstream American English (or create a dialectical mixture) in talk;
• some of what making these choices entailed, generally, with respect to vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics;
• that there were social consequences to making these kinds of decisions, particularly with respect to oral language; in other words, that questions of audience or reader and social context necessarily influence such decision-making.

While I will be taking up these questions more deeply in chapter 9, I conclude this chapter about mixed and multiple discourses with a brief expression of regret that my students and I did not have more time together, that Hutsch, the home of our third space, closed. I think that time would have helped me clarify the way I sequenced and presented some of these ideas and activities. With the help of my students, I would have gotten better at making myself understandable. For my students, especially those whose ideas about genres and style shifting seemed unstable or confused, more talk and more practice would, I like to believe, have rendered the concepts around multiliteracies both familiar and generative.
CHAPTER 8

KAYODE HUBB!!!

The title of this chapter is a salute and tribute to Kayode's exuberant punctuational custom during the fourth grade (2007-2008). Of the 21 pieces of writing I have in his folder from that year, nine of them are titled with a phrase followed by exactly three exclamation points:

- When I Am Not in School!!! (9/26/)
- How Come!!! (10/10)
- All at Once!!! (11/14)
- Kayode's Soul Food Seasoning Store!!! (12/07)
- My Grandma's!!! (12/12)
- My Two Comfortable Places!!! (3/12)
- About Me!!! (5/08)
- 2 Truths and a Lie!!! (5/08)

Kayode turned ten years old in the middle of fourth grade. By then he had matured dramatically from the emotional and anxious student who came to Room For Writing beginning in second grade. When we both left Hutsch in May, Kayode was a solid student, confident that he could be president one day.\footnote{I will discuss how Kayode's innate sensitivity to order and symmetry (there were always three exclamation points) may have contributed to his identity as a "good student." An image of him writing at my big teacher's desk can be seen in appendix U.}

In order to render the lifeworld of \textit{Writing to Connect}, I have spent the previous four chapters sweeping across large tracts of data, across many participants, multiple themes, and through time. As a case study of a particular program, the scope of my...
inquiry up to this point has been bounded by the experience of the program for all of its participants generally. In this chapter, I will home in on an individual case within this case, the case of a single student, Kayode Hubb. By presenting some of Kayode's interactions, experiences, and compositions, as well as my analyses and interpretations of this material, I will reveal the ways in which Kayode "did" the experience of Writing to Connect (Dyson and Genishi, 2005). The long, fruitful tradition of the modern case study approach to educational research dates from the middle 1960s (Merriam, 1998), and suits perfectly my philosophical stance as a teacher-researcher-artist. I subscribe fully to a process of knowledge building that moves recursively between the concrete details of a local, particular context and the abstract theorizing about phenomena in general that can be induced from such particulars (Dyson and Genishi, 2005; Geertz, 1973). Knowing something about Kayode's experience as evidenced by a close-up examination of his talk, behavior, and text will help me better understand the program as a whole, which in turn will help my attempt to theorize in chapter 9 about transcultural writing workshops in general.

Although I might have selected any one of the students I taught and asked the same questions of their talk, text, and behavior, I have chosen to feature Kayode because, first, he participated in the program for all three years. Like Angel, Kayode was particularly active in the construction of the relationship we had across time. From the beginning, he took ideas home with him. In second grade, for example, he had his grandmother buy him a binder and looseleaf paper so that he could keep a journal. He wrote me extra notes. His mother sent him to a summer camp I heard about and recommended for him. When I wrote letters to all of my former students at their new
school, he wrote me back. He sent me a copy of a speech he had made. And in the summer of 2009, I sat down on his livingroom floor and talked with him as he read through all of his work from second, third, and fourth grade. I know that we both hope and expect to remain connected.

In taking up the case of one individual out of more than 100 participants, I realize that I am opening but one window into the program. Should I have selected another participant for case-within-a-case interpretation, I would have thrown open a different window altogether. Moreover, it is likely that a different researcher, given the array of data concerning Kayode I have gathered and chosen to present here, might arrive at entirely different sorts of interpretations. I frankly accept the contingency of my analyses, acknowledge the subjectivity at work in producing them, and welcome other perspectives and ideas.

I will now draw upon Kayode's written work, classroom talk and behavior, and the history of our particular relationship in order to present my interpretations of his development as a student in my care. What kind of familiarity and knowingness did the practices and culture of the Writing to Connect permit? What kinds of patterns and themes emerged in his writing? How might I use The Egg presented in chapter 5 to make sense of Kayode's experience in Writing to Connect over three years?

Case Study Procedures

Because the quantity and quality of my data is so immense, I will now describe how I set about the process of analysis in order to take up a single student as a case. First, I listened several times to the audiotape of my conversation with Kayode in July 2009. I transcribed what seemed to me to be the most telling exchanges, when Kayode was
commenting on a piece of writing, or recalling a feeling or experience he had that struck
me as contextually relevant. Next I reviewed the *Writing to Connect* blog to have a broad
sense of the experience week to week and also see what I recorded about Kayode in
particular. After reading through a single year, say 2005-2006, I turned to my field notes
from the same year, the messy run-of-the-class scribblings I kept while teaching, some of
which I had not expanded upon in the blog. I always began every class by taking roll,
writing every student's name down the left-hand side of the page and leaving plenty of
room for comments. Here is where I would note interesting remarks, comments, or
questions made by individual students in the context of the day's lesson, which was
always logged down the right-hand side of the page. In this way I culled more data about
Kayode specifically. I repeated this step for the next two years. Next I reviewed the
scanty but interesting "official" documents I had on Kayode: his Hutsch progress report
from third grade and a few of his standardized test results. I laid out all the photographs I
had of him, alone and with his classmates, to refresh my memory of how he looked in the
room, how and where he put himself, the expression on his face through the years. And
finally, using two very large tables, I laid out the entire contents of his writing folders
from second, third, and fourth grades. In a row from left to right, and in chronological
order, I laid out every page he produced in 2005-2006. Under that, I laid the work from
2006-2007; and below that I spread the work from 2007-2008. In this way I could see the
sweep of his progress week to week for three years (except for vacations and
summertime). I could compare something he wrote in Thanksgiving 2006 with something
right below that he had produced exactly one year later.  

Keeping in mind the specific

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74 To gain a sense of the longitudinal sweep of three years of Kayode's compositions, see
domains of the program described in chapter 5, I attended to content, page design and layout, use of illustrations, handwriting, length of response, and the feelings and attitude evident (or missing) in the response. During every one of the steps detailed above, I made analytic notes and observations.

I will begin by discussing Kayode's temperament, how I attempted to draw upon his particular ways of being in Writing to Connect, and with what results. After that I will present the most salient themes and patterns that emerged in his written work. Finally, I will explicitly take up The Egg as an heuristic. Rather than applying it to the program as a whole (as I did in chapter 5), I will use it to help me see Kayode’s experience of the program (his processes and products) as an individual across three years.

Kayode in Person

From the beginning of our time together, when he was seven years old, I recognized Kayode as a person who formed attachments. He loved his family, he loved school, and he was attached to both. I was part of school, and therefore I was from the start someone to attach to. His big sweet smile, deep-throated laugh, and charm made it easy for the attachment to be mutual. Furthermore, Kayode was easy to read. His emotions played on his face like wind on water. When he was in a good mood, Kayode's sense of humor was palpable. He frequently shaped his words to comic effect, styling them and stretching them out in African American English, often accompanying a statement with a telling hand gesture or facial expression. Such whimsical communicative practices eventually leaked into his writing, as when he (in fourth grade) wrote, "My spring break was fun. It wasn't just fun, it was awesome." Kayode’s appendix V, for which I assembled a single example from the beginning and end of each of each school year.
attachment to school played out in the way he dedicated himself to doing his work, and doing it well. Sometimes this was not easy, especially in second grade, when noisy or disruptive classmates made it hard for him to do his work. That year a new baby brother at home made it hard for him to concentrate at school. He would cry, cling ever closer to me and any other adult who happened to visit the room, and sometimes sit under tables.

In the fall of 2005, it seemed to me that Kayode’s feelings about his new sibling were dramatically affecting his school experience. I consequently spent some time talking with Kayode’s classroom teacher. She, too, had noticed that Kayode was very distracted, and we discussed what I might be able to do to help. I went home and tried to think about literacy activities good for the whole group that might also address Kayode’s needs as an individual.

The next class period, I gathered everyone in a circle. Kayode was weepy and kept himself separate under a table, but I could tell he was paying attention. I put a two-by-two matrix chart on the chalkboard. In columns going across, I wrote Good Things and Bad Things. Rows going down were labeled Having a Baby Brother/Sister and Being a Baby. Then I asked the students to help me fill in the chart. The second graders had an easy time filling in the bad things about having a younger sibling: babies and toddlers messed up your things, peed on you, cried in the night and disturbed the peace in other ways. The students also had ideas to contribute in the “good things” column: little siblings were fun to cuddle with, they smiled, they were cute. With respect to being a baby, the students felt that the good things included “getting lots of attention” and getting a lot of love.” Interestingly, the class had trouble coming up with anything bad about being a baby. This one box in our chart was empty, and we all stared at it. It was
interesting to see how satisfying the students found this activity. Sorting and arranging the concepts in this formal way, concepts that actually had some bearing on their real experiences in life outside of school, seemed to stimulate their thinking. Being able to visualize a structure in which to situate ideas was key to the activity. Every time someone voiced one of the examples, I asked where to write it in the chart. And I kept a close eye on Kayode, staring at the chart from his spot under the table. With my help and prompting, eventually we got a few things written in the empty space on the chart. It turns out there are quite a few things that are bad about being a baby: Babies cannot speak, they cannot walk, they can hardly do anything for themselves. They get frustrated and have to cry to communicate. Now our chart was complete. After the group work, the class split up and wrote. Kayode came out from under the table. I asked him to join me at the computer so I could take dictation for him and he could complete his thoughts. Careful and meticulous with his penmanship, Kayode sometimes ran out of time before he could finish the writing he had in mind. I did not want this to happen that day. This is what Kayode composed (and I typed):

Dear God,
I wish I was still a baby for the rest of my life. And I wish that my brother Larique was still alive. He died when he was a baby because he was really sick. I wish I was still a baby because it is fun being a baby and you never have to go to school and never have to do anything else but stare at TV and mess up the house. And I think that being a baby is really fun because you get to do anything you want. I think that a puppy is a great pet to play with when you are a baby and it will never bite you. And I think that you should watch out for what you wish for because it might hurt somebody’s feelings.
Love,
Kayode

Before this moment, I had had no idea about Larique (later I learned that he had died of asthma). Obviously, there was a lot going on in Kayode’s thoughts around the arrival of
this new brother. I also wondered about why he believed his wish might hurt somebody’s feelings. Whose feelings would it hurt to know that he wished to remain a baby? Or that his late brother were still alive? None of this was my business, exactly. On the other hand, Kayode’s writing was my business. At the time, I remember asking myself whether I was practicing a form of cultural imperialism in opening up a student to such questions. I had reason to worry.

A year before the launch of Room For Writing, an African American cooperating teacher, someone in whose classroom I had been working for several months, sharply criticized me on precisely this point. Angry and upset that I seemed (to her) to be encouraging her students to dredge up and write about what she considered the "bad stuff" of their personal lives, she assured me that "black folks don't do that kind of thing." What I was calling "attending to reality," something that all writers do, something that I would teach students from any background to do, she considered undermining and dangerous. (Again, Cissy Lacks!) She said that "talking about things" was something Jewish people may do, but not her people, not people who have to contend with the reality of the street (here she indicated the entire world outside the classroom window). On the one hand, I wanted to challenge my colleague's essentializing understanding of both Jewish people and African American people. I knew quite a few Jewish people who never aired or shared their personal lives, many who bottled up trauma; I also knew plenty of African American people who vented freely. On the other hand, in the days before Room For Writing, this teacher was my host at Hutsch. I did not want to offend or

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75 One of my great uncles, a physician, was among the first to enter and liberate Auschwitz in 1945. He never spoke a word of the experience to anyone. That same year my step-father was among those in Patton's Army who liberated Orduhf, a work camp. Like my great-uncle, he has never spoken of what he witnessed.
even contradict her. And so we spent a half hour debating back and forth in front of the students. While I stood by the ideas (supported by African American scholars like Ladson-Billings (1995), Simmons (2006), and others) that there needed to be a place for community and culture in elementary school classrooms, I could see her point. It is taken for granted in my very particular corner of Jewish New Yorker culture that owning up to negative feelings allows a person to move on from them. Eventually we reconciled, finally landing in a place where we could see accept each other's position. I think she came to see that I meant no disrespect to the students. I came to see that she had her mind set on getting them the education she believed in, and that that meant (for her) severing their ties to anything that might harm them. We embraced and grew closer over time, but the experience left an indelible impression on me. Ever after, I was vigilant about not over-imposing my cultural practices on the students.

Yet there I was, a year after this encounter, deliberately making room for Kayode to own up to his negative feelings about wanting to be a baby, about wanting things to be different. And he had. Mindful of my cultural boundaries, however, what I did not do was use this response to probe further into his psyche or his personal life. It seemed to me that what we had done might be enough. Thank goodness it was. From this moment on, Kayode was ready to resume participating in the class. He still cried from time to time. He still got upset when his classmates were too lively. But it no longer seemed like Kayode was trying to stop growing up. His classroom teacher reported that his emotions and attitude in the regular classroom seemed back on track. Indeed, near the end of second grade, he wrote, "I want to learn how to be a writer for when I grow up and will
be a fire fire [firefighter]." Since I knew that Kayode knew that firefighters are not babies, I could assume that his wish to revert to babyhood was gone.

At the beginning of third grade, Kayode still wanted to be a firefighter. He liked strawberry ice cream, and had learned to ride a two-wheeler. Right from the start of the year, his confidence seemed solid, his enthusiasm and affection evident almost every day. We did a great deal of collaborative and small-group writing that year, and Kayode's approach to the butcher paper activity described in chapter 7 was typical: "Can I make a big heart in the middle and then everybody write their name?" During one January class I noticed he was crying. I wrote on a piece of paper, "Write it down so I know what's wrong." In this way, I kept in touch with Kayode's emotionality without drawing all the attention in the room to it. Kayode was somewhat unique in this regard. Usually I could trace the anger, sadness, or sullenness of the students in my class to actions or behavior outside of the room. Another student might inform me that Darrion, say, was mad because he had gotten in trouble for throwing crayons. Someone else might explain that Tyrone was angry because a teacher had yelled at him for talking back. Diamond was always upset when Erika rolled her eyes at her. If I asked directly, the student would explain to me exactly what had happened to put them in a bad mood. But Kayode was so generally liked among his peers, respected by teachers, and averse to getting in trouble, that his changes in temperament in Room For Writing were usually on account of something that was happening right under my nose. When he cried, there was usually something I could do about it.

The summer after third grade Kayode went off to sleepaway camp for about ten days. He had a fantastic time, and on his first day back in Room For Writing, wrote about
swimming and climbing the 40-foot tower. From that day forward, the enthusiasm manifested in the triple-exclamation-point titles was characteristic. As revealed in his writing, he paid attention to the outside world, touching on the subjects of war, politics, the judicial system, the voting age, and the economy. He absorbed and recontextualized the language of church and home. He found a purpose for his writing and an audience for his ideas. When, in January 2008, we learned that Hutsch was destined to be closed, he wrote and sent the following letter:

Dear board of education,
I think you all should not close down Hutsch. I hope you can give this school 5 more years or 3. My name is Kayode Hubb. I am a 4th grader here at Hutsch. My teacher is Mrs. Johnson. Principal Mrs. Harrison. I been here every sense I was in kindergarten. Please try your best to save this school. And I will thank you with all my heart.

Thank You
Kayode Hubb

Kayode's goals and plans for adulthood became clearer and more ambitious. In a letter he drafted and sent to the Hutsch principal, he wrote:

Dear Mrs. Harrison,
When I become grow up I will try to become president. I will have 2 children. And a wonderful life. If I do become president then I will build a home for the poor. I will take down the taxes for poor people and raise prices for rappers. I will raise prices for rappers because the rappers are always try[ing] to take our money.

Your friend,
Kayode Hubb

On the last day of Writing to Connect in May 2008, the whole class was asked to reflect on who they were five years before, who they were at that moment, and who they thought
they might be in five years. In his final sentence, Kayode wrote, "in five years I will be in high school working my butt off with a job trying to get money for college."

One year after that, as Kayode came to the end of 5th grade in a new school, he wrote me a long letter, an update on his life and a request for another camp form. The letter is filled with fond reminiscence and also humor. "My report card grades are nowhere near good. Instead of them being good my grades are great. I have straight A's in all of my subjects, but I have a C in science because I lost my lab report paper with the length, height, and width of a car parking spot." Enclosed with this letter, he sent a copy of the welcome speech he wrote and delivered for the fifth grade promotion ceremony. It was typed up, and at the bottom, in yellow marker, Kayode scrawled: "I made it up by myself."

Themes and Patterns Across Written Work

In looking at all of Kayode's written work across the three years he participated in Writing to Connect, three themes seem most salient. These themes include pride in and affection for his family and personal culture; an awareness of and responsiveness to ideas about God; and his own identity as a responsible and cooperative student and member of the Writing to Connect community of practice. I will now trace each of these three themes through Kayode's three years in the program.

Pride in Family/Culture

Of the 26 writing samples I have in Kayode's 2005-2006 folder, eight of them feature an aspect of his family, his home life, or his relationship with his family members individually or collectively. He writes about how much he loves going to work with his grandmother at Burlington Coat Factory. He writes about going swimming with his
family during the summertime. He writes about going trick-or-treating with his family, and about a special couch his family bought. When assembling randomly selected words into a sentence (a game I developed out of magnetized words) Kayode managed to work "support" and "coffee" into a sentence that featured his grandpa supporting Kayode's mother in her attempt to quit drinking too much coffee. In another activity, I introduced the idea of an "identity molecule" a concept map that shows how different aspects of who we are relate to each other. At the very heart of Kayode's identity molecule, he wrote out the social roles most important to him: grandson, friend, son, student, brother. In completing his Lifeline, among items like "learned to ride bike" and "learned to swim. very good swimmer" he made a note of the year his parents divorced (when he was two years old) and the year his father went to jail (when he was four).

Kayode wrote 16 papers in third grade (as I mentioned, much of the work that year was collaborative, oral, on the chalkboard, or done in small groups). Of these texts, five of them feature experiences or thoughts about family. On his first day with me that year, he wrote, "One thing that makes me angry is when my uncle and mom won't let me ride my bike on a great day . . ." On another day, he mentioned in a letter to a former principal that back at his house, "ever one" [everyone] wanted to see the video made of a dance performance he had participated in. "I want them to see all of us do it," he wrote. Later that fall, the class was looking at photographs that a classmate brought from home. In writing about these pictures, Kayode wrote that his classmate, when she was a baby, looked like his own baby brother. In January, after discussing the genre of biography, Kayode wrote that his hero was his grandma. And toward the end of that year, Kayode wrote a small but touching paragraph that he titled, "I Remember."
I remember when I was three we was living in an apartment and my mom would be in the restroom. And we all came in and, my mom set us in a dry tub and, I would stand at the door and, read a small book I found.

The
End

This example brings together Kayode's fond feelings about the care he received from his mother, and how that care is bound up with a literacy event. It is interesting to me to see that AAE feature in his writing ("we was living. . .") because in general, although his spoken language featured many of the phonological and some of the syntactic features of AAE, Kayode wrote nearly everything in MAE. I believe that the shift happened on account of the content of the writing: such a cozy, homey memory may have called upon Kayode's more comfortable form of English. In July 2009, when Kayode read this sample aloud in livingroom, his mother chuckled at the memory. She well remembered her need to keep her children safe while she took a few necessary moments for herself. She also said that the only reason Kayode knew this story was because she used to tell him about setting them in the laundry basket. In fact, what Kayode had called his memory of the experience was actually his memory of a story his mother used to tell him about the experience. He was recording in writing an important piece of family oral history.

In fourth grade, nearly half of everything Kayode wrote (10 of the 21 texts in his folder) included something about his family. He wrote out an argument with his mother regarding how she ought to let him go by himself to meet his friends. He wrote a piece of fiction about an uncle who liked drag racing. He wrote an angry jeremiad about the needless shooting of his cousin. He designed an advertisement for a Soul Food Seasoning Store that happened to be located at his family's address (see appendix W). He wrote biographies of his two grandmothers. Other writing mentioned how he had felt homesick
at camp (but only at first); how comfortable he felt at church with his grandma and at
home with his family. On other occasions he wrote about taking a trip over spring break
with his family, how good it feels to speak Ebonics, and how his family can sometimes
be embarrassing.

Meaningful Relationship with God and Church

Week in and week out for three years, the depth of Kayode's affection for his
family came through in his writing. Entwined in these feelings were his feelings about
God and going to church, both of which were clearly associated with family. I have
described how Kayode dictated a lengthy letter to God at the beginning of second grade.
After I printed this letter out I gave the copy to Kayode. In pencil, he then handwrote a
few more lines on the bottom of the page:

I Love. you god
and I wish when I die that
I will become a angel.

He surrounded the entire text (printed and written) with a heart. He also drew a cross:
interlocking planks of wood, complete with two nails poking up at each of the four ends
of the planks. He colored in the cross with purple crayon. For nearly three and a half
years, this piece of paper lay in a folder. In July 2009, Kayode looked it over for the first
time since second grade.

"When you said we was writing these to Jesus I thought you was going to send it
to him."

"I didn't really know how to do that," I said. "What should I have done?"

"You should have tied them to a balloon."

"Oh," I said, "yeah."
Then he unfolded a large, 12-inch by 15-inch letter to Jesus for which he had used pencil, black marker, and red marker. On the front, in a symmetrical pattern, he had written the word "god" ten times. At the top he wrote "Jesus" in bubble letters. At the center of the page he made a huge solid red heart with a navy blue core. In the center of the blue core he wrote "god." Under that, he wrote "Love me!!!!!!." I am not sure whether he meant these words as a sign-off—"Love, me"—or as an imperative, a command to God: "Love me!" The entire page has a border, and each of the "gods" in the top corners are inside clouds. On the back of the page, Kayode wrote: "to: Jesus" and "from: Kayode." Kayode admired this work, which like the other letter, he had expected me to send.

Of course I knew perfectly well that religion or God-talk of any kind was not allowed in public school. More precisely, I knew that while teaching about religion(s) was permissible, teaching religion was not. In any case, I had always been sure that school was no place for religion, had righteously taught my own children not to say "under God" when reciting the pledge of allegiance, since the phrase was only tacked on during the Cold War to distinguish the United States from the "godless" Soviets. I would (privately) bristle if any of my children's teachers happened to wear a cross when teaching at their (private) school. Years earlier, when facilitating the composition of a radio play with a class of fifth graders, I had been told by a school administrator that my students would have to change their fictional preacher to a mayor, and the crowd's call-and-response from "Amen," to "Okay." The script was going to be produced for a real radio audience, and so we made the changes.
But during my years at Hutsch working with students like Kayode, something happened to my righteousness with respect to keeping religion out. At Hutsch, I became more sensitive to and respectful of the deep meaning church and religion had for some children. Church and religion affirmed community affinities and other social and familial ties. Students were proud of the singing they did in church, eager to share with me their dances, their affirmations, their celebrations, their beliefs. Simply put, it seemed more wrong to exclude all of this culture than to simply let it be. Coles (1986, p. 34) writes of the tendency of some White researchers to overlook the significance of religious traditions when trying to understand the motives and inspirations of African American "others," and I had certainly begun teaching with this bias. Eventually, and belatedly I am afraid, the religious life of my students came to matter to me.

When Easter rolled around in 2008, I began a class by asking about the holiday and how everyone celebrated it. Most of the students ate candy and decorated eggs. Only one in 20 students mentioned anything about Jesus Christ or Christian belief, although it was difficult to know whether they were simply aware of and honoring the no-church-in-school rule. At any rate, I took a few moments to pass out some matzoh with margarine (Passover, too, was right around the corner), and talked about the legend of the former slaves in Egypt fleeing from pharaoh. In passing, I mentioned that, for Jewish people, the flat matzoh reminded us not to be "puffy headed," or vain, but to remain flat and humble, sometimes. It was Tremaine who caught me.

"Aren't you not supposed to be talking about religion in school, Ms. Schaenen?"

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76 In a hurry to leave, the people known in the Old Testament as "the children of Israel" did not allow their dough to rise, but simply baked it right away into a flat cracker-like bread.
"You're right," I said. Wiggling out of the corner, I added, "But this is just a story. Let's get going and read some more of *The Well.*"

With respect to religion and faith in public school, I came to be of two minds. At a national level, of course I still believe in the formal separation of church and state. But at the interpersonal level where teaching and learning take place, I am less certain. Kayode's writing was private. His God-informed texts were composed wholeheartedly, for himself and sometimes to God directly, presumably through me playing the role of mail carrier. In this case, the no-faith-in-school was a rule that (in my opinion) needed to be broken. Kayode's material as a writer and an individual encompassed his belief. His belief was part of his identity. Given my role in the school as an enrichment specialist, I made the decision not to cut my students off from this rich source of ideas and inspiration. It was another moment that Landsman (2006) might call subversive, but one which caught me as off guard as anyone.

Kayode's third grade written work made no mention of God. In fourth grade, however, God came back. One day in early October, Kayode was not feeling too well. He had a stomach ache and felt sleepy. We began the class by talking about the herbs and vegetables I had brought in from my garden. We talked about how fresh herbs looked compared to the dried herbs people shook out of little bottles while cooking. After this I asked the students to put their heads down and close their eyes. I asked them to imagine that they were all sound asleep in their beds, but that in the morning, instead of waking up as themselves, they had turned into their favorite animal. What would they be and what would they do? Cheryl wrote about being a rabbit. Angel wrote about being a bird. Harrison woke up as a monkey. Dante was a golden beast bigger than a lion and a tiger.
Mohammed told a story into the tape recorder about being a fox with two tails. Kayode wrote this:

When I Wake Up!!!

When I wake up I would rather be god. I would want to be god because when god was born he was the one to be chosen to be the sky god. When he grew up the devil was born and tried to take over. But god didn't let him take over. God didn't let the devil take over because god was trying to keep us safe. And to make sure we would have great lives. Until one day the devil killed most of god people includin his son and him. And now he's in heaven looking over me as I am reading!!!

I read the passage but did not make too much of it. I did not report it in the blog, nor mention it in my field notes. I think I registered that on that day, for whatever reason, Kayode needed to retell a story he had heard in church. He begins by making use of the prompt and seems to get going like his classmates, but by the second clause of the second sentence, his text is clearly going in an entirely different direction. By the final line, Kayode feels safe and looked over as he's reading (although I wonder why he wrote "reading" and not "writing," which was actually what he was doing).

Much later in the year, Kayode drew upon the language and pragmatics of church rhetoric. At the end of February he wrote a lengthy description of his family. After everyone had written that day, the students took turns reading aloud. Kenneth played emcee, and announced each reader by name. Called to the stage, Kayode put on a big grin and said, "Hello, my fellow worshippers." Then he read his paper. There was nothing particularly worshipful or religious in the text; Kayode was simply playing with the oral genre of the church sermon.

The only other time Kayode wrote explicitly about church was about a week later, in a paper entitled, "My Two Comfortable Places!!!" Kayode had had a rough start to the
writing portion of the class, crying about the level of noise and distraction in the room. I invited him to sit at my big desk to write, and imposed a strict silence during the writing time for everyone. He wrote:

I have two comfortable places. One, is a church. Two, is a hotel. The reason I think church is a comfortable place is because my grandma goes with me, there's lot of people and the people in the church are safe. The reason I think a hotel is comfortable place because it has a swimming pool, security, and lot of rooms and workers. I think if you feel comfortable in these two place then you feel comfortable at home with your family.

The End.

From his playful introductory "hello, my fellow worshippers" and this passage written so soon afterwards, I infer that Kayode's experience in church during those weeks of fourth grade were saturated in good feeling. Experiences at home, at church, and at hotels, all among family, are those that made Kayode feel both safe and part of a larger social web. There was every reason for a meaningful writing program to make room for these ways of being.

Identity as Good Student and Writer

From his earliest days in the program, Kayode was very much aware of constructing himself as a writer, and an attentive participant in the school community. In second grade, nearly a third of his writing (eight out of 26 texts) contained a reference to or outright description of his identity as a schooled person and a member of the Writing to Connect community of practice. "I never get use to talking," he complained at the bottom of a small paragraph about going to work with his grandma. He wanted me to know that his classmates were distracting him. Actually, this piece of paper also has three torn holes at the bottom, places where Kayode's tears fell and soaked through the paper. "I fill [feel] like I am sad because I cannot concentrate," he wrote in November. On the
same day, he took another piece of paper to write, "I am cry because I cannot finish my work." In a journal entry he titled, "The Best Day I Ever Had," he wrote, "When I first came to writeing class an talked about writeing class that was the best day I ever had."

Around Christmas, he recalled that a long time ago, when his report card "was good," his family gave him "a special couch." In another assignment, his identity molecule featured bubbles for writer and reader, both of which connected to the center bubble and also to each other. Kayode drew a wide bar between his writer and reader bubbles, filling it in with heavy squiggles which suggested to me his understanding of the solid relationship between reading and writing. Earlier I mentioned Kayode's end-of-second-grade ambition to become a firefighter. The complete paper that taught me this was called, "The reason I want to stay in Writing Class."

Mrs. Schaenen
The reason I want to stay in Writing class because I want to learn how to be a writer for when I grow up and will be a firefire[firefighter].

Perhaps the most telling demonstration of Kayode's awareness of his schooled identity, and his ease with the rules and regulations that govern the behaviors expected at school, is a paper he wrote on the final day of second grade titled, "A Few Words of Advice for First Grade."

The things you do in room for writing is write and pay attention to the specker [speaker]. The things you do in the hall way is stay with the teacher and walk. Another thing you do is give respect the teacher. The last thing you do is do what the teacher tell you to do and all ways try on your work.

Apart from what it reveals about what Kayode has absorbed from our routine, this piece of writing shows me that he has also been learning the conventional writing lessons from his regular classroom. He has four points to make, and he uses transition phrases—"another thing" and "the last thing"—to guide the reader along.
In 2006, the principal of Hutsch retired and a new principal took her place. In third grade, Kayode wanted to write the former administrator a letter. He and his class had participated in a cultural enrichment program, and had performed a dance for the whole school (mentioned in the section above with regard to family affection). Now Kayode wanted to obtain the film in order to share this meaningful school experience with his family.

Dear Mrs. Olivieri,
I want you to send me the tape of us doing the Nepal dance to my house because ever one want to see it. I still remember the dance but I want them to see all of us do it. Please Please Please Please Please Please Please Please Please Please thank you. Never forget me never forget me never forget me.
Thank you
Love
Kayode
Hubb

Kayode's attachment to his former principal is of course obvious. What I think is most significant here, however, is the desire Kayode clearly expresses to bridge the two worlds so meaningful to him: home and school. "Everybody" at home wants to see the film. Kayode wants them to be able to see the film. He identifies Mrs. Olivieri as the person with power to make this happen, so with his communicative power, he appeals to her clearly and directly: "I want you to send me . . .;" and "I want them to see all of us . . ."
Kayode has used Writing to Connect to realize particular goals relating to home and school.

A final example from third grade reveals Kayode's ability to re-voice the rules and expectations of school as a predictable environment, where certain things happen in certain ways. In chapter 7, I discussed the daily pre-dismissal practice called "Silent Reading Time." It was my intention, early in the year, to have my students write their
own appreciation for books and reading, texts that they might take turns reading aloud on
the loudspeaker. Kayode wrote:

The reason I like silent reading time is because doing silent reading time the
principal get on the speaker and say the more you read the more you know the
more you know the more you grow books can take you anywhere from new york
city to county fairs so take a book and take a journey in your mine it's silent
reading time. When the principal say that some of the teachers send some of their
good students to the office to read with the principal for silent reading time. But
before you start you must have a book to read. Having a book to read is the most
important thing about silent reading time. Love,
Kayode
Hubb

Kayode has embedded the entire block of the daily announcement into his text. With only
a few misconceptions ("mine" for "mind," for example) he transcribed the passage
verbatim. What impresses me most about this sample, however, is the way Kayode has
varied his sentence structure in the three concluding sentences. He makes use of a
dependent clause "when the teacher say that . . . ;" a counter . . . , "but before you start . . . ;"
and using a participial phrase as a subject, "Having a book to read is . . . " As evidenced in
this writing sample, Kayode details this extremely prominent feature of the daily life of
Hutsch with confidence and skill. He is a person who knows about school and can
represent its ways.

Such commitment to his student-self continued throughout fourth grade. Six of his
21 writing samples featured Kayode's engagement with school. In "When I am Not in
School!!!," written at the beginning of the year, Kayode explains that he is only not in
school when he is sick, it is the weekend, or it is summer vacation. Early in this chapter I
presented his letter to the board of education. Through Writing to Connect, Kayode could
advocate through writing on behalf of his school. In fourth grade, too, Kayode wrote
directly to the principal to tell her what he wanted to do when he grew up. His
relationships with teachers and administrators were always active, personal, and realized through writing. In February, when asked to imagine that he was 18 years old and could vote, Kayode said that he would vote for Barack Obama because, among other things, Obama "is trying to help the elementary schools in St. Louis." And at the very end of year, as I have already mentioned, Kayode wrote that he would be saving money for college. The consistency of Kayode's plan-making, his way of sustaining those three exclamation marks on every composition throughout all of fourth grade, his persistent way of reminding me to do this or that activity that may have slipped my mind, were all part of his schooled way of being. Planning for his long term educational needs was not lip service; as evidenced in his written work, Kayode's identity as a writer and a student was rooted in his attitude toward school from second through fifth grade.

The Egg and the Individual Participant

As I suggested in chapter 5, the visual representation I developed of the Writing to Connect experience—its values, processes, products, and participants—can be taken up as an analytic tool with respect to different units of analysis. As an heuristic, The Egg offers me a way to look at the program as a whole, the program on any given day, a whole class on any given day, or an individual on any given day. Any of these units can be also examined across time. In this section, I will take it up in order to see if there is anything I may have missed about particular aspects of a single student’s experience, in this case Kayode’s. It will not be necessary to review each and every domain I detailed in chapter 5. The subsections that follow will therefore refer to the largest units of analysis: Multiliteracies (and its component parts); Affect/Relationships/Emotionality; and Power.
Particularly in third grade, Kayode mixed and matched forms and content: He wrote an underlined title atop a personal letter. He signed an essay about Silent Reading Time with love. He wrote a single long sentence on double-spaced lines which he numbered one through seven, then drew a signature line for me to sign. He drafted a play in perfect dramatic form but called it "A Scaring Story." The more I emphasized suiting the form of the composition to its communicative purpose, the more composite Kayode's papers seemed to get. The instability of Kayode's comprehension and manipulation of textual forms seemed to me to be traceable to our work with the word and concept of genre. As I have discussed elsewhere (Schaenen, in press), defining the word genre was itself problematic. In January of his third grade, I asked Kayode what the word genre meant. Backing up into a seat and composing himself into the position of a student-answering a question, he said, "The word genre, genre to me, the word genre means all kinds of word, one word for all other kinds of words." This reply suggests that Kayode understood genre as a catch-all word, one that stands for “all other kinds of words.” These "other kinds of words" (fiction, non-fiction, biography, autobiography, interview, drama, poetry, etc.) happened to be listed on two flip charts within view in the classroom, which Kayode could surely see. Although I believe that Kayode came to understand that there were many ways of expressing ideas and thoughts, the forms themselves remained slightly fluid, their boundaries porous. The form he liked best of all, the one that accommodated nearly all of his writing from spring 2007 through May 77

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77 Asked in 2009 about these numbered-for-no-reason lines, Kayode said, "Ms. Calloway asked us to line up our sentences." He was simply following what he understood to be the rules as directed by his regular classroom teacher.
2008\textsuperscript{78}, included an underlined title (complete with three exclamation marks), and a "The End" at the end. Clearly, this manner of designing most of his texts suited his need for clarity and rules. A title marked an obvious beginning; "The End" clearly plainly the end.

\textit{Multivoicedness}

As I described in chapter 7 and elsewhere, Kayode's written work frequently displayed features from one or more kinds of discourse. Attentive and absorbent, Kayode embedded in his writing some of the rhetorical strategies picked up from church, from home, from peers, or from something he heard or read at school. Visiting him at home on a hot summer afternoon, I could see the pleasure he took in listening to the group of adult family members chatting and teasing each other (what my family might call \textit{kibitzing}) on the front porch. Kayode's open affection for and comfort among his family's discursive ways may have been one reason he could transfer such easygoing communicativeness to our classroom activities. Kayode drew directly from the tonal semantics (the deliberate shaping of the sounds of speech to convey particular meanings) and other pragmatic features of AAE in order to express himself across the different landscapes of his lifeworld: at home among family, among his friends, in church, in school, and in \textit{Writing to Connect}.

\textit{Talk and Text}

With respect to style shifting between AAE and SE, I have spoken about Kayode's tendency to favor AAE in his spoken language and SE in his formal school writing. In second and third grades, the only major syntactical feature of AAE that appears in Kayode's writing is the S-absence in the third person singular:

\textsuperscript{78} A piece of science writing from December 2007 proved an exception. Noting observations about a cranberry bar, he listed the facts one through eleven.
"the sage stink"
"she work at the cash register"
"it make waves in a cup"
"it look like"
"it make you hands freeze"

Every so often he would write a verb in the past perfect (AAE) in lieu of the simple past (SE): "He had killed himself," which Rickford claims is common among preadolescents (Rickford, 1999, p. 6). And although his fourth grade written work shows virtually zero AAE features, when writing at length about his family, Kayode was presumably so caught up in representing who they were that he wrote, "they don't let nobody say nothing to them wrong or disrespectful," making use of the AAE feature of using a multiple (in this case, triple) negative for emphasis.

On the other hand, because Kayode's spoken language is marked by AAE's phonological features, I often saw words spelled in ways that represented how he "heard" the words in his head. Examples of final consonant reduction or internal vowel differences include:

m-i-n-e for mind
a-n for and
f-i-l-l for feel
s-t-i-l-l for steal

For all of my students, I always bore in mind that spelling is a representation of the sound (not the look) of words (Read, 1986). If a word seemed misspelled or confused me with respect to usage, the first thing I tried to do was "hear" it in my head as AAE. Once I understood the students' intended meaning, we could talk about revising spelling if necessary.
Page Design

I have already discussed Kayode's application of rules and other schoolish habits with respect to the content of his work and his ways of being in school. A review of the design and execution of his texts throughout the years tells a similar story. Beginning in second grade, and for most of third grade, Kayode made his periods with big solid ball-like marks. There is no doubt about them. By fourth grade, his periods have shrunk, but his exclamation points (as I have remarked) have multiplied, and come in sets of three. In all three years, he holds his pencil firmly in his right hand and presses hard with the tip, making steady, clear lines. He observes the margins, works neatly, and, up until the middle of fourth grade, skips lines. Throughout the second half of fourth grade, he condenses his work on the page and writes on every line.

Throughout second grade and much of third, Kayode illustrated his writing, sometimes on the bottom of the page, other times on the back. Every so often, he spent the writing portion of the class making a complete drawing. In second grade, he decorated a journal folder. Labeled "Me and My Mama Diary" (a title which, incidentally, featured the AAE form of indicating a possessive) the design was a symmetrical illustration of a house. On either side of the house was a cloud from which perfect blocks of individually rendered raindrops fell. The house had exactly two windows on either side. If I knew nothing else about Kayode but only saw this picture, I would know that this was a person who valued order and symmetry. That year he also made picture of a "Brush Your Teeth" mobile, a staffed truck with a loudspeaker that drove around town telling people to brush their teeth. And in fourth grade, when we were designing multimodal texts in the genre of advertising, Kayode drew a picture of his Soul
Food Seasoning Store. This image, which is copied in Appendix S, is akin to the picture on his second grade journal in that it reveals Kayode's tendency to see and make patterns and ordered arrangements of visual elements. He precisely alternates red and blue markers in the name (and even in the exclamation marks!). He alternates red and green lids on the seasoning jars. When making the picture, Kayode took his time with the ruler, and with each individual blade of grass. Seeing that a row of grass crossed the line of the shop window, he used nearly a whole bottle of White-Out to get the row back outside. Every single tiny label on each one of the eight jars has text written on it in microscopic writing: Bar-B-Q Seasoning, Garlic Powder, Black Pepper, Italian Powder, Sugar, Salt, etc. The doors are labeled Push and Pull. Attention to detail, order, and the proper completion of a project were always quite important to Kayode. For this reason, I always tried to make sure he had the time (and space) that he needed to see an activity through.

Affect/Relationships/Emotionality

I have described at length the ways in which Kayode's highly affectionate temperament was realized in the Room For Writing, and the ways in which I tried to respond to him as an individual and tailor my practice to suit his ways of being. It is not necessary to repeat what I have observed already. Here I will only reiterate what I said in chapter 5: the fact that this interactional dimension is present in The Egg obliges me to attend to feelings in assessing the experience of any of the participants, not only those whose feelings are as close to the surface as Kayode's were.

Power

All three years, Kayode showed a deep respect for the power I had as one of his teachers. In second grade, when giving advice to the upcoming first graders, he stressed
the ways they would have to submit to my authority: pay attention, show respect, obey my rules, walk (don't run) in the halls, try hard. What seemed to change over time was the power he felt in his own abilities, his ability to get me to do something he wanted me to do (like make a Xerox copy of his work, or send a letter to someone, or read his journal, or play a game I had promised to play), and his freedom to call me out publicly when I made a mistake, forgot something, or in some other way was unfair, inconsistent or unreliable. Much the way my own children do, Kayode had the power to keep me honest. He was a truth teller.

I would like to conclude this portrait of Kayode by presenting what I believe was the most powerful piece of writing he did in *Writing to Connect*. In this text, written in November of fourth grade, nine-year-old Kayode demonstrates storytelling fueled by civic, political, personal and social outrage. Even the bitter humor at the end, perhaps something he overheard and has re-voiced, indicates the powerful sense he has of his own knowingness.

**All At Once!!!**

All At Once!!!

It all happened one Friday afternoon. My cousin had got shot. The 18 year old boy gave the gun to a 15 year old boy. He was slow. He saw a police car and waited until my cousin Sanford Jamison got out of his car. When he got out the 15 year old boy pulled the trigger and show my cousin. He died because the bullet was right next to his kidney. He called for back up. The only reason he should not of got shot because he was only trying to tell them to get away from a car. But they shot him instead. I am mad at the police district. Early in the morning you see two police cars together. But late at night they got only one police car. I think they did it backwards. I think they should fire the boss. The chief. The chiefs. All those white people men and women. All those black women and men. They make me sick they could have been his partner. All of them they were just too scared they were probably at a donut shop. And that's how he got shot. The End.

Because Hutsch was closed, I can only imagine what it might have been like to teach Kayode until he went off to middle school in seventh grade. As Kayode himself might
have written in second grade, *I feel sad* that I will never have that experience. What I do know is that Kayode's strength is rooted in his family, his temperament, and his ability to draw the best from his teachers. I hope that I am lucky enough to teach him (and learn from him) at some other time in our lives.
CHAPTER 9

ORGANIC EDUCATION

To achieve balance without retarding growth, and to promote growth without permanently upsetting balance, are the two great aims of organic education.

—Lewis Mumford (1951)

I began this account more than 300 pages ago by posing sets of questions, the broadest of which asked: what was the nature of the Writing to Connect experience? In order to answer this question as comprehensively as I could, I assumed many different stances. In chapter 4, I looked at identity-construction from the perspective of something I called writerliness, and learned that young children can and will develop agency as authors when they are taught to notice and write with a purpose as writers do. In chapter 5, I looked at the processes and products of the “multiple, layered, and conflicting activity systems” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 152) entailed by Writing to Connect as a collective third space, and learned that it is possible to depict the messiness of literacy teaching and learning in a form that does not flatten, simplify, or otherwise deform the experience. In chapter 6, I looked at identity construction from the perspective of sociocultural assumptions about race and language, and learned (among other things) that lengthy discussions with second graders about the most complicated and sensitive subjects can and should happen. In chapter 7, I looked at our experience with respect to
multiliteracies, and learned how centering literacy practices in the customs of AAE fits perfectly well with current ideas about multimodal literacies and critical multiliteracies. And in chapter 8, I focused on the experience of one person, and learned how his experience (although part of the group’s) was patterned around particular themes and narratives specific to him as he developed and matured over time.

Collectively, though, what have all of these investigations told me about the nature of our program? Most importantly, they have reminded me that the most important product of this particular workshop was not the writing it produced, but the quality of the learning experience itself (Seidel, S., Tishman, S., Winner, E., Hetland, L. Palmer, P., 2009). It seems to me that as a connoisseur and critic of the writing workshop, I can claim, based on this inquiry, that the quality of the learning experience for me and my students was excellent. Not excellent because all of us were happy all the time, or always felt good about our work and each other, but because it was real, complicated, surprising, true, and challenging—all the things that art-makers experience in going about what they do.

In this concluding chapter, in order to flesh out what I have just asserted, I will be looking both backward and forward, into the past and toward the future. Married to a kayaker who thinks, talks, and reads a great deal about rivers, I plan to wade upstream into the scholarly eddies, whitewater, drops, cross-currents, quiet places, and distant headwaters where many of the big fish—including Thorndike, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Dewey, Mumford, Freire, Bruner, Lave, and Wenger among many others—spawned some of the broadest and most fruitful concepts relating to teaching and learning,
language, and community and social justice.\textsuperscript{79} There in the current, I will train my attention on the range of ideas most germane to this study: bidialectalism and multiliteracies; communities of practice; arts education; and teacher power. Next, I will synthesize the ideas, theories, interpretations, and experiences I have described throughout this study in order to present what I am calling an organic approach to conducting a writing workshop in the "between" space where people from different but overlapping cultures meet. Third, I will enumerate the ways in which \textit{Writing to Connect} broke open the fixed assumptions about experiencing and interpreting the lifeworld of young children in school, ways that used multiliteracies pedagogy to empower students to learn in new ways (as I had hoped). Finally, in reckoning up my own learning as a teacher, I will enumerate what I would wish to do downstream from here, given another workshop opportunity. What might I (or anyone else) do with the expanded teacher knowledge this study has generated?

\textbf{Among the Big Fish}

Although I have long considered myself a post-structuralist (understanding knowledge claims and textual meaning to be partial, unfixed, contingent, negotiable, and time-bound), I also know that I have a tendency to seek coherence. My experience in schools suggests that it is the rare teacher who will allow a post-structural outlook free rein. The fear of classroom chaos and insubordination and the professional ethical obligation to teach a definite "something" puts a damper on unfixed curricula and total disregard of structure. Speaking personally, a teacher who allowed her power to be fully de-centered and negotiable would only annoy me. As a writer and a teacher, therefore, I

\textsuperscript{79} In imagining a river of scholarship, I am also grateful to Gary Howard's ruminations on the river of diversity and river of change (Howard, 1999, pp. 65-82).
make arrangements. I arrange desks, children, lesson plans, and various classroom situations. I frequently ask questions to which I already know the answers. ("Darrion," I ask, "what does genre mean?") I design classroom experiences in order to lead my group of students toward what I consider desirable pedagogical ends. I do so to help them make the connections that they would not be capable of making without me (Vygotsky, 1986). To a certain degree, the arranging I do is rather traditional. On the other hand, much of what I do would appall a genuine traditionalist. Critically framing some of the social and political reasons why my students "have" to know mainstream American English; deliberately engaging students' social critiques for the purposes of breaking open assumptions about schooling and racial identities; asking my students questions to which I do not already know the answers; and, quite simply, playing with ideas and language: these are activities that are unlikely to figure in the curriculum of, say, an English public school's Latin master.

Here in the onrushing river, therefore, I experience a shiver of epistemological tension. Conflicts arise between my disposition as a theorizer about education and as a practitioner of education in a living and breathing classroom. Perhaps this is true for many teacher researchers, because while teaching can be designed, "learning cannot be designed," as Wenger (1998) so succinctly writes. The minute we begin to generalize, the complex lives of our students and our highly charged experiences as teachers (the interesting disarrangings and rearrangings of our designs) fade to gray. All I can do is remain aware of the swirling currents that project knowing and knowledge-making along a continuum: at one end claims are made and sit confidently; at the other they are not and do not.
In his efforts (now largely rejected as behaviorist, essentializing, and outmoded, if not downright inhumane) to work out the psychology of learning, Thorndike (1913) also conceived of groups of connections made by the learner, categories that included intellect, character, skill, and temperament. For Thorndike, such words denoted stable, “knowable” clusters of qualities intrinsic to the individual. They were grounded in imagined biological constructions of "neurones" (Thorndike, 1919, p. 170) that could be literally hardwired to make connections so that he might conceptualize learning as connecting (1913, p. 55). For me and many others, these sets of character qualities are social constructions, and connections in learning are established interpersonally as well as intrapersonally.\(^{80}\) I am far more comfortable thinking in Bakhtinian terms about the co-authorship of all utterances and the dialogic nature of great long chains of communicative interactions over time; or about the connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge, the kinds of connections made by all people in the process of learning. But just because they are slippery, polysemantic, socially constructed, and negotiated between utterance-makers does not mean words like character and temperament are useless. It would be dishonest of me to claim that I do not entertain ideas about the character of a student like Kayode, who cares so much about his attachments to home, to family, to God, and to school. Or that I am not concerned about why, in spite of

\(^{80}\) Neurobiology ("hardwiring") is finding its way back into ideas about cognition, particularly socially distributed cognition and learning. I wonder, for example, what Thorndike would make of the recently identified "mirror neurons," specialized brain cells that help us know and respond to the intentions associated with the actions of others. See Iacoboni, Molnar-Szakacs, Gallese, Buccino, Mazziotta, et al. (2005); and Gallese (2005). As Gallese writes, "By means of a shared functional state realized in two different bodies that nevertheless obey the same functional rules, the 'objectual other' becomes 'another self'"p. 43. Talk about connections!
Mohammed's sharp intellect, he has not been equipped with the fine motor and other skills he needs to be writing and reading at what other people have decided is grade level. I remain concerned about Angel's fiery temperament, one which puts her at risk for fighting in middle school. These nouns carry meaning about my students that helps me know them better. Although I understand the meanings of the terms as constructed-in-use and ever negotiated (my own thinking is always glossed by Bakhtinian concepts) and my students themselves will change in time in the course of our social interactions, I prefer not to throw the words aside as too overdetermined, too freighted with power and history and multiple meanings for use. Indeed, as I have done with the phrase *learning is connecting*, I would like to lift them straight out of their behaviorist backwater and carry them all downstream to a stretch of the river in which they can unfurl more fully in a social context.

It is the act of interpretation participants bring to the experience of learning and teaching that leads me to Dewey. Learning is constructed within a community and for a community, "part and parcel of the whole social evolution" (Dewey, 2001/1916, p. 6) Learning happens in history, and is subject to history (Dewey, 1902). Moreover, as Dewey writes:

Learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within. Literally, we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. It is he and not the subject matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning (pp. 107-108).

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81 In any case, even if I reject an atomizing fragmenting word like *skills*, the massive power of educational policy administration currently insists that as a teacher, I figure out some way of assessing the practices-done-by-students-that-used-to-go-by-the-name-of-skills.
Learning happens in time. It is active, and child-driven. More generally, taking up the ideas of Freire, if learning is to be transformative it is must be interactional and dialogic within its community, where "subjects [teacher-learners and learner-teachers] meet in cooperation in order to transform the world" (Freire, 1993, p. 167). It is very easy to add these statements, especially learning is active, to the concepts I carry.

In Toward a Theory of Instruction, Bruner (1966) posits that all humans learn, and that the will to learn comprises four qualities: curiosity, competence, identification, and reciprocity. The reasoning here is that when we become curious about something, we want to know more about it; when we become more knowledgeable about it, we want to get good at it. In order to get good at it (whatever it may be), we need competent models (other people) who can show us how, models with whom we can identify in our process of getting good. With respect to guiding others to toward competence, teachers (models) are resources as much as authorities; curricula are both a subject and a method of transacting learning. Once we have acquired the learning, we want to put it to use. We want the flow of learning to be reciprocal and dialogic. In this sense, learning is social.

Deepening and clarifying the way in which we understand learning as a social activity is the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). The process of learning, these scholars have suggested, changes the ways in which a learner can participate, belong, and make meaning in a particular community. In doing so, learning changes people. Learning shapes identities. Learning transforms.

And so I arrive at the present moment carrying Four Big Ideas: Learning is connecting. Learning is active. Learning is social. Learning is transformative.
Writing to Connect and the Four Big Ideas

My task in this section will be to review the essence of Writing to Connect by the light of the Four Big Ideas. In turn I will address bidialectalism and multiliteracies; communities of practice; arts education; and teacher power. After doing so, I will present an organic approach to conducting a writing workshop in the "between" space where people from different but overlapping cultures meet.

From Bidialectalism to Multiliteracies

As I described and detailed in chapters 2, 3, and 7, I launched Writing to Connect with the theoretical assumption that the best way to help students acquire and make use of a mainstream form of language has been through bidialectal practices, those which incorporate into the curriculum—in considered, respectful and multiple ways—the students’ home dialects and other funds of knowledge; as well as by familiarizing teachers who are not African American with African American English as a complex system of communication which involves interrelated discursive and cultural practices. Our experience with bidialectalism and the many different ways of writing across different modes (individually, collectively, collaboratively, by dictation, publicly, privately, and so forth) established and encouraged connections between home and school, between people from different linguistic backgrounds, and between enrichment and the regular classroom. Over the years, as I wrote in chapter 2, I began to view the dichotomous framework of bidialectalism as both limiting and unreflective of the ways in which actual people (especially writers) make meaning in language. Before ever arriving in Room For Writing, Kayode, for example, already tended to shape the mainstream American English he spoke with the tonal semantics of African American English. How
can we put such an utterance in one or the other of two linguistic cubbies? He and many other students spoke AAE and MAE, often simultaneously. My students and I were active agents in the construction of our identities as people who can manipulate more than one linguistic code in more than one way. Our classroom was ever abuzz with social interactions that made use of more than one dialect, more than one register, and more than one mode of meaning making. In Writing to Connect, with respect to multiliteracies and what I am now going to term the pedagogy of polydialectalism, learning was connecting; learning was active; learning was social; and learning was transformative.

Community of Practice

Playing with the ideas embedded in speaking and writing was a foundational concept and principle of Writing to Connect as a site for language arts enrichment. Our situated, contextualized practice as a group of writers doing the kinds of things that writers do entailed plenty of serious play. Taking play seriously is affirmed by Dewey (1933, pp. 182-183), as cited in Hung (2002):

[N]othing is more fascinating than to follow out the relations of concepts and, by discovering unexpected relations among them, see them unfold into a harmonious system whose contemplation gives great esthetic satisfaction. There is such a thing as playing with ideas ... it promotes a constructive, although unconscious, playing with meanings in their relations (p. 198).

As I have tried to convey throughout the study, the considerable time my students and I spent talking and laughing about our different ways of speaking was fun. We jointly played with meaning. Conversations in which my attempts to make use of AAE vocabulary and phonology, for instance, or their attempts to sound like a newscaster or like a person from what they called "the country," were subjects of collaborative observation and analysis. Although what we were "doing" was sociolinguistics, what I
told the students we were doing was "thinking and talking like writers do," which was equally true, as I argued in chapter 4. Hung (2002) affirms the sociocultural dimension of negotiating meaning in the process of classroom conversation.

Dewey (1925, 1981) also expressed the social constructive dimension of idea generation as 'to anticipate' knowledge together. The writings of Dewey suggest that discoveries and new horizons of knowledge spring from novel ideas co-authored by individuals and through group negotiations. Such a negotiation process is probably of unequivocal importance in social constructivism (Prawat, 1996). Through negotiation, students are usually engaged in explaining their ideas, defending their opinions, and trying to convince others of their thoughts. Through such a process, students can establish shared meanings or intersubjectivity. In other words, playing with ideas can be a social constructive process or perceived as the co-playing of ideas (p. 198).

The recursive, groping classroom episode I described in chapter 6, through which my students and I tried to determine what was going on when people called each other White or Black, African American or mixed, illustrated the kind of negotiation and co-playing with ideas Dewey is talking about here. To paraphrase Hung (2002), our meanings accumulated incrementally. I got things wrong. I was corrected. In comparing the color of my arm to a piece of paper, for example, I was playing with the idea of White as a signifier of identity, and my students were quick to refine the use of the word White (referring to skin) away from the use of white (referring to a color you might find in a box of crayons). In an important way, getting things wrong is good. Uncertainty is good. "Confusion is essential," as Meier writes (2002, p. 14). It is good for teachers to take risks as learners, to show students what learning looks like from the outside. Also, making mistakes openly and demonstrating the impossibility of perfect mastery undercuts the potential for a teacher to become the amazing and charismatic Know-It-All, the person who gets everything already.
Given the license to grope, to explore possible connections and associations, any teacher can play with ideas. The possibilities for all teachers making successful use of AAE and bidialectal techniques depend on the degree to which teachers understand language use as a function of sociocultural decision-making. What feels “wrong” or “uncomfortable” can be built into the moment of instruction and classroom discourse. The rich and moving writing my students did around the word *nigger* arose when I honestly conveyed my extreme discomfort with reading the word aloud (connecting my classroom activity with a very personal emotion in situ). African American teachers can be open about their personal histories around style shifting and discursive purpose. Students can be made aware of the feelings of the teacher and learn to question why certain habits of utterance feel wrong and others feel right. Drawing explicit connections between this affective and ethical dimensions of reading and writing helps put the "rich" in literacy enrichment, and allows meaningful, honest teaching and learning of MAE to happen.

In *Writing to Connect*, affective engagement led to participation, and participation led to learning. What I mean is that the greater the ease and confidence my students had in their relationship with me and with each other, the greater the likelihood they would engage energetically in the day's activity by writing and sharing their written work, and discussing constructively the work of others. Participation often led to revision or reflection, which lead to the composition of new work. At our best, as I argued in chapter 4, we were a community of practice, confirming, as Wenger (1998) writes, that "learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon" (p. 3). Similar to the distributed systems now found in business and communication in the global community, the
collaborative writing workshop in practice is ever negotiating matters of power, expertise, cultural capital, and direction.

The theories of learning and meaning-making offered by the research in community-of-practice live harmoniously with the communicative practices and theories of bidialectal pedagogy. Becoming a person who thinks about language is a matter of becoming a person who can take a loose metacognitive stance with respect to his own language practices. In that regard, my students and I were partners in a shared project of what Freire (1993) calls problem-posing education. "Problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality" (p. 83). For all of us, *Writing to Connect* was meant to expand the ways in which we entertained problems and constructed communicative identities. In a classroom conceived as a community of practice, we all learned new ways of being. With respect to *Writing to Connect* as a community of practice, learning was connecting, learning was active, learning was social, and learning was transformative.

*Arts Education*

In designing the curriculum and classroom practices for *Writing to Connect*, I made assumptions about the nature of arts education broadly defined, and writing enrichment specifically. As I described in chapters 3 and 4, when planning what we would do day to day, I seriously considered the academic, social, and historical forces which I perceived to be oppressing my students. As Cherryholmes (1988) writes:

Curriculum is what students have an opportunity to learn. What students have an opportunity to learn depends on what they do not have an opportunity to learn, Power distributes opportunities and nonopportunities. And curriculum is intimately linked to educational administration and instruction, because each set of activities produces opportunities and constrains what can be learned" (p. 144).
Thus the nonopportunities I saw suggested what I planned as an arts enrichment specialist. As I detailed in chapter 4, students and regular classroom teachers at Hutsch alike were trapped by the pressures of statewide standardized tests, mandatory literacy curricula, routine DIBELing, and ever-shrinking financial resources. The nonopportunities included just about everything except reading and a smattering of math. In line with the ideas promoted by developmental psychologist Howard Gardner (1973), I saw myself as a nurturer of my students' "full participation in the artistic process," including roles as creators, performers, critics, and audience (p. 23). Like Gardner, I believe that the child of seven or eight (the age of many of my students) is already primed in many ways to play those roles; indeed, may even be at a fulcrum-like point in his development. In order to advance and deepen my students' participation in the writing arts, I sought to make available "intensive experiences of all sorts with the symbolic medium"—talking, reading, questioning, evaluating, judging, reflecting, writing, and observing, all of which were meant to lead "to the natural growth, development, and integration of the perceiving, feeling, and making systems" (p. 293). Allowing for expressive complexity, interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict, and plain old confusion and frustration created an environment where students had to face the same problems all writers face at one point or another. In a manner of speaking, all artists learn to self-assess; looking critically at our own work is how we make it better. Ongoing self-assessment is integral to the lifelong project of making art (Booth, 2005). In addition to what might termed these holistic experiences of being writers, I aimed to impart specific skills, such as paying attention—the kind of keen, close attention to the sensory detail from which writing is made. Indeed, longitudinal research in arts education among
student populations similar to those at Hutsch suggests that participation in such programs led to students more quickly absorbing a variety of expressive forms (Fowler, 1996; Heath, 2004).

As I discussed in chapters 2 and 4, Room For Writing was situated in a top-down, fill-in-the-bubble urban public school culture. I consequently felt an urgency about what I was doing, ever fearing the doomsday scenario spelled a generation ago by Gardner (1973): "Without an appropriate art education which will succeed in cultivating these means of expression and in encouraging these first manifestations of aesthetic creation, the actions of adults and the restraints of school and family life have the effect in most cases of checking or thwarting such tendencies instead of enriching them" (p. 19). Like many artists-in-the-schools, I was aware that other people had control over whether I could remain with my students. What could I say should a district or building administrator say, "We’re very sorry, we know the kids have fun with you, but we have to use every spare minute for drilling. Everyone is talking about accountability. Our test scores have got to come up." In order to justify my presence at Hutsch, I was therefore at all times interested in ways of thinking about how to account for myself and evaluating enrichment programs in general.\footnote{For a concise history of the evaluation of arts programs in the United States, and a detailed outline of the range of quantitative (preordinate) and qualitative (responsive) styles of approach to art program evaluation, see Courtney, 1997, pp. 74-83.}

In particular, Stake (1975) presents a model for the evaluation of arts programs characterized as responsive. In this model, evaluative questions derive from the purpose of the evaluation. The purpose of an evaluation can be to document events, record student change, aid decision making at the level of public policy, seek understanding, or facilitate
remediation (Stake, 1975, p. 15). To this end, Stake suggests that the evaluator use the data collected on site to complete a description matrix and a judgment matrix that lie side by side; these matrices are connected by the concepts of antecedents, transactions, and outcomes (p. 19). The visual representation I presented in chapter 5 can be used for exactly this purpose. Grounded in my values as a specialist and in our collective experience as participants in the workshop, The Egg allows me (or anyone else) to think about how the components of the program are interacting. Tests, measurements, and other data-gathering devices can be part of an evaluation, Stake suggests, but should be selected after observing the program in situ, and after accounting for the purposes and intentions of the program as stated by its participants. Further discussions about the assessment of arts enrichment in classroom practice can be found in Courtney, 1997; Greene, 2001; and Fowler, 1988. While these volumes offer fruitful ways of considering and evaluating the creation, establishment, and benefits of arts enrichment, they tend to disregard the collaborative nature of a writing workshop that I have been describing in this study, one in which the "expert writer" learns as well as teaches. Furthermore, the ways in which sociocultural customs are embedded in the doing of music, or painting, or drama, or any other performing or plastic art beg exploration and further research.

Because the Room For Writing was sponsored by a private/public cultural enrichment organization, the program entered and lodged at Hutsch with an outsider's freedom from many of the district's protocols, procedures, and administrative constraints. (To the extent that I was also an insider, I had a yearly background check by the police, tuberculosis screenings, a district-issued school identification card with a photograph, and a paycheck issued by the district.) In the classroom, however, although I took into
account the needs and requests of the classroom teachers, I was more or less free to do what I wanted. This gave me the opportunity to establish a hybrid role for the Room For Writing (and for me as an individual adult in the room) as a place that existed (was constantly in-the-process-of-existing) along a continuum between formal and informal practices. With respect to Writing to Connect as an arts enrichment community of practice, learning was connecting, learning was active, learning was social, and learning was transformative.

Teacher Power

As recommended by Ball and Lardner (2005), who studied what they termed "exemplary" teachers of African American students in out-of-school contexts, I strove to maintain a "powerful sense of teacher efficacy and reflective optimism" (p. 112). In other words, I believed that I could accomplish what I was setting out to do, that what I was trying to accomplish was worth trying to accomplish, and that each one of my students had the competencies and aptitudes to achieve success in the program in individually and collectively meaningful ways. I struggled to negotiate a complex identity at Hutsch, a flexible way of being at times formal, at times informal, "teacherly" and "writerly" and "motherly" and all the other adverbial descriptors I enacted as a fully human person (ways of realizing what Ball and Lardner call an "extraprofessional identification" in my interaction with students (p. 112)). Moreover, I felt and knew in my bones that I could, should, and would make a positive difference in my world, and that, as a powerful person, I could create positive change for my students (Price, 2006, pp. 124-125). Also influential was the theoretical and empirical work of Jean Lave (1996), whose apprenticeship research grew out of earlier work by Scribner and Cole (1973). Having
studied Liberian tailors' ways of apprenticeship, Lave developed theories of learning that rang true to what I was trying to set into motion on the second floor of Hutsch. Apprenticeship models of learning do not mystify and deny the situated character of learning, Lave argued, and for this reason offer an easier site for the understanding and theorizing of learning than do schools. An apprentice beekeeper, for example, knows why she has to inject smoke into the hive before examining the colony: Smoke calms bees, and calm bees are unlikely to sting. If a teacher adheres unquestioningly to a mandated, “teacher-proof” curriculum, it is easy for why questions never to come up. In uncritically transmitting to students de-contextualized sets of disciplinary knowledge, schools-as-institutions can mask the socially situated forces that make them what they are. In schools, much goes unexamined: Who determines what students need to know? Where do they make these decisions? In whose interest are they made? How do some people come to be the ones with the power/authority to make these determinations? In Writing to Connect, I made room for the personally meaningful why questions, and students like Erika posed them explicitly. Why, she asked, do we need to know both Ebonics and Standard English, but White kids do not need to know anything about AAE? The open conversation I had with the third graders about this, and about the standardized tests (and the writing it led to) took up these very questions. Angel, Cheryl, and Mohammed were but three of my students who took advantage of the relatively free forums for conversation during circle time. These students came to know themselves as questioners of the system living within the system. With the exception of those who were either too shy or too fearful to weigh in to any given discussion, nearly all of my students came see themselves as apprentice critics.
A dozen years ago, Perry and Delpit (1998) disclosed the classroom customs of a veteran elementary school teacher, Carrie Secret, who practiced bidialectal pedagogy from an apprenticeship model. Secret started her career attempting to "fix" the "broken" English of her students. Over time, she shifted her teaching identity. She was no less committed to her students becoming fluent in MAE, but her methods of arriving at that outcome changed. Secret came to embrace notions of helping students gain access to multiple Discourses. (Anyone interested in attempting a similar approach might consider Secret a role model, and apprentice herself from afar through the mediational tool of Perry and Delpit’s text.)

Once exposed to culturally responsive teaching methods, Secret looked for ways to “apprentice them into an academic community of practice” without sacrificing either their “heritage Discourse” (Street, 2005, p.18) or their ability to do the critical analysis necessary to think about their thinking. Teaching and drilling students in words alone was not enough, Secret found. The complex and far-reaching goals of a bidialectal approach require complex and far-seeing teaching practices.

Secret also focused on culture to enhance reading achievement, and described “nine cultural aspects that permeate African-American life: spirituality, resilience, emotional vitality, musicality and rhythm, humanism, communalism, orality and verbal expressiveness, personal style and uniqueness, and realness. These concepts are then presented in conjunction with instructional strategies that have proven to be effective for African-American students” (pp. 80-81). As assumptions by one teacher about a sociocultural group, they may or may not be applicable to particular individuals; still, as named descriptors that factor generally into a communicative custom and style, they have
proven to be useful concepts for effective teaching in a primarily monocultural community. At the very least, no White teacher in predominantly African American schools ought be unfamiliar with the range and richness of what Meier (2008) calls Black Communications. Secret’s daily routine, for example, always began with group recitations and songs that affirmed cultural identity and communal participation. Then she called for private reflection in journals to focus on individual goal-setting. All of these activities made use of affirming and testifying to the good faith and affection between teacher and students. Only then did Secret begin to teach.

Throughout this study, I have described the ways in which a White teacher can take up these nine cultural aspects, connect them with her own sociocultural lifeworld, and bring them into play. I might teach the students a cheer I once hollered on behalf of the Blue Team at my sleepaway camp; I taught them to spell "Mississippi" through the mnemonic song I learned in third grade; a student might call attention to my jewelry, dress, or hairstyle in ways that led to conversation; simply remaining alert and attentive to the vitality and group spirit that filed into Room 203 every week took me a long way down the road toward creating a shared experience.

Secret also challenged her students to become metalinguistically sensitive. Doing so, she helped them see the ways in which language, literacy, and culture both shape and are shaped by identity, and the ways in which identity can encompass multiple ways of expressing thoughts and feelings. With insights gained from working in the Vygotskian ZPD, they could participate fully in more than one Discourse (Gee) and more than one speech genre (Bakhtin). They became active rather than passive participants in the construction of a classroom open to the play of ideas. In this study, I have emphasized
some of the ways in which I tried to emulate Street's ways of being a teacher. While I was careful not to cultivate a persona that might be called charismatic, I did consciously use myself and my tendency to connect relationally with my students. Yes, I was authoritative; but I was also (or tried to be) very much me, the person who would have been recognizable to my own children, friends, and family. I laughed. I chatted. I "cracked down" when behavior turned disrespectful. I spoke as honestly as I could about the subjects that were most difficult. In the realization of my identity as a teacher-with-power, a teacher-with-power-who-cares, learning was connecting, learning was active, learning was social, and learning was transformative.

An Organic Approach to the Writing Workshop

It took me a year to entitle this study. When I finally settled on two key words—structure and flow—I knew I would have to explain myself. In this section, I will try to do so. Earlier in this chapter, I wrote that I have long believed myself to be a post-structuralist. In the early 1980s, at my New England alma mater, a person could not really be an English major (which I was) without taking up the ideas of Derrida (1982) and Foucault (1973), or at least feigning to. Both Cherryholmes (1988) and Hawkes (1977) offer clear descriptions of the conceptual progression of the structuralists, beginning with Saussure (1915) and structural linguistics, through the language work of Sapir (1921), Whorf (1956), and Levi-Strauss (1958) in anthropology. While Hawkes is more interested in post-structuralism with respect to literary criticism, Cherryholmes clarifies the distinctions between Derridian and Foucaultian post-structural thinking, and connects their ideas to various aspects of education, including research methodology, teacher education, textbook writing/reading, curriculum development, and assessment and
construct validity. Twenty years later, we are still faced with discourses that appear stable and univocal (No Child Left Behind, for example, or the current Race to the Top), but are in fact highly contingent upon the political and social forces that give them meaning and make them "heard" in particular ways. Texts do speak with many voices, and are heard in many ways. This is what multiliteracies tell us. And yet.

And yet human beings seek patterns and perspective. We are most comfortable when positioned in structures that both protect us and allow us a view. Rocking on a front porch is one example of this. Gazing out from a cave high on cliff is another. As I demonstrated with The Egg, Writing to Connect had a structure. The program was constituted out of many different sets of activities, each of which interacted with the others in ways that were meaningful and generative, if sometimes contradictory or oppositional. Our ways of talking, sharing, reading, writing, thinking, and just plain moving around doing things together set up a predictable quality to our time together. It was a weekly system in which we all participated. In this sense, our program was organic. Each of the differentiated aspects of the workshop existed in systemic relation to each other and collectively played vital roles in the overall experience. Like any organism, the program existed in space (Room 203, Hutsch Elementary), across time (2005-2008), and in a particular moment of history when those with power kept the school and its community in a kind of economic and political chokehold. Like any organism, it developed ways of adapting to its environment, ways of resisting and challenging the chokehold. Our conversations and writings about race, about identity, and about language (all that I have described in this study about the lifeworld of the workshop) pushed back against the pressures from without. The fact that the languages in which we spoke of such
matters were hybrid, plural, and sometimes unintelligible to each other (recall my Bracknellian indirectness, or the words my students uttered which confused me) created flux and breathing room. At such times we had to hash through our confusion, talking about talk. "What you mean, Ms. Schaenen?" And me: "What's fahr? What does fahr mean?" My students and I could not and did not let our languages and cultures go without saying. Notwithstanding my post-structural leanings, I claim that it was the structure of *Writing to Connect* that enabled the making of this powerful and dynamic organic system. Just as the bee colony as a whole is most properly understood to be the unit of the organism rather than the individual bees who do the various jobs required by the hive, *Writing to Connect* ought therefore to be viewed as an organic whole. My students and I co-created a particular system, a (lower-case) writing workshop whose synchronic and diachronic function was to create a social, artistic, expressive community whose purpose was to talk, think, read, and write in different ways across time. *Writing to Connect* was a unique iteration of the (upper case) Writing Workshop more generally conceived. Given all this, perhaps what I am is a post-structural structuralist.

**Were We a Transformative Third Space?**

It seems to me that in at least three overlapping domains—literacies, identities, and schooling(s)—*Writing to Connect* unfixed uniformity and disrupted stable arrangements in the teaching and learning environment.

**Literacies**

By design, as I described in chapter 7, my students and I spoke and wrote in mixed and multiple ways. The program's affirmation of AAE as meaningful, patterned,

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83 What I heard was *fahr*. What the student was saying was *fire*, which meant nice-looking, stylish, enviably with-it.
and purposeful way of communicating helped our literacies break free of hegemonic, academic English (at least to some extent, and for some people).

**Identities**

Our racial and cultural identities, my own and that of students like Niya, were likewise complex constructions, dependent on variables like emotionality, relationships, and power distributions at any given moment in the classroom. As I described in chapter 6, at times I felt unsure about what my students were making of me at any given moment, as what they made of me clearly shifted depended on contextual phenomena. Our ways of doing the writing workshop disintegrated some of the seemingly fixed boundaries of identity.

**Schooling(s)**

The Room For Writing, situated within Hutsch as a pull-out enrichment program, yet connected by teacher and staff relationships, administrative bureaucracy, and just plain longevity to St. Louis Public Schools and its policies, carried both insider and outsider status. Officially, the program followed school rules. At times, however, I was aware of breaking them, or at least subverting them (as when allowing religion a place in our conversations, or permitting challenging talk about standardized tests). With respect to institutional solidarity, Room For Writing occupied a heterogeneous third space, not wholly inside nor wholly outside the boundaries established by officialdom. It was not by chance that Darrion prefaced a comment with the words, "I'm not sure whether this is appropriate to say in school or not." In his regular classroom, it might not have been. In Room For Writing, saying things, even seemingly transgressive things, was OK.

**Methodological Implications**
As I wrote in the chapter 1, I designed this inquiry in a way that would harmonize methodologically with the experience itself. In the section above, I suggested three dimensions in which the experience itself broke open fixed ways of doing language arts in an urban public school. I turn now to this study: Has the act of doing teacher research broken open ways of perceiving and explaining what happened in my classroom at Hutsch? I suggest that it has in four significant ways, each of which I will now describe.

**Role of Teacher Researcher**

First, the default stance of a teacher researcher is complex and unfixed. At different times, in different ways, and for different purposes, those who practice teacher research take on the roles of participant, observer, recorder, data analyst, storyteller, and generalizing theory builder. Often, for the sake of a particular line of inquiry, the teacher researcher occupies more than one of these roles at the same time. I will always remember the experience I had one day while teaching about genre. I spent an hour instructing, listening, checking for understanding, holding a video camera, taking notes, maintaining classroom discipline, and reflecting upon what I was hearing in order to guide my students to a more lasting understanding of the concept. Self-positioning and re-positioning as necessary comes with the territory of teacher research.

Furthermore, with respect to professional development for in-service teachers, I believe that we can do far more with the technology now widely available, particularly video, audio, and text recording systems, to distribute and disseminate the knowledge generated in individual classrooms. In order for teacher-generated knowledge to scale up and out, we must also create even more productive alliances between knowledge-generating classroom teachers and university-based researchers in the field. Advances in
qualitative research software have made it possible to cull patterns and themes from video and audio data, portfolio data, teacher journals, and other raw classroom material. University researchers with access to data from a wide variety of classroom researchers might design meta-studies that focus on particular aspects of the teaching and learning experience using the reports made by individual teacher researchers across domains of interest. I can imagine designing a cross-case study of classrooms in which the students are Latino, the teacher is African American, and the subject is math, for instance. Or one in which the students are predominantly immigrants, the teacher is a White non-immigrant, and the subject is United States government. This would be a world in which huge numbers of teachers contribute to an ever-expanding collection of insider research, a data base which can be drawn upon by outside researchers eager to find the strongest threads of practice that can be inferred from these highly personal and individual reports.

As external, standardized methods of “accounting” for classroom experience seem less and less valid, and only superficially replicable, and do nothing at all to close the most meaningful cross-ethnic, cross-cultural achievement gaps; and as attention is increasingly focused on teacher quality, and the qualities of good teaching, future researchers might consider using the powerful research tools and methods now available to design practitioner studies that will allow deep, teacher-based knowledge to contribute directly to the wider educational conversation.

Approach to Analysis

Second, as I described in the introduction, my approach to the qualitative analysis of my data has been deliberately hybrid. I have juxtaposed a longitudinal reach for themes and patterns with methods and tools such as Critical Discourse Analysis that
allow for fine-grained examinations of micro-episodes. I have combined some of the procedures of ethnographic and contextual description of the classroom as a whole with a narrow look at a single student over time. A phenomenological approach has allowed me the freedom to move beyond the constraints of any one of these analytic frameworks.

**Representational Registers**

Third, with respect to representation and reporting, this study is inscribed in many kinds of voices. Indeed, it is a social science construct which I might term polygeneric. In order to best convey the experience of *Writing to Connect*, I made discursive choices about how I would accomplish the telling. Parts have been autobiographical. Other parts have been narrative and analogical. Whole chunks have been presented in dramatic form (those long transcripts in chapters 6 and 7). Like many writers fond of epigraphy, I borrowed the words of others to set ideas vibrating at the beginning of certain chapters. I have relied on the customs of academic codes, one of which, for example, is to state explicitly at the beginning of every chapter (and often throughout the text) precisely what that chapter is going to contain from section to section. In sum, this very text as a whole has walked the walk of multiliteracies I attempted to teach in *Writing to Connect*. And of course, "doing" multiliteracies is viewing expression as a function of social purpose (the statement at the heart of The Egg). We say (and write) things the way we do because of the social context in which do the saying (and writing).

**Epistemological Assumptions**

Fourth, and finally, I must return one more time to the epistemological tensions that play out in my reflections upon the program and my experience of it. The post-structuralist in me says that all meaning is up for grabs, situated in time and freighted
with relations of power, that seeking a stable structure, or any kind of objective theoretical or practical construct, is a deluded and possibly pernicious effort. On the other hand, my students and I inhabited a world together. That world had characteristic qualities. It had values. It had ways of being particular to the group that we were at that time. Looking back at that world, I saw large patterns and I saw structure. Of course I also saw discrepancies, inconsistencies, and just plain confusions. Given the tension, I have decided to plant a foot in multiple ways of thinking about reality, hence the words structure and flow and organic in this study's title. As a teacher researcher in 2010, I am breaking away from explanations that limit me to this or that school of thought. I build theory out of my practice, and my practice requires double- and triple-dealing. As with respect to this study's design, representation, and analysis, my approach to figuring out how I know what I know has been loosened, destabilized, and made hybrid.

With the Benefit of Hindsight: Implications for Future Practice

In this section, I will enumerate what, in my view, are the three most crucial modes of action for anyone aiming to conduct a writing workshop among primary students. In addition to a total immersion in language-related activities, including talking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking, these modes of action include: 1. imparting a critical awareness of history with respect to language perception and use; 2. committing to the program across years in order to build trusting relationships and to see growth in a meaningful community of participants; and 3. cultivating and nurturing identities and roles in the classroom that are hybrid, adaptive to change, critically self-reflective, and dialogic. I will discuss each of these modes in turn.

Critical Awareness of History
It seems to me that a teacher must situate the learning of new ways of textmaking (talking and writing) within a critical framework that takes history into account. Anyone in a United States school today, anyone from anywhere, is not the first person to be targeted for mother tongue modification. The assimilationist model, made palatable through the image of the melting pot, has annealed many a tongue into a tool of whatever the "standard" language (that spoken by a dominant group) happens to be—Latin, German, French, Castilian, English, and so forth. Writing about a young Jewish lawyer who quit her job at a New York firm peopled by White Protestants, novelist Cynthia Ozick (1977) observed

Puttermesser left too, weary of so much chivalry—the partners were excessively gracious to her, and treated her like a fellow-aristocrat. Puttermesser supposed this was because she did not say "a" in her nose or elongate her "i," and above all she did not dentalize her "t," "d," or "l," keeping them all back against her upper palate. Long ago her speech had been "standardized" by the drilling of fanatical teachers, elocutionary missionaries hired out of the Midwest by Puttermesser's prize high school, until almost all the regionalism was drained out; except for the pace of her syllables, which had a New York deliberateness, Puttermesser could have come from anywhere. She was every bit as American as her grandfather in his captain's hat. From Castle Garden to blue New England mists, her father's father, hat-and-neckware peddler to Yankees! In Puttermesser's veins Providence, Rhode Island beat richly. It seemed to her the partners felt this.

Then she remembered that Dreyfus spoke perfect French, and was the perfect Frenchman (p. 26).

Ozick's paragraph break sets up the clincher. An assimilated Jew, Dreyfus was reviled and publicly shamed in spite of always having played by the linguistic, cultural, military, social rules of 19th century France. In that place and time, Dreyfus' identity as a Jew took precedence over his identity as a French officer. Henry Louis Gates, who is African American, was trying to get inside his own home in Cambridge when a police officer arrested him in the summer of 2009. In that place and time, Gates' African-American
appearance became more salient than his identities as a middle class Harvard scholar and Cambridge homeowner. When one group has power over another, social, political, or historical circumstances can fuel the abuse of such power. It does not matter how seemingly absorbed a person is: rules can suddenly not apply. Or rather, those with power can change the rules. Anyone who makes use of bidialectal strategies and practices owes it to their students to remind them of the limits of the powers of fluency in the dominant language. It is not enough to expand a student's array of choices; a teacher must also convey the social and political consequences of making one choice or another. At the same time, an educator must openly acknowledge that bidialectalism is the best we can do for students at this moment in time. In the ideally pluralistic world, one in which all languages are heard with respect because all people are mutually respectful, it will be unnecessary to style shift from African American English to mainstream American English (assimilate linguistically with the dominant social group) in order to rent an apartment, acquire a bank loan, or get a job.

**Committing Across Time**

The regular classroom teachers at Hutsch told me that they knew our school was going to be closed before the summer of 2007 (which was when the district announced the buildings slated to receive air conditioning) and Hutsch was not on the list. As for me, I found out along with my students, in January 2008. I remember walking down the hall from the fourth grade classroom to Room For Writing, holding Ebony's hand and listening to her complain about the pending closure. Her mother had gone to Hutsch. Her siblings had gone to Hutsch. Like Angel, Cheryl, Darrion, and many of my other students, Ebony felt attached to the school, to its people, to its structure and place in her
life. In the year to come, the fourth grade would be divided and sent to different schools. Most would be bused to a very large K-8 building also on the north side. Angel and Mohammed would go to the nearby middle school, a place where, as fifth and sixth graders respectively, they would pass through metal detectors first thing in the morning.

In the blog following that day, I noted that as we walked the hall that morning, the scenario reminded me of the final scene in *Fiddler on the Roof*, when the residents of Anatevka are finally sent away from home, banished by the Russian authorities. Out on the road, their ragtag possessions loaded onto carts and animals, they asked each other about their plans. Some would go off to stay with relations in America. Others were migrating to Palestine. Still others shrugged and said they were heading elsewhere in Europe, villages and cities in Poland, in Germany. What keeps this moment in the movie from turning sentimental is the perspective we have on the consequences of those decisions about destination. What *we* know is what those Jewish villagers had no way of knowing, namely that those among them who fled from pre-revolutionary, czarist Russia into western Europe were heading into the disaster that would follow roughly 25 years later. On the other hand, the ones who wound up in America would probably live to have grandchildren. The passage of time, the distances we travel, and the people among whom we end up determine a great deal about our lives. Most of my students and I would probably not see too much of each other in the future, and I certainly regretted not having another three years with the students I had taught since second grade. I strongly sensed that the disintegration of the Room For Writing would have consequences for all them, and for me, too. For some, the consequences might be serious.
On the bright side, I was grateful for the three years we did have. When a person is eight or nine years old, three years is a long time.

For all of these reasons, the second crucial mode of action in planning and assessing a meaningful writing workshop is a commitment to a program over time. As I demonstrated in chapter 5, nurturing the habits of thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing exists in an ambient blend of relationships and distributions of power. It takes time to know children. And children grow and develop in time; as loci of interpretation, they are moving and evolving subjects. We need to view them in time. Moreover, teachers grow and develop in time. We learn things. We get better. Sometimes we get worse before we get better. Cultivating an atmosphere of trust, a place where people feel it is safe to make mistakes and learn from them, takes time. Sharing ideas, feelings, and words requires time. A fully human life requires time to unfold.

When my own children were young, the voices of parenting "experts" in the print and electronic media talked a lot about quality time. It was all right for people to work long hours and show up only for bedtime, they said, as long as those bedtime moments were warm and wonderful. To me, this never seemed like the whole truth. Of course it is nice to have a close and warm experience with your children at bedtime, and nobody who has to work long hours for economic reasons alone should be made to feel bad about what their children may suffer on that account. Given a great deal of choice, however, choice that rested on my status as a person of privilege, I valued quantity time no less than the quality time I had with my children. I valued hours and hours and hours of time, days, weeks, and years of it, all the way up to nearly nineteen years of quantity time, when my daughter, the eldest, left home for college. Some of those hours were difficult.
At times I behaved in ways I regretted, and later apologized for. My children have seen me at my best, at my worst, and mostly at my some-where-in-between.

It seems to me that teachers, and certainly teacher researchers, ought to be able to experience their time with students in similarly expanded ways. Although I found it buried in a footnote in Coles (1986), the perspective of Anna Freud on researching among children seems exquisitely germane to this moment in time, when a child's entire future can rest on a single high-stakes test. "Her emphasis on time," Coles writes, "on longitudinal assessment, is especially noteworthy and exemplary at this time of fast survey research, of questionnaire studies analyzed by computers, of hasty hour-long interviews all too obviously geared to a specific "topic" through directed inquiry.

She [Anna Freud] was willing to let children lead her where they wanted to go, and the press of a research project, of data and results, be damned. Always she asked us to spend time, with boys and girls, if we would gain some overall sense of what had been occurring to them, and why, during a span of their lives" (p. 283).

There is not much more to be said on this score. I wish I could have taught Lexus, for example, for a few more years. Toward the end of 2008, I began to see signs in her writing that her mind was beginning to work through some of the kinks that made her phrases recur in cycles. Throughout this study I have cited many contemporary educational researchers, insiders and outsiders to particular classrooms, who have generated new ideas about children and learning (Ballenger, Dyson, Dyson and Genishi, Ladson-Billings, Landsman, Paley, Bohn, Lou Smith). These exemplary studies (and others) flow out of long periods of immersion, of watchful attendance through long stretches of time. Still, long after the researchers are gone, veteran teachers remain, building, undoing, and rebuilding their teacher knowledge over decades. I suppose what I
am saying is: a year is fine. Three years is better. Following students' lives for five years
or more would be best of all. And those who are in the best position to document and
interpret across decades are the teachers themselves.

*Hybrid, Adaptive, Critical, Dialogic*

I have spent a great deal of time talking about how we construct our identities in
and through language, and how *Writing to Connect* made these acts of construction
explicit. Our Discourses do the work of conveying meaning about who we understand
ourselves to be. And yet, for others, interpreting these meanings can be challenging,
because there is often incongruence among the various layers and expressions of identity.
Our jewelry may mark us as wealthy, while our tattoos brand us as mavericks. Our
language may sound mainstream, while our clothing indicates ethnic salience. We may
speak like Queen Elizabeth at work, and like Queen Latifah with our friends. In other
words, it is not always easy for others to figure us out. As a writer, I tend to stare too long
at people, trying to do just that—figure them out based on what I can observe and infer
from my observations. As a beginning teaching artist, I had been prepared to pass this
practice along. But I swiftly learned that my students were already doing plenty of
figuring. My job was to make their ways of observing, and of communicating, more
nuanced, more aware of the play in identity that was a result of choices people made.

What happened to our identity if we took away the personal voice, the use of
capital “I?” and substituted passive verbs for active ones? Suddenly we sounded a lot
more like scientists. What happened to a piece of writing when we removed all the
quotation marks, got rid of the narrative descriptions and dialogue tags like *he said*, and
put lines of speech next to colons? The writing became a script in the genre of drama.
Tinkering with identity construction is messy work. It is hard to know what is going to stick and what strikes young students as just plain weird. But if nothing else, the experience of *Writing to Connect* taught me to look for opportunities to render the lifeworld of the urban public school classroom as playful, as explicit, and as responsive as I could. The program taught me to be a teacher, the way that having children taught me to be a mother, the way that the act of writing teaches people to be writers. I will take up the key words from the beginning of this chapter one final time, only now with a twist:

Teaching is connecting. Teaching is active. Teaching is social. Teaching is transformative.

In the context of an organic community formed by the class as a whole, the ideal relationship between a teacher and a group of students will achieve balance and promote growth for everyone. A teacher of writing who reckons with the whole child must reckon with his own whole self, too. For this reason, the identity of the connecting, active, socially conscious writing workshop teacher who embraces and practices multiliteracies will necessarily come into being organically over time. In particular, the job of the White language arts teacher in a school situated in nondominant communities is to oversee the collaborative construction of communicative bridges, suspension bridges that will traverse the vast sociocultural landscape (including the chasms) we want all students able to move freely across. These bridges must engineered to be strong enough, and substantive enough, to support all of us as we move from place to place, yet able also, at times, to swing free.
Significance of this Study

This study began with an open-ended phenomenological question: what was the nature of Writing to Connect? Through my interpretations and analyses, I have both addressed this question and described the ways in which the nature of Writing to Connect might speak to particular stakeholders in education: students, enrichment specialists, classroom teachers, literacy practitioners, teacher educators, and pre-service teachers. Furthermore, in expanding and deepening our understanding of a particular case, this qualitative inquiry has both participated in and bridged the ongoing conversations in three domains in particular: New Literacy Studies, teacher research methodology, and arts education and enrichment. In each of these domains, certain factors particular to this research render it especially significant. I will now describe these factors, some of which I have mentioned earlier.

Duration and Participants

I was committed to my participants for three years. There are very few longitudinal case studies that take up classroom culture, customs, and processes in urban public schools for that length of time. Furthermore, there are even fewer studies that consider such cases over time where the teacher is White, middle aged, and bred securely in the middle class, and the students are all Black primary grade students who are growing up in working poor and poor families.

Critical Multiliteracies/Polydialectalism

In responding to scholars who have called for more investigation into effective classroom practices that make use of bidialectalism, this study has actually found that bidialectalism as pedagogical practice is too limiting a concept for students today,
particularly for students from nondominant urban communities who are already isolated in space from places where people speak in many different kinds of ways. While the idea of knowing two languages is a useful starting point, the sociocultural demands of textmaking require that students be active designers of their own discourses across many, many kinds of languages, and many different kinds of places. Even within African American English there is heterogeneity, and to suggest that picking the "right" language for the right purpose is a matter of simply switching from one autonomous code to another leads to erroneous notions of how people actually use language, and how students will be required to express meaning as they move from environment to environment. In a manner of speaking, conceptualizing AAE and SE as if they were two wholly distinct and autonomous languages now seems to me a linguistic version of the outdated legal notion of "separate but equal."

**Critical Discourse Analysis and Teacher Research**

In chapters 6 and 7 I detailed several ways in which CDA can a powerful analytic tool for teacher researchers interested in understanding more about their own practice, and in sharing this new understanding with outsiders to their classrooms. This study has added to the growing body of scholarship that combines ethnographic approaches to classroom inquiry with various methods of discourse analysis. The fine-grained, close-up views allowed by discourse analysis set in the context of teachers' special knowledge of classrooms over time makes room for surprising illuminations. As a White teacher scrutinizing my own language among very young African American students, I have pushed the conversation further along by showing how teacher research and Critical
Discourse Analysis can generate new knowledge in fruitful and accessible ways.

Assessing Artistry

In developing a comprehensive construct to represent the processes and products generated by Writing to Connect, I have demonstrated that the messiness of teaching and learning in the language arts can be depicted from the inside for the purposes of understanding, assessing, and analyzing in trustworthy ways what is going on in a particular classroom. Grounded in the values of the education practitioner, such a depiction does not flatten, simplify, or deform the teaching and learning experience.

Directions For Further Research

Many different branches for future inquiry stem from this study. First, there is a great deal to be tried, explored, and investigated with respect to the idea I have called the pedagogy of polydialectalism in language arts. How can we infuse language arts curricula, particularly in the public schools, with the ideas I have been discussing here? Second, how can the most effective practices from Room For Writing be transferred to other schools in other contexts? What can classroom teachers take up from the ideas that emerge from this study so that future visiting artists are not merely "icing on the cake" but offer something more integrated and useful to regular practice? Third, what happens to The Egg if it is brought to bear on another writing workshop? What changes in its design and the interpretations the design permits? Fourth, as a method and tool, Critical Discourse Analysis in teacher research is expanding in the scholarship as I write. I cannot imagine ever teaching again without subjecting particular moments to the rigorous analysis that CDA allows. Fifth, this inquiry has opened up many possibilities for investigating the multiple ways of conceiving of and collaboratively constructing
transformative third spaces in education; in what ways can the practices in such spaces
interact with traditional classrooms? And finally, I have to say that I conclude this inquiry
with more questions than I began with. Having conceptualized Writing to Connect as a
transformative third space, I would like to think more about the relationship between
educative time and educative space. Education seems always to point people in a
chronological direction, namely to the future; what happens if we think about education
as pointing people in spatial directions, namely outward from wherever they happen to
be? If we stay stuck in time, there is only one way to go; if we free ourselves to teach
and learn in space, suddenly the choices, the purposes, and the possibilities are many.
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Appendix A
Summary of Data

Oral/embodied communication: recorded in field notes, audiotape

Student work: poems, fiction, how-to, and all the various assignments students produced on task in class; journals kept by students in class; incidental writing/drawing: private, random notes and drawings made for me "just for fun" or the need to express something

Writing by me that students encountered: handouts; activities, letters, individual notes I wrote or typed for them

Environmental/ambient writing: photos of boardwork; flip-charts produced spur-of-the-moment; writing on the walls, posters, charts, "wall" texts

Writing by me that students did not encounter: field notes; blog reports of the week's experience; official reports/papers analyzing progress of the program as a whole

Photographs of students taken in situ

Outsider traces: standardized test scores; grades, report cards, and comments

Books used in curriculum

Hutsch data from outside of Room For Writing: informal, unstructured interviews with teachers; fieldnotes

Material culture: toys, games, knickknacks, figurines, mobiles, masks, shelved books; musical instruments
Appendix B
Summary of Student Participants in *Writing to Connect*

Total number of students who participated over three years: 103

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total students</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of participation</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The names of the students (pseudonyms) who participated for three years:

Girls: Angel, Cheryl, Diamond, Lexus, and Nieta
Boys: Kayode, Darrion, Kenneth, Marcus, and Tyrone
## Appendix C
### Coding Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skin Color</td>
<td>SKN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>RACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Activity</td>
<td>LA (play 2 write; read 2 write; talk 2 write; play 2 play; write 2 talk; talk 2 talk; read 2 read; read 2 read, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidialectal Features in Teaching</td>
<td>BIDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidialectal Literacy Activities</td>
<td>BIDI-LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Curriculum Transfer</td>
<td>RCT+ or RCT-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS identity Construction</td>
<td>ILS-ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Identity Construction</td>
<td>STU-ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Relationships</td>
<td>FR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambient Material Culture</td>
<td>AMB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tools/Technology</td>
<td>T&amp;T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Proximity</td>
<td>PROX</td>
</tr>
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<td>Textual Copying</td>
<td>COPY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Teacher Input</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order &amp; Justice Awareness</td>
<td>LOJ</td>
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<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>MGMT</td>
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<td>Student Power/Agency</td>
<td>KP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS Power/Agency</td>
<td>ILSP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rough Lifeworld Features</td>
<td>RUFF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson Failure</td>
<td>LF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundamental Revelation</td>
<td>REV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embodied Learning</td>
<td>BOD</td>
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<td>&quot;Let's Move On&quot;</td>
<td>MO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
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<td>More than One Hand on a Page</td>
<td>COTXT</td>
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<td>Visual Design Salience</td>
<td>LAYOUT</td>
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<td>Silence</td>
<td>SILE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Initiated Literacy Event</td>
<td>SIL</td>
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As suggested by Pearsol in Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 439), I will detail the chronology of the inductive content analysis I conducted across three years of data described in Appendix A. I began by reading through the 2005-2006 blog. As I did so, I highlighted and labeled the stories, descriptions, and examples that seemed most significant. I assigned these items to descriptive categories, which I listed in a notebook, and developed abbreviated codes for them. I read through the blog a second time, this time writing the codes in the margins, often with a phrase or two of analysis that would remind me of my initial impression. Next I read through all of the student work from the same year, 2005-2006. In a notebook I listed specific exemplars of the analytical codes I was developing, indexing them to the individual student so that I would know where to find it for citation. Reading student work, I also noted additional categories that were not apparent in the blog (such as “skin color,” SKN, and “law and order and justice awareness,” LOJ). I repeated this same process for the years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. Once I had what I believed to be a complete list of categories, I repeated this entire again, paying special attention to the student compositions of the students I taught for all three years.

Next, I read through the raw field notes taken in situ. I read through the years in order, and make analytical notes as I did so. Here I found scraps of quotes and off-the-cuff observations that had not made it into the blog. I found charts of seating
arrangements, and details about individual students, such as how they were feeling or behaving, with whom they had teamed up to write, and so forth.

At this point I indexed the audio tapes. I listened to them, took detailed notes about what was on each tape, and made decisions about which sections of tape to transcribe in full. I transcribed both small sections of discussion and longer episodes. I laid out photographs on a large worktable, and kept them in view throughout my analysis and writing.

I made lists of lessons that I deemed successful or rich with complex meaning (failed lessons were particularly noted). I returned to the long list of coding categories, and began to see the ways in which certain terms or phrases might be bundled together under a larger umbrella term. I called these five larger categories, “Ideas for Treatment,” and listed them. They included FEELING, GENRE, SKN/RACE/ID/CULTURE, POWER, and MULTILITERACIES. With the data and these categories fresh in my mind, I rethought the design and structure of the study. How did these concepts fit together in the program? How might they fit together in telling the story of the program? I drafted a chart which I called “Communicative Matrix in the Volatile Frontier.” The matrix had two columns: SKN/RACE/CULTURE/ID and GENRE. It had three rows: POWER, FEELING, and MULTILITERACIES. Inside the matrix I jotted examples from the data. The next thing I knew, double-headed arrows were pointing from box to box, suggesting flow and overlap. At this point I began to see how the study might be arranged in terms of chapters and topics.
With this better sense of structure I returned again to the folders of student work, the field notes, and the blog, in order to glean additional exemplars of the newly enlarged categories as they were shaping up into chapters.
Informed Consent for Teachers to Participate in Research Activities
Bidialectal Teaching in Language Arts Enrichment

Participant ______________________________________        HSC Approval Number

Principal Investigator IndaSchaenen____________________  PI’s phone number 314-863-6403

Why am I being asked to participate?

As a teacher, you are invited to participate in a research study about using vernacular dialect in teaching standard English conducted by Inda Schaenen and Wendy Saul, a student and professor in the College of Education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. You have been asked to participate in the research because some of your students at Gundlach are participating in an enrichment program called Room For Writing under the auspices of Springboard to Learning, a city-wide academic and cultural enrichment program. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with Gundlach School. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What is the purpose of this research?

We are trying to determine how using vernacular English in the classroom in deliberate and limited ways may improve achievement in standard English. We are going to document lessons and practices that improve school performance overall.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in this research, you can expect:

That I will talk to you about formal and informal writing and teaching practices, many concerning the practice of code switching. Our conversations will be collected, recorded, and studied over time. The study will not interfere with regular school work or regular school schedules. The study will be conducted over several years at Gundlach School.
Any time I spend with you will be at your convenience during the school day. Because I teach some of your children and you are familiar with their work outside the Room For Writing, I will talk with you about your understanding of the ways standard English and vernacular English are used in your classroom. I may ask to visit your classroom in order to listen and observe language, but will do so only with your express permission. In your classroom I may take notes or use a tape recorder to track what kind of language the students use. The time we spend together will be determined by your needs and schedule. I estimate the range of time we well spend together as two minutes to a half hour at any one time.

All of the Room For Writing students and some portion of Gundlach teachers may be involved in this research. All of the research will happen at Gundlach School.

**Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

It may be that after participating in this research, teachers will know a little more about how language works. Teachers will understand the benefits of becoming flexible and adaptive with respect to what forms of English to use where. Teachers may observe that their students may be able to do better in school because of this increased knowledge, and because of the direct instruction and dialogue their students experience during the enrichment period. Teachers may be able to institute classroom practices that are more effective for children outside of the study.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. If photographs, videos or audiotape recordings of you will be used for educational purposes, your identity will be protected or disguised. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

If any activities are audio- or videotaped, you have the right to review/edit the tapes, which will be archived with the Principal Investigator Inda Schaenen, who can be reached at 314-863-6403. Inda Schaenen will code, store, and protect the privacy of all written work and recordings of conversations in order to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you decide to end your participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at [http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/IRB.html](http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/IRB.html), or you may request that the Investigator send you a copy of the letter.
Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Inda Schaenen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Inda at 314-863-6403, or Inda’s supervising faculty advisor at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, Dr. Wendy Saul, at 314-772-0652.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

What if I am a UMSL student?

You may choose not to participate, or to stop your participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your class standing or grades at UM-SL. The investigator also may end your participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

What if I am a UMSL employee?

Your participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with Gundlach School. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

All signature dates must match.

_____________________________________________     Date     ________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature                                             Date    Participant’s Printed Name

_____________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                             Date
Assent to Participate in Research Activities (Minors)
Bidialectal Teaching in Language Arts Enrichment

1. My name is Inda Schaenen.

2. I am asking you to take part in a project because we are trying to learn more about how to teach English better.

3. If you agree to be in this project I will be able to look at your writing and listen to your conversation in ways that will help me understand how to be a better teacher. I may ask you to write down stories or ideas that you might have. I may talk with you and record what you say in my notes or with a tape recorder. I am interested in understanding the choices you make when you speak. Most of us sound one way at home and another way in school. What makes you choose one way of talking instead of another? What goes on around us that makes us switch our words or phrases? These are complicated questions, and, with your help, I am trying to figure out how to answer them.

4. It may be that after participating in this project you will know a little more about why you use certain words in some places and other words in other places. Because of what you learn in this project, you may be able to do better in school. You may get better grades, and you may do better on the standardized tests you take.

5. I have asked for your parent’s/guardian’s permission for you to participate in this project. Even if the person who takes care of you says “yes,” you still can decide not to do this.

6. If you do not want to be in this project, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this project is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not want to participate or if you change your mind later and want to stop.

7. You can ask any questions that you have about the project. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me at 314-863-6403 or ask me next time you see me.

8. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this project. You and your family will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.
Informed Consent for Your Child’s Participation in Research Activities
Bidialectal Teaching in Language Arts Enrichment

Participant ____________________________ HSC Approval Number ____________________
____________________
Principal Investigator ___Inda Schaenen__________________________ PI’s Phone Number:
314-863-6403

Why is your child being asked to participate?

Your child is invited to participate in a research study about using informal “home” language – sometimes called “Ebonics,” in classroom settings in order to better understand and master the Standard English of more formal environments like school and work. The study is being done by Inda Schaenen, who has been teaching writing at Gundlach School since 2005. Inda is a doctoral student at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, and is working under the supervision of Professor Wendy Saul at UMSL’s College of Education.

Your child has been asked to participate in the research because she or he participates in the Room For Writing at Gundlach, a writing enrichment program under the umbrella of Springboard to Learning, an academic and cultural enrichment organization that serves the students of St. Louis Public School. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow your child to participate in the research. Your child’s participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision to allow him or her to participate will not affect your family’s current or future relations with the University or with Gundlach School. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your permission at any time without affecting those relationships.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to understand how informal language of home relates to formal language of school, and how children can use their fluency in their home language to understand and master the rules and concepts of Standard English.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research, she or he will be writing, speaking, and reading various forms of English. Some forms will be standard English. Others forms of English will be more informal—the way they speak at home, for example, or on the playground with friends. I will be taking notes on their use of language. Sometimes I will be using a tape recorder. I will be checking for when they use their formal English and when they use their
informal English. There will be no swearing or use of “curse words” allowed or tolerated in this research.

I will explain to your child that the way we all speak depends on where we are. When we are at home, we use certain words. When we are at school, we may use different words. I will tell them that we are trying to understand ways to become better teachers of English, and that keeping track of what form of language we use where is one way to do this.

All of my work with your child will take place during school hours, and in the course of their regular day.

Approximately 70 students and teachers may be involved in this research at Gundlach School.

**What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

I anticipate no risks of any sort to your child on account of participating in this study.

**Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

As the researcher interacts with your child and raises his or her awareness of the purpose and use of language, your child is likely to experience a huge new understanding of verbal communication. Because of this understanding, she or he may come to feel greater sense of power and accomplishment. Being able to switch from formal to informal English at will is likely to increase your child’s flexibility in social situations. Because of the instruction and conversation in this project, your child may do better on standardized tests. Your child may do better in school and get better grades.

**Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?**

During the course of the study, you will be informed if something new is learned about language arts education that makes me feel that the risks or benefits of this study change either for good or for bad. If we learn something that makes me think that you might want to change your mind about letting your child participate, I will keep you informed. At that point I will ask your permission for your child to participate all over again.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

The only people who will know that your child is a research subject are members of the research team. No information about your child or you will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- if necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the University of Missouri-St Louis Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- if required by law.
In any published work resulting from this research, I will protect your child’s privacy and anonymity by whatever means are necessary—using a made-up name, for example, or initials only.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your child’s identity. If photographs, videos or audiotape recordings of your child will be used for educational purposes, his or her identity will be protected or disguised. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with your child, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The only people allowed to handle any audio or video tapes of your child, or any of their written work, are Inda Schaenen, the principal investigator; Dr. Wendy Saul, Inda’s supervising and advising professor, and one or two other faculty researchers at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Inda will keep all of her notes and documents, including your child’s written work, locked in files—one at Gundlach School and one at her home. No unauthorized people will be able to see any of your child’s work. Any video or audio tapes will be erased.

The research team will use and share information until January 2008. At that point, the investigator will remove the identifiers from your information, making it impossible to link you to the study.

**What are the costs for having your child participate in this research?**

There is no cost at all for having your child participate in this research.

**Will I be paid for my child’s participation in this research?**

There is no payment, fee, or reward to you for allowing your child to participate in this research. If your child’s behavior becomes unmanageable, or if she or he becomes a threat to himself/herself, to others, or to school or personal property, the Principal Investigator may decide to release him or her from the study and you will be informed of this decision.

**Can I withdraw or remove my child from the study?**

Yes. You can choose whether or not to allow your child to be in this study. If you do grant your permission, you may change your mind and withdraw your permission at any time without consequences of any kind. The investigator may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which make this necessary. If you decide to end your child’s participation in the study, please complete the withdrawal letter found at [http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/IRB.html](http://www.umsl.edu/services/ora/IRB.html), or you may request that the Investigator, Inda Schaenen, send you a copy of the letter.

If your child’s behavior becomes unmanageable, or if she or he becomes a threat to himself/herself, to others, or to school or personal property, the Principal Investigator may decide to release him or her from the study and you will be informed of this decision.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**
The researcher conducting this study is Inda Schaenen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Inda at 314-863-6403 or Inda’s research advisor at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, Dr. Wendy Saul, at 314-772-0652.

**What are my child’s rights as a research subject?**

If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a research subject, you may call the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at (314) 516-5897.

**What if I am a UMSL student?**

You may choose not to allow your child to participate, or to stop your child’s participation in this research, at any time. This decision will not affect your own class standing or grades at UM-SL. The investigator also may end your child’s participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing will not be affected. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you allow your child to participate in this research.

**What if I am a UMSL employee?**

Your child’s participation in this research is, in no way, part of your university duties, and your refusal to allow him or her to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at UM-SL. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you allow your child to participate in this research.

**Remember:** Participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to allow your child to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with Gundlach School. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw that permission at any time without affecting those relationships.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

**All signature dates must match.**

_____________________________________________  Date  ____________________________
Participant’s Signature                                            Date    Participant’s Printed Name  

_____________________________________________  Date  ____________________________
Parent or Guardian’s Signature                               Date          Parent or Guardian’s Printed Name
Assent to Participate in Research Activities (Minors)

My name is Inda Schaenen. As you know, we spent three years together in the Room For Writing. We did a lot of talking about language, and about writing in general. I am still doing a research project at the University of Missouri, Saint Louis. You gave me permission to use our classroom experience in my research project about teaching writing. However, I still have some questions about language and teaching! I would like to talk with you more about these things. I am hoping we can meet at some place like a library, or restaurant, or even at your home if there is an adult there too.

If you agree to participate in these interviews, I would be asking you questions about your memories and experiences of learning to write, learning to read, and learning to do these things (and doing them) in different places (at home, in school, or other places). I would like to meet with you three different times, all within two weeks. We can arrange the times that are best for you. I would record our conversation with an audio cassette recorder/player.

There are no risks at all to you if you participate in these interviews. One benefit might be that we could stay in touch even though Gundlach School is closed and there is no Room For Writing.

Please talk this over with your parent or guardian before you decide whether to participate. I also will give your parents the opportunity to say no to your participation. If they would like to ask me anything at all about this research, they can call me at 314-605-6204 at any time. Even if your parents say "yes," you can decide to say "no." If you don't want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. Remember, being in this study is completely up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or if you change your mind later and want to stop. I will protect your privacy by not sharing your name with anyone else. I will store any tapes or transcripts in a locked place in my house.

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me at 314-605-6204 or ask me when we meet next. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it. Thank you!

Participant’s Signature          Date          Participant’s Printed Name

Parent or Guardian’s Signature   Date          Parent or Guardian’s Printed Name

Participant’s Age               Grade in School
Appendix F
Photo of Hutsch Exterior
Appendix G
Floor Plan and Photos of Room For Writing
Appendix H
“Note on the Text”
(Inserted into the 2005-2006 Anthology of Student Work)

It will be clear to many readers that the writing in this book—a snapshot of our students’ work during the first year of a multi-year program—does not consistently conform to the rules and customs of written expression in standard English. Please remember that Room For Writing, the first program of its kind offered by [the arts and academic enrichment organization], was conceived as a long term engagement with the students at Hutsch School. Before our students can begin to marshal the skills necessary to become masters of communication in standard English, we must recapitulate all of the literacy enrichment available to children in more highly resourced communities. Conversation, reading, thinking, and reflecting on personal experience—the kind of foundational exploration of language and feeling taken for granted in many schools—is where academic achievement begins. As writing specialists, we know that while drilling, correcting, and red-lining may squeeze a “correct” answer from a child, that is not the way to genuine and lifelong mastery. (If it were, we would see a greater difference between the written work of the sixth graders, for example, and that of the third graders.) Please pay special attention to the italicized descriptions of the assignments in order to see the kinds of probing and self-directed investigation we encouraged. During this first year, our aim was to make room for our students’ thoughts, feelings, and impressions; to allow time for revision and re-thinking; and to begin to see how all of this material, subjected to this deeply engaged process, might inform and improve writing. Room For Writing is committed to Hutsch students over time. What we expect, and what we are
working toward in the coming years, is a school full of children who feel confident using standard and non-standard forms of English appropriately and skillfully. This volume is but a first installment.
Appendix I
Revision Handout

REVISION: SEEING A PROJECT AGAIN WITH FRESH EYES
Writers revise!

Just because you have wrote something does not mean it finished.

(Oops!)

\[ \text{written} \]

Just because you have wrote something does not mean it finished.

Just because you have written something does not mean it is finished.

STEPS TOWARD REVISION:

1. Read the first draft aloud, either to yourself or to a partner.
2. Mark changes and corrections on the copy.
3. Add and delete information as you like.
4. Rewrite the next draft below.

Just because you have written something does not mean it is finished. Maybe you have more to say, or maybe you have said too much!
Appendix J
The Egg

Writing to Connect: Products and Processes
Appendix K

Doctor’s Impromptu Definition of Shell

Shells are mineral “covers” made by invertebrates such as clams to “home” and protect them throughout their lives. We also use the word shell to describe the hard covering of arthropods such as lobsters. Shell is also used metaphorically to describe any hard, protective covering. Metaphorically, it also describes an emotional barrier that others may sense around a person who has withdrawn socially.
Appendix M

Darrion Thinking

I ask, "What does genre mean?" Darrion struggles to define the word. He squeezes his eyes shut, bobs back and forth, and flips his pencil repeatedly.
Appendix N

Mohammed’s Hybrid Text:
Letter, Biography, Personal Affirmation, Illustration

Dear mam,

Richard was born in a Mississippi plantation. Richard Wright was the son of a farmer. He was born on 1908. And I am Abdul Pickens and I am in room for Wright and this is his Schaereh class. She helps me with my Wright.

From your son,

[Signature]

[Date: 1908] 19600
Appendix O

The Lifeline

LIFE LINE

Names: 

Dates: 1-25-06

Good Things

Learned how to use the bathroom
Learned how to walk
Learned how to go to school
Learned how to write and read
Learned how to do a split


Birthday

Age

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Not-so-good Things

First day of school

Slapped brother

Went on a trip

Got a glass in my foot

Got a glass in my hand

Went on a trip

Went in the navy

Went on a trip

Went on a trip

Went on a trip
Appendix P

Memo on Culture

Culture in the Classroom: A Suggested Stance for Writing Enrichment Specialists

Here’s the dicey nitty-gritty. If we are true to our mission—to sustain and nurture a place where students can engage in literacy practices that are authentic (true to lived experience), a natural outgrowth of their own initiative, and connected to community (their own and the school’s), then we are going to come face to face with elements of their culture that are difficult and complex for us to manage in ways that are both ethical and pedagogically sound. Free conversations may turn to guns, loved ones imprisoned, violent acts or words, and other subjects. Teaching and learning through these moments requires some serious thought and advance preparation so that we do not appear to be either eliciting this stuff, or relishing it as stories of “the other.” On the other hand, this is a Room For Writing, and writers write what they know. We do want our students to take themselves seriously as writers and observers. We do not want them to feel that anything about their lives is taboo for them as a subject. That’s not writerly. Moreover, if a child expresses something that requires us (as authority figures) to articulate a value judgement, how can we do this safely?

1. Be aware that this is something we have to be aware of. Being mindful is the first and most important step.
2. Try to avoid asking the questions that invite violence into the reply.
3. Try to move from the specific story that gets told toward a general comment: “Hmm, that made me think. People sure can do or say mean things. Or hurtful things.” Don’t ask for details in front of the whole class.
4. If a child writes about his father putting a gun in his face, that's OK, if everyone in a class writes about their gun experience that's not OK because it suggests that we got excited about this topic and invited everyone to weigh in.
5. If you ever feel that a child might be in danger—and you don't need any confirmation on this—you must tell a school or organizational administrator, a higher-up.
January 27, 2007

Dear Tremaine,

I am writing to tell you that I am so sorry to have had to dismiss you from class the other day. I love having you in class when you pay attention and try your hardest, Tremaine. You are such a smart boy and I know you have lots of interesting ideas in your head. You have stories to tell and a natural way with words and thoughts. You are also -- and you need to know this -- a VERY VERY VERY good reader. Thinking about all this, Mrs. J. and I have come up with a plan.

I invite you to come upstairs this week. But instead of sitting and working with all of us in the room, which seems to be very hard for you these days, I will make you a nice place to sit and read. I will offer you a few choices to choose among so that you can find something that’s challenging but also interesting. Once we settle on your level of reading, we can pick more books. From time to time I will ask you to write about what you are reading. I will also allow you to write in your journal, in case there are things you feel like writing about but find difficult to talk about. Tremaine, this is a privilege we are offering you so that you can be the best student you can be. I will need you to honor this privilege by behaving well and concentrating. I am asking you to sign your name at the bottom of this note so that we will all know that you take this opportunity seriously.

I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday.

Love,

Ms. Schaenen

I understand what you expect from me:

X_________________________________

Date: ___________________________
Appendix R

Third Grade Writing About the Word Nigger

With the exception of Angel, who finds the word all right to use "at times," but "not to offend or hurt someone, the consensus among my students in the passages quoted here is that the word nigger is not "OK to say." Among their observations of the word-in-use, the students remark that the word nigger can incite violence, can make people feel afraid, can hurt or offend listeners, and should not be used. The passages also reveal tension and confusion with respect to the word in relation to the trusted adults and family members who do use it. Only Cheryl declares with confidence that while some people in her family think it's OK, she does not.

As I passed out paper before the students began to write, I emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers in this kind of writing activity. The idea was to write out what we were thinking in order to know what we were thinking. In my mind, I envisioned these passages, generically speaking, as essays in the true sense of the word: trials, tests of a thought or a series of thoughts. Like Montaigne, the students wrestled openly and doubtfully. I would like to call particular attention to Cheryl's paragraph below. She begins with a topic sentence, which she supports with the one that follows: the reason that she believes the word is not "OK to say" is because it is not endogenous to the African American community where it is used ("some white person made it up"). Cheryl then reckons with the various perspectives on and justifications of the word in her own family. She also details where else she has heard it, and weighs all of this perceptual material when making use of the analytical transition word, "evidently." Cheryl's evidence and
reasoning lead to two different "confusing" conclusions: it is both OK and not OK to use the word. The writing here reveals an engaged mind wrestling with a complicated concept, and winding up ambivalent and unsettled. I claim it as exemplary analytical work.

*Angel*
Hi. my name is Angel and I think the word nigar [sic] is a word that is used to make a black person feel like he or she doesn't belong. I think that every person should not be judged by the skin color but by their personality. But do you know that the word nigar was not always bad it also was another word for black but it become a bad word from the Laitin people I think it's O.K. to say the word at times but when your [sic] using it to ofind [offend] or heart [hurt] someone it's not O.K. and I think everyone knows that. The word nigar is some kind of word but the word nigar could heart [sic] someone so badly that it makes you not want to know of a word like that as you could see the word nigar is use 75 percent of the black people say the word when they are angry and when they sometimes think it's cool you might hear me say it but not to hurt someone.

*Alyana*
My mom does not like the my sister saying the N. word because she is light-skinned and my mom is afraid that she is going to get beat up…My brothers and my cousins act mean to her beacause of her skin…I want my sister to go to the same school as me so I can protect her. That’s why doesn’t want her to say word nigga and I don’t either that’s sister love.

*Diamond*
Is it OK to say nigger? I think it’s not OK because it can cause people to argue and fight and die. But people say it like it’s a standard English. But it’s really not. But a lot of people say it in my family because usually people in my family say it to babies, kids, adults, teenagers, elders. But it is not not not absolutely not positively not definitely not OK. But it is not an easy subject to stop saying it. But if you can control your bad words that come out your mouth but try to might can really really really help. But mostly I hear it on streets, in stores, in cars, radios. But mostly rappers, singers. But I said it a lot of times. But I am getting scared I mean very very scared. Because I going to die. But mostly I hear it from bloods, crips. But I’m still wondering………I’m next?
**Darrion**
The word niggaz is not okay for some people. But nobody should use it. And why do they call chocolate milk nigger milk. Whoever made that word is foul. And sometimes when grown up use it I feel afraid.

**Kayode**
I think that the person who changed the word negro to the word nigger should change it back because nigger is bad. I think they should change it because the word nigger make people feel bad and hurt. When … you say the word nigger people try to fight. The End.

**Erika**
The word nigger is not okay for me to say it. My mom says not to say it. It is very bad. And I hear people on the streets saying it. And mostly thugs say it and they be shooting. And I be scared.

**Cheryl**
Some people in my family think it is OK to say the word nigga but I don’t. I don’t think it is OK to say the word nigga because I think that some white person made it up. My cousin think it is OK to say the word nigga probably because she say the word all the time. But my other cousin think it is not OK because she think it is inappropriate. But usually the only places I hear it is on the streets and on rap songs and sometimes I see it in the bible and sometimes I hear it in church but evidently the word nigga is not bad because everybody say it. I be getting confused sometimes because one minute the preacher would say that the word nigga is OK to say but then other preachers think it is not OK to say.

**Ebony**
The word nigger is a very unkind and kind word. But this how it came to be. One day a white person called a colored person a nigger and that colored person was mad. That colored person was Hammer's mom. Hammer's mom was called a nigger and was disrespected. Hammer didn't like how his mom was disrespected. Hammer's mom didn't say a word to the simmies. Hammer was about to say something to the simmies about disrespecting his mom. Hammer's mom told him not to say anything about it. Hammer's mom said that word was not nice to say. Hammer's mom told her kids not to say it. Hammer was still mad about how they was disrespecting his mom. Hammer's mom was thinking about what they was saying. So Hammer's mom mom pulled a gun out and was about to shoot the simmies. But Hammer's mom stopped her mom from shooting the simmies. And that's how the word nigger came to be.
Appendix S

Mohammed’s Genre Log

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<th>Date Revised</th>
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<tr>
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Appendix T

Curls vs. Flat-Iron

Angel argues in favor of curls.

Cheryl argues in favor of flat-iron.
Appendix U

Kayode Writing at My Desk
Appendix V
Kayode’s Writing Across Time

Second grade: Fall 2005
Schooled identity: Kayode attends to formatting with the word “title,” followed by the underlined title. Affection for family: The word “family” appears three times.

Second grade: Spring 2006
Schooled identity: Kayode is a knower (and follower) of rules.
Third grade: Fall 2006
As instructed, Kayode considers sensory information: taste, smell, sight. Then he makes a plan and a remark.

Third grade: Spring 2007
Reporting on a classroom visitor’s presentation, Kayode narrates a story within a story to recreate a personal/historical recount.

Notice the development in small motor control and use of space on the page over the course of the year.
Fourth grade: Fall 2007
Spiritual dedication: Kayode seems to identify with both God and those whom God protects (“looks over”).

Format and rules: The trio of exclamation marks opens and closes the composition.

Fourth grade: Spring 2008
Political awareness: Kayode knows the minimum age of presidential candidates. He is ready to hold power and use it to free adults from work, to liberate kids from being bossed around.
Appendix W

Kayode’s Soul Food
Seasoning Store