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A GRADE 7 TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS' NEGOTIATION OF LITERATE IDENTITY IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURB EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS OF RESIDENCY: THE ENACTMENT OF LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION, CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

presented by

KIRSTEN DARA HILL

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in CURRICULUM, TEACHING, AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Susan Florio-Ruane
Major Professor's Signature

July 22, 2006
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# A GRADE 7 TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS' NEGOTIATION OF LITERATE IDENTITY IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURB EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS OF RESIDENCY: THE ENACTMENT OF LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION, CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

VOLUME I

By

Kirsten Dara Hill

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

A GRADE 7 TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS' NEGOTIATION OF LITERATE IDENTITY IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURB EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS OF RESIDENCY: THE ENACTMENT OF LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION, CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

By

Kirsten Dara Hill

The announced closure of 34 Detroit Public Schools during the 2004-2005 School Year, as a result of Detroit's declining population, led to a chain of events for its surrounding suburbs, including Oak Valley. Oak Valley received a midyear influx of working class African American students. Although parents sought educational parity, their children encountered teachers largely unprepared to teach them and a community that questioned the legitimacy of residency status. Speculation that many enrollees were border cheaters led to 3000 parents who signed a petition, requiring all Oak Valley students to re enroll and confirm residency status. Although proponents of this requirement claimed that race was not the issue, opponents suggested that poor and minority students were disproportionately investigated. Ultimately, what arrived at the forefront was a community that was pushed to confront its discomfort with diversity, rooted in intergenerational divisions of race and class. In an environment where teachers were uncertain about modifying instruction, this study examines an experienced 7$^{th}$ grade English teacher who identified demographic change as an opportunity toward improvisation in a culturally responsive manner, among 29 racially and ethnically diverse students, including five African American students from Detroit. He is an experienced teacher who was capable and motivated to change his pedagogy within the limits of the district's seventh grade standards by working with his

class as a developing community, in which adaptations and improvisation would play important roles in the mediation of experiences by language. It is in this way that the teacher transforms a community norm for students to study language in the upper grades as a literature based experience. But by selecting district sanctioned, though rarely used literature, the teacher is able both to respond to the cultural differences among his students, especially those who are border crossers. He creatively improvises curriculum in a manner that prompts students to investigate social stratification by identity, or even by culturally familiar or unfamiliar curriculum, as one way a group can enact a theory critical of race as the essential characteristic of a person. This teacher gives us a case in which he and his students confront a socially just community and curriculum as a key learning challenge.

The case of Mr. Lehrer reveals his expertise as a literacy teacher, his ability to finesse (Pardo, 2005) book choices as the basis of instruction, and his knowledge and experience of the borderland where families are coming into contact by means of de facto "school choice," a value that is neither universal nor easy to enact.

Professionals, teachers, administrators, and policy makers alike may learn from the case, and perhaps others, (Cohen, 1990) that change cannot be predicted or controlled, that people negotiate change, and good teaching is decision making often moment to moment and in complex, indeterminate circumstances. Getting learners to risk coming along and risking together, as a stage of multiracial, multiethnic engagement is more authentic than forced politeness or de facto segregation (Nieto, 1994).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to Jason. We have a shared history and connection to Detroit that many people cannot comprehend. Because of you, I have a better understanding of the reality of Detroit's underclass. All of this would not have been possible without your support and understanding. You helped keep me on track throughout the program and made sure my needs were met. You helped me recognize that we can do anything we set our minds to. Thank you for believing me, especially during moments when I didn't believe in myself.

I would also like to thank my parents for being near, even though you were far away. Your words of wisdom and encouragement inspired me to pursue this project. Thanks, Dad, for paving the way for me and modeling what it means to pursue research. Thanks, Mom, for the stories about the imposed transition in our Bagley neighborhood. Thanks also, for contributing to the body of knowledge surrounding Detroit's tumult, and for providing the history that is not written about.

I would like to especially thank Anne Haas Dyson for inviting me to take Advanced Methods in Qualitative Research for three years in a row. You saw potential in this work while I was bringing it to fruition and helped me cultivate my research from the proposal stage, data collection, to the eventual write-up. You helped me identify that all students possess funds of knowledge and linguistic competence, during a critical time when so many practitioners assume a deficit approach.

Special thanks to Susan Florio-Ruane, for instilling in me an initial value in becoming a teacher researcher during my days at Detroit Public Schools. You were integral to my awareness of professional development that is on-going and relevant to

the circumstances that concern teachers, and I was able to experience benefits firsthand in the Teacher in Residence collaborative. You inspired and influenced me to pursue the program at Michigan State University. From you I learned the significance of the ethnic based paradigm in relation to my work. You always managed to situate my work in metaphors and pushed my thinking in ways I would have never considered. I intend to fulfill your legacy and extend it to my future students and mentees.

For Dylan and Kira, who were always curious about why Auntie Dara spent so much time working on this project, but understood that it was important. I wish you everything you aspire to become. Remember that there is nothing you cannot do and to always utilize your best potential.

# PREFACE

Detroit is an urban, Midwestern city, which for decades has been struggling to retain its population, due to the on-going exodus of its upwardly mobile, in search of the sanctity of its neighboring suburbs. Perhaps the most affluent neighboring suburb is Oak Valley, the original bedroom community of Detroit's industrial past. The auto barons build their fortunes in Detroit and resided in its wealthier neighborhoods, and later established roots in Oak Valley. This initial exodus of the wealthy was perhaps the onset of the longing for Oak Valley as a suburb defined by affluence.

Detroit and Oak Valley are unique neighbors. As Detroit has experienced the exodus of the majority of its wealthy and middle class base, so too has Oak Valley's original wealth forged changes. Although patterns of wealth have shifted across the two boundaries, the contrasts between the two communities have grown dramatically. Salient contrasts are within the realm of housing, racial identity of residents, quality of education, student achievement, social standing, and rates of employment.

Currently, wealthy Oak Valley residents attend charitable events, often intended for the betterment of Detroit residents, but there is an underlying disconnect between recipients and the wealthy. Upon making the drive from Oak Valley to downtown Detroit, there is noticeable evidence of numerous blighted pockets that are not pleasing to the eye. One would likely render the blight invisible, and the wealthy who drive through have little to do with rebuilding efforts, but assume a blind eye. The disparities between both boundaries are normalized, and the wealthy accept conditions as they are.

Oak Valley Schools are embedded in a close knit community and are high achieving. It is common for Oak Valley graduates to attend college and return to the community to raise their family. To that end, Oak Valley's community underlies intergenerational cultural reproduction and a familial bond.

The current climate in Detroit Public Schools is such that parents in droves are removing their children from a system they view as failing, for alternatives that are seemingly more viable: charter schools, religious schools, Afro centered academies, to nearby suburbs under school of choice voucher programs. Oak Valley is not a district that participates in the school of choice initiative. Instead, enrollees must live in Oak Valley boundaries or Huntington, a nearby, less affluent suburb. To that end, housing in Oak Valley is out of a working class family's reach. The presence of working class Detroiters has been unwelcome, due to the nature of relocating to Huntington or affordable areas in Oak Valley.

Hence, Detroiters living below the poverty line have been accustomed to pooling economic resources to rent in Detroit, and transience has been commonly enacted to exercise school choice. Therefore, Detroiters began to move to the fringes of Oak Valley where apartments and small houses could, in fact be rented by an individual signing a lease by pooling the money for rent and housing children who, by virtue of address could legally attend Oak Valley's public schools. Although many families relocate to Huntington or affordable areas in Oak Valley, many Detroiters have sought additional alternatives, including utilizing the address of a friend or relative in Oak Valley. Moreover, many families in Huntington, but it is commonly speculated that Detroiters continue to reside in Detroit, while procuring the address that enables access

to Oak Valley Schools. Establishing residency, under circumstances deemed questionable, is indicative of enrollees with limited cultural capital.

Additional residences have often abutted the largest hospital in the area, serving people from both sides of the border, while similarly hiring diverse workers. Interns and residents are aloes provided with affordable housing who are not well paid, but would become Oak Valley residents after completing training for their medical careers. Their children were not questioned as appropriate in Oak Valley Schools because similar to third culture children elsewhere, they possessed high cultural capital, in spite of low income status. Essentially, fitting in was not a simple definition of renters and property owners or of children who spoke first languages other than English. Additionally, fitting in was more than being defined by parents who did not pay property tax, included in their rent. Rather, it was a clash of what constituted legal residency in Oak Valley that created tensions Mr. Lehrer would face in his English classroom. Questions were raised within the realm racial identity or income transitioned to questions of practices, including multiple families living at the same address to send their children to Oak Valley Schools. Questions were raised, of getting a free education that other paid for, posited in high and increasing property taxes. Detroit enrollees were commonly acknowledged as "those kids" who were not prepared to do grade level work, which raised concerns about taxing school resources for remediation and taking such resources away from "our kids".

Moreover, excellence of school was a point of pride in this community and a source of maintaining property values, while continuing to be desirable places for middle and upper middle class professionals to live. A precipitous increase of Detroit students

led to speculation that those kids would result in a decline of test scores and consequent decline of property values.

What could the students of Oak Valley gain by having their classes integrated by Detroit students? Detroit students feel so marginalized by their reception and by their initial lower achievement, leading to in many cases further marginalization. Is there potential for Detroit students to maintain their presence in the schools and benefit from the fine instruction, curriculum, and administration Oak Valley could provide? Mr. Lehrer was as unsure as everyone else. This study of his response to these new and challenging circumstances, how he improvised within the known borders of the Oak Valley School and community, and how he engaged his students in this uncertain work, below the surface, is the story reported in this dissertation.

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## Chapter One: Introduction to the Problem, Rationale, Theory, and Method

*Vignette: A look into Mr. Lehrer's Classroom—An exception in a Racially Polarized School*

The racial and ethnic composition in Mr. Lehrer's 6th hour class was the most diverse in his 18 year career. The gradual demographic changes in the school and his classroom, which was historically White and affluent, led to pedagogical adjustments. Modifications included critical discourse of multicultural literature in a welcoming, non threatening environment. One of his read aloud selections, for example was Paul Fleischman's Seedfolks (1997), which, as will be discussed further in this text, came to represent the class community. The novel presented a community on Gibb street in urban Cleveland, where racially and ethnically diverse residents initially held suspicions about each other. Additionally, ethnic enclaves were sustained in the community, positing that ethnic groups interacted among each other, but not with other groups.

A vacant lot in the community became the focal point for residents to come together and intersect, beginning with a Vietnamese girl who planted lima beans in honor of her father. Each chapter depicted for the class a character from a different background who appropriated their linguistically diverse voice. Their connection with the vacant lot and transforming it into a garden became a community effort. Characters gradually unlearned stereotypes and hostility about each other.

The transformation across and between characters in the novel transcended to the seventh graders in Mr. Lehrer's class. Initial teacher-led conversations about Seedfolks raised controversy between the students from Detroit, Monet, Kiki, and Taye, who sustained their enclave, and everyone else. The basis of the controversy occurred when Jason, a White student, referred to Ana's chapter in the book and her use of the term

Negro. The Detroit trio was deeply offended, the remainder of the class argued that Jason was drawing from the language in the book, and Mr. Lehrer became the mediator between both sides. Lennie suggested the discussion was a waste of time and Taye told him to shut up, with an intonation that spelled outrage. In spite of Mr. Lehrer's suggestion that this was not a waste of time and the best conversation the class participated in all year, it took time for the Detroit trio to recover from feeling singled out and challenged.

Gradually, the discussion with Mr. Lehrer's support reflected awareness that other racial groups were labeled by characters in a manner that might offend a member of that group. Kim, a Vietnamese girl was labeled Chinese by Ana and Wendell's characters, while Melissa, a Filipino student in the class quietly contended with that. For Monet, Kiki, Taye, and everyone else, this understanding transformed their perspective and understanding toward each other.

As the discourse ensued about linguistic diversity across characters, a growing understanding occurred, for Monet, Taye, and Kiki gained an awareness that they were not the only students who speak a deviation from Standard English. Given the racialization of the characters, where physical features covaried by social or national backgrounds, Whiteness was not the norm from which diversity deviated, and nationality did not stand in for either race or culture. Thus, writing one's Seedfolk chapter and moving to discussion of dialect placed all students on an unfamiliar and sometimes contentious "equal footing." This was an example of how a person with deep knowledge of a practice can see with it great complexity—the possibility of transformative pedagogy. The "cognitive" flexibility of the experienced teacher can be

identified and as will be described in Chapter 8, introduced as early as the beginning years of teacher education, in hopes of accelerating the growth of such deep knowledge(Spiro and Jehng, 1990). Transformation occurred when students were invited to write their own Seedfolks chapter that depicted their ethnicity and voice. In fact, Monet, and Abe, a White student, raised questions about depicting their voices in their chapters that deviated from the standard form. Mr. Lehrer welcomed their deviations, assuring that they would not be marked down.

The community eventually came together with Seedfolks and tensions were alleviated. Mr. Lehrer's classroom became the garden, as a focal point for students to unlearn stereotypes about each other. Lennie and Taye agreed interchangeably at the end of the novel that the garden brought the people in the community from different places and backgrounds together. That they came to this agreement after deeply disagreeing reveals that the interactions surrounding Seedfolks was an impetus for students of different backgrounds and places to come together in Mr. Lehrer's classroom community.

*A teacher in a racially polarized school in a cultural and historical context*

These interactions occurred in a racially polarized school, in a controversial climate where suspicions were heightened about legal residency of students who transferred from Detroit. Mr. Lehrer represents a minority of teachers who welcome this nature of discourse, in a manner that provides activity with linguistic mediation toward what Dewey called curricular "ends in view"(1938). This provides a social and linguistic place where activity can become an educative experience and, ultimately, cognitive development (Florio-Ruane and Rosaen, in press). In this context, students

express thoughts about racism and prejudicial treatment, as part of the process of making meaning of difficult topics.

This study will examine the nature of Mr. Lehrer's classroom as a welcoming place for every student, in the sense that every students' engagement, participation and contributions to learning are welcome, regardless of background. Because he represents a minority of teachers, the discomfort with increasing diversity among the majority warrants investigation. It is necessary to theorize the context and the circumstances that shape why teachers and community members sustain perceptions about diverse populations that are regarded as outsiders. In a school district that is gradually recognizing that pedagogical changes are needed to teach its increasingly diverse population, transformation cannot occur unless there is full recognition about existing biases held by many teachers and willingness to take risks to draw on teacher's knowledge in new ways.

The problems embedded in this study are manifest in conditions calling for ethnographic and participation observation research espoused by LeCompte and Schensul (1999). Thus, the context matters to social relations and learning. The following conditions will be explored and defined in Oak Valley Public Schools, an affluent school district experiencing a precipitous influx of working class African American children from neighboring Detroit. The study will attempt to: (1) Define the problem when it is complex and embedded in multiple systems and sectors (2) Clarify the range of settings where the problem or situation is occurring at times when the settings are not fully understood (3) Explore the factors associated with the problem in order to understand and address them, or to identify them when they are not known

(1999). And, finally, to locate participation in the systems to discover how participants come to make a different kind of sense about who they are and what they are doing by participating in the situation Mr. Lehrer provides for them (Well and Chang-Wells, 1992).

This study is an examination of Mr. Lehrer, a grade 7 English teacher, who enacts literature-based instruction and culturally relevant pedagogy among his diverse learners in an affluent suburb experiencing residency issues. The problem is complex, for it encapsulates tensions among African American students at the periphery of Oak Valley Public Schools, an affluent school system and their exodus out of Detroit, a largely struggling school system. Tensions have amassed in the Barrington Middle School community in Oak Valley, as the number of Black children from Detroit precipitously increased during the 2004-05 school year. Prior to this school year, the phenomena of a gradual influx occurred as a result of parent dissatisfaction, perceived and/or experienced, with educational offerings in public schools within Detroit city limits. The influx during the time of the study occurred mid year, and was synonymous with the announcement that Detroit Public Schools would be closing 34 schools at the end of the academic year, due to declining enrollment. The increased influx was also synonymous with suspicion that new enrollees were border cheaters who were stealing from residents by not living in the district or paying property taxes, as an affordance of privilege to attend a top notch school district.

Coincidentally, an onset of 3000 parents in Oak Valley signed a petition to re-enroll each student in the district to confirm residency. Many proponents claimed that the petition drive was not racially motivated, but rather a vehicle to ensure that students,

regardless of color, legally attended its schools. Many opponents, on the other hand, questioned the practice and believed that the tactic was racially motivated, for Black and/or poor students seemed disproportionately targeted.

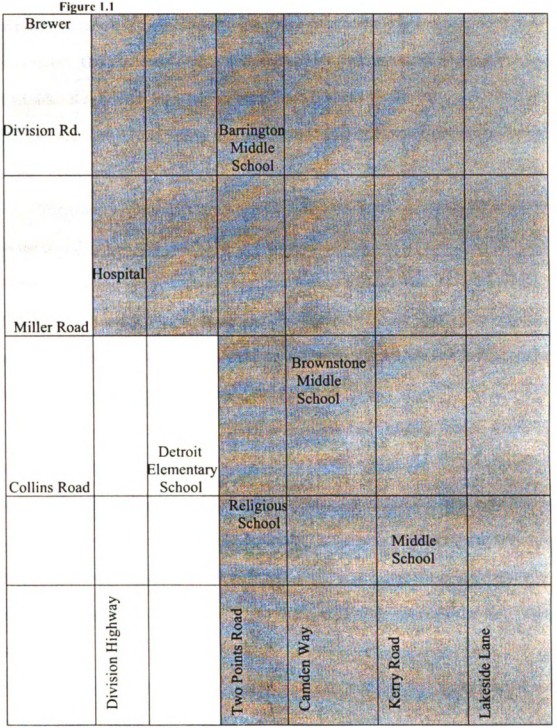
The range of settings where the situation is occurring is in the neighboring school districts, the school, classrooms, and in the community. In this controversial climate, this study is an examination of Mr. Lehrer's practice, as a teacher who manages to teach in an environment that is experiencing dilemmas that resonate when urban children enter a suburban school and face teachers largely unprepared to teach them.

Dilemmas that are not fully identified and understood are embedded in historical and current divisions of race and class. To illustrate, these divisions historically define where people reside, and consequently, where children attend school, and where teachers prefer to teach. Currently, Oak Valley is predominantly White and affluent, bordering Detroit, which is disproportionately African American and poor. The school enrollment mirrors these populations.

*Mapping Oak Valley's Demography and Surrounding Areas*

Divisions are also the foundation of the problem, for the existence and/or reasons of prejudicial treatment and speculation of African American and minority students are not explicitly acknowledged by many teachers and community members. Many claim that the issue is legal residency, not racism. However, it is difficult to overlook the potential for racism, given a petition drive that was seemingly aligned with a precipitous influx of African American children. In order to understand the nature of demography of Oak Valley, its surrounding areas and schools, it is necessary to provide a map illustration and description (See figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1




Detroit Road (The borderlines)

| Detroit | Oak Valley/Huntington | Oak Valley |
|---|---|---|

In order to contextualize demography in and around Oak Valley, it is necessary to provide a map to illustrate where schools are situated and the make up of the students who enroll. Oak Valley is a series of linked suburban enclaves and borders Detroit's East side. Key arteries into Oak Valley include Division Highway, Two Points Road, and Lakeside Lane. Oak Valley's proximity to Detroit and Huntington determines the school's enrollment.

There are two primary entry points from Detroit Road. Detroit Road is regarded as the boundary line that Oak Valley children are warned not to cross. The immediate Detroit border is a visible stark contrast from the manicured lawns and property on the Oak Valley boundary line. Although the Detroit side of Detroit Road is undergoing significant renovation of its retail buildings and housing stock, the instilled perception is synonymous with crime, blight, and poverty.

The closest Oak Valley School to Detroit is Perry Middle School, due to its close proximity to Detroit Road. Hence, Perry Middle School has experienced a significant influx of working class African American and Albanian immigrant children. Rental housing and two family flats are nearby. There are affordable rental alternatives in the Oak Valley region that borders Detroit road. At the same time, many students are speculated to continue residing in their Detroit homes while sustaining an Oak Valley address.

Upon driving Eastbound on Two Points Road, and crossing Detroit Road into Oak Valley, particularly salient is the manner in which Detroit and Oak Valley boundaries are juxtaposed, parallel to one another. One would not easily be able to distinguish between Detroit and Oak Valley, for the Detroit side between Detroit Road and Miler

Road is a middle to upper middle class community. The noticeable difference is that the housing prices are approximately $100,000 more on the Oak Valley side. There is a private religious school on Two Points Road, and its enrollees live on both sides. The school is racially integrated, and also attracts children from other affluent Detroit areas.

Also visible from Two Points Road is a predominantly working class, African American, Detroit Public School. Its enrollment within Detroit City Limits posits a stark contrast from Brownstone Middle School, which is only a few blocks east and two blocks north of Two Points Road.

Between Collins Road on Miller Road on the Oak Valley side is Brownstone Middle School, where I was a practitioner during the time of the study. Brownstone was predominantly European American, located in the center of the district. While a majority of its student body reside within the feeder boundaries, Brownstone also enrolls European American and African American students from Huntington. Its proximity to Huntington is not as close as Barrington, so it receives fewer African American students.

The southeast boundary of Detroit ends, upon crossing Miller Road. The west side of the road is considered Detroit and the east side of the road is considered Oak Valley. To the south of Miller Road is the Huntington boundary. A major hospital is situated on the east side of the road, which employs and services its neighboring communities.

Barrington Middle School, the setting for the study, is situated at Division and Two Points Road. Its increased influx of African American students from Detroit is rooted in its close proximity to Huntington. Division Road is on the opposite end of

Division Highway is the locale for an apartment complex in Huntington, with a significant African American population. The apartment complex has been under speculation for selling leases to procure a Huntington address, while continuing to reside in Detroit. Students are commonly regarded as "those kids from the apartments".

Also notable is Brewer Elementary, an Oak Valley Valley School on the other side of Division Highway and lies on the Huntington border. Brewer is the feeder school to Barrington and is commonly scrutinized for sending low achieving students. Brewer enrolls a high concentration of African America students, many of whom reside in the nearby apartment complex.

Mr. Lehrer noted during an informal conversation of having an African friend who resides in the apartment complex and claimed that his family was not like the African American residents who lived there. They did not share the same cultural norms and he did not associate himself with his neighbors. Ultimately, living in the apartments signified diminished social capital.

The intersection of Detroit, Oak Valley, and Huntington illustrates a demography that is deeply entrenched by boundaries and parents who want the best opportunities for their children. Privilege has been a determinant for educational opportunity and is compromised when members of Detroit's underclass have access to opportunities traditionally procured and afforded by the affluent.

Teachers at Barrington are facing challenges typically experienced in urban districts. Similar to other teachers at Barrington, Mr. Lehrer has experienced dilemmas

of increased class size, matters of unsettled behavior, and heterogeneous learning abilities.

*History of divisions*

Exploring the history of divisions between Detroit and Oak Valley, as regions that intersect at the periphery is an attempt to explore the factors that are associated with many community members and teachers in Oak Valley who are uncomfortable with increasing diversity. Current conditions are historically constructed and intextricably linked to patterns of job discrimination during the Post World War II years in Detroit. Additionally endemic was residential segregation and massive disinvestment in the city (Heron, 2005). In order to fully understand existing divisions of race and social class within and across boundaries in Detroit and Oak Valley, it is important to grasp these historical constructions that shape patterns and attitudes. In addition, Detroit's history encapsulates race and class divisions, and a changing demography that has been aligned with upward mobility.

Tensions ensued as Blacks began moving into resisting White neighborhoods as early as the 1920s. According to a *Detroit Metro Times* interview with Thomas Sugrue, patterns of residential segregation espoused White resistance to African Americans who moved into White neighborhoods, and is a forgotten history among Whites and their descendants. Sugrue, however, reifies that African Americans and their descendants recall the violent acts of protests, picketing, and harassment (Heron, 2005). The influx of African American families resulted gradually into a White exodus into neighboring suburbs, without the threat of a Black invasion (Sugrue, 1996). As Blacks have become more affluent, influx in more recent years has shifted into newer

neighboring suburbs, including Oak Park and Southfield, to which many Whites have responded by moving farther West. As Blacks have become even more affluent, and moved farther West, the pattern has continued farther westward. The depletion of Detroit's middle class has led to a declining tax base to fund its schools (Mirel, 1993; Tyack, 1974).

Oak Valley, on the other hand, is a neighboring suburb that borders Detroit, to which a Black influx has not become salient, or threatening until recent years. Unlike newer neighboring Western suburbs, Whites in Oak Valley have been less likely to abandon it, due to generations of wealthy families and descendants that have enjoyed its exclusivity. Among many, there is century old wealth and cultural reproduction. On-going dissatisfaction with marginalized neighborhoods and schools in Detroit has led to recent patterns of Black influx into Oak Valley Schools, often by unconventional methods. For example, parents have been known to purchase apartment leases in Huntington, a feeder suburb into Oak Valley Schools, but continue to reside in Detroit. Suspicions of illegal residency are detected in children who are dropped off early to school and picked up late.

Patterns have resulted in tensions that are a reminder of Detroit's past, for many current Oak Valley residents were once Detroit residents, who as children, moved with their resistant families to the sanctity of a neighboring suburb. Many, as existing parents, want to sustain a sense of security for their families, and an influx of working class Black children in the Oak Valley Schools is often regarded as a threat to that security. The desire to remain espouses the agency to exert whatever possible to sustain privileges that are provided by high property values and paying high property taxes.

Barrington Middle School is situated in the Oak Valley school district, an affluent suburb that lies on the northern edge of Detroit, a neighboring urban core with a struggling school system. Oak Valley is synonymous with a prestigious lifestyle. Several residents have historically possessed the socioeconomic and cultural capital to enjoy upscale home ownership and acceptance in the community. Wealthy families that have resided in the area for generations are indigenous to the community, and are regarded as insiders. Moreover, families of Northwestern European descent have been held with the highest regard.

In fact, restrictive covenants existed until the early 1960s, which aggressively barred Jews, Blacks, Italians and other minorities from buying homes there. Graham (2000) claims that realtors established a well known point system "for scoring potential buyers by evaluating their ethnicity, skin complexion, accent, and other characteristics"(p.341). According to Sugrue (1996), Blacks and Asians were excluded altogether, and Southern Europeans and Jews needed higher rankings than Northwestern Europeans to move into Oak Valley. This suggests a long history of preventing the Detroit population from entering. Although restrictive covenants no longer exist, high property taxes and values prevent outsiders—people who are not indigenous to Oak Valley-- from buying homes there.

Currently, De Coster (2003) suggests that a small number of Blacks who live in Oak Valley are as rich as the Whites. They maintain the cultural values embedded in maintaining its exclusivity, and are welcome. Currently, pride within Oak Valley is seemingly synonymous with status and privilege, not race. Moreover, Hurst (2000)

claims that boundaries are reflective of the nature of social relationships between people inside and out of them.

Public parks historically have been, and continue to be restricted to residents only, who must carry a park pass. This is a concerted effort to keep outsiders and people from Detroit out. According to De Coster (2003), the concern is that permitting outsiders will make the well-manicured parks susceptible to societal ills. The public schools have historically been, and continue to be predominantly White, representing its demographics. Oak Valley schools have a long history of success, enabling generational social reproduction and preserving positions of power. Unlike the parks in Oak Valley, however, nonresidents have been able to enroll in its schools.

Detroit is situated on the immediate border of Oak Valley. The stark residential contrast by race and class resembles other cities, including Hartford, Connecticut, described by Orfield & Eaton (1996). To explicate, a nearly all white suburban, high achieving district is only minutes away from a nearly all black, urban low achieving district; yet, they seem worlds apart (Orfield & Eaton, 1996, p. xiii).

Detroit also has a long history of segregation, which resembles patterns of numerous urban cores throughout the United States (Anyon, 1997; Tyack, 1974; Mirel, 1993, Sugrue, 1996). Patterns of upward mobility and segregation, historically, espouse racial and class divisions, which are rooted in existing divisions and attitudes in Southeastern Michigan. As the most racially segregated region in the United States (Mirel, 1993; Sugrue, 1996; Wells & Crain, 1997), it is important to fully understand underlying factors that shape the existing demographic patterns, and its impact on school disparities in urban and suburban settings.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, recent European immigrants and Blacks resided in the center city, known as Paradise Valley, also known as Black Bottom. It was during this time that Whites and Blacks shared city streets, and Blacks were rarely concentrated in predominantly Black neighborhoods. In addition, European immigrants lived in enclaves that defined their ethnicity (Sugrue, 1996). Gradually, upward mobility became a determinant for race and class residential boundaries. Upwardly mobile working class whites began purchasing bungalows in areas, including the far West and Northeast sides, in close proximity to their factory jobs in the 1920s (Sugrue, 1996). The Great Migration of Blacks ensued from 1916 to 1929, as Blacks arrived in search of opportunity with factory work and mass production and Whites began to ascribe to solidarity in whiteness, abandoning their ethnic affiliation. Their solidarity was a vehicle to establish and sustain restrictive covenants and sustain racial homogeneity, by preventing Blacks from moving into their working class neighborhoods (Sugrue, 1996). Additionally, restrictive covenants called for residents to not sell to Blacks or other racial, ethnic, or religious groups that were deemed undesirable, in an effort to sustain security and property values (Wells & Crain, 1997). As Whites began purchasing homes, Blacks, regardless of social status, were therefore confined to living in the center city. Thus, began high concentrations of Blacks. However, that all socioeconomic classes were relegated to one section of the city meant that working class and jobless Blacks had the influence of upper classes, providing aspirations and a social buffer (Sugrue, 1996).

It is important to note that the years 1919-1929 was a time when the Detroit Public School system was regarded as one of the finest public school systems in the

world (Mirel, 1993). However, the 1930s and following decades would ensue the deliberate dismantling of the city and Detroit Public Schools, due to tensions of race and class (Mirel, 1993), ultimately in reaction to the rising influx of Blacks. Working class Whites comprised the majority of White Detroiters, who largely fought vigorously to keep Blacks out of their neighborhoods. They regarded Blacks as a threat, particularly since it was difficult for them to relocate and there was a sense that they had nowhere else to go. The Ossian Sweet incident in 1925 on Garland Street on Detroit's Southeast side foreshadowed decades of approximately 200 incidents of violence and resistance against Blacks who attempted to buy homes in White neighborhoods. Ossian Sweet was a prominent African American doctor who was tried for murder after shooting into a crowd of hundreds of angry Whites. Although he was acquitted, this incident illustrated the consequences of violating racial boundaries (Sugrue, 1996).

The late 1920s and early 1930s led to a trend, in which many previously integrated schools were becoming segregated, as a result of changing racial composition of neighborhoods, White resistance to integration, and restrictive covenants. During the 1940s, the African-American community began to expand to central, Southeastern and Southwestern portions of the city, as White, working class families began to occupy the Northeastern and Northwestern part of town. Migration and settlement patterns resulted in a highly segregated racial geography that would increasingly influence municipal and educational politics (Mirel, 1993, p. 153).

Eventually, White flight from working class Detroit neighborhoods to working class suburbs, mirroring the neighborhoods they left behind, began in the late 1940s. This occurred with the end of restrictive covenants in 1948. Consequent panic selling

ensued as a result of blockbusting tactics enacted by real estate agents. Hence, many real estate agents fueled fears of the Black influx, and encouraged Whites to sell to Blacks at reduced prices. To illustrate, realtors would fuel suspicions by showing a Black family a house in a White neighborhood and inform existing neighbors with calls and leaflets that "Negroes are taking over this block, and they'd better sell while there's still a chance of obtaining a good price (Sugrue, 1996, p. 195). Brokers bought low and sold high to Black families, who were desperate for home ownership. However, high rates, due to redlining in racially transitional neighborhoods were conducive to defaulting on home loans. Moreover, working class suburbs offered reasonable incentives, making it easier for working class Whites to flee. In a short period of time, once all-White neighborhoods became predominantly Black neighborhoods (Sugrue, 1996).

Problematic in the schools during the late 1940s was the manner in which the district engaged in modifying school attendance polices that deliberately separated Blacks and Whites. For example, the district was unwilling to sustain Eastern as an integrated high school. Miller, as a feeder school to Eastern became a senior high school and announced a liberal policy for White students who wanted to transfer to other schools. This resulted in Miller as an all Black high school. In spite of inequities, Miller was one of the best high schools in Detroit, and exemplifies Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) and Morris's (2004) notion of successful teachers of African-American children who sustain high expectations and community support.

It was during this time that Arthur Dondineau, a segregationist, was superintendent of Detroit Public Schools. African American parents enacted a series of

initiatives to challenge the neglect of schools in Black neighborhoods, that were facing unequal treatment and resources. The Higgenbotham-Birdhurst Strike was an effort to remove Dondeneau, in the effort for unsegregated education(Mirel, 1993). Problematic was the manner in which Black teachers were assigned only to Black schools, along with the placement of Black students in academically deficient general high school curriculum, at twice the rate of Whites(Mirel, 1993).

Although working class White Detroiters comprised the majority of Whites, there also existed a population of middle class and affluent Whites. Middle class Whites lived in Northwest areas, including Bagley and Russell Woods, in 3-4 bedroom brick colonials and tudor style homes. Wealthy Whites lived in areas, including Indian Village, Sherwood Forest, and Palmer Woods, in more upscale, 4 to 7 bedroom brick homes and mansions. The reaction to the Black influx beginning in the late 1940s among many affluent Whites was to move to more desirable suburbs, including Oak Valley. This reaction was a stark contrast from the violent reactions of working class Whites. For those who relocated to the suburbs, many sensed that the invasion was inevitable.

As an Indian Village resident, I am familiar with a well known story about George Childers, the first African American to purchase a house on Seminole street in 1967. The reactions to Childer's move, while not pleasant, is a stark contrast to Ossian Sweet's experience. Childers recalled that neighbors refused to speak to him. Activities, including garbage pickup were learned based on observing neighbors taking their garbage out. This example, in contrast with Sweet, will be raised later in this section to illustrate reactions of Whites to the Black influx, and the impact on the

existing, contrasting composition of neighborhoods, such as Indian Village and Garland Street, in Southeast Detroit.

The settling of middle class Blacks in more affluent areas was a sense of comfort, away from the rowdyism of the working class Blacks in Black Bottom(Sugrue, 1996). Problematic, however, was the manner in which working class Blacks were trapped in the worst housing, joblessness, and neglected schools. Moreover, the jobless became a concentrated poor (Mirel, 1993; Sugrue, 1996), without the social buffer of more affluent Blacks (Sugrue, 1996).

Samuel Brownell was appointed superintendent of Detroit Public Schools in 1956, and received praise from civil rights leaders and scrutiny from segregationists. Brownell announced color blind teacher placement, and made concerted efforts to improve the decaying conditions of schools in Black neighborhoods. Brownell received criticism and praise over politics of boundaries and busing from 1959 to 1962, which in numerous instances segregated schools throughout the city by race.

The matter of boundaries can be illustrated when leaders announced the transfer of 74 Black students from Patengill to Houghton, another predominantly Black school, more than 4 miles away. Black parents from Patengill noted that two predominantly White schools had space, and were in closer proximity to where they lived. They consequently argued that the administration bypassed closer schools to avoid integration. Brownell admitted to error in not assigning them appropriately and promised to rectify the error(Mirel, 1993).

The matter of busing is manifest in the response from Whites when the administration made the decision to bus approximately 300 students from overcrowded,

predominantly Black central district schools to 3 underutilized schools in the nearly all White Northwest district. White parents threatened to keep their children home when Black students arrived, and formed the Northwest Detroit Parents' Committee to fight the busing plan and to recall board of education member by circulating recall petitions (Mirel, 1993).

Essentially, the early 1960s was a time of contradictory trends. The liberal administration responded to Black demands, but many White Detroiters resented the attention. Blacks, however, were angry about the lack of racial change in the system. On both sides, Blacks and Whites were becoming less likely to support school tax increases on bond issues. Voters in the White sections of the city did not want increased taxes to pay for schools in Black neighborhoods. Additionally, many did not want to pay higher taxes to ship more Blacks to White schools. There was further opposition from Black nationalists who argued that schools in Black neighborhoods received little funding from additional funds. Many Whites were therefore unwilling to support a Black majority and voted against millage and bond issues.

Another factor that resulted in significant working class White flight was the emergence of the freeways, which significantly disrupted neighborhoods (Sugrue, 1996). Rather than live alongside freeways, numerous White working class residents who remained sold their homes to marginalized African American families at reduced rates (Sugrue, 1996). However, marginalized families were largely unable to procure funding to maintain their homes, due to declining home values in racially transitional areas to secure home improvement loans. This led to the precipitous decline of communities bordering freeways. Homes were either foreclosed and abandoned, or ill

maintained. Because school funding is determined by property values and taxes in Michigan, declining housing values led to depleted financial and political support for Detroit Public Schools, resulting in financial and social concern for those who assumed responsibility (Tyack, 1974;Mirel, 1993).

Currently, disproportionate housing that borders the freeways illustrates their on-going impact on the city's declining tax base. For example, one paying close attention to houses that line the John C. Lodge freeway would recognize numerous homes in disrepair. Many are vacant and condemned, but many are also occupied. During the 1960s and 1970s, major industries relocated to the suburbs, taking jobs, tax revenues, and most of the middle class. It became significantly more difficult to provide adequate services to a district that was predominantly Black and poor(Mirel, 1993).

Problematic during these years was the pervasive treatment of students by teachers, who provided negative perceptions, including ADC leeches, dumb, and unteachable. Such notions were gathered in a series of Free Press articles, gathered from a reporter who was substitute teaching at Jefferson Intermediate School. It was also indicated that nearly 40 per cent of students had little or nothing in common with teachers or with the material in the curriculum(Mirel, 1993). The aforementioned variables—patterns of Black influx and White flight, politics of residency and busing, and freeways—had a significant impact on Detroit's changing demographics. Between 1960 to 1980, Detroit's population dwindled from 1.6 million to 1.2 million. A significant decline from the 1950s to the 1970s was from the young, White middle class population. The Black population was 29 per cent in 1960, 44 per cent in 1970 and 63 per cent in 1980. In the meantime, suburbs grew from 2.8 million in 1970 to 3 million

in 1980. The population of Blacks in the suburbs was static, at 4 per cent over a 20 year period.

The population in the Detroit Public Schools resembled the demographics of the city over time. In 1963, Detroit's 293,745 students were evenly distributed among Black and White students. By 1970, of 288,953 students, 64 per cent were Black, 35 per cent were white, and 1 per cent were Hispanic. By 1980, of 214,736 students, 86 per cent were Black, 12 per cent were White, and 2 per cent were Hispanic.

In spite of aforementioned administrative actions from the 1930s to the 1970s to segregate Detroit Public Schools and deplete its middle class tax base, plaintiffs in the Milliken Bradley case in 1974 could not prove that the suburbs played a role in deliberately segregating schools by race. This ruling diminished the potential for urban-suburban school desegregation. The Supreme Court ruled that suburban Detroit districts could not be consolidated with the nearly all Black Detroit Public Schools. Ultimately, in order to desegregate, it needed to be clearly indicated that racially discriminating acts of state or local districts, or of a single district, have been the significant cause of inter district segregation. During the Milliken II Case in 1977, the district sued the state of Michigan to pay for quality education programs to remedy the harm caused by segregation. The US Supreme court authorized the lower court to pay for educational enrichment programs for Detroit Public Schools.

A key determinant of increased class size in Oak Valley occurred with Proposal A in 1994, which called for parity between urban and suburban schools. To decrease disparities between urban and suburban school districts, Proposal A created a minimum per pupil foundation allowance. Hence, funding for urban districts was increased, while

suburban districts experienced a decrease in funding. Ultimately, the funding gap between rich and poor districts was reduced (www.mtmorriscity.org, 2005). Mr. Lehrer recalled Proposal A's long term effect in Oak Valley, and Oak Valley's desire to sustain its privilege:

Mr. Lehrer: And so I say, oh, I wouldn't want 27 instead of 28 and get rid of this kid. But if I were designing this ahead of time, I would say give me 22 from the beginning.
Mrs. Hill: Do you think it will ever move back?
Mr. Lehrer: I don't think so, funding is so, and it's not just our district, although our district is doing what other districts are in that they're trying to hold on to something, you know they're looking toward the future and continue to provide quality education but it starts at the state. And other things like the economy. But I still look back to 1994, with what we would call proposal A or proposal 1. I can't remember which one...Well, what they did then was they started to they said A, local communities cannot just vote these millages however much they want, they were looking for some parity in schools, like Pontiac, Detroit, other big school districts that were poor and struggling, they're saying, how can you bring them up to a level equal with districts like Birmingham and Oak Valley, I think that's a wonderful idea, but not when you take those schools on the higher end and say we'll bring them down and bring the other ones up and meet in the middle. Why would you ever want to bring anyone down?
Mrs. Hill: You shouldn't bring anybody down , you should bring everyone up to par
Mr. Lehrer: Right! To me I remember it coincided with the fall of communism in the world and I'm thinking well communism has fallen in the world and suddenly in Michigan, they were saying, I don't care if you live 3 houses from that school and your children attend it, you cannot vote to give that school more than this amount of money...this is the connection to communism in my mind, here are these people in Lansing saying, everywhere in the state of Michigan our edict says you can't vote more than this much money, that's crazy to me, so we were hurt, Oak Valley was hurt by that, because now there's that cap...all of this is related because when you, the kinds of things we're talking about having 28 or 29 kids in a class.

Essentially, Proposal A became a matter of reducing privileges in the suburbs so that urban districts, such as Detroit and Pontiac would not have stark disparities. As

a result of determining a cap, class sizes in Oak Valley have been large, and teachers are facing class sizes and consequences that have resonated in urban districts.

*History to the Present Situation*

The demographics of Detroit Public Schools currently represent its population. A handful of affluent, integrated areas exist, including Indian Village, Sherwood Forest, and Palmer Woods. Bagley and Russell Woods neighborhoods are predominantly middle class and Black. Select magnet schools exist that are appealing to these populations, although children in Bagley often attend neighborhood schools. In addition, affluent families that do not attend magnet public schools choose affluent private schools located in the city and neighboring suburbs. Ultimately, school choices sustain social reproduction and preserve positions of power among Detroit's middle and upper middle class. A handful of schools in marginalized areas exist and succeed in spite of the odds, in a manner similar to schools describe by Ladson-Billings(1995) Rose (1995) and Morris (2004). However, such opportunities are not available to most children, who are concentrated in marginalized sections of the city and are relegated to low performing schools where they are concentrated with students who are disproportionately Black and poor (Mirel, 1993).

The current composition of neighborhoods correlates with the history and nature of White flight. Mr. Childer's Indian Village community and Ossian Sweet's Southeast Detroit neighborhood, for example, espouse contrasting demographics. Many liberal Whites remained in Indian Village, and a combination of Whites and Blacks continue to purchase homes and reside there. It is a thriving community, and home owners are largely committed to maintaining their homes. Most liberal Whites did

not remain in Bagley and Russell Woods areas, but many middle class Black families have remained for generations, and sustain a commitment to preserving the neighborhoods.

The Southeast neighborhood where Ossian Sweet lived is approximately two miles east of Indian Village. It is predominantly Black and poor, and numerous homes are poorly maintained and are rentals. Many residents face the consequences of joblessness, or are among the working poor. The number of homeowners that are not poor resemble families in Chicago's poverty areas cited by Wilson (1996). Home ownership is spotty, and homeowners are the lifelines in the community. But they are also victims of living and coping alongside drug houses, where people exert the habitus aligned with ghetto-related behavior (Wilson, 1996), endemic in crime, drug activity, public drinking and arguing, and alcohol abuse. Such activity is problematic for residents who live in fear, but cannot afford to move elsewhere. Behaviors that are difficult to tolerate are rooted in joblessness that is aligned with the decline of factory work and lower-skilled blue collar jobs (Wilson, 1996). There is a decline of positive influences, for children observe ghetto-related behavior, rather than neighbors who sustain jobs and careers.

An informal conversation with a teacher in the neighborhood school claimed that many parents are defensive, and student behavioral issues are an on-going battle; in spite of the fact that the school is newly built. On the other hand, many parents in jobless areas want to protect their children from activity in the neighborhood, and neighborhood families who exhibit rowdyism. They often opt to establish and cultivate

relations with families and institutions outside of the neighborhood, through church groups, community recreation programs, and schools (Wilson, 1996).

Working class parents' dissatisfaction with Detroit Public Schools in Ossian Sweet type neighborhoods has led to a phenomenon that is becoming more pervasive in the affluent, suburban Oak Valley school district. A rising influx of African American students have been enrolling at Barrington, and in many instances arrive from the neighboring Detroit Public School system, from marginal areas of the city. Entering this affluent White school was not necessarily enacted based on the desire to integrate, but because of awareness that financial resources and opportunity follow Whites (Mirel, 1993; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Eaton& Orfield, 1996). Hence, the perception is that children will have better educational opportunities in the suburbs, and will not have the distraction of negative influences in an urban school (Wells & Crain, 1997). However, students largely do not have the cultural capital valued in an affluent district, and largely are not from the middle and upper class Detroit neighborhoods. To illustrate, Mr. Lehrer expressed during an interview the benefits and consequences for students, depending on their ability to succeed at Barrington:

> " Some us need to be creative and keep our goals in mind. Because the kids are getting the short end of the stick. I can see why they'd want to come to a place that has a very good reputation. And that is one of the issues that comes up, that sometimes some of the parents who send their kids here come out of Detroit Public Schools and bring them here, they kind of think that because things go well and the scores are strong and so forth, that their student, and by the way, I say great students, from the Detroit Public Schools, just in terms of the kind of student he or she might be. But a lot of them also really have been deficient in basic skills and they are just lost, and some of these parents think, well wait now, my son or my daughter has been in your class for almost half a year now, and he's still failing. Why aren't you, well they don't say it this way, but it's like, but this school district is supposed to save them

> from that. They were getting A's or B's in their other school and now they're failing. And it's sort of like looking at the teachers in the school and saying this wasn't supposed to be, this was supposed to be the thing that fixed the problem... I can understand that from the perspective of not being an educator, most people would say, that school is better than this one, therefore, if I can get my child into that school, things will be better. It doesn't acknowledge that gap that can exist sometimes in schools."

Therefore, in spite of intended consequences of a school setting that is perceived as a better opportunity, unintended is that there are instances where students do not perform better.

During the time of the study, a report in the Detroit Free Press revealed that the loss of 40,000 students over a ten year time span and consequent school closures would lead to a dramatic population decline of Detroit residents out of the city(MacDonald, Guthrie and Nichols,2005). Reports added that the same number of buildings were operating with half the enrollment of the 1970s, and was no longer cost effective in a financially strapped district. 33,000 Detroit resident students are enrolled in charter schools, while approximately 6,000 are enrolled in neighboring suburbs with school-choice initiatives. Others moved in a variety of ways to neighboring suburbs, including Oak Valley. In a city with a population of 900,000, this exodus led to a 140,000 student population that is 90 per cent Black, with more than 70 per cent living below the poverty line (Randall, 2005). The population has not been this low since the 1920s. More school closures are anticipated over the next decade, a total of 95 schools by 2009, at a rate of 20 to 30 per year, as the population continues to diminish (MacDonald, Guthrie, and Nichols, 2005).

A great deal of hopelessness has ensued, for satisfied parents in high performing closing schools in marginalized areas became concerned and disappointed

about consolidating their children into low achieving schools in like communities, which in many instances removed the convenience of walking to the neighborhood school. They are confronted with transferring or moving. The high performing schools are schools that sustain caring communities, and teachers and administrators are committed to knowing the surrounding community and the families, similar to succeeding schools of African American children described by Ladson-Billings (1994), Rose (1995) and Morris (2004), in spite of the odds.

District officials reported that the selected schools were based on enrollment, building age, and academic performance (MacDonald, et al., 2005). But 13 schools slated for closure were high performing schools, including Vandenberg Elementary on Detroit's northwest side. Vandenberg's principal reported to the Free Press that performance, a quality program, or a building in good shape was not a consideration to remain open, but that low enrollment was the only factor involved ( MacDonald, et al., 2005). Randall (2005) suggests that the decision to close schools was all about the bottom line and had nothing to with providing quality education for Detroit children.

The sense of community, connection, and memories associated with generations of families in many of the schools was regarded by many as a tremendous loss. A 34 year veteran teacher, for example, was cited as teaching the children of former students, and boasted about the successful career paths of numerous Vandenberg graduates (Randall, 2005). Chadsey High School also had a long standing tradition of graduates within families, and its closure was regarded with disappointment (Randall, 2005).

Mr. Lehrer acknowledged this loss of community in a formal interview:

> Mrs. Hill: I'm just so angry at the things I see happening in Detroit. And there's so many gaps that need to be addressed. They're closing schools that parents are even happy with, schools that are meeting AYP, and are doing well, and the parents are so frustrated
> Mr. Lehrer: I saw protests on the news for schools that have been doing really well.
> Mrs. Hill: Why would you target a school that's doing really well? And then when you mix a school that's doing really well with a school that's struggling. I mean, I've been in struggling schools and it's tough. From one administration to the next, it makes a huge difference. You can have kids come from the same demographics, and sending kids from a strong administration to a school that doesn't have that?
> Mr. Lehrer: And they forget when they do that, that many of these schools are struggling. Also, the sense of community that has been established, they're uprooting it.

Detroit residents who sent their children to schools of choice expressed contrasting sentiments about Detroit Public Schools, regarding the potential of taking school of choice vouchers away, in an effort to reclaim students, and parents have commented that they would rather move than send their children to the violent, inferior schools in Detroit. Such perspectives construes a stigma that all Detroit Public Schools are bad, and that there are no exceptions to the rule. However, expressing these generalizations also reflects the lost faith many Detroit residents have.

Oak Valley is not a school of choice district. Students must either be a resident of Oak Valley or live in designated areas of Huntington.

Ultimately, decades of dismantling the district as a result of historical divisions of race and class have resulted in a feeling that circumstances will not improve. Upcoming years in Detroit Public Schools are fueled with an uncertain future. As dissatisfied marginalized groups enter suburban contexts, such as Oak Valley in droves, circumstances that once defined the urban contexts are becoming suburban problems. Not only are many suburban teachers beginning to work with populations they hoped to

avoid upon working there, they are also facing overcrowded classrooms, matters of behavior, and a lack of preparation to teach effectively.

*The School, Classroom, and Mr. Lehrer*

March and April of 2005 marked a noticeable influx of students from Detroit, for they were arriving on systematic basis. Informal conversations with Barrington teachers revealed concerns about growing class sizes, whose abilities were reported as significantly below grade level in reading and math. Additional concerns surrounded matters of inappropriate student behavior, which made it difficult to sustain control in their classrooms. Moreover, concerns engendered the notion of the cut-off point. Because so many new enrollees were arriving at once, teachers were concerned that class sizes were surpassing 24-25 students during the previous year, to 29-30 students during the current year. Many teachers were grappling with already overcrowded classrooms, which were gradually increasing in size, and wondering if there was a point when Barrington would need to turn students away.

Mr. Lehrer noted the impact Proposal A had on precipitous changes in class sizes over the past decade, along with the changing demographics:

> "...oh my gosh! That's the reason it's happening. We had for so many years, 10 sections of 7th grade, so I had five and Dawn (pseudonym) had five, and it was, we had the class sizes to a good level, we had, Jan (pseudonym) had a 7th grade class. Now we're down two sections. If you take 270 kids and divide that by 10, you have 27 kids in a class. But when you divide that by 9, now you have 30 kids in a class. So, all of this there's not enough money, so we have to make fewer sections, and now , I just think class sizes are an issue. Especially because you add the change in demographic to it that, we're encouraged, and I don't think it's a bad idea, we're encouraged to differentiate.

Mr. Lehrer's 6th hour class had 28 students at the beginning of the study, but enrolled one more student from Detroit in April. During February and March of that

year, he received three new students throughout all of his sections. He wondered why the English teacher next door had not received new students.

Also noted was being able to accommodate heterogeneous learning abilities, ranging from grades 3 to 9, having significantly more work to evaluate, along with unsettled behavior from a significant number of his students:

> Mr. Lehrer: I think differentiation can work really well when the range that you're differentiating among is still sort of in the same range. But when you start to say well my 7th grade classroom , which used to have a couple of kids around the 5th grade level, and boy was that low, and some reading at the 9th grade level, so you had a range of 5 to 9, nowadays, you may have kids that are 3rd grade level because they've been, they don't get held back, they move forward no matter what
>
> Mrs. Hill: They never get held back in the district
>
> Mr. Lehrer: No, and so I'm not saying that I'm a big proponent of that, but what I am saying is that
>
> Mrs. Hill: every single person I've talked to has said no one is ever held back
>
> Mr. Lehrer: no, so do you eventually deal with a class, you say differentiate, well I have a 2nd grader here in essence, and a 9th grader. And we're reading the same book, how am I going to do that?
>
> Mrs. Hill: that requires a lot of guided reading. Do you have time to read aloud every chapter?
>
> Mr. Lehrer: It's like a one room schoolhouse. Are we going back to that?

That students were arriving in large numbers in the middle of the year, raised speculation about legal residency, for Barrington never experienced an influx of this magnitude. In addition, students were arriving after count day, which indicated that Detroit received funding, based on the enrollment numbers there. Teachers expressed concerns that Detroit kids were entering Oak Valley, but that Oak Valley, already experiencing budget cuts, was not being funded because their enrollment funded Detroit, based on its count day.

These conditions present complications in the era of standards-based reform, when teachers are expected to lessen the achievement gap between minority students

and their counterparts (Hilliard, et al., 2004). Similar to other school districts, this is expected with declining resources, increased class sizes and heterogeneous learning abilities. In response to increasing demands with declining resources, Mr. Lehrer suggested:

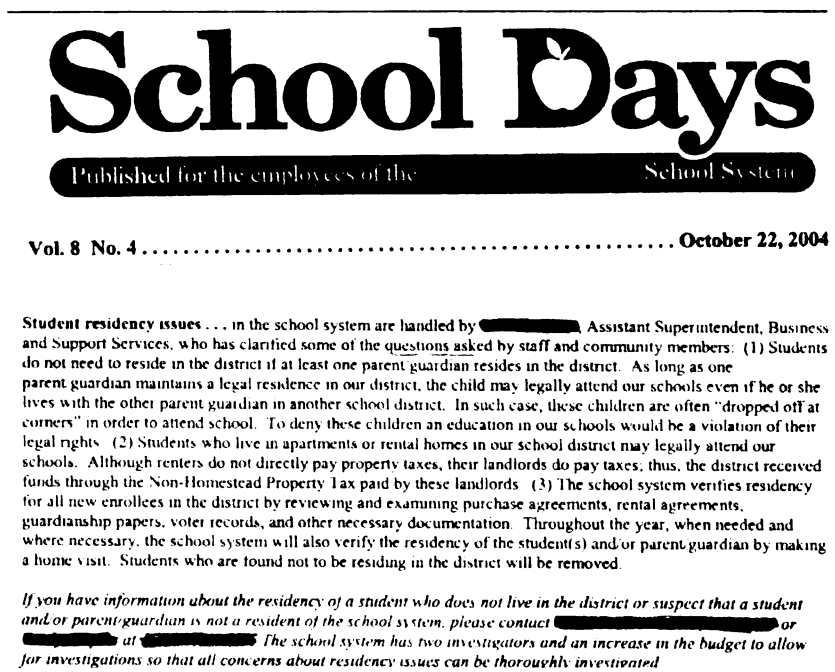
> "...but I think that those external to the classroom structures, with the kind of support that's coming from the state into the district. Things curricular, yet I think our curriculum has gotten so jam packed that it's hardly helpful to us anymore, there are other issues that are supposed to be real supports for what we're doing in the classroom, but now we're servicing the students, and it seems the organization we're doing a job, Oak Valley schools, and they're so reliant on what comes from the state, but we need to do our job well. We're expected to have better and better results, yet the conditions we're up against to get to those results compared to ten years ago, 15 years ago, and I'm sure we can go back to 20, 25, 30, even if it's not my experience, people can look back and say wow! You had to do all of this?"

Hence, a dichotomy emerges, for schools rely on the state for resources. However, the state demanded heightened results and outcomes while providing declining resources and teachers were faced with bigger challenges.

Families that don't live in Oak Valley enter its schools in a variety of ways. One is by renting or buying a house in Huntington, a nearby suburb that feeds into Oak Valley. It has lower home values and rental costs. Others pay for a lease in Huntington, but continue to live in Detroit. Students face economic disparities and are scrutinized of scamming their way into the district. African American students are often regarded by their teachers and administrators as the "Detroit" kids" or "the kids from the apartments." This pattern suggests that the "those" kids have scammed their way into an affluent school system, sharing the same privileges as their middle class counterparts who worked hard to buy a house in the community. Furthermore, administrators frequently report suspicious students to hired detectives, who verify

residency status. Ultimately, there is an undercurrent that the "Detroit" kids, as outsiders, do not belong in Oak Valley.

A district newsletter distributed in October 2004 (Figure 1.2) confirmed questions and held suspicions regarding residency, asked by parents and teachers.



School Days

Published for the employees of the [redacted] School System

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**Student residency issues** . . . in the school system are handled by [redacted] Assistant Superintendent, Business and Support Services, who has clarified some of the questions asked by staff and community members: (1) Students do not need to reside in the district if at least one parent/guardian resides in the district. As long as one parent/guardian maintains a legal residence in our district, the child may legally attend our schools even if he or she lives with the other parent/guardian in another school district. In such case, these children are often "dropped off at corners" in order to attend school. To deny these children an education in our schools would be a violation of their legal rights. (2) Students who live in apartments or rental homes in our school district may legally attend our schools. Although renters do not directly pay property taxes, their landlords do pay taxes; thus, the district received funds through the Non-Homestead Property Tax paid by these landlords. (3) The school system verifies residency for all new enrollees in the district by reviewing and examining purchase agreements, rental agreements, guardianship papers, voter records, and other necessary documentation. Throughout the year, when needed and where necessary, the school system will also verify the residency of the student(s) and/or parent/guardian by making a home visit. Students who are found not to be residing in the district will be removed.

*If you have information about the residency of a student who does not live in the district or suspect that a student and/or parent/guardian is not a resident of the school system, please contact [redacted] or [redacted] at [redacted]. The school system has two investigators and an increase in the budget to allow for investigations so that all concerns about residency issues can be thoroughly investigated.*

**Figure 1.2.** District newsletter confirming parameters for legal enrollment, and addressed community concerns surrounding border cheaters.

Parameters for legal enrollment outside of traditional residents are as follows: Students do not need to reside in the district if at least one parent/guardian lives there. Children who live with at least one parent or a legal guardian living in the district, may legally attend, regardless of whether that parent or guardian has custody, or even a role in the student's life. The newsletter referred to these cases as children who are often "dropped off at corners" in order to attend school. It further suggests that denying them an education is a violation of their legal rights. Students who live in rentals may legally attend, even if they do not pay property taxes. Landlords pay them and the

schools are funded through the Non-Homestead Property Tax. Residency is verified for all new enrollees by reviewing purchase and rental agreements, guardianship papers, voter records, and so on. At that time, the letter informed that the school system verified residency by employing two investigators who made home visits, with an enhanced budget. Students who could not verify residency would be removed. Additional factors for legal enrollment was provided by the *Detroit Free Press*: Students who live with at least one parent at someone else's home within the district; students who are sent to live with someone who resides in the district for the child's benefit, but not for the express purpose of attending the local schools; homeless students may enroll because all Michigan school districts are required to educate homeless students in their area (Walsh-Sarnecki and Mask, 2005).

May of 2005 sparked controversy throughout the district when the Detroit Free Press reported that 3000 parents in Oak Valley Schools signed a petition to request the reenrollment of all students to confirm residency. Tensions heightened when the president of Oak Valley's school board told the Free Press that the Oak Valley community was not comfortable with diversity, and not dealing well with a growing number of African American students(Walsh-Sarnecki and Mask, 2005). The president additionally claimed that there was a perception that minority students were more likely to be investigated as border cheaters, for they were disproportionately turned in as suspected cheaters (Walsh-Sarnecki, 2005).

The district provided a retraction to the president's claims, and announced that it regretted and did not support the president's views. It further acknowledged its commitment to tolerance and diversity of differences, and sustained a belief that the

community also supports these values. In addition, it was stated that regardless of the school board members' agreement with the reenrollment suggestion, it obliged the reenrollment request, with legal counsel. Furthermore, the board members were obligated to react to the request, due to its sizable magnitude among parents. The president apologized that expressed views worsened the situation and might make it more difficult for the community to address the concerns about residency. Furthermore, comments expressed were the president's alone, not intended to reflect the views of other board members.

*The Detroit Free Press* noted that proponents of the petition claimed that race was not the issue, but that it was not fair for residents outside of the community to use declining resources and money for schools (Walsh-Sarnecki and Mask, 2005). It was also noted that no one is targeting Detroiters, for students from other neighboring districts were also trying to enroll their children in the schools. During the 2004-05 school year, district officials claimed that 30 students were asked to leave, after determining that they were border cheaters. Approximately one-third was African-American (2005).

One parent wrote to the *Free Press*, and claimed that students of varying colors attend the schools and live within the boundaries. It was proclaimed that skin color was not the issue, and that every child is welcome in the district as long as they live there legally. This matter of suggesting that race is not a factor among proponents implies McIntosh's (1989) notion of not being critical of whiteness as privilege. Hence, many residents did not question the persistence of the conditions underlying the petition signed by 3000 parents, indicating denial that a lack of comfort with diversity exists.

Another resident, however, was more critical of sustained notions of White privilege, and represented opponents who questioned the district's plan, suggesting that African American and poor students were disproportionately investigated (2005). A few residents cited by Walsh-Sarnecki and Mask(2005) claimed that the new policy might not be enough, particularly regarding border cheaters who continue to enroll in the schools, even after they have moved to another district.

As for enacting the policy, current employees in the district were exclusively invited to be hired on a part-time basis during the summer of 2005. Training would be provided, and interested employees took part in the reenrollment process. All parents would need to reenroll at designated locations, and would be turned away if they did not enroll by the first day of school. Reenrolling and consequent enrollment across three locations for new students was intended to crackdown on border cheaters who previously enrolled directly at the school with documentation. Large banners were displayed at the varying enrollment sites during the summer of 2005. Near the end of the cut off point, Walsh-Sarnecki (2005) referred to parents who expressed mixed feelings. This included having to reregister with all of the information on file, and concerns about registering each year thereafter. Varying forms were designated for scenarios which applied to residency status

Varying forms during reenrollment were designated for scenarios that applied to family circumstances. Parents were required to fill out the form that matched their residency status and provide documentation of legal residency. The forms provided included students who live with one/both parents or a legal guardian who owns or rent in district. Another form was designated for and parents of the child who resides within

the boundaries. Other forms were designated for students and parents who live with someone else in the district, along with a student placed by parents with a relative residing within the district. Another required method of documentation was the Landlord's Affidavit, due to concerns of landlords who sold illegal leases to people who did not reside on the property. Each form called for providing different forms of documentation , appropriate to the circumstance. In addition, documentation included a combination of closing statements, lease agreements, guardianship papers, any two utility bills, and so on.

A year prior to this study, Mr. Lehrer acknowledged that there had been recent demographic changes in Oak Valley and at Barrington. During an interview, he revealed that he saw demographic changes coming to Barrington, based on his daughters who attended Brewer Elementary, one of the feeder elementary schools that enrolled a significant number of African-American students and other non dominant groups. To illustrate, he commented "I saw demographic changes coming to Barrington when my daughters were in elementary school." One daughter was a Barrington student at the time, and the other was in the feeder high school. Essentially, integration at Barrington had been fairly recent, given Mr. Lehrer's claim that noticeable demographic changes were aligned with students in the same age cohort as his daughters.

In addition to being a teacher in Oak Valley for 18 years, Mr. Lehrer lives in Huntington. He also grew up in a neighboring suburb, and was aware of outsiders' perceptions that residents in Oak Valley have historically been standoffish. However, Mr. Lehrer recognizes that not all residents fit into this category. Mr. Lehrer cited

noticeable comments from neighbors, who expressed curiosity and a hint of scrutiny about the recent demographic changes in the school, particularly regarding the African American students. During an interview, Mr. Lehrer stated that questions have included, "How are things going, now that...to "How bad is it getting? Mr. Lehrer expressed discomfort with these negative attitudes. He has assured skeptics that he enjoys teaching at Barrington, and that he has no problems with the demographic changes. He further expressed,

"There are some who may be uncomfortable with the increased influx of diversity, who perpetuate negative attitudes about it. I always try not to get into that ."

Mr. Lehrer cited a couple of cases that dealt with residency issues among African American students that consequently raised suspicion:

> " I'm not sure what's happening. I know this, that I had a student in my 4th hour earlier in the year, probably late October and then by December he was back out because residency wasn't confirmed, it was made up. And it happens. I had a kid last year, and I think that was more , suddenly he was just gone at the beginning of June. I never saw him over the last 2 weeks of the school year. He had come in maybe November and so they submitted that, so I would not be surprised if there was more of it. I don't say that like, let's get rid of kids."

He also cited a sixth grade student during the current year who exhibited unusual behavior:

> "This is just what someone told me, yesterday one of the 6th grade teachers was telling me they got a new student. And he came from Detroit Public Schools, and uh, he said to him, he asked him something about his house, or where he lived, or whatever, and the boy actually said I'm not allowed to tell you that. What he's saying, if someone told him to say, I'm not sure. It's so strange."

These patterns are indicative of numerous instances that pose concerns for community members and teachers, and raise speculation that students may be enrolled illegally.

Mr. Lehrer is recognized as a community member who is inclusive and welcoming at Barrington. I engaged in an informal conversation with Mrs. Bell, which suggested a contrasting perspective from another Barrington teacher. Our conversation occurred when we returned to Brownstone, after attending district wide departmental meetings at other school sites. Mrs. Bell expressed deep concern when Mrs. Slaughter, a teacher at Barrington, exerted harsh attitudes about demographic changes. All middle school social studies teachers in the district witnessed Mrs. Slaughter, who for a one hour time span made numerous references about African-American kids as "those" kids, and suggested that they were all from poor Detroit neighborhoods. She regarded them as unteachable and unable to be brought up to grade level in large group setting, claiming they were better reached in small groups. However, she made complaints about reading classes that offer small group settings for low achieving readers and said that the classes were "full of them," taking slots away from "our" kids. "They were also to blame for declining test scores. The second floor of the building was "full of them" as well, and she reiterated that the school had gotten so awful that it was not suitable for her own children.

Mrs. Bell was a former teacher at Brewer, a feeder school to Barrington. She claimed that she and staff members at Brewer were regularly scrutinized and despised by Barrington teachers for sending low ability and behavior issue students, otherwise known as "those kids." Mrs. Bell added that although Brewer was a welcoming,

multicultural school that valued student diversity, the stigma of being on the wrong side of the tracks carried over to Barrington. Brewer, although an Oak Valley School, was actually located directly on the Huntington border, on the opposite side of the freeway. Brewer graduates were regarded as being poor, and coming from the other side of the highway by many Barrington students from more affluent elementary schools. The middle school transition was an unpleasant experience for many of them, for school no longer felt welcoming.

Informal conversations with teachers and my own student enrollment at Brownstone reveals a growing exodus of European American transfer students from Barrington to Brownstone. Although residency boundaries dictate where students attend school, Brownstone has reserved slots for students desiring to attend outside of its boundaries. This pattern of flux, however, has not occurred from Brownstone to Barrington. During my past five years at Brownstone, I have had at least one student transfer per year from Barrington. Brownstone is not as racially integrated as Barrington, and many teachers have suggested that transfers occur, due to discomfort with the growing number of African American students at Barrington. An informal conversation with Mrs. Morgan revealed that the level of integration at Brownstone now is where Barrington was 15 years ago. The manner in which students are leaving one racially integrated school in order to attend one that is less integrated, although more subtle, resembles the politics of residency and boundaries that occurred in Detroit from the late 1950s to the early 1960s.

Kiki, a focal African American student who moved from Detroit three years prior to the study mentioned during an interview that she did not always feel that she belonged at Barrington:

> Kiki: A lot of people say stuff about me that they don't really know, like they be saying
> Monet: Oh, that's a ghetto girl. She starts trouble
> Kiki: Or I'm a trouble maker, it doesn't matter what everybody else says, because I know who I am.

On one occasion, she said that an African American student who always lived in Oak Valley confronted her and told her that she did not belong there:

> "Like last year this girl told me that I didn't need to be over here and I needed to go back where I came from like I'm from the ghetto, you know what I'm saying? If that's what she wanted to say, but that's what she said, she's black too."

Kiki was proud of her identity, and was not eager to change what she regarded as "ghetto" behavior, to fit in. Kiki said that her mother wanted to move to Oak Valley so that she could have the best opportunity that her mother did not have. This aligns with Wells & Crain's (1997) notion of African Americans who perceive that the better opportunities are in the suburbs. The confrontation with the "proper" African-American student suggests similar social class tensions between upwardly mobile and working class blacks that has occurred in and out of Detroit for decades. Perhaps the student who confronted Cece was among the minority population, whose parents are professionals or skilled laborers, and may represent the first generation of their family to complete college (Houston, 1988). Perhaps she felt that Kiki was not proper enough to be at Barrington, or she wanted to make it known that she and Kiki did not share the same characteristics. Although Kiki felt often that she did not fit in with students, she claimed that her teachers made her feel welcome.

Violet, an Italian American student from Huntington noted during an interview that she was often made fun of, for not living in Oak Valley and being looked down upon for not being as rich. She added, however, that there were people in Huntington with more money and bigger houses than many of the Oak Valley students. She therefore opted to ignore on-going teasing.

Violet: So, like, I dunno, some people from Huntington get made fun of, but
Mrs. Hill: You think so?
Taye: Huntington, you've gotta have a lot of many to live here, but
Violet: I live in Huntington
Taye: I live in Huntington. I live near Brewer, about seven streets down. Our house is pretty big.
Violet: A lot of kids from Huntington, and a lot of people think that because we live in Huntington, we're a lot poorer, but that's not true. I live in Huntington and we're not poorer

This excerpt suggests that there are incidents in Oak Valley, in which children from less affluent suburbs are made fun of. There are misconceptions that students from Huntington do not share the same economic capital as their Oak Valley peers.

Detroit students at Barrington may be defined in a manner similar to Smitherman's (1981; 1999) description of working class African American children at King Elementary School in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the late 1970s. King Elementary School became integrated as a result of scattered site, low income housing, where poor Blacks lived in the same neighborhood and attended the same affluent schools as affluent Whites and Blacks (Smitherman, 1981).

During the Ann Arbor *King* case in 1977, teachers were accused of not teaching the plaintiff how to read, and improperly placing them in special education classes, while not accounting for language, social, economic and cultural differences. The defendant district assumed a blame-the victim-mythology, claiming that equal

opportunity could not be denied because enrollment in the school itself was the guarantor of equity (Smitherman, 1981, p. 134). Furthermore, King teachers denied the plaintiff children spoke Black English, and claimed that they "talk like everyone else" (Smitherman, 1981, p. 142). Such claims contradicted documentation of childrens' use of Black English on forms, and test data showing low verbal ability in standard English, determining that teachers failed to take children's home language into account (Smitherman, 1981, p. 142). The 1979 judgement of this landmark case was to legitimize American dialects other than standard, and to take Black English into account in order to teach reading(Smitherman,1981 ,1999, 2002). Smitherman (1999, 2002) suggests, however, that minimal attention has been exerted to that effect in Ann Arbor and elsewhere, and the goal has not been realized.

In the past, teachers at Barrington have been reluctant to modify pedagogy to teach students, and Oak Valley has been silent about the implications of changing demographics. While a lawsuit has never ensued, teachers at Barrington want to change their pedagogy to teach their heterogeneous learners, but admit that they do not know where to begin. In addition, Oak Valley is beginning to acknowledge that students from non dominant groups are being disproportionately marginalized into lower tracks and special education programs.

At the time of this study, the district was attempting to take on the challenge of acknowledging the academic history of students from Detroit, rather than assume a deficit model. They have also been scrutinized by civil rights organizations for investigating residency status. In addition, Oak Valley wants to devise strategies to inform teachers about challenging initial assumptions about student abilities, in order to

better meet their needs. While it has good intentions to address diversity, its maiden approach has been problematic.

As aforementioned, Oak Valley has a history of sustaining a point system until the 1960s, to prevent Blacks, Italians, Jews, and other non dominant groups from buying homes there (Sugrue, 1996; Graham, 2000). The point system no longer exists, but concerns from community members and teachers that Barrington has been adversely affected suggests that they may be threatened by an influx of working class African-American students at the school. The ending of restrictive covenants in 1948 led to an on-going pattern of several wealthy Detroit families, who sought sanctity away from an influx of Blacks in affluent suburbs, including Oak Valley. As a lifelong resident of Detroit, I sustain an awareness that high real estate values in Oak Valley are intended to prevent outsiders—the working class, particularly—from buying homes there. However, rentals in Oak Valley and Huntington make it possible for the working class to attend Oak Valley Schools. Oak Valley's exclusivity becomes threatened among homeowners who pay high taxes when other people's children (Delpit, 1995) with limited cultural and economic capital attend the same schools as their children.

Barrington Middle School enrolled 776 students in grades 6-8 during the 2004-05 school year. 87 per cent of the students were European American, compared to 92 per cent during the previous school year. The current state average during the time of the study was 77 per cent in schools enrolling grades 6-8. African American students made up 9 per cent of the population, which is above the district's average of 6 per cent, and an increase from the school's 6 per cent during the previous year. The current state average is 16 per cent. Asian American students made up 2 per cent, aligned with

previous year's enrollment and the state average. 1 per cent of students were Hispanic. No Hispanic students were enrolled during the previous year, and the state average was 4 per cent. 3 per cent of the entire school population received free or reduced-price lunch, up from the previous year's 2 per cent, and is below the 31 per cent state average. Census data reveals that the median household income in Oak Valley in 1999 was $79,199.00.

Standardized test scores among grade 7 students in 2002 exceeded state averages in reading, writing, and math. 70 per cent of 7th graders met or exceeded standards in reading; 88 per cent did the same for writing, and 80 per cent in math. State averages are 49 per cent in reading, 63 per cent in writing, and 50 per cent in math.

*Mr. Lehrer's classroom*

Salient features resonate upon entering Mr. Lehrer's classroom. Among them: desk arrangement, classroom library, student artifacts, teacher artifacts, a professional library, and teacher approachability.

First, upon entering, desks are aligned in rows. One might assume that they would remain in that state for the entire period, and that discursive practices are traditional and teacher-led, in a manner described by Cuban (1993). It can also be assumed that the emphasis is on control, and that students are what Lortie (1975), Cuban (1993), Britzman (2003) and Jackson (1990) would define as passive receptors knowledge. The enactment of classroom activity, however, is quite the contrary and challenges Cuban's (1993) claim that secondary classrooms are dominated by teacher-centered practices, due to limited contact and time constraints. Teacher-led discourse

does exist, but it has a clearly defined purpose, which will be defined further in Mr. Lehrer's negotiation of teacher and peer-led discourse. After teacher led discourse, students transition desks into small circles for literature-based discussion groups. Circles transition back to rows at the close of class. This challenges the assumption that this class is dominated solely by teacher-led discourse.

Second, to the rear of the classroom is a sizable literature collection, arranged alphabetically by author, with accompanying student sign-out box. Novels are the primary choice, with authors ranging from Lois Lowry, JK Rowling, Katherine Paterson, Gary Paulsen, Gloria Naylor, Brian Jacques, Anne Montgomery, and Mildred Taylor, to name a few. There are also several dictionaries and writing reference books. Ultimately, novel choices are conducive to grade 7 boys and girls, suiting a variety of genres and interests. Such a collection seemingly would surpass what would be expected of a typical middle school classroom, and the plethora of literature may have grown over the duration of Mr. Lehrer's 18 years as a middle school English teacher.

Third, student artifacts are prominently displayed on the classroom bulletin board. Poetry and other written compositions are an end product and celebration of the writing and revision process. The written artifacts were renewed on a regular basis, and were reflective of students' personal experiences, cultural background, and family life. Tucked away in one of the cabinets are several letters written by students in self-addressed stamped envelopes over the years. Each year, Mr. Lehrer has students write letters to themselves, acknowledging their social worlds that year, not to be read until it is mailed to them at the end of their grade 12 year. It is a space for students to revisit their past. Additionally, this is one feature that defines student and parent fondness for

Mr. Lehrer. He is known for taking the time to know his students and for having a lasting impact in the community.

Moreover, teacher artifacts on the bulletin board above the chalkboard represent multiple themes—equality, peace, literary works, and representations of Mr. Lehrer. This becomes a juxtaposition of social worlds among Mr. Lehrer and his students. A poster for the Holocaust Memorial reads, "The stars and stripes had a different meaning for 6 million Jews." There are pictures of birds in nature. Mr. Rogers postcards are dispersed throughout, for the value of people as they are. There is a poster with books, labeled with classic authors: Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, to name a few. Additionally, artwork and writings of Mr. Lehrer's daughters are displayed. These artifacts are reflections of their early childhood—a holiday poem, paintings, scribbles and writing. During the time of the study, his youngest daughter was an 8$^{th}$ grader, and was enrolled in one of his morning sections when she was in 7$^{th}$ grade. His oldest daughter was a former student in grade 7. In fact, according to Mr. Lehrer, his oldest daughter's first day of grade 7 was marked by the first spoken words of a peer who commented on her scribbles, resulting in minor embarrassment in dad's class.

Teacher resources are positioned on a shelf next to Mr. Lehrer's desk, indicative of his interest in inquiry and sustaining authentic opportunities for students to write, read, and engage in discursive practices: Lucy Calkins' (1994) *The Art of Teaching*, Nancie Atwell's (1994) *In the Middle*, and Taffy Raphael's, et al., (2001) *Book Club for Middle School*, to name a few. Mr. Lehrer has been teaching English for 18 years. It has been a number of years since he has taken education courses since

earning his masters degree, and he admits that teacher resources keep him abreast of changes that emerge in his practice. He regarded the presence of a researcher as an opportunity to develop and polish his practice.

His primary concern in his classroom embodies students spending time reading and writing in meaningful contexts. This contrasts his early career, where he claims that his pedagogy, as Lortie (1975) and Britzman (2003) suggest in the apprenticeship of observation theory, mirrored the skills-based way he learned in school. Consequently, his concern was that his students were not spending considerable time in the act of reading and writing. Among other things, he sensed something was wrong when he recognized that students could memorize and get A's on vocabulary tests, but could not synthesize vocabulary knowledge into anything meaningful over time. Without authentic application, vocabulary had no meaning for students. Ultimately, Mr. Lehrer's on-going inquiry challenges the notion of scholars in the field that teacher pedagogy is deeply rooted in traditional practice and largely not conducive to significant change (Britzman, 2003; Lortie, 1975; Jackson, 1990;Cuban, 1993).

I observed Mr. Lehrer's class during the 6th period of the school day. Before and after each class, and at the end of each day, numerous students from other sections would visit Mr. Lehrer with a class question or concern. Students would also visit to share accomplishments and news. One student received tutoring after school on an on-going basis, in preparation for the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee competition, and Mr. Lehrer traveled to the competition with the student and family. Mr. Lehrer has also been known to run after school with the track team students. It was also common

for parents to visit, particularly if their child was absent. Parents of former students have expressed a fondness for Mr. Lehrer, and he has received numerous accolades for taking the time to know his students and instill a sense of self-efficacy. Ultimately, he fosters connectedness, and a comfortable, inviting learning climate for students and parents.

*Pilot Study*

I conducted my pilot study in Mr. Lehrer' classroom for two months during the 2003-04 school year. My commitment to the pilot, and eventually this project began during informal conversations with a colleague at Barrington, who expressed that problems were emerging as Detroit kids were entering the school, often illegally. She acknowledged that teachers were experiencing behavioral issues and were having problems teaching them. She also noted that teachers initially reluctant to modify pedagogy were recognizing that modification was necessary, but they did not know where to begin. Furthermore, she expressed that Oak Valley as a district was not properly addressing teachers' concerns and was not prepared to acknowledge that a problem existed. Instead, she claimed that they were sweeping the problem under the rug. When I expressed that I wanted to research a teacher at Barrington in the context of existing residency issues and changing demographics, she expressed that Mr. Lehrer would be a perfect fit because he is a welcoming teacher who does not assume the deficit approach. Initially, I wanted to help transform a reluctant or uncertain teacher. I was assured, however, that I would be better off working with a teacher who was enthusiastic about, and in the process of transforming his practice to teach all of his students.

Mr. Lehrer and I developed a collegial bond during my pilot study. During this time, it became apparent that we shared a similar pedagogical philosophy, based on cultivating a classroom community that employs holistic literacy practices and is conducive to modifying practice in the interest of teaching all of students. Therefore, he agreed to work with me again for my dissertation research during the 2004-05 school year.

*Literacy Practices*

Against the societal backdrop of a diversity problem, Mr. Lehrer is a practitioner who represents teachers in Oak Valley who implements controversial, multicultural literature and enacts discursive practices about matters of racism, classism, and ethnicity. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer provides his students opportunities to engage in written and spoken discourse that allows them to draw from their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Opportunities are also provided for students to appropriate their home language as a foundation to write in standard contexts in a non threatening manner, and to write in non standard contexts (Bakhtin, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996; Smitherman, 1999; Wolfram, 1999; Baker, 2002).

*Addressing this problem is important*

My personal background is important to this study. I am resident of Detroit and a graduate of Detroit Public Schools. I grew up in an interracial, middle class family in Detroit and attended magnet public schools there. These schools attracted a diverse mix of students, racially, culturally, and socio economically, and are better funded than segregated neighborhood schools. They continue to thrive and sustain long waiting lists. Many teachers that I had continue to sustain their careers there, another indicator that these are desirable places. Parents who selected these schools

opted to remain within city boundaries, in spite of white middle and working class flight to the suburbs during the late 40s through the 1970s. However, neighborhood schools (with few exceptions) did not provide the same opportunities as magnet schools, and did not sustain the same type of diversity or funding. Rather, a significant number of neighborhood schools face a disproportionate number of students who are Black and poor (Mirel, 1993) and endure effects of joblessness and coinciding societal ills (Wilson, 1996).

It is difficult to sustain teachers in these settings, and turnover rates are problematic (Irvine, 2003). Many middle class teachers are not prepared to teach in urban areas, and would prefer not to teach there (Shannon, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Weinstein, 2004). As an insider in Detroit, and a former teacher of color in two of the poorer, segregated neighborhood schools, I know that I my undergraduate experience did not adequately prepare me to face the demands of teaching in marginalized neighborhood schools. Although I preferred to teach there out of personal obligation, I only remained for four years, and resigned when a reading specialist position became available in Oak Valley.

School was where I always felt a sense of belonging, and everyone's differences were valued. As much as I enjoyed this educational setting, there was always a sense that regular public schools were not good enough. These institutions, as ideal as they seem, perpetuate social and cultural reproduction, largely among Detroit's middle and upper middle class (Sugrue, 1996), for parents, including mine, did not want to expose their children to the social conditions in segregated neighborhood schools. Paley (1979) claims that optimal learning environments are embodied in multiracial

classrooms. However, in a highly segregated region, such opportunities are limited, and seemingly not desirable to most people. The notion of an educational setting where a sense of belonging resonates for most is unfortunately rare.

Lortie (1975) and Lanier (1986) suggest that a significant number of teachers were reared in working class homes. It is likely that working class resistance to integration during the late 40s through the 70s has an intergenerational impact on teachers. Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret that significant number of teachers in Southeast Michigan are immediate descendants of the working class families who opposed integration during the late 40s through the 70s (Hill, 2005).

The notion of repeated history is manifest in Omi and Winant's (1994) definition of racial formation, which invokes that the concept of race signifies and symbolizes social conflicts by referring to different types of human bodies. Current circumstances reify that race formation theory is clearly grounded in history, and continues to play a role in shaping conditions. In Oak Valley, the current influx of Detroit students is a matter of repeated history and a matter of the ethnic based paradigm. Many Oak Valley residents and teachers grew up in households that participated in violent protest and eventual exodus to the suburbs when Blacks moved into their then White neighborhoods during the post World War II years, until the 1970s. Europeans who once ascribed to their ethnic identity began to ascribe to their Whiteness in solidarity, to preserve racial homogeneity and White privilege (Omi & Winant,1994).

Now that a Black invasion has re emerged in Oak Valley, the act of 3000 parents signing a petition became a matter of preserving White privilege. The ascription to

Whiteness as a historical construct is pervasive in Oak Valley, for most Whites have become White over time. In a place where ethnicity has been perpetually abandoned, privileges have been afforded in their Whiteness. Hence, race formation is historically situated in Southeast Michigan and continues to play a role in shaping current conditions and notions of sustaining White privilege can be detected in the school context (McIntosh, 1989).

There is ultimately a preference to teach students that resemble them, in a familiar setting (Shannon, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Weinstein, 2004). Consequently, working class Black children who enter suburban contexts, including Oak Valley, face several teachers who sought jobs there to avoid dealing with urban children (Hill, 2004). In many instances, the hostile treatment of an urban child in a segregated suburban setting is no different than the urban setting they left behind. The treatment underlies the expectation that African American children will struggle more than their White counterparts, due to a perceived deficit and being underprepared.

As a racially ambiguous person, I hear numerous sentiments about "those" Detroit kids who had easy coursework, write nonsensical sentences, and are regarded jokingly in teacher meetings as incompetent for incorporating dialectical features in their writing. Certainly, it is more acceptable when "our" kids appropriate dialectical features. I hear such sentiments among practitioners who may identify me as an exception to the rule, or simply do not know my background as a biracial Detroiter—but I hear the truth.

Currently, Oak Valley Schools implement diversity workshops carried out by outsiders that preach tolerance, without a full understanding of insider perspectives and

the problems that are endemic in the community. Although the workshops have good intentions, their existing framework will do very little to change the problem of the cultural discord between urban students, as "those" kids and insider teachers, who prefer to teach what they perceive as "our kids." Although there is much to be said about teachers critiquing notions of White privilege and unlearning their bias effectively through diversity awareness, this dissertation will not provide a framework for professional development. Rather, it will examine Mr. Lehrer, a grade 7 English teacher who transforms his pedagogy in manner that is culturally relevant. Mr. Lehrer is a practitioner who is very much aware of the circumstances that shape this racially polarized region.

*Overview of Chapters*

Chapter Two, *A Closer Look at Mr. Lehrer, his class, and their situation—teaching as improvisation and confronting the unexpected*, provides a description of the Barrington Middle School context, Mr. Lehrer's classroom and his role as a welcoming teacher. The class, as the case, is the most integrated he's had, but also unusually unsettled. Focal students are introduced, including four African American students from Detroit. Among them, one enrolled mid year; an Ethiopian student, French student, and Filipino student; and 17 European American students. My research role is explicated and manifest in Dyson and Genishi (2005) who recommend having theoretical commitments and personal/professional experience that inform all aspects of the project. My connection in Detroit as a lifelong resident, former teacher and student suggests my commitment to the study. Additionally, being a current Oak Valley teacher reifies my role as an insider. This, along with dressing in accordance with the

teaching staff enabled me to preserve the normalcy of the class (Dyson and Genishi, 2005) Other salient assets included working with the teacher previously and sharing a similar teaching philosophy. Data collection procedures were designed, being mindful of LeCompte and Shenshul (1999), who suggest designing measures that match characteristics of the population when existing measures are not a good fit. My goal was to provide an example of the nature of literacy pedagogy that is conducive to teaching racially and ethnically diverse students in the context of dilemmas that occur in a racially polarized school. Existing measures that are not a good fit embed the existing professional development in Oak Valley that promotes diversity that is detached from the concerns facing practitioners.

Gathered data includes teacher and peer-led discourse, written artifacts, and teacher and student interviews. I utilized procedures recommended by Emerson, et al., (1995). Initially, I coded salient themes, by reading fieldnotes and transcripts line by line. I interpreted salient themes to devise theoretical memos. This on-going work led to integrative memoing, where I made analytic connections across themes within the realm of Mr. Lehrer's instruction.

From there, I was able to construct assertions about what was happening in the context, relative to the phenomenon of interest (Dyson and Genishi, 2005). Assertions are claims, based on findings in the data, guided by my research questions. The phenomenon of interest is Mr. Lehrer's pedagogy, within the realm of literature-based instruction that espouses culturally relevant pedagogy in a racially polarized school. Analytic codes embody the following themes: Literacy practices embedded in a balanced literacy program that posit discursive practices and culturally relevant

pedagogy; Dilemmas of Practice and unintended consequences of progressive pedagogy; Mr. Lehrer's facilitation of connectedness, self efficacy and knowing. Once themes were devised, I approached data through integrated and excerpt style (Emerson, et al., 1995). Integrated data was aligned with written artifacts and fieldnotes. Excerpted data was aligned with teacher and student interviews, discourse, and discourse captured in fieldnote jottings.

Research questions were manifest in the following topics and engendered subquestions: What literacy practices are enacted? What are dilemmas that shape practice? How does Mr. Lehrer facilitate connectedness, self efficacy, and knowing? A set of hypotheses are also provided, given expectations working with Mr. Lehrer from the previous year and circumstances that shape current conditions. Hypotheses are manifest in problems of practice and unsettled behavior, which will be an on-going concern, but will not result in the abandonment of practices. On-going decision making and dilemma management will occur, in the effort to effectively teach all students. examines the body of literature that embodies components of literature-based instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical race theory. Peer and teacher-led discourse are salient features embedded within these theories. In addition, explored are codeswitching pedagogies that provide students with access to standard and non standard codes of writing and speaking in a non threatening manner. Cited is professional development that is conducive to supporting teachers that face and confront dilemmas of practice, due to increased diversity in classrooms. It refers to

research that documents qualities of successful teachers of minority children. Standards based reform, as an impetus to address the achievement gap among African American American students is another facet that is explored.

This chapter additionally examines the body of literature that embodies implications for minority students in non urban schools. Additionally examined are components of literature-based instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical race theory. Peer and teacher-led discourse are salient features embedded within these theories. In addition, explored are codeswitching pedagogies that provide students with access to standard and non standard codes of writing and speaking in a non threatening manner. Cited is professional development that is conducive to supporting teachers that face and confront dilemmas of practice, due to increased diversity in classrooms. It refers to research that documents qualities of successful teachers of minority children. Standards based reform, as an impetus to address the achievement gap among African American American students is another facet that is explored. The existing body of literature surrounding professional development encapsulates the need to treat current multicultural workshops more deeply. Hence, it is necessary to establish a link to disciplinary learning, and a space for teachers to take risks, in a manner accomplished by Mr. Lehrer.

Chapter Three, *A Balancing Act: Curriculum, Time, Discourse and Diversity,* examines Mr. Lehrer's enactment of literature-based instruction in a balanced literacy approach, which engenders reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Components are enacted among 29 students of heterogeneous learning abilities, in a manner that is improvisational. They include a writing component that utilizes the workshop approach

and invites numerous genres, appropriating standard and nonstandard writing conventions; there is a reading component that includes self selected, assigned reading, and read aloud. Assigned reading includes controversial literature. Peer and teacher led discourse are surrounding *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* are integral to facilitating multiple interpretations and in depth comprehension. Teacher and student interviews and patterns of peer and teacher led discourse are excerpted throughout this chapter to support assertions and themes that underlie supporting comprehension and interpretation. Practices provided a transition from teacher-led discourse, to peer-led discussion groups. Co-constructed student written artifacts are also integrated throughout the chapter. Most components are culturally relevant, for Mr. Lehrer draws from the language and culture of the home to inform instructional practices. The more diverse class composition is such, that Mr. Lehrer's practices are significantly more culturally responsive than the pilot study. Making these changes is an act of improvisation, for he makes adjustments in an effort to best teach his students.

Chapter Four, *Mr. Lehrer's Orchestration of Peer-Led Discourse*, examines Mr. Lehrer's enactment of literature-based instructional practices surrounding literature choices most teachers reject. This chapter examines the rejection of protected titles that are exclusive to the grade 7 curriculum, and include *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), *Dragonwings* (1953, 1981), and *My Brother, My Sister and I*(1994). Moreover, the acceptance of another protected title, *The Outsiders* will be explored. Also explored is Mr. Lehrer's deliberation in the regrouping of student discussion groups from *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, to transitioning student grouping across the aforementioned protected titles. An additional novel, *Seedfolks*, was enacted as a

read aloud, in an effort to bridge the overarching theme, prejudice, across the literature-based discussion groups. Interviews and patterns of teacher and peer-led discourse will be excerpted to support assertions that undergird critical race theory and affirming student queries. Students' co-constructed written artifacts and individual reader response journals will be integrated to illustrate the influence of teacher and peer led discourse in the construction of critical literacy.

Chapter Five—*Dilemmas of Practice.* Chapter Three and Four practices underlie this chapter. This is a study of change, which is deeply held, even tacit ways of thinking, knowing, communicating, or identifying oneself. Yet it occurs in a familiar context. Regardless of income or history, all of these students share culturally formed concepts of "school." Additionally Mr. Lehrer is attempting neither to repeat old habits, nor revolutionary social structure. Structures are human made and have social histories. So, it makes sense that they both help us order our thoughts and lives and make changes in that order by the freedom shared knowledge also affords. We can improvise, do all kinds of things with words, by revoicing ideas, changing subtle patterns of talk and activity, read different texts, and read familiar texts differently. This chapter examines Mr. Lehrer's negotiation of dilemma management in a class that is behaviorally unsettled and demonstrates difficulty with responsibilities. Mr. Lehrer does this, knowing that such "small changes" will have great impact on the situation. The idea that he cannot rely on prior or unexamined knowledge means that he has to negotiate a new social order with his students. This is hard and takes time, and is resisted for many reasons. Unintended consequences of progressive pedagogy exist within the realm of: Teacher and peer led discourse, and students who do not fulfill

requirements in spite of changes in the agency of Mr. Lehrer and class members and lack of fit between some of the important work students are doing in the pursuit of social justice and at least initially, formal assessment. Documented through teacher interviews and observation is on-going decision making—making directives explicit, and deciding when to accommodate or when to require student accommodation. This results in student improvement in the context of dilemma areas, yet dilemmas require on-going management and attention. Particularly salient in this chapter is the matter of achievement, in correlation with students who chose not to turn in important assignments. Numerous students received grades that did not align with their aptitude, including Detroit focal students—Although research suggests a phenomenon of low achieving minority students as a result of a classroom that is not optimal to their strengths, this is not the case in Mr. Lehrer's class. It is a result of the decision to not turn in assignments—in many instances, students were observed working competently on required tasks, and having ample time to complete them.

Chapter Six, *Mr. Lehrer, This is Foul: Dilemmas of Teacher and Peer-Led Discourse, Crisis, and Connectedness* bridges patterns of peer and teacher-led discourse in Chapters Four and Five. This chapter will explore the unintended consequences of discourse when classroom relations are compromised and when students do not assume collaborative responsibilities. Things fall apart, revealing the fragility of a new order. Also documented are Mr. Lehrer's on-going deliberation, decision making, and adjustments to restore classroom relations and encourage equitable participation for all students. Patterns of peer and teacher-led discourse will

be excerpted to support assertions, along with interviews. Student writing, individual and co constructed will also be integrated.

Chapter Seven, *The Seedfolks: Connectedness, Self-Efficacy and Professional Development* will explore the manner in which Mr. Lehrer facilitates a connection with his students, personally and pedagogically. Personally, he participates in activities in and out of school that are important to his students. Pedagogically, he provides opportunities to connect the culture of the home and matters that are important to student identity. This is embedded in discursive and reflexive practices, and through written tasks. He provides opportunities to build student competency, self awareness and self efficacy, within the realm of critical race theory. Teacher and peer led discourse are excerpted, along with teacher and student interviews. Student written artifacts and are integrated to support assertions. It concludes with reflection on new ways of learning about teaching , reflective of a changing society. The unanticipated border situation in this dissertation is a close study of adaptation and improvisation, which underscores the newness of the problem of practice. It reaches beyond the usual definitions of multicultural education, where diverse means other than normal and cultural responsiveness is polite, but not an authentic process. Therefore, we have much to do in order to learn about how teachers, experienced or novice, can have authentic, engaging, and collaborative experiences from with to develop new ways of thinking about practice; ways that make small changes with rippling effects. In the process, a focus on the subtle but powerful ways that participation in teaching make a difference harkens back to Dewey (1915), but also places us in theories and technologies that afford close study and teacher inquiry networks in which various stakeholders from

diverse situations or loci of practical dilemmas can exchange notes and learn, as we want students to learn, dialogically and authentically.

## Chapter Two: A Closer Look at Mr. Lehrer's Creative Responses to the Unexpected in His Classroom and Among His Students

I observed noticeable changes in Mr. Lehrer's classroom from my pilot study, conducted during the previous school year) to my dissertation study. While I got to know Mr. Lehrer, his teaching values and styles in the pilot, the composition of his class changed in the second year—as did the wider social context of his teaching. Mr. Lehrer's class was significantly more racially diverse than the previous group of students. What became apparent during the course of this dissertation study, and what I will illustrate with case examples based on my research, was that the changing student composition led to the adjustment of teaching and teacher decision-making, both during planning and on-the-spot. Mr. Lehrer was called in the second year to make adjustments surrounding the changing nature of student demography. Not surprisingly, these changes, located in the wider contexts of school, community, society, and history, were reflected in the classroom discourse by means of which participants tacitly mirrored the circumstances at Barrington. This chapter will examine the class composition and my methodological approach to determine Mr. Lehrer's nature of improvisational pedagogy.

In order to discover and describe Mr. Lehrer's improvisational pedagogy in context, it is important to investigate classroom activity over a long period of time, with the trust of teacher and students, and in notes and recorded talk. Long before I could identify what was, in fact, changing with circumstance—what was improvised and jointly made by teacher and students, I had to look back on the pilot year as well as on research describing teacher talk and classroom discourse, as typically patterned.

It is common to think of diversity as the source of dilemmas in teaching, but the realities of practice are such that the teacher and students must continuously interact. They may reflect on that action and identify dilemmas, but while they are together they must endeavor to make sense together (Erickson, 2005). To introduce this idea as it is embodied in the classroom I studied, the next section of this chapter will discuss participants, setting, context, analysis, and theory.

*Participants*

The class represents the case in the study. Mr. Lehrer's class was integrated in a manner that resonated with the school population. Of all classes, however, Mr. Lehrer claimed that the composition of students was the most racially and culturally integrated he had ever taught during his career. Mr. Lehrer's 6$^{th}$ hour class of 14 boys and 15 girls was therefore significantly more diverse than the previous year when I conducted my practicum study. The class comprised of 29 students, compared to last year's 25 students. 25 students consented to participate in this study. All students' names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Students selected most of the names.

One portion of Mr. Lehrer's class was made up of students different from the mainstream of this community, in terms of ethnicity, language, and so forth. But these students were not nearby migrants. They were first generation students who either immigrated to the United States or who were born from parents who immigrated. Of these students, one was an Asian American female who was Filipino, aligned with last year's enrollment ( Melissa ); Marissa was Polish, whose parents immigrated from Poland; one was a French citizen who arrived in Kindergarten (Helena), and another

student was Ethiopian who arrived a few years prior to grade 7(Jack). These students made up the population of students in the class who were descended from immigrant parentage, and consequently became the first generation in their families to procure schooling in the United States. Their "third culture" or "voluntary immigrant" (Ogbu, 1983) identity afforded them a status in both community and classroom different from the Detroit students. Third culture status in the district and at the school was not a basis of scrutiny, surrounding legal residency. Although they may not have shared the same cultural capital as many students indigenous to Oak Valley, more than likely their families would obtain what was considered appropriate capital over time. At the same time, they shared similar cultural norms that were valued by middle class, mostly Caucasian, teachers, in a manner described by Lareau (2000). To that end, there was visible and relatively smooth parental involvement between home and school. Helena's mother, for instance, would regularly visit Mr. Lehrer after school to discuss her daughter's progress and exchanges were always positive. In addition, the students spoke a variation of English that aligned with European American Vernacular English, which was valued by teachers. In this situation, students were not seen as using "poor" or non-standard English—presumed to be their native language. They were identified as youngsters who were or were becoming bilingual in languages highly valued in contemporary world commerce.

Mr. Lehrer's class additionally comprised of five African American students, compared to last year's two. Of the African American students, all were from Detroit(Taye, Monet, Kiki, Kim), with the possible exception of one of the students, whose origins are uncertain, who did not consent to participate. The population of

African American students was indicative of the numbers in a typical class at Barrington. These numbers represent a minority of the classroom and school population, but working class Detroit African American students were heavily scrutinized. This is a phenomenon also addressed by Vivian Paley, especially in her book, *White Teacher* (1989). Although Jack was considered a Black student, it is important to note that he was not African American, nor was his enrollment questioned. Jack shared similar cultural norms, and spoke a form of English that was similar to his European American counterparts. He was identified as an international student, and also spoke a public form of so-called "Standard English". The African American participants, however, spoke African American Vernacular English, a language that has historically been despised by teachers and in the dominant culture (Purcell-Gates, 2002; Smitherman,1999). Hence, discordant values with the school and limited comfort, as well as mistrust and questions of legitimacy led parents to avoid the kind of contact with the teacher that international parents of students like Jack avidly sought.

Here is a clear example of assumptions and expectations playing out with such complexity (race, class, ethnicity, language, nationality, history, culture) that, like Paley, it was Mr. Lehrer, not the students who "had the problem" (Paley quoted in Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001). Before even discussing the remaining 17 students who were typical Oak Valley residents, it is important to note that complexity called for Mr. Lehrer to think and act in new ways—many invented as he went along—if he was to avoid the reproduction of the local and wider social order. Call and response, labeling, singling out students as representatives of their "cultures" and so forth—and with that, most of what had passed for professional development in multicultural education

heretofore—was going to be of little use if applied unreflectively, if embraced in totality, or if seen as more authoritative than what teacher and students might create together in this microcosm that fate handed them.

The remaining 17 students were European American (Anna, who lived in neighboring suburbs and Detroit before moving to Oak Valley; Steve, Bert, Brandy, Dave, Jason, Mickey, Abe, Pippen, Jessie, Lennie, Jared, Moe, Julie, Violet, and Phoebe, and three students whose parents did not consent to the study). Most of this population was indigenous to Oak Valley and made up second and third generation families in the district. Their enrollment was not scrutinized. Instead, their enrollment became a matter of being protected, particularly as a result of parents who exerted their agency in solidarity. Middle class European American parents, therefore, sustained an active role in supporting school and cultural reproduction, similar to what Lareau (2000) describes. Sharing similar cultural norms was also conducive to active involvement with the school. In addition to speaking a variation of English valued by teachers, students additionally acquired participatory norms which underlie what Cazden (2001) terms Initiation-Response-Evaluation, a traditional discourse pattern in which a teacher initiates a child to respond, then comments on the child's response.

Mr. Lehrer's class was going to be "counter cultural" if it was going to succeed as a community in which everyone had rich opportunities to learn and where it was important to know and learn in authentic ways with people unfamiliar to you or different from you. Therefore it was not surprising to note concern that the class was unusually unsettled, in stark contrast from his class I observed during the previous year. He was uncertain about my observing the 6$^{th}$ hour class for optimal outcomes, for he

found himself explicitly and constantly managing matters of behavior and responsibility for this class. More so than any other class that year, and more notably than he could recall over the course of his teaching career.

As a researcher, I found myself serving as a trusted sounding board for Mr. Lehrer's thoughts. Mr. Lehrer welcomed the opportunity to reflect on his practice and on the on-going improvisational adjustments he found himself making for students he regarded as having so much to offer, yet in many instances did not exert their full potential. This was particularly evident, in spite of extended opportunities to turn in assignments. While he claimed to adore each student as an individual, he suggested that they were a challenge to manage collectively. My presence therefore was also as a participant, not only a passive observer.

While this role is central to ethnography in that it enables access to the insiders' perspectives, I was careful to remember that, ultimately, I needed to preserve what some have called a "dual vision" in which I was able to participate in an also analyze and write about this class.

The students enthusiastically welcomed my role in the class, and were eager about the potential to create their own pseudonyms, be audiotaped, and consequently be written about. They were curious about what it took to write a dissertation, and many were eager to read a finished product that was about them. On numerous occasions, students were eager to have an opportunity to see what was written about them and wanted to hear their voices. The awareness of being taped was conducive to several students who wanted to make in-depth contributions to their conversation.

This, of course, may be the way youngsters generally respond to the chance to be recorded, but the idea that their class was being documented and that what they had to say mattered no doubt underscored their sense from day one that they were different from "the usual" class and that this year was also going to be "different from the usual".

During my study, I examined the interaction of all of the class members, as they engaged in Mr. Lehrer's instructional practices. Additionally, Taye, Kim, Kiki and Monet became focal students, to determine the nature of their participation and benefits from the class. As students from Detroit who spoke African American Vernacular English, I wanted to explore opportunities for them to write in standard and nonstandard contexts. They were comfortably vocal about their identity in relation to the controversial themes raised in the multicultural literature and/or the circumstances shaping their space in the school and community, and I wanted to explore their written and spoken discourse within that realm. Because research suggests the potential that African American students fare no better in a desegregated school than a segregated school, I wanted to document the African American students from Detroit, as they participated in Mr. Lehrer's classroom. Given that Mr. Lehrer's pedagogical decisions were improvisational based on changing demographics from the previous year, I wanted to pay closer attention to the nature of written genres, not only for Detroit students, but for all members of the class who spoke deviations of Standard English. Where applicable, I wanted to also explore their interactions with their peers in the class, in the effort to determine the benefits when students of varying backgrounds interact and discuss matters of racism, classism, and culture.

These interests grew in part, out of my fieldwork, but they also came from what I had previously studied and experienced firsthand about the tendency for teacher education to be a very weak intervention into the thinking action of teachers or the achievement of students—in particular when the topic was multiculturalism and the focus was language and literacy learning. It is important to mention that Mr. Lehrer's nature of peer-led discourse during the pilot study did not explicitly draw from these themes. Instead, students were typically invited to generate questions they believed would invite meaningful conversation and would discuss themes underlying the literature. Therefore, I wanted to be mindful about Mr. Lehrer's improvisation, and the nature of the shift in discourse underlying racism, classism, in culture, as a result of his diverse class of students and their situation. Abe, Dave, and Mark additionally became focal students because they interacted with peers during discursive practices in a manner that was insightful and unexpected. Jack, Helena and Melissa were also selected, as students who comfortably expressed their heritage in their reading and/or relation to the literature.

It is well-known that all research in the human sciences is influenced by the humans trying to study human nature. Regardless of the tradition in which we work, we must all be aware of this—as both a problem and an advantage—but we must also try to be conscious of our biases so that we can discipline them and also, especially in the intimacy of fieldwork, we must acknowledge that they are a part of the process—a process actually characterized by and valued for, in Geertz's (1983) view, the chance to learn about self and other. Therefore, to describe my role, it is important to explain my background. This is grounded in Dyson and Genishi (2005) who suggest that

researchers have theoretical commitments and personal/professional experiences that inform all aspects of a project. Additionally, the researcher influences the kinds of data that is gathered (2005).

I grew up in Bagley Subdivision, a middle class, predominantly African American neighborhood in Northwest Detroit. My upbringing was in an interracial household, and my parents nurtured my German and Jamaican heritage. Growing up, it was known that the segregated neighborhood schools my best friends attended were not diverse enough, so I attended citywide magnet schools. I enjoyed attending school with children from all over the city, with varying racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds.

My experience in Detroit Public Schools influenced me to teach there after I graduated from college. My dream was to teach at a multiracial school, whether it was Burton International School, the school I attended, or Detroit Open School, where I student taught, but there were no vacancies, due to teachers who sustain lengthy teaching careers there. In spite of that, I felt that my presence was needed in the neighborhood schools, because I believed that children, regardless of socioeconomic background, or attending a magnet or neighborhood school, deserved equitable opportunities.

I began my teaching career in two different neighborhood schools over a four year period, in the poorer sections of the city that were predominantly African American and poor, Burt Elementary and Bellevue Elementary, respectively. Initially, I experienced culture shock, for my university and schooling experiences did not prepare me for work in a typical urban setting. I immediately sought a Masters program in

literacy to help me better teach my low achieving readers, which was helpful to my development as an effective practitioner.

Leaving Detroit after four years for Oak Valley to become a reading specialist was difficult. I left behind a school community where I was one among caring, nurturing teachers. Although low test results consistently second guessed teachers, many were committed to their students, and worked collaboratively with each other to attempt to raise achievement levels. I was saddened to learn that declining population led to the closure of Bellevue Elementary School, and was aware that community members were petitioning to keep it open.

Although many teachers were caring at both Detroit schools, I experienced a few teachers who expressed derogatory attitudes about many of the poor students and their families. In several instances, I sensed that some teachers, both African and European American exerted a deficit approach, especially among students who were behavior problems. I recall a colleague telling one of my students that she would never want him in her class because he was so bad. I committed myself to teaching to his strengths, and to reaching out to him. It troubled me that many teachers openly perceived him in this manner. There was seemingly a sense of middle class superiority, a sense of "us" versus "them" which I found problematic.

During the time of the study, I was teaching in my sixth year at Brownstone Middle School in Oak Valley, where most teachers are committed to knowing their students, and to sustaining a nurturing community. The population is predominantly European American and affluent. Each year, I noticed a gradual increase of African American students at Brownstone. I was deeply concerned about student files that

follow them through school. To illustrate, many of my African American students that I determined as competent and capable, had files following them from elementary school that assumed a deficit approach. Although Brownstone can be a welcoming place, I noticed that many of my colleagues did not appear as welcoming when African American students entered the context, particularly if they were from a marginalized area of Detroit. This can be illustrated by my attendance at IEP (Individualized Education Plan for special education placement) meetings, where teachers made insensitive comments about students' dialectical differences. In fact, vernacular differences in writing were improperly regarded as what Dyson and Genishi (2005) term as developmental errors and as wrong. Assumptions have also been exerted that coming from Detroit means that they came from an inferior school and that teachers there must have sustained low expectations. I believe that my purpose in Oak Valley is to act as a lifeline for African American students who are quickly labeled deficient and placed in special education programs. On numerous occasions, I expressed and proved student competency during my enactment of literature-based instruction. Although I made success with my Detroit students, I was often made to feel by other teachers that student success in my class was discounted, because smaller enrollment meant more individualized help. Although my assessment of students have prevented special education placement on a few occasions, there have been times in which student progress in a small group setting confirmed that special education was a good fit. Essentially, I was identifying student competency that no one else could determine in a larger class setting, so my claims of success were not always validated.

My research role was ultimately grounded in and influenced by my experiences as a student and resident in Detroit, and my experiences teaching in and interacting with colleagues in Detroit and Oak Valley. It was also influenced by middle class teachers in both contexts who assume a deficit approach about students who are African American and poor.

As a reading specialist and journalism teacher at Brownstone, in addition to previously researching at Barrington, I was regarded as an insider in the school community. The faculty welcomed my presence and interactions with teachers were as welcoming as at Brownstone, so I personally felt that I belonged there. I was formally introduced in Mr. Lehrer's class as a reading teacher at Brownstone, and as a researcher at Michigan State University. Mr. Lehrer also noted that I observed one of his classes last year. This established a comfort level, especially for students who had friends at my school, and for Michigan State fans.

Students were informed that I was interested in researching their participation, particularly as they engaged in teacher and peer-led discussion and assignments. For the students, this confirmed for them that their participation in class was important. Students openly welcomed me into their class. They were even cognizant of my schedule and anticipated my presence in the classroom.

Dyson and Genishi (2005) assert about the importance of a researcher locating oneself within the case, and to determine the nature of interactions with students. I decided at the onset of the study that I needed to position myself at the front of the classroom, so that I could observe student reactions to Mr. Lehrer. It took some time for students to forget that I was there, and some would ask me questions about

what I was writing, or would attempt small talk, so I would gently ignore or respond quickly to remind that I was taking notes. Dyson and Genishi (2005) also suggest that it is important to be the least disruptive to the everyday workings of the class and the teacher's schedule. Normalcy can be sustained by looking like an insider. I would arrive at Barrington in the afternoon, after teaching in the morning at Brownstone. Therefore, my manner of dressing in accordance with the teaching staff was another vehicle to easily be recognized as an insider (Dyson and Genishi, 2005).

Because the pedagogical focus was mainly on peer and teacher-led discursive practices, I observed mostly on optimal days when discursive practices were carried out. I also did not observe during standardized testing windows or during times when the schedule was adjusted to conflicting times with Brownstone. I also did not observe during most days that were reserved for reading in class. In short, I was explicitly looking for those occasions maximizing the unfolding of talk among students, by teacher, between teacher and students, etc. My "educated hunch" , or in the parlance of fieldwork research, my "working hypothesis", was that I could see improvisation.

Open, collective activities invite talk about text, high engagement and interdependent among group members, and, in this case, probably surface differences. The teacher and the students are "on the spot" to figure out how to teach and learn together without the "safety net" of assumed common experience and the format of teacher-led discussion that usually protects us from deeply knowing one another, the text, or even our own values and beliefs. I predicted that things would be quite different in Mr. Lehrer's class.

Mr. Lehrer and I would meet 1 to 2 times per week after school to discuss what was happening in class, concerns with students, and so on. We only met during times when it did not interfere with after school schedules and obligations. On many occasions, Mr. Lehrer would notice something that I overlooked, and vice versa. This was also an optimal space for comparing interpretations of salient matters that occurred.

I became a participant observer, and was accepted in the class as a helpful person. During times when students were participating in individual writing or in a writer's workshop, I would briefly help confirm Mr. Lehrer's directives. I limited my interactions so that I could vigorously jot down salient observations. My interactions with students were also within the encactment of their peer led discussion groups. Similar to Mr. Lehrer, I would make sure students stayed on topic or encourage someone to build on an idea that was ignored. Before becoming adjusted to my presence, students would try to talk to me, and invite a more in-depth conversation than during the whole group setting. As aforementioned, I would gently ignore or remind that I needed to jot down my observations. Additionally, I would request that they talk naturally and pretend that I was not there.

Mr. Lehrer and I share common pedagogical practices, surrounding literature-based instruction, literature selection that deals with matters of race and racism, and drawing from students' funds of knowledge. We established a collegial bond during my practicum study during the previous year. Therefore, trust was established at the onset of this project.

Mr. Lehrer was transforming his practice during the time of the study. This became an asset because we were able to openly and comfortably discuss the benefits

of enacted pedagogy, along with the inevitable problems of practice that emerge. Moreover, comfort was established in the fact that I was not in a position to judge Mr.Lehrer's teaching. I regarded his practices as optimal, and as a good example of what literature-based instruction and culturally relevant pedagogy looks like for researchers and teachers. My familiarity with literature-based instructional practices was also helpful as I interpreted interactions, salient patterns, and artifacts.

As a resident of Huntington, with 18 years of teaching experience, Mr. Lehrer was aware of the changing demographics at Barrington. Establishing a collegial bond and trust enabled us to openly discuss the community's response to the changing demographics, its impact on the school, and consequently his practice.

*Data Collection Procedures*

Observations were conducted from February to June 2005, three to five days per week, for a 46 minute period in Mr. Lehrer's 7$^{th}$ grade English class. According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), it is necessary to design measures that match the characteristics of the population when existing measures are not a good fit. The data was gathered, in an effort to model the nature of literacy pedagogy that is conducive to teaching racially and ethnically diverse students in the context of dilemmas that occur in a racially polarized school. A narrow definition of success, especially one dependent on sampling student performance at intervals or against a standard definition of literacy would not begin to capture the kind of success that might be claimed by the teacher and the students in this class. If we think about Dewey's (1915) stressing of democratic pedagogy, student involvement, teacher guidance, and relevance to the quality of life, diverse students would ultimately live as adult members of a democracy, this class was

successful—particularly in tackling these issues with limited external support and with impressive occasions when curriculum, society, and learners came together. This is therefore an effort to provide an example of a successful teacher of diverse students, in an environment where many teachers express uncertainty. In this instance, existing measures that are not a good fit embed the existing professional development in Oak Valley that promotes diversity in a manner that is detached from the concerns facing practitioners. Perhaps a case of this sort is generative, as teachers engage in their own inquiries, improvisations, and communication about a situation growing ever more common in our nation. It has been argued and demonstrated in research that such ongoing, teacher-led, and inquiry-based development may be a powerful intervention, as teachers learn about language, literacy, culture, and development (see, for example, Florio and Ruane, in press; Raphael and Florio-Ruane, 2005, for examples). Gathered data included:

*Teacher-led discourse*: This was captured through in-the-moment jottings in ethnographic field notes and audiotaped transcriptions of Mr. Lehrer affirming student responses over a 5 month time period. In order to avoid unmanageable amounts of data (Dyson and Genishi, 2005) throughout the study, I only transcribed relevant discourse patterns.

*Peer-led discourse:* In order to capture this, I provided an audiotape for each literature-based discussion group, and where possible, ethnographic field notes. This was enacted over a 3 week period during the middle of the study.

*Artifacts:* Collected written artifacts were collected across the 5 month study, and comprised mainly of individual and group written responses to literature, along with narratives, poetry, and essays.

*Teacher Interviews:* Audiotaped teacher interviews, based on enactment of practices, dilemmas, the school climate and outcomes, were conducted at the beginning and end of the study. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

*Student Interviews:* 1 audiotaped interview with selected groups was conducted during the end of the study to determine the intended and unintended consequences of literature-based instruction, student perceptions of peer and teacher led discourse, and of controversial discourse that was enacted. I also wanted to determine students' reactions to having opportunities to write about their cultural backgrounds and social lives. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

*Data Analysis Procedures*

I utilized procedures recommend by Emerson, et al. (1995). Initially, I coded salient themes, by reading fieldnotes and transcripts line by line. I was able to elaborate and interpret these salient themes by devising on-going theoretical memos. This on-going work led to integrative memoing, where I made analytic connections across instructional themes enacted by Mr. Lehrer. Therefore, I developed analytic codes to group data into categories of relevant information (Dyson and Genishi, 2005).

Consequently, I interrelated analytic categories with situational circumstances and participant perspectives to develop assertions about what was happening in the context, relative to the phenomenon of interest (Dyson and Genishi, 2005, p. 110). Assertions are claims, based on findings in the data. The phenomenon is

Mr. Lehrer's pedagogy and his enactment of literature-based instruction that espouses culturally relevant pedagogy in a racially polarized school. Analytic codes embody the following overarching themes : (1) Literacy practices enacted in literature-based instruction (2) Dilemmas of practice (3) Mr. Lehrer's facilitation of knowing. These elements suggested an overarching theme that has been described and will be further illustrated, in a manner that an experienced teacher worked within a familiar structure, but in transformative ways. Since these transformations were largely negotiated with students as a part of Mr. Lehrer's objectives, he had to hold ends in view and use text, written and oral, to help the group understand fears, biases and beliefs, in order to learn about self, others, and literacy. To that end, I was able to enact data reduction across my fieldnotes, transcripts, student written artifacts, and curriculum documentation.

From my fieldnote analysis, I devised assertions that were guided by Mr. Lehrer's literacy practices, and considered his enactment of improvisation, based on my awareness of decisions from the pilot study. Hence, I paid attention to his negotiation and balancing act of reading and writing requirements between home and school, as he made sure students were actively engaged in on-going processes. I was also mindful of his selection of multicultural curriculum literature, and his transition from teacher to peer-led discourse. Moreover, I was attentive to the manner in which Mr. Lehrer modified the nature of discursive practices, which coincided with the participants in the class. My fieldnote analysis was also intended to capture Mr. Lehrer's on-going decision making processes in his efforts to teach every student, in a manner that was often decided in-the-moment. Hence, I identified fieldnote data that captured his

enactment of adjustments to accommodate individual circumstances, scheduling changes, student absences, and so on.

During my enactment of data reduction across teacher interview data, my intentions were to capture dilemmas of practice Mr. Lehrer paid attention to, in the era of standards-based reform and declining resources. This seemed key, since he was doing something that many would consider paradoxical—changing the discourse of his practice to widen and deepen it at precisely the time when others were viewing educational reform, largely as a process of narrowing, even scripting discourse. Moreover, it was necessary to utilize transcripts, which illustrated his decision making processes in his attempt to resolve challenging dilemmas, in the act of being improvisational. Salient interview data was also selected in my attempt to understand the nature of Mr. Lehrer's background, which cultivated his role as a culturally responsive teacher who welcomed controversy and his comfort level to address uncomfortable topics with his students.

Upon enacting data reduction with teacher-led transcripts, I was most interested in the improvisational nature in which Mr. Lehrer responded to students' ambiguous queries. Moreover, I was mindful to identify moments when Mr. Lehrer affirmed student contributions and facilitated a sense of knowing his students. This was aligned with their cultural and linguistic heritage and their interests. Also significant was the nature of teacher-led discourse, while accounting for dilemma management and confronting uncomfortable topics. I additionally wanted to identify the nature and transition of teacher-led discourse from the pilot study, particularly surrounding critical literacy.

As I reduced data among peer-led transcripts, I was interested primarily in students who provided in-depth treatment of themes underlying the literature, as intended by Mr. Lehrer. Keeping in mind the nature of peer-led discourse from the pilot study, I additionally paid attention to the transition to discourse, which emphasized critical literacy and critical race theory. To me, these phrases connoted the cultivating of a language of critique—a sense of the importance of "reading within, reading upon, and reading against", as Morrell (personal communication, 2004) describes it. Here, of course, text is both written and spoken, composed by careful crafting, or spontaneously created, individual or joint. Likewise, reading is not only decoding, but is attending to meanings and the power of language—in writing and in speech—to impact cognition, to shape or challenge values, to call to account.

While analyzing student interviews, my data reduction embodied their reactions to their interaction in Mr. Lehrer's class. I sought to identify what I perceived to be compelling responses to engaging in peer and teacher-led discourse and opportunities to write standard and nonstandard writing conventions. I was additionally mindful of student reactions underlying the circumstances shaping their identity, experiences and sense of belonging at Barrington.

As I reduced my student written artifact data, I paid attention to writing, which engendered standard and nonstandard writing conventions. Nonstandard writing conventions were identified as writing, which seemed to employ their home language in a manner that was authentic. For standard writing conventions, I paid attention to writing, which appeared to demonstrate distinctions between nonstandard conventions, and potential changes over time.

Once salient themes were devised, I approached data through integrated and excerpt style (Emerson, et al., 1995). Integrated data was aligned with written artifacts and fieldnotes. Excerpted data was aligned with teacher and student interviews, discourse, and applicable discourse captured in fieldnote jottings.

*Hypotheses*

As mentioned above, contrasting the pilot year with the dissertation year, I generated working hypotheses related to the teacher's improvisational pedagogy, the interactions among the group, and ways that talk and text were negotiated in the face of difference. I entered the context with hypotheses, based on my knowledge of the class from the previous academic year, Mr. Lehrer's teaching practices, and precipitous changes that occurred during the time of the dissertation study.

What I was to learn—and illustrate in the following chapters—is that my hunches were the tip of an iceberg of deeper proportion. I came away from the study with a deeper sense of the complex situation Mr. Lehrer and his class tried to manage. For example, it was a situation unto itself, but it was also embedded within an institution with norms and expectations that participants needed to honor. It would not do much good if Mr. Lehrer created a harmonious space for students, but did not do it in the service of learning—and of learning both one's own sense of identity in relation to others, as well as the canonical texts, many of which can be read, as mentioned above, in ways that are geared both toward literal comprehension, standard commentary, and powerful critique. As a practitioner, I hypothesized that problems of practice within the context of unsettled behavior will be an on-going concern. He therefore would not abandon progressive pedagogy in favor of more didactic practices, but devise strategies

to best teach all students. Although he continued to enact a balanced literacy program, facing dilemmas that resemble urban contexts, but more challenging than the previous year, was a source of on-going reflection and decision making. Literacy practices mirrored last year's study. He continued to affirm student responses during teacher-led discourse and sustain peer-led discourse, but he also modified his approach to discussion prompting in a manner that is relevant to the increased diversity in the classroom. As a recipient of Detroit students midyear and beyond, Mr. Lehrer devised strategies to assume competency. Mr. Lehrer would devise strategies to assume competency and make it public and valued by the group as a whole.

*Confronting the Unexpected—The Need for Teaching as Improvisation*

Historical divisions of race and class in racially polarized regions engender limited familiarity of groups across race, class, and ethnic boundaries, for there is a tendency to self-segregate through upward mobility or be relegated in residential communities. These factors have an impact on school demography, yielding stark disparities across urban and suburban settings. More than 50 years after Brown vs. Board of Education declared separate but equal schools illegal, Ladson-Billings (1994) informs that most African American students still attend schools that are separate and unequal. Moreover, patterns have led to urban school districts that are predominantly African American and poor, but border school districts that are predominantly European American and affluent (Orfield and Eaton, 1996). Consequently, an on-going phenomenon in southeast Michigan is occurring, as affluent suburban schools are experiencing an influx of diverse populations, including working class African

American students, as a result of parent dissatisfaction with conditions in urban school systems, in the effort to seek educational parity for their children.

Although parents have good intentions and want to provide their children with the best perceived educational opportunities (Wells & Crain, 1997), students, with few exceptions are facing teachers who are unprepared to teach them. Hence, research suggests that African American students fare no better in a desegregated school than a segregated school (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Wells & Crain, 1997). This is due to the fact that teacher preparation, historically, has prepared teachers for work in White, middle class settings (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). In addition, a significant number of middle class teachers prefer to teach in educational contexts and among students that resemble themselves (Shannon, 1995, Cochran-Smith, 2000).

Furthermore, Morris (2004) claims that many Black students who attend predominantly White schools do not benefit from the social capital in these schools. They are often tracked into low level classes (Oakes, 1995), marginalized, and disproportionately disciplined (Meier, Stewart & England, 1999).

Notions that many teachers hold about "those" kids in affluent settings suggests what Omi and Winant (1994) term the "ethnic based paradigm." According to Florio-Ruane and Williams (2004), this paradigm attributes ethnic groups' successes in the US dominant culture to individual and group bootstrapping (p.3). In this realm, "those" kids are regarded as scamming their way into an affluent system, sharing the same privileges as their middle class counterparts who worked hard to buy a house in the community. An undercurrent exists among many, that "those" kids don't belong there. The undercurrent of "those kids" resonates with McIntosh's (1989) notion of White

privilege, in a context where privilege is detected in and out of school. Moreover, Wells and Crain (1997) cited suburban White teachers, students, and administrators who made a mandated desegregated school an unwelcoming place for African American transfer students. They often perpetuated racial insensitivity and exerted racial attitudes, resulting in recreating attitudes among African Americans to dislike each other, or to balance their critique of White racism with their need to survive in a predominantly White society (p. 183).

Moreover, in an effort to support the assumed deficits of "those" kids, many middle class teachers enact the color blind approach and acknowledge that they provide instruction to all of their students, regardless of background, in the same manner (Tyack, 1974; Purcell-Gates, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane & Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Paley, 1979). McIntire's (1997) work with White student teachers reveals that meanings they attach to whiteness poses implications on their work with nonwhite students. Hence, this reifies the tendency, that rather than build on students' funds of knowledge, middle class pedagogy is largely enacted and irrelevant to students and their experiences (Delpit, 2002; Anyon, 1997). Hence, the role of whiteness has an impact on instructional decisions manifest in the colorblind approach.

Ultimately, the body of literature surrounding circumstances in increasingly diverse school contexts suggests the need to enact culturally responsive pedagogy and management. Such transformative practices cannot fully occur unless teachers unlearn existing attitudes and understand the divisions of race and class that shape current conditions in racially polarized regions.

By examining the nature of Mr. Lehrer's practice within his circumstances, this dissertation will impart the need for teachers experiencing changing demography to acknowledge complexity and learn to engage in practice that is improvisational in nature. This is a difficult shift because it runs counter to more than a century of US education, in which inculcation of values and indoctrination in subject matter have been the essence of public education (even Dewey's school foundered on the rocks of these assumptions). But we are accumulating case upon case—in multiple media including print, videotape, film, and hypermedia—in which the narratives of teaching are perhaps more prominent than the techniques. It is in this format that teachers can learn by Mr. Lehrer's decision making and deliberation, in collaboration with a researcher , which will reify that teachers must engage in systematic inquiry, trial and error, and reflective, collegial communication about their practice within the context shaping their classrooms and schools. At the same time, they must engage in discursive practices outside of their comfort zone, and in collaboration with colleagues. Moreover, current multicultural workshops in Oak Valley and similar districts require in-depth linkages to disciplinary learning, standards, and a sense of space to take risks.

It is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to this existing body of knowledge by drawing from a teacher's enactment of improvisational practices, as he appropriated pedagogical changes. On-going modifications were a result of changing demography in Mr. Lehrer's classroom, in his effort to teach all of his students.

## Chapter 3—A Balancing Act: Curriculum, Time, Discourse, and Diversity

*Literacy practices that are enacted in a balanced literacy program*

Mr. Lehrer manages to enact literature based instructional practices, embedded in a balanced literacy approach, which posits Raphael and Pearson's (1999) recommendation of reading, writing, listening and speaking. These practices are enacted within the parameters of a 46 minute period, among 29 students of heterogeneous learning abilities, and are reasonably balanced between delegated class time and consistent and relevant assigned homework. Practices can also be termed culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995), for students have opportunities to connect literacy acquisition with their cultural and linguistic background, and appropriate their identity. Writing practices will be examined through the lens of emic perspectives, as they are enacted and accepted by Mr. Lehrer. Etic perspectives, where appropriate, will by utilized to take into account societal constructs and the body of research that draws from Mr. Lehrer's instruction. Given that Mr. Lehrer's class composition was more racially and ethnically diverse than during the pilot study, his pedagogical changes are improvisational, for he has made adjustments that coincide with his students and their needs.

On-going components that are assigned as homework, but transition into class on occasion, include assigned reading for instructional literature, a self-selected reading requirement, and a writer's notebook. Students are expected to bring necessary materials to class daily. In addition to reading assigned novels according to a schedule, students selected their own literature, to read 20 minutes nightly. Writer's notebook was a daily ½ page requirement, appropriated as writing in a low stakes manner.

Students were able to appropriate nonstandard writing conventions, and were provided with a venue to appropriate their personal style and voice (www.mich.gov/mde), embedded in Michigan's Grade Level Content Expectations.

Writing is an enacted component, in which students write a variety of genres. Mr. Lehrer utilizes the workshop approach recommended by Atwell (1987) and Calkins (1994). Additionally, the opportunities for students to access standard and nonstandard conventions of writing and speaking, recommended by experts in the field (Bakhtin, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996; Smitherman, 1999; Wolfram, 1999; Baker, 2002) will be examined as a facet of the workshop component. In this manner, students were able to utilize their home language as a foundation for standard writing conventions (Adger, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Gee, 1996; Wolfram, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2002; Smitherman, 1999; Vaughn-Cooke, 1999) in a nonthreatening manner (Delpit, 1995). In this regard, students were provided access to what Delpit (1995) and Gee (1996) term the culture of power, and to the dominant discourse . On occasion, they also had opportunities to utilize their home language as a foundation for writing nonstandard conventions, and were able to utilize their voices in their writing without the threat of correction or being marked down, in a manner that resonates with sociolinguists (Delpit, 1995, Gee, 1996; Smitherman, 1999 Adger, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Gee, 1996; Wolfram, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2002; Vaughn-Cooke, 1999). Hence, students were able to build on what Delpit (1995) and Meier (1999) recommend as their cultural linguistic strengths. In Mr. Lehrer's classroom, such pedagogical decisions became a manner of facilitating the Gee's (1996) notion that people of varying races and backgrounds are tied to varying literacies that are connected with varying Discourses. Also salient is the manner in

which African American students in the class recognized that they were not the only students who spoke a deviation from standard English, in a manner that resonates with Wolfram's work (1999). Moreover, opportunities for Delpit's (1995) suggestion for appropriating skills in meaningful contexts will be examined. To account for etic perspectives, the nonstandard and standard conventions appropriated in class will be interpreted and defined in relation to societal constructs and research.

Moreover, the Grade Level Content Expectations called for nonstandard and standard writing conventions, positing the emic perspective. Nonstandard conventions are embedded in appropriating a personal style, by exhibiting individuality to enhance the written message (www.mich.gov/edu). To account for the emic perspective, reference and analysis of student writing samples that posit individual style and voice deviating from standard conventions will be termed nonstandard. Simultaneously, writing that Mr. Lehrer accepts and appropriates as nonstandard will be taken into account. It is important to note that explicit attention was not given to these distinctions during the pilot study. However, changing demography and more emphasis on standards during the dissertation study prompted Mr. Lehrer's decision to draw more explicitly among these distinctions for his students.

According to Grade Level Content Expectations, standard writing espouses standard and grammar usage, where students must appropriate a variety of grammatical structures. Writing samples that focus on standard grammatical usage in the context of expectations of a grade 7 English class will be termed standard, within the realm of the emic perspective.

Mr. Lehrer enacts a read aloud component, as an impetus to model multiple interpretations, complex discursive practices, and in-depth comprehension (Rosenblatt, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; McGee, 1992; Almasi 1995). The read aloud component includes Gary Paulsen's (1993) *Nightjohn* at the beginning of the school year. Avi's (1990) *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* was enacted during the time of the study in February, along with Paul Fleischman's (1997) *Seedfolks* near the end of the school year. The enactment of read alouds was conducive to familiarizing students with a new speech genre (Bakhtin, 1986). The dissertation study was the first time Mr. Lehrer employed *Seedfolks.* This enactment was improvisational, for the novel was a direct reflection on the circumstances facing the class, Barrington, and the surrounding climate in Southeast Michigan. Moreover, it became a vehicle, which linked multicultural text set novels.

Titles selected for instructional literature will be examined as an enacted literacy practice. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (1990) is a required core novel in the curriculum that all grade 7 teachers must teach. The titles in the text set Mr. Lehrer implements are protected curriculum titles, which are limited to the grade level. Novels include *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*(1976), *Dragonwings*(1953,1981), *My Brother, My Sister and I* (1994), and *The Outsiders* (1968). Because selected titles engender controversy, the discussion of the text set will be explicated in Chapter 4.

Additional practices include a discursive component, in which students interact with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978) and participate in peer-led literature-based discussion

groups and teacher-led discourse. The preparation for grouping will be explicated, and patterns of peer and teacher-led discourse will be explicitly examined.

Mr. Lehrer regularly affirmed student responses and responded systematically to ambiguous queries (Britzman, 2003; Sawyer, 2004), in a manner of improvisation (Sawyer, 2004) that sustained deep knowledge of subject matter(Sawyer, 2004; Britzman, 2003; Shulman, 1987).

Peer-led discourse took place in small groups, enabling students to assume collaborative responsibilities (Cazden, 2001) and interact to construct multiple interpretations(Almasi, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978; McGee, 1992; Wertsch, 1991). The juxtaposition of peer and teacher-led discourse provided multiple participation channels (Philips, 1972) that facilitated equitable participation opportunities for students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The enactment was inspired by the Book Club framework embedded in the work of Raphael, et al., (1995, 2001, 2004), which posits "I Can Statements" during a literature-based discussion. Students were particularly expected to contribute to the conversation and build on each others' ideas. The balance of peer and teacher led discourse was observed during the enactment of Avi's(1990) *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, and the text set, along with the read aloud of Fleischmans's (1997)*Seedfolks*. The text set novels and *Seedfolks* will be described in Chapter 4.

The reader response journal is also an important component in a balanced literacy program, to be brought daily, but usually enacted at home.

Most practices can be termed culturally relevant, and will be explored within that context, when applicable.

*Assigned Reading Component—Instructional and Self Selected Literature*

With few exceptions, assigned reading for instructional literature is primarily enacted as homework. During the assigned reading of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (1990) and the text set of four titles, students received a reading schedule.

Mr. Lehrer explicated the need for students to be aware of the time they would need to manage their nightly reading responsibility. There was an expectation, therefore, that all students would be mindful of sustaining their obligation to assigned readings and contributing to activities and discussion. Not reading, therefore, would not be fair to other group members because everyone was required to participate collaboratively during peer-led discussion groups. The disseminated schedules were needed so that students could plan their reading accordingly. Students were also encouraged to plan reading around their homework and extracurricular activities. This was integral to deciding when to read more than assigned on occasion, in order to be on schedule with the group.

The self-selected reading component is a space for students to engage in on-going reading, in a book selected by the student. Students are encouraged to read challenging novels, or at least novels that match their ability and interest levels. Each day, students are required to read 20 minutes nightly because most class days in a 46 minute period, do not permit sufficient time to read. Students are required to bring their books, to allot for times when students may finish an assignment early, or if a few moments remained in class. However, on most Fridays, time is allotted for students to read in class. When this time is allotted, Mr. Lehrer reads his book, also. This aligns

with Duke and Armistad (2004), who suggest that reading time is only effective when teachers model reading behavior, rather than use reading time in class for purposes of paperwork.

Mr. Lehrer also has carpet squares, for the purpose of reading outside when the weather permits. During the one outside occasion where I participated with the class near the end of the year, Mr. Lehrer loaned me a book to read, and everyone read. The notion of reading a book of choice in an enjoyable space is conducive to sustaining enjoyment in reading, in and out of school.

Students were excited about having the opportunity to go outside, not only for the sake of going, but because the entire class needed to earn the opportunity to go. Loose ends needed to be completed during the period, and full cooperation was needed from everyone to fulfill that obligation. Additionally, they were reminded throughout the week that they would not go, unless each class member brought their own book because there would not be enough time for anyone to search the shelf. Everyone arrived prepared. The following integrated fieldnotes, in the moment, revealed their enjoyment at the end of the school year:

Students expressed overall fulfillment to read in the sunshine, clustered with their peers, while sustaining an influence that comfortable spaces away from a desk are optimal spaces to enjoy a good book.

When the school year approached an end, most students were mid way through their self-selected reading books, and many borrowed books from him. Mr. Lehrer requested book returns, but required them to bring a checked out copy of the same book out of the library or purchase it, to finish reading it over the summer. In this manner, he would be assured that they would be able to finish the book during the

summer, rather than abandon it half way. This enactment sustains the notion that reading is not simply cut off because school was ending, and that it is possible to finish what they started. There is always time to read, and it is important. Moreover, students were left with an exerted expectation that they would follow through on his request, and that reading is an on-going activity that is meant to have meaning.

The excerpt and observations reveal that Mr. Lehrer was mindful of facilitating the self selected reading component that influenced students' enjoyment of reading. Students were responsive to those efforts and determined purposes for reading beyond the classroom.

Because students select the titles on their own, students have opportunities to select self selected reading books that are culturally relevant. Mr. Lehrer has titles in his collection, which are available by choice and recommendation, which is an important tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy. Taye selected Christopher Paul Curtis's (1995)*The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963,* about an African-American family that travels to Birmingham, Alabama during the time of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. It was recommended by Mr. Lehrer, upon learning that he read Curtis's (1999) *Bud, Not Buddy* before his arrival at Barrington. I observed Monet, who selected Sharon Flake's (1998) *The Skin I'm In*, which she said encapsulated a 13 year old girl who gets made fun of in school because of her dark skin color, and is consequently uncomfortable with who she is. Monet expressed numerous accounts of being prejudged based on her African American background, and could relate to the book, although she was not dark skinned. Upon completion of that book, she opted for Lurlene McDaniel's *Six Months to Live*, which was a title more grounded in White

middle class culture. This pre-teen novel encapsulates a young girl who must confront that she is dying of cancer. Although this was not a depiction of Monet's identity, the plot line would appeal to the grade level, transcending across racial lines. Students did not appropriate culturally relevant options all the time, but the opportunities were certainly open to them, in a low stakes manner.

*Writer's Notebook*

The writer's notebook is a component for students to write about anything that occurs in their daily experience, embedded in Calkins' work, intended for students to lead a writerly life(1994). Daily entries are maintained in a separate composition book. Each day students are assigned a half page of writing as homework, and they are collected regularly. Although students might write in writer's notebooks as time permitted during class, usually after the completion of other tasks, the task is normally appropriated as homework. Because students are able to explore anything that is relevant to their experience and background, while appropriating nonstandard conventions in their voice, writer's notebook is an on-going component that is culturally relevant.

Mr. Lehrer wanted students to have a purpose for writing. Students are able to write about any topic of their choosing, in a low stakes manner, without threat of correction and revision. Informal conversations suggest that writing is intended to be natural, and engaging in writing in an on-going, daily manner is conducive to writing comfortably.

In the following integrated fieldnotes, Mr. Lehrer reiterated the importance of the writer's notebook on the last day of class, especially due to students' nature to throw away old work and assignments:

Mr. Lehrer said that he did not want to see writers' notebooks or reader response journals in the hallway or in the garbage. He expressed that over time the notebook would gain in value, and it was important to revisit it. To explicate his point, he told students a brief vignette about a revelation he had when he ran into a former student at a high school graduation party. The student, who had recently completed her 11$^{th}$ grade year approached Mr. Lehrer with gratitude, and mentioned that she did not see much of a purpose of writing everyday during 7$^{th}$ grade, and did not really like to write. However, she saved her writer's notebook and continued writing in it, even after the school year ended. When she ran out of pages, she began a new writer's notebook, and made consistent entries a part of her daily routine. She noted that every now and then she would arrive at things where it really mattered, in spite of moments where she admitted that she would write fillers on certain days. Mr. Lehrer further reiterated that they should not throw away the writer's notebook, or the reader response journal because they would gain in value when they would come across them.

Ultimately, this excerpt suggests that Mr. Lehrer implemented the writer's notebook to foster for students a sense of purpose and enjoyment for writing. That he termed writer's notebook as valuable for students reifies that he wanted them to write in a manner that was natural and meaningful on a daily basis. He also wanted them to consider writing beyond the limitations of his class.

*Writing Component—The Workshop Approach*

The workshop approach to writing in Mr. Lehrer's class encapsulates practices, including brainstorming ideas, prewriting, drafting, seeking feedback from a peer by conferring, inspired by Atwell(1987) and Calkins(1987, 1990, 1994). Students were expected to respond to Mr. Lehrer's written feedback. The expectation is to submit an errorless draft. Mr. Lehrer's on-going written feedback, and verbally reiterating that all students were responsible for submitting the previous draft with the new draft to

document progress established an intended comfort level to acquire standard conventions. Because writing was often in the context of topics that were important to the children, this also became a matter of acquiring basic skills in meaningful contexts, while positing culturally relevant pedagogy.

Moreover, the process of brainstorming and prewriting across genres required systematic modeling. Modeling was embedded in the enactment of poetry writing and was influenced by Atwell's (2002) "Twenty Actions that Could Become Poems," embedded in *Lessons that Change Writers*.

To illustrate, one day in March, Mr. Lehrer modeled poetry that focused on matters that were relevant to student lives and interests. For example, poetry began with the notion that poems are in unusual places to tap into, whether it be a sock drawer or a garage. Mr. Lehrer referred to Billy Collins, a poet laureate selected by the United States Congress. According to Mr. Lehrer, Collins has been known to say that students should be reading poetry everyday and suggests that if one looks around at normal activities, there are poems there. In fact, Mr. Lehrer shared numerous things he had done the previous weekend, to model those everyday actions: Going out to shovel snow with a coffee cup in hand; moving Chloe (the family cat) off my lap so I can get out of my chair; cheering at the high school baseball game, to which some students had attended; taking a picture of his daughter attending one of her last high school dances; convincing his brother in law that he did not have $1000.00 to attend a Van Morrison concert in New York.

These examples made explicit that there is lot to write about. Several of them can be turned into poem. He allotted 5 minutes of writing time, as a prewriting session,

to think about their list of ten items. As Mr. Lehrer observed writing, he noticed that a lot of students were jotting "going to." They were reminded to focus on the action of doing things when they got there, to generate additional ideas.

Mr. Lehrer later modeled additional actions that could become poems, inspired by Atwell (2002): styling my hair with the usual gel and not thinking once about the ozone layer, practicing the same piece over and over, and kissing the surf on the beach. He indicated two reasons for providing this list. The first reason was that they would read a few poems that would come from them. Another reason was for them to look over their list to make entries more specific. Because students were able to draw from their personal experiences and social worlds recommended by Dyson (2002), instruction posited what Ladson-Billings would term culturally relevant, (1994, 1995) while balancing literary elements embedded in poetry. Jottings included Helena, whose list included going with a friend to get ears pierced for the first time and being nervous about it. She also included playing Pictionary with her best friend. Monet's list included her Uncle's surprise birthday party and a 14 year old aunt in law who would be visiting.

After designated time to revisit lists, Mr. Lehrer showed students four examples of poems that came out of the list, and discussed their features to model free verse poetry. The list and poems were written by students cited in Atwell's (2002) work, and Mr. Lehrer reiterated that cited free verse poems were authored by middle school students. Among them, he shared a soccer poem, about someone who must relearn soccer after the long winter. Steve asked about rhyming, and Mr. Lehrer responded that it was possible to free verse. Melissa noted that there was repetition in the poem, and

Mr. Lehrer added that poetic repetition is when something is repeated for effect, and certain meaning is trying to be conveyed. Lennie noted imagery, in the line " I pick up the soccer ball, it feels cool." Abe drew attention to the idea of what "Three months of winter have done to my game," implying that winter can't change a player. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged that this person wrote it because they think that winter has done something, when in fact, it cannot. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged and encouraged the free verse format. Providing a demonstration of the list therefore modeled an opportunity to see how topics transition into poetry.

As students transitioned their topics into their own poems by late March, many of them were ready to conference with a peer. As for peer conferencing or conferring, there were designated areas in the back of the classroom. Upon sharing work, students were required to read their draft in collaboration with a peer. The student whose paper was under review was to bring questions they were desiring for feedback, and the reviewer's role was to provide it. Hence, on this occasion, Jack, Taye, and Jared conferenced together in a corner, along with Phoebe and Jessie. Most students were in the drafting phase.

Taye's poem can be utilized as an example of revising from feedback during the conferencing process. His poem, "The Barbershop Blues" was about the experience of going to the barbershop, but the emphasis was on the joy of getting one's hair cut. I inquired with him and his peers about the notion of a barbershop as a culture. The idea was that the same people are regulars, and there are close bonds that are fostered. Taye mentioned that his father was a barber, and cuts his hair. I further made mention of the movie "Barbershop" which he had also seen. Taye's draft reveals a slight revision:

"The barbershop is so relaxing /When you feel the dippers/When I'm finished I say glory/It's like you just got out of the shower/As I try to move my head/Up the barbar softly put my/Head down/As people come in and out of the door/Ding Ding the cowbell says/It starts to get boring/As I sit in the chair/It is so relaxing it's hard not to go to sleep/But it's hard to go to /Sleep when it sounds like/A elephant is coming through/I shout are we finished he/Says yes/Thank you"

Taye's original draft did not include anything about people coming in and out of the door, nor did it mention an elephant going through. Minor additions in poetry have the potential for presenting a deeper meaning. It is possible to interpret these additions as a reference to the noise generated by the people who arrive at the barbershop. The minor change that I recommended was supported by Taye's peers. Moreover, in connection with the movie "Barbershop," the reference to loud noise may be inspired by Calvin, the owner of the barbershop who wants to change the image of his establishment by implementing a no "loud talking" rule, to the dismay of the barbers and customers. Loud talking is deeply embedded in the culture of barbershop culture in Black communities. In spite of critique posited in the limitations of Calkins'(1994) and Atwell's (2002) work in affluent communities, Taye's poem suggests that the pedagogical appropriation has potential to transcend boundaries and engenders culturally relevant pedagogy..

Mr. Lehrer encouraged conferencing throughout the year, and occasionally revisited expectations when necessary. This process will be described in more depth in Chapter 4, which will encapsulate dilemmas that emerge with progressive pedagogy(Lambert, 1997; Osborne, 1987), and the manner in which they are managed.

Upon submission of the rough draft, Mr. Lehrer provides feedback for revision and re submission. Students are required to submit the rough draft, with what will hopefully be the final draft. Feedback typically espouses content and writing

conventions. Over the course of the study, Mr. Lehrer often reiterated the importance of submitting the draft with his comments. This was to ensure that students responded to his feedback. Reading the final draft was therefore easier to evaluate, reading side by side with the previous draft, rather than evaluating the entire draft without a frame of previous reference. The "errorless copy" is intended to be just that. Because the final copy must be errorless, it was common for students to resubmit numerous drafts, until the final copy met Mr. Lehrer's expectations. Mr. Lehrer therefore exerted an expectation that students submit their best possible work, because it represented them. Similar to Ladson-Billings' (1994, 1995) tenets, Mr. Lehrer refused to accept failure, or anything less than a student's potential.

Students wrote varying genres that were reflective of their life, culture, and experience, and having the opportunity to share their writing for feedback on content that is culturally relevant, for students are sharing writing that reflects their personal experience. Within that realm, Taye, as an African American student was able to see himself in the schooling process.

*Writing Practices that Mr. Lehrer uses to provide Access to Standard and Nonstandard Conventions*

Within the enactment of the writing workshop approach, writing practices also provided opportunities for students to access standard and nonstandard conventions of writing and speaking, as recommended by scholars in the field (Bakhtin, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996, Smitherman, 1999; Wolfram, 1999; Baker, 2002). Access to standard conventions will be explicated through the enactment of a vignette with Kiki and the writing of the "Letter to Future Self" assignment. In addition, the Letter to Future Self samples will include Mr. Lehrer's written feedback to provide an emic perspective.

This is intended to illustrate the expectation for students to respond to feedback and submit final drafts with standard conventions.

Access to nonstandard conventions will be explicated through poetry and student *Seedfolks* chapters, and salient written samples will be provided. In addition, nonstandard conventions will be translated into standard conventions, to illustrate how Mr. Lehrer would have corrected the draft, also accounting for emic perspectives.

Moreover, to account for emic perspectives, nonstandard and standard writing conventions will be defined within the vein of Grade Level Content Expectations and Mr. Lehrer's acceptance and expectations of conventions in student writing. Etically, the nonstandard and standard conventions appropriated in class will be interpreted in a manner in which practices intersect with research and societal constructs.

One day in late April, Mr. Lehrer returned essay drafts with feedback, which called for standard conventions. Upon receiving what she believed to be her final draft, Kiki got out of her seat and yelled without hesitation that she did not want to make any changes with her draft because it was fine the way it was in the first place. She continued that Mr. Lehrer wanted her to write the essay the way he wanted her to write it, but she wanted to say her message the way that she wanted to say it.

Because he was busy working with another student, and to alleviate the pandemonium, I offered to take a look at what she was talking about. In the context of giving appreciation to her mother, the following were noted errors in her writing, which had been identified in a previous draft that she chose not to turn in with the present draft. Although feedback was not as detailed this time around, Kiki's act of not turning the previous draft with the current draft suggests resistance to the suggestions offered

by Mr. Lehrer. Upon reading Kiki's draft, written errors included, "To all mothers who doesn't...as to do everything...now of days...any were." This presented an opportunity for me to help Kiki better understand matters of the culture of power and why it was important for Mr. Lehrer to cite them for her to correct.

After reading her work, I read the areas requiring revision aloud and asked if this was how she would say it if she were speaking. She agreed that what she had written was her voice. I told her that although this was how she would say it informally, which is acceptable, I also expressed that she needed to write a formal essay for school. The essay assignment was different from poetry and narrative, where she had more freedom to express her voice informally. From there, I circled "mothers," explaining that that was a subject. The formal way to write would be "mothers don't." After the explanation of the additional errors, Kiki felt better about making necessary changes.

Mr. Lehrer welcomed that I took the time to work with Kiki. He claimed that he clearly noted changes in her previous draft, which were not turned in with her final copy. To reify such changes indicates the importance of writing standard conventions in the context of essay writing.

That Mr. Lehrer did not have the opportunity to address Kiki's concern raises the question of how this would have been addressed, had I not been there, especially because Kiki resisted initial feedback, and because of constraints posed with helping numerous students in a large class. However, Kiki was presented a formal opportunity to write about a topic she cared deeply about, while writing standard conventions. Hence, this was a way for her to apply basic skills in a meaningful context. Revisions

were intended to provide standard conventions in a nonthreatening manner, with her home language appropriated as a foundation. Mr. Lehrer sustained an expectation of standard conventions with the entire class, and explained that everyone was required to make changes.

Mr. Lehrer's written feedback to Kiki was intended to be nonthreatening, but Kiki, who was aware of saying what she wanted to say, felt threatened. This poses implications for how to address these matters individually, due to the constraints of not being able to individually address everyone in a class of 29 students. However, the act of Mr. Lehrer ignoring needed revisions when the assignment calls for standard conventions is to not provide access to writing that will provide equal opportunity in and out of school.

The "Letter to Future Self" was another writing assignment and genre that posited standard writing conventions, in the context of topics that matter to the students. Students were required to write a letter to the person they would become when they are a senior preparing to graduate from high school. Student letters would be mailed to them near the end of their senior year of high school. The guidelines embodied the letter format (Figure 3.4). Each paragraph manifested topics that were appropriate to the student during their grade 7 year. Topics for students to elaborate upon included physical appearance, favorite things, and important people. Additional topics included things that have happened this school year and students' hopes and dreams for the future.

Letter samples will be examined in Chapter 7, for the purpose of making explicit the nature of connectedness and knowing that embodies the letter. However, it is

important to note the manner of standard conventions that are sustained with the writing of student social worlds (Dyson, 2002) and experiences. Cited drafts are rough drafts, and include Mr. Lehrer's feedback for the final edited version, to be placed in stamped envelopes and mailed in five years.

To illustrate, the following are integrated writing samples across focal students who utilized salient standard features in their writing. Samples include Mr. Lehrer's recommended feedback, to reify standard conventions for students' final drafts.

Kiki wrote about her physical appearance: "Normally you see me wearing jeans, button-ups, skirts, and a lot of t-shirts. My hair is like a silky black with a tint of brown. Well, that's only when the sun comes out."

Mr. Lehrer did not identify any corrections in this area, illustrating Kiki's awareness of writing standard conventions. Comments indicate spelling clarification and including more detail in another paragraph. It is important to note that Kiki appropriated standard conventions in her writing, without Mr. Lehrer's prompting. More than one month prior to this enactment, she was confrontational about preserving her nonstandard conventions in the aforementioned essay about her mother. Hence, utilizing standard conventions on her own suggests that she became more aware of distinguishing from standard and nonstandard conventions.

Helena wrote the following about her favorite things:

"I don't have that many favorite things. I don't see how people can pick their favorite colors or foods because there are so many different foods and colors"in the second paragraph."

Mr. Lehrer's comments in Helena's draft consist of omitting and inserting words, and underlining titles of literature. Helena needed to make cited corrections in order to submit a final errorless draft positing standard conventions.

Abe wrote the following about important people, appropriating standard conventions:

"My mom has told me on countless occasions that my punishments were to help me. I finally figured out that she was right. When I couldn't watch TV I was doing better in school. I had everything turned in on time and my grades went up."(Figure 3.7):

Mr. Lehrer's feedback throughout the draft, in preparation for Abe's final standard draft, consisted primarily of punctuation and word choices.

Taye's draft indicated that he would need to apply standard conventions recommended by Mr. Lehrer. Comments in Taye's draft will prepare him for appropriating standard conventions in his final draft. One portion of the second paragraph was corrected to read:"My style of music is rap and r and b. They have nice sound to them. They are poetry".

Mr. Lehrer's feedback consisted primarily of punctuation. In addition, he clarified pronoun usage by substituting 'them' in place of 'it,' and clarifying 'are' instead of 'is' in the last paragraph.

To express hopes and dreams for the future, Monet wrote the following, utilizing standard conventions:

"My hopes and dreams for the future are to be a famous singer, and if that doesn't work I want to be a pediatrician. When I finish college, I want to make good money and be a very rich person. That would make me happy"

Very few corrections were made to Monet's draft, illustrating her awareness of appropriating standard conventions. This is particularly salient, given her aforementioned question about "writing proper" for the *Seedfolks* chapter within days of completing this assignment. Mr. Lehrer noted spelling errors and punctuation to help Monet prepare for her final draft.

The expectation for writing standard conventions and skills in meaningful contexts reifies Delpit's (1995) assertion that intervention is needed to write in standard contexts.

Mr. Lehrer actively sustained an awareness and balance of standard and nonstandard contexts for writing in meaningful contexts. Sustaining this awareness aligned with grammar and usage embedded in the Grade Level Content Expectations.

During a formal interview, Mr. Lehrer acknowledged the importance of sustaining skills in meaningful contexts, for it was an integral facet of standard acquisition and usage:

Mr. Lehrer: Yeah, sure, because that's the basis of the class. I mean, really, this kind of class revolves around the idea that those skills, and I think there's a lot of truth to this, those skills exist, within the context of important language usage.
Mrs. Hill: Right
Mr. Lehrer: So if you're using language in an important way which is to say that you're using it to express meaning
Mrs. Hill: True, so, you put skills in meaningful contexts, not finding the subject and the predicate
Mr. Lehrer: Even though occasionally I will do that if I really want to mention some things that they don't have, I think it's such a vacuum.
Mrs. Hill: So that would make you a little less approachable if you were just
Mr. Lehrer: I think so, I think they know as the year goes on that I care about that stuff a lot. I really do. I demonstrate that when I get their papers and mark them up and when I talk to them about their writing, but it would have to be in a meaningful context

This excerpt reveals that Mr. Lehrer's written comments are intended to provide skills in meaningful contexts, in a manner that is nonthreatening. He considers on-going written feedback an impetus to talk to students about their writing, in an effort for them to acquire standard conventions in meaningful contexts.

Providing on-going, written feedback for 137 students across all of his class sections is a time consuming task, and, as previously illustrated, poses constraints for meeting each child personally to address his comments. However, each student is at least provided with written feedback and opportunities to confer with a peer. He exerts for them an expectation that they must assume responsibility and respond to written feedback until the draft is errorless.

In addition to writng standard conventions, students had opportunities to employ non standard conventions during poetry and narrative writing practices.

Focal students displayed numerous nonstandard conventions in their poetry writing, and it was encouraged and valued on a regular basis. To illustrate nonstandard conventions as a deviation from standard conventions, it is necessary to account for emic perspectives. Therefore, integrated writing samples will include illustrations of how Mr. Lehrer might have corrected, had he called for standard conventions.

For instance, Dave wrote about the band Dire Straits and wrote that they "simply can not be beat." The standard convention might have been written as "simply cannot be beaten."

Helena wrote "Listening very attentively to our teach giving us directions" to explain her participation in a band performance.

The standard convention may have been corrected by Mr. Lehrer to be read as "Listening very attentively to our teacher giving us directions."

The remainder of the writing in their poems was grounded in standard conventions.

These nonstandard expressions are more than likely the way Dave and Helena would say them with peers or at home.

Kiki's poem comprised of numerous nonstandard conventions to express sadness surrounding her cousin who died, including:

> "Leaving Elementary that's when she left me...We were close friends also cousins did everything for one another...But now I go to live and make it somehow...I know I got to move on and realize that she is gone

Standard conventions, as Mr. Lehrer may have corrected them would have been written as:

> She left me in elementary school...We were close friends and cousins. We did everything for one another...But now I've got to live and make it somehow. I know I have to move on and realize that she is gone.

Kiki spoke strongly about preserving her voice in her writing. Allowing her to write about her loss while sustaining her voice is a manner of valuing her nature of speaking that is intimately connected with her family. By providing Kiki and other students these writing opportunities, she is able to build on her cultural linguistic strengths. Monet was another student who was aware the distinction between speaking what she regarded as slang, and what was considered "proper." The following excerpts in her poem about a surprise party for her uncle illustrate a strong sense of voice:

> ...My uncle say's, "Where the kids at?" She says, "They busy." He said, "What is a two year old and a two month old 'busy' doing. She says, "Whateva, but how did you do at the casino?"

Standard conventions would have been written as:

> "...My uncle says, "Where are the kids?" She says, "They're busy." He said, "What are a two year old and two month old 'busy' doing?" She says, "Whatever, but how did you do at the casino?" My uncle tried to say good, but we left as fast as an alkaseltzer when it drops into water"

The examples that represent her relatives speaking naturally is an accurate depiction of how they would speak. To write their voices in a standard form is an inaccurate depiction and diminishes who they are. Monet's appropriation of their voices acknowledges strength in cultural linguistic tradition.

All in all, the integrated writing divulges that poetry writing practices provided students with opportunities to appropriate the language that is valued at home and accounts for their personal style, embedded in the Grade Level Content Expectations.

Another salient example of the enactment of nonstandard conventions was the writing of the *Seedfolks* chapter. Although the nature of the task will be explicated in more depth in Chapter 6, it is important to note that students were encouraged to write a character into the text, and to write in accordance with their voice and culture. Each chapter in the novel was based on a character, who was a depiction of their ethnic group. Because each character's voice illuminated a different variety of English, students became aware that they would be able to write in accordance with their voice.

One chapter that was especially notable, regarding the notion of voice and language acquisition was "Sae Young's" chapter. The read aloud component prompted students to take their language varieties into consideration with the writing of their *Seedfolks* chapter. During the excerpted teacher-led discourse that occurred prior to reading the chapter aloud, Mr. Lehrer noted why he likes this book so much at the end of May:

I would like to say something about this book. This book I really like a lot. I think it does celebrate multiculturalism, for sure. This is an interesting thing because when you're talking about new cultures, and writing about them, you also want to be careful not to be too stereotypical, which is to say, people of this culture are that way. I think that Paul Fleischman walks that line. But I really think that the things that are stereotypical about this book are really mostly getting across the beauty of differences...the next Chapter, Sae Young, is a Korean person. Here's her picture...now I would like to say this, too. On the board you see the words that say style of narration? Paul Fleishman uses a different narrator for each chapter. You notice so much how they speak and have different voices, but it really is. Because Sae Young is a Korean American with broken English, and that's the way it reads. But I think it's part of the views of the chapter.

The premise behind the chapter is Sae Young, from Korea, who owns the cleaners and lost her husband. After her husband died of a heart attack, she no longer desired to go out, and was afraid to walk alone. In the two years since her husband died, a robbery where she was assaulted forced her to hire a Korean man to run the cleaners. Her life is reclusive until she notices a Vietnamese girl picking lima beans, and notices other people working there. Being near people felt good when she decided to join them, even if she didn't talk to them. It made her feel safe to see people: Next day I go back and dig small garden. Nobody talk to me that day. But just be near people, nice people feel good, like next to fire in winter" (p. 38). After the read aloud, the following excerpt illustrates the teacher-led discourse that occurred at the end of May:

Mr. Lehrer: You know, I don't know this, but I'm sure Paul Fleishman looked into this when he wrote this chapter. I do remember that many of the Asian students I had, this is a general recollection, many times when they were trying to learn English from their native language, articles were a problem for them. And the, very often. That's probably something Paul Fleishman knew, and took into account.
Unnamed: um, when you're saying about the "and" and
Mr. Lehrer: mm hmm
Unnamed: maybe it's because the language they had they didn't use them much
Mr. Lehrer: Oh, you know I think they're being very insightful in that because I

> remember reading somewhere that there are many different dialects, for instance, Chinese, in Chinese languages that many of them don't have articles. So when you're going from language to another, the parts that are going to be hard are the parts that there's no translation for in your own language. Because how do you understand that concept? You never know, and it doesn't necessarily, you know, language makes sense without these these things. So I think you're right on with that.

This pattern of teacher-led discourse transitioned into directives and expectations for the *Seedfolks* chapter that students were preparing to write. Guidelines called for students to pre-write their ethnicity and taking into account the appropriation of their voice, in a manner they would speak at home. Students were required to indicate the two chapters they envisioned their chapter to fall between. Students were expected to weave in their ethnic background rather than dumping it on the narrator at once. The narrator's tie to the neighborhood and garden was required, along with a connection to one of the other characters in the story. Lastly, students were expected to ask themselves if the chapter conveyed how the narrator is affected by the garden and/or how the narrator affect the garden or the people involved in it.

To clarify the assignment, Monet quietly approached Mr. Lehrer after class that day. She expressed that she wrote proper, but that she speaks slang. She wanted to know if she could write in the same manner that she spoke without being marked down for it. Mr. Lehrer welcomed her idea, expressing that that was what he wanted her to do.

Soon after, in early June, Abe asked the same question in front of the whole class. Mr. Lehrer's welcoming of non standard voices explicated for Monet that she her appropriation of African American Vernacular English was not the only deviation from

standard English. Therefore, Mr. Lehrer affirmed that people of varying races and backgrounds are tied to varying literacies that are connected with varying Discourses.

In this instance, Mr. Lehrer openly welcomed the sophisticated distinction of students' cultural literary traditions, rather than assume nonstandard language as a mistake. Moreover, promoting a balance between standard and non standard writing conventions suits Delpit's (1995) notion that students should not eradify the features of their non standard home language and have opportunities to appropriate them. At the same time, intervention is required for formal writing contexts. Students sustain an awareness that different language forms are appropriate in different contexts.

Examples of students utilizing nonstandard conventions in their *Seedfolks* chapters include:

"No I ain't seein' things...again," I told him with a roll of my eyes, from a student who did not write their name on the draft, but included elements African American Vernacular English.

The student's detected background in the draft was English, so the use of ain't suggests metalinguistic awareness. As a standard convention, it would have read, "No, I'm not seeing things...again," I told him with a role of my eyes.

Moe's draft, titled "Leif" included nonstandard elements of Irish speech patterns:

"Me great grandfather came to Cleveland, Ohio during the potato famine in Ireland."

Standard conventions may have been written as "My great grandfather..."

Kim's draft, titled "Kimberly" included nonstandard features of African American Vernacular English spoken at home, incorporating sophisticated cultural literary tradition (Delpit, 1995) and a Terry McMillan flavor, "...I quickly pulled out my new cell phone and chirped my best friend Monique, that girl has good timing

because when I called she was just getting out of the shower. In addition, exaggerated intonation could be detected in

> "all that trash had dumped their cans directly on ALL of MY plants. I was so mad I took my phone out and called the police right then and there"

Had standard conventions been required, it would have read, "I quickly pulled out my new cell phone and called my best friend Monique. That girl has good timing because she was getting out of the shower when I called." In addition, it would have been written as "I took my phone out and called the police.

Helena's chapter, titled "Helena" seemingly embodies French, as a foundation for Helena's use of English:

> "I walk to the store and try to look for some fresh tomatoes, onions, olives to make a gateau au olive. This is French meal. The next day I wake up and Patrick has already gone to work...I walk over to the vacant lot and see the man working."

Helena's mother visited Mr.Lehrer one day, and her beautiful French accent could be detected. Her appropriation of a French accent would be based on her mother's voice.

Had this writing been appropriated with standard conventions, it would have read:

"I walked to the store and tried to look for some fresh tomatoes, onions, olives to make a gateau au olive. This is a French meal...The next day I woke up and Patrick had already gone to work...I walked over to the vacant lot and saw the man working."

Detroit focal students, Monet, Taye, and Kiki did not submit their *Seedfolks* chapters, so their use of African American Vernacular English could not be detected for this assignment.

However, aforementioned integrated examples illustrate a comfort level utilizing nonstandard language conventions, without the threat of correction or of being marked down.

In addition, Monet and Kiki affirmed their awareness of writing nonstandard conventions in a manner they would speak during an interview:

Mrs. Hill: Monet, when you asked Mr. Lehrer if you could use your voice, he said of course you can, without being marked down. Do you realize how amazing that is?
Monet: Because I did spell words how I would say 'em, and, like aight (alright),
Kiki: y'all!
Monet: stuff like that, and y'all, because we don't talk like, yeah, you guys are, we don't talk like that, so it's just how I was raised and where I came from, they talk like that.
Kiki: It's not basically street talk,
Monet: It's how we were raised
Mrs. Hill: And that's very important, that Mr. Lehrer sees that as important too, because that's your voice. If you read Maya Angelou, or even Mildred Taylor, there's so much of that rich language, even Joyce Hansen. It's really an important technique of writing, and it's important for you to be able to do that. I can give you the authors if you want, because it's important to be able to read them
Monet: Because he said it was important to write about us, and it would have been hard to write about me talking in someone else's voice
Mrs. Hill: Absolutely. Imagine, he let you do that. I can't think of other teachers that would do that
Monet: If he didn't do that I probably wouldn't have got a good grade because I wouldn't have known what to say, but like y'all, I would have been like, what's another word that I could use for y'all that I could spell right?
Mrs. Hill: Hey, you! [laughter]

This excerpt reveals that Monet and Kiki are openly aware of the distinctions between standard and nonstandard conventions of writing and speaking, along with the perception of their home language as street talk in the dominant culture and in school. Both girls grappled with their identity in school, and knew that standard writing conventions was a skill they needed, although it meant that it required them to

compromise their identity. For Monet especially, there was no standard convention that could illustrate her true voice, and she knew that there were standard writing contexts where she would not be able to fully illuminate who she was. Therefore, Monet and Kiki sustained awareness in Mr. Lehrer's class that different language forms are appropriate in different contexts. Problematic, however, is that they did not take the time to complete and submit their *Seedfolks* chapters. This will be addressed in further depth in Chapters 5 and 7.

From the beginning of school, Mr. Lehrer reifies the value of language varieties by reading aloud *Nightjohn* (1993). In a formal interview, he conveyed the importance of language in the novel:

> "I always start out reading purposely *Nightjohn* because I love the way it does so much about first of all multiculturalism and secondly history and slavery, but also it's about words and language and the power of language."

In the following excerpt, he also suggested the nature of approving for students the notion of voice to accurately depict the way a person or character would speak:

> Mrs. Hill: Abe and Monet being able to write in their own voices. Can you speak a little bit to that?
> Mr. Lehrer: Uh, again, it comes from literature, in *Nightjohn*, the narrator Sarny has an uneducated way of telling the story, with her terms. Right away they notice that and obviously I'm standing up there reading that and that must be some sort of stamp of approval
> Mrs. Hill: right. You do give a stamp of approval, don't you?
> Mr. Lehrer: You know, if you're a language artist, which is to say writer, you use languages in a natural way of conveying the way someone would speak.

Therefore, the stamp of approval and notion of language artist suggests that Mr. Lehrer sustains early on a level of comfort for students to utilize nonstandard contexts for writing. In addition, integrated student writing and Monet and Kiki's excerpts, illustrate their level of comfort that is manifest in Mr. Lehrer's facilitation of offering

on-going opportunities to write nonstandard conventions to convey their manner of speaking.

In spite of validating a context for nonstandard conventions on numerous occasions during the course of the year, it is seemingly problematic that Abe, Kiki, and Monet expressed uncertainty about appropriating their voices later in the year. Perhaps their concerns were a matter of being marked down upon writing nonstandard conventions when an assignment called for writing standard conventions, as experienced by Kiki. It is also possible to interpret that they may have been conditioned to being marked down for writing nonstandard conventions on numerous occasions during experiences with different teachers over the duration of their schooling.

It is important to mention that *Seedfolks* chapters will be revisited in Chapter 6 for the purpose of illustrating their nature of sustaining a connection with students' identity and culture, and fostering Mr. Lehrer's enhanced knowledge of their background.

*Read Aloud Component for Instructional Literature*

Read alouds are a salient feature in a balanced literacy program. This is a space for students to construct multiple interpretations of literature. The read aloud component became salient during the enactment of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle,* to additionally explicate pertinent and complex themes, and to introduce complex terms embedded in a new speech genre.

*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (1990) illustrates the experience of 13 year-old Charlotte Doyle during her voyage from her boarding school in England to the United States on a ship known as the Seahawk. The complication begins when a family intended to accompany her cancelled at the last minute, leaving Charlotte, a

proper young lady, to travel alone on the Seahawk with marginalized, ill mannered sailors in 1832. There is an expectation that a 13 year old girl accused of murder will embody suspense, along with her transformation as a human being.

It was regarded as a challenging required text, and was often enacted initially as a read aloud, to help students adjust to the author's writing style and wording. During the onset of the book, for example, he read aloud beginning pages, and directed students to ask questions and give comments and multiple interpretations at the end of the paragraph. He also announced that he would make comments as he would go along. At the end of one paragraph, he prompted students to imagine Charlotte being sheltered and in good standing, and to imagine her thoughts as she sees merchandise, goods, and working men at the marketplace. At the beginning of the study in February, Mr. Lehrer noted that this was a delicious chaos for her, because she was taken by the confusion. One notable comment surrounding Mr. Lehrer's directive came from Helena:

> Helena: I'm not sure I'm supposed to know what this means—created an exotic late afternoon hubbub.
> Mr. Lehrer: There's a lot of activity. She's captivated by this comment

This excerpt reifies students' expectations that there is a complex nature of language in the novel. Moreover, ongoing discussion and construction of interpretations was embedded in Helena's comfort level to ask a challenging question. The negotiation of interpretations additionally suggests McGee's (1992) notion that meaning is an on-going state of flux as new interpretations and ideas are contemplated. Almasi (1995) also suggests that interpretations are continually shaped by new information that is connected with old information.

Its introduction warrants considerable investigation, for it establishes a backdrop for a series of nautical terms. Therefore, it was important to read aloud to clarify complex terminology. For example, royal yard and rigging were two unfamiliar terms. He paused during the read aloud to inform that these are terms readers must know, if they are not familiar with them. He directed them to the diagram in the novel's appendix (Avi, 1990, p. 220), to inform that anytime he reads this book, he must look at diagrams as a reminder of where Charlotte is and what is happening there. Mr. Lehrer referred to another page in the appendix to reify ship time, also important terminology. Reading aloud in this instance provided students with a frame of reference, whenever they read something unfamiliar. Mr. Lehrer acknowledging the unfamiliar for himself, who has read the book numerous times, provides an expectation that the students, as first time readers will be expected to refer to the appendix pages.

Also salient is the manner in which Mr. Lehrer makes explicit that students are entering a new, unfamiliar speech genre, which embeds nautical terms. He recognizes the importance of giving strategies to engage in this process. Unlike most readings students enact, they have limited background to effectively scaffold their prior knowledge to make sense of their reading. Enacting teacher-led discourse surrounding terms, with their books only, enabled students to actively refer to the appendix pages that would help them construct on-going meaning, shaped by new information and connections between new and previous information.

*Transition to Literature-Based Discussion Groups*

Another component that shapes a balanced literacy program is the enactment of literature-based discussion groups, which requires a great deal of preparation from

the beginning of school year. In Mr. Lehrer's class, literature based discussion groups did not take place until the onset of the study in February.

To effectively prepare students for participation in literature-based discussion groups, the first half of the year is dedicated to facilitating students' excitement about reading a book. There is a great deal of aforementioned components, such as independent reading and the read aloud. Literature-based discussion groups in Mr. Lehrer's classroom embodied the negotiation of reading, teacher-led discourse, written response, and the transition to peer-led discussion. Implementation was inspired by using Raphael, et al. (2001) *Book Club for Middle School* as a reference, and professional development surrounding it. Mr. Lehrer determined that students were reading well, but he wanted to include elements of book club to facilitate more in-depth construction of meaning.

*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (1990) was a beginning space for the transition from (and juxtaposition between) teacher and peer-led discourse.

During the pilot study, this novel was implemented near the end of the year, after the text set. This led me to believe that management issues resulted in forming groups around a common novel first, in preparation for a more complex text set. However, when asked about the rationale for selecting the core novel first, Mr. Lehrer confirmed that there was only one class set, shared between him and his colleague next door. The decision was therefore based on availability. In the following excerpt during a formal interview, he revealed that he and the other 7$^{th}$ grade teacher decided that he would use them first this year:

Mrs. Hill: I noticed that last year you selected Charlotte Doyle last.
Mr. Lehrer: You're gonna laugh at this

Mrs. Hill: So what made you decide to do it first ?

Mr. Lehrer: Mrs.. Kelly, who always loved doing it 3rd quarter, did not want to do it 3rd quarter this time, and we only have so many books. We have enough for one 7th grade teacher to use it at a time. So that was it right there. I will say this. Certainly you look at the year, you structure things to build upon each other, but one thing I think is true about literature is I can probably throw the whole thing up in the air and have it land in different ways and may even be surprised that there are wonderful things that can come out of it. Reading this book prior to this one, or whatever. I think a lot of this stuff you can switch it all around. Other than when you feel you're reading a particular level you're trying to lead to, but I don't think that's the case with this one .

In middle school, when to carry out a novel is typically regimented, and teachers often determine novel sequence based on order of perceived difficulty. Mr. Lehrer's claim suggests flexibility surrounding when to carry out a novel, and willingness to make changes with a colleague.

Six groups of 4 to 6 students were assigned to discussion groups. Transitioning into groups meant that students needed to move the desks out of rows, in order to form table clusters. Carrying this out required a great deal of procedure, and modeling the move with a few students. Engaging in conversation meant that the organization of formed square tables were spaced far away enough from other tables, so that students would be able to hear their group members.

Students were required to be responsible group members, and their manner of participation was embedded in the Book Club framework recommended by Raphael, et al. (1995, 2001, 2004). The Book Club framework reifies "I can" statements. Relevant statements include contributing to the discussion and bringing others into the discussion. Mr. Lehrer reiterated that quiet members needed to be mindful to take part. To make expectations pertinent, he was observed explaining to students what it takes to be a participatory in the following fieldnotes in early February:

Mr. Lehrer informed that people who participate a lot must bring others in, and let other people talk. Students were told that they must look at themselves as group members, and ask themselves what they think about their participation.

Raphael (1994) claims that students are more likely to participate in peer-led discussion groups than teacher-led discussion. Also, sustaining more equitable participation was intended for students to appropriate collaborative responsibilities and for students to provide varying interpretations. Students were named and placed into the group by numbers. They were directed to move first to the appropriate meeting area before moving the seats. Once students moved to their appropriate areas, they were told that they had 5 minutes to discuss a topic they had previously read in their books. Their job was to therefore discuss Charlottes' first impression of Zachariah, who was a crew member on the ship. Only a few moments were allotted, but the time taken to enact the procedure was a necessary component to prepare students for upcoming discussion groups. Groups comprised of the following students:

1)Jennifer, Lennie, Dave, Marissa
2)Melissa, Phoebe, Jason, Moe, and one student who did not consent to the study
3) Kiki, Julie, Abe, Pippen
4) Helena, Kim, Bert, Mickey, and one student who did not consent to the study
5) Brandy, Violet, Monet, Steve, and one student who did not consent to the study
6) Stephanie, Jarred, Jack, Jessie, and one student who did not consent to the study.

During this brief time span, the fieldnotes from one group's activity typified the interaction across groups:

Bert initiated the idea about Charlotte being freaked out because Zachariah gave her a knife when he first met her. The group did not seem especially compelled to respond, so he attempted to sway the group to think the way he was thinking. Helena suggested that Charlotte must have felt odd. Kim added that Zacharia's speaking from the 3rd person point of view, surrounding Zacharia's reference to Charlotte as her final and only friend was odd, because he was speaking as if she were not there. She thought that he was talking like he was talking to someone else.

During this brief meeting time, the group was able to provide multiple interpretations, as they made sense of Charlotte's reaction to Zachariah. Although not everyone was a participatory member, the allotted time was intended to give students the experience of transitioning in and out of groups.

Upon completion of meeting in groups, Mr. Lehrer announced that students' transition was not bad, and reiterated that this procedure was a way for them to get into groups and to see where they sit. Raphael (1995, 2001, 2004) suggests that initial Book Clubs take time to develop into effective discourse. My initial observation with one group indicates a good start, for in 5 minutes, they were able to develop a beginning space to explore Charlotte's reactions.

*Patterns of Teacher and Peer-Led Discourse—The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*

Mr. Lehrer devised numerous strategies to facilitate in depth teacher and peer-led discourse across assigned reading of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle.*

On numerous occasions throughout the study, Mr. Lehrer affirmed and validated students' responses, particularly during teacher-led discourse. This construction facilitated a learning environment that was inclusive and welcoming for students, in their exploration for more in-depth understanding of salient themes and complex ideas. His goal was to facilitate critical constructions of meaning embedded in the literature, and students were often invited to read against the text. In several instances, ideas derived from the teacher-led discourse were utilized as an impetus to inform peer-led discourse.

The notion of affirming student responses was salient, as early as my first day of data collection, when *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* was introduced in early

February. Mr. Lehrer directed them to the book's preface, which posited an important warning to readers. Attentive listening was required, and students needed to carefully jot down notes because Mr. Lehrer would not be jotting them on the board. Students had read the previous night, and teacher-led discourse began with :

Mr. Lehrer: A 13 year old girl is accused of murder, brought to trial, and found guilty. We'll want to learn more about this.
Jason: Her dad gave her a journal.
Mr. Lehrer: There are two things. One at a time. Charlotte is traveling on a trip without her family. Write this down.
Kim: She went from England to America, Providence, Rhode Island.
Lehrer: She's not alone, not the only one on the trip.
Jason: Her family gave her a journal, and wanted to write her experience everyday
Violet: She has a family of two parents, a brother and a sister
Mr. Lehrer: Let's get back to that. Please note that
Kim: Her father wanted her to finish the semester
Mr. Lehrer: How logical. She will stay and finish the school at the boarding school. The ship was owned by her father's firm. There was no formal schooling in the summer. There are two families on board who are her guardians. Not everything is fine though, because of the first two sentences.
Julie: She's a lady
Mr. Lehrer: Yes! Write that down! In 1832 especially. She wears a bonnet, gloves [explicitly referring to page 6]. Charlotte is groomed to be that kind of lady

This discourse pattern represents a small portion of the discourse that occurred that day. Especially notable was the manner in which numerous students eagerly participated and reified their learning about the story's setting and complication. No one student dominated the conversation, and students appeared comfortable contributing, as Mr. Lehrer affirmed their responses by thoughtfully acknowledging their statements. It is evident that students are thoughtfully acknowledging Mr. Lehrer's comments, in addition to valuing and building on each other's ideas, a tenet in the Book Club Curriculum Framework. The passive receptive discourse pattern posits teacher questioning, and student responding, while students listen quietly. Mr. Lehrer's

suggestions to note what students have said is indicative of the passive receptive discourse pattern, but further affirms that contributions are important.

The following example of affirming student responses early in February, with fewer participants, is more question and answer driven, and resonates more of a passive receptive discourse pattern, but the ideas build more naturally. The teacher-led discourse pattern draws attention to the porter, who carries out what is regarded by the captain, as a breach of decorum in early February:

Mr. Lehrer: What does this mean? (numerous, attentive hands are raised).
Lennie: Disrespectful
Mr. Lehrer: Good guess. Is he disrespectful?
Jason: Maybe the porter didn't know.
Mr. Lehrer: Is this a misunderstanding? That is not what that means.
Abe: If you were from a lower class in those days, you speak when you are spoken to?
Mr. Lehrer: He doesn't like when Charlotte asks questions, and especially the porter. It's about social order

Mr. Lehrer asked about the porter's breach of decorum during the read aloud component. In this instance, he is sustaining an in-depth conversation with students, while informing about complex terminology. Hence, learning is facilitated through the assistance of more knowledgeable members of the community and culture and they are negotiating bridging previous and new information.

Students were invited into this next discourse pattern, in similar fashion to the discussion surrounding the book's preface. Students were required to jot down important notes, but this time Mr. Lehrer's directives to do so were not as explicit when the teacher-led discourse was occurring.

The topic encapsulated problems and warning signs for Charlotte in the first chapter:

Mr. Lehrer: What are some of the warning signs?
Melissa: The porter dude people
Mr. Lehrer: What do they do?
Melissa: The porters react to the captain's name
Mr. Lehrer: The reactions of porters to the captain's name and the ship are warning signs. They don't want anything to do with the captain. She might not interpret this as unusual behavior or as anything to do with the ship and the captain. Another sign?
Mark: There's barely anyone around
Mr. Lehrer: Would you expect any people during that time? Have you been somewhere when someone asked you what happened?...she waits (refers to pages 15 to 17) for a half hour , gazing at the ship. There must be a problem. Waiting itself is a warning sign. Others? [more hands are raised]
Abe: I read leaving protection when there was a ship out to sea to take care of those out.
Mr. Lehrer: Another sign?
Lennie: She saw people. [Drawing from the relevant text].
Mr. Lehrer: I'd go along with you. Entering in suspicious way, right? That also draws attention away. Jot notes.
Undecipherable student: Grummage comes out
Moe: The head?
Mr. Lehrer: I wasn't getting at that, but that's a warning sign, right?
Steve: She heard angry voices
Mr. Lehrer: Yes! The argument was about her!

Students exhibited a sea of faces that expressed that they were eager to be called on. Mr. Lehrer is familiar with this novel and has read and taught it several times, acknowledging that each reading brings new interpretations, and aspects that were not noticed before. For this reason, he sustains Lanier's (1996) notion of intellectual pedagogy and deep understanding of the content, enabling him to respond to students with the liberal professional approach. Hence, managing class behavior does not forego the learning process. Furthermore, this encapsulates Britzman's (2003) claim that preparation and knowledge are necessary to effectively sustain in depth participation.

The aforementioned teacher-led discourse patterns illustrate that students have acquired a comfort level, surrounding complex themes and terminology in the novel. In addition, students exhibited the ability to transition into peer-led groups.

The following discourse patterns will illuminate a transition of classroom practices, in which the time is delegated by beginning with teacher-led discourse, as an immediate impetus for students to engage in peer-led discussion groups. Patterns will illuminate varying prompts to invite discourse.

There are numerous characters in the novel, and Mr. Lehrer prompted students to discuss the notion of hierarchy, in relation to the characters:

Moe: People are more respected
Mr. Lehrer: The captain has the highest status, and Moe's way is thinking about the lowly crew, their tattered clothes, and Zacharia's mouth full of stumps (points to the board , where Captain, First Mate, and crew were written on the board to illustrate hierarchy. He then prompts students to think about the interaction between the captain and the crew)
Violet: Between first and second mate
Mr. Lehrer: Mr. Hollybrass (assuming Captain Jaggery's point of view) is my first mate. I'm here and people in the middle will relay my orders. I have no desire to speak to any of you again.
Abe: Is there anyone higher than the first mate, lower than the captain? My dad has a book about a large ship.
Mr. Lehrer: You should study the internet about ships and military ships. This might be a more basic structure, being 1832. Who are the main characters?
Pippen: Zachariah is a main character
Mr. Lehrer: He's said and done important things.
Unnamed: Charlotte Doyle.
Mr. Lehrer: Sometimes people miss her.
Unnamed: Mr. Grummage.
Mr. Lehrer: If we believe her(Charlotte), we may never see him again.
Brandy: Captain Jaggery.
Mr. Lehrer: Let's leave off here. We can say these are main characters
Abe: Isn't Cranick important?
Mr. Lehrer: What do we know about him so far?
Kim: He chopped his arm off because he didn't do what Captain Jaggery Wanted
Mr. Lehrer: He's not a main character yet, we'll stick to these three characters

The following in early February illustrates Mr. Lehrer, who then transitioned students to take out the sheet of paper in which students previously jotted notes:

For five minutes, students were directed to write about Charlotte's feelings toward Captain Jaggery and Zachariah, and to tap into what they'd been reading about the book. Students were invited to revisit the book, and to walk through what they read so far. This writing was a springboard for students to discuss in their groups and students were directed to share their thoughts. Sharing was regarded as asking a question about someone else's utterance, or to express similar thinking. Students were also reminded to consider why they were thinking about their ideas, and to give a good reason to back up what they were saying

Once groups were formed Abe, Kiki, Julie, and Pippen engaged in the following peer-led discourse:

Julie: Charlotte thinks Captain Jaggery is a fake. He is part of her social class and that is the only reason she likes him.
Abe: Captain Jaggery is a fassad
Kiki: What is a fassad?
Abe: He is fake
Kiki: You use hard words

Mr. Lehrer visited and informed that sometimes we interact with someone like us, affirming Julie's contribution. He considered this a good place to begin.

Pippen: Zachariah is being too nice to Charlotte, because Captain Jaggery and the crew think that being nice is weak.

The discourse pattern ended with Julie trying to clarify Pippen's idea. Mr. Lehrer intended for the group to further build on Julie's idea, perhaps in an effort to assist them to remain on topic. However, once Mr. Lehrer left the group, Pippen began a new idea, and Julie attempted to build on that, without acknowledging the initial topic she established.

Another group comprised of Melissa, Moe, and Jason. The fourth student did not consent to participate in the study, but did not participate in the discourse.

Jason: Zachariah might be trying to frame Charlotte somehow. Do you

[motioning to Moe] agree that Zachariah and the crew are trying to kill Charlotte?
Moe: Killing her would be funny.
Jason: I disagree. Charlotte feels that Zachariah and the crew are together.
Melissa: He might kill himself with a dirk and then frame her.

In spite of Moe's comment, Jason was able to redirect the group back on topic. In both discourse patterns, students managed a conversation, as intended, in spite of minor involvement offenses (Goffman, 1951) initiated by Jason and Moe. These samples indicate that students are aware of staying on topic when they talk, although a few students deviate from the rule.

Another manner of peer-led discourse was the enactment of group writing prompts. In this regard, students are given a topic to explore, and to work collaboratively to construct new meanings and a written group response. Also, another manner of participation is constructed with selecting one student to be the recorder.

Mr. Lehrer briefly raised the idea of Charlotte, who is told should not be in this situation. She faces a sickness and sees Zachariah in the galley. In one chapter she sees Zachariah and in the next she sees Captain Jaggery. Each side is unique, and they go hand in hand. Because both characters were trying to sway Charlotte, Mr. Lehrer suggested that she's put in an awkward situation. Each group was given a handout, where the group was directed to write details that would make Charlotte think a certain way. Students were directed to analyze the conversations Charlotte had between both characters, across neighboring chapters.

As Steve, Monet, Brandy and Violet gathered, they vigorously got their ideas situated and were looking through their books. Violet was the recorder. Steve invited the idea of Jaggery who invites her to tea, and Brandy mentioned Charlotte expressing to him that he reminded her of her father. Steve told Violet to jot down Charlotte's

suspicions, and Brandy raised the idea of Charlotte refusing to take the knife. Steve acknowledged this as well, but mentioned that she took the knife back. Brandy noted that Charlotte eventually decided to take the knife from Zachariah.

The integrated written artifact reflected the discourse:

"She felt suspicious when he gave her a knife; she was fearful of him; he gave her bread; she took the knife anyway; bread tassed bad; she was ill for 4 days." In the "Conversation with Captain Jaggery" column, Violet jotted : "invitied her to tea; he reminds me of her father."

Ultimately, the group was actively reading and contributing to the written artifact. The participation from this group, coupled with groups cited previously, suggests that all students are provided with opportunities to actively participate in a small group in order to discuss and make sense of important ideas that resonate in the novel. Certainly all students do not appropriate opportunities all of the time, but it is important to note that equitable opportunities are available to them. Mr. Lehrer facilitates equitable classroom relations in the enactment of peer-led discourse, which Ladson-Billings (1994) terms culturally relevant. In addition, students were assuming collaborative responsibilities.

Another example of written and spoken discourse surrounding a group handout involved students' exploration of two questions in late February. Students were invited to interpret and speculate what the answers might be, and were informed that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions: "Why do you think Captain Jaggery chooses Zachariah to accept punishment from the crew? How would you characterize Zachariah now, after chapters 10 and 11?" Students were reminded think about who he is after these chapters, for he is a different person from the onset of the book.

Upon visiting Stephanie, Jared, Jack, Moe, and Jessie (recorder), their enthusiasm surrounding group work was easily detected: Stephanie mentioned that Captain Jaggery wanted to punish Zachariah for stepping up to help Cranick. Jared interpreted that Captain Jaggery was a racist. When I asked why, he and Jack confirmed they wrote that Zachariah was singled out for being the only Black character. Jessie mistakenly jotted that Captain Jaggery was old. When I pointed that out, Jack quickly confirmed that they meant to say that Zachariah was old, and was punished because he was no longer useful to the crew.

The co-constructed written artifact reflected the conversation. Jessie's jottings suggest that she actively contributed by writing within the parameter of the discourse. In addition, she reworded Stephanie's claim that Zachariah was punished for stepping up to help Cranick in the last two sentences. Students often will simply write the suggestions offered by the group, and assume that the recorder's role does not require thinking. However, Jessie's collaborative effort and participation negotiated the contributions constructed from the group:

"Because the captain wants to mock Charlotte; Because Zacharia's black; Because Zacharia's old; Zachariah disobeyed Captain Jaggery; Captain Jaggery wanted to show that he was still in command."

During informal conversations after class, Mr. Lehrer reified that interpretations must have a basis. Although there are no right or wrong responses, students are aware that "anything doesn't fly," and students' responses have become more sophisticated as the year has progressed. Because interactions are with the text, the expectation is that responses should apply the context of the text, whether the realm is within and across texts or experiences. This is especially salient among students who struggle academically. This explicates the importance of on-going classroom discourse that is

systematic and meaningful. Students were therefore mindful of the context of the reading, in a manner that was reiterated during teacher-led discourse over the course of the year.

Another way to sustain a peer-led literature–based discussion group was Mr. Lehrer's prompting that Charlotte was in a position where she had nowhere to turn, in late February. The situation has become more serious for her now, because it's become a matter of life and death. She's alone in the middle of the ocean. The accompanying sheet consisted of five questions. He recommended that every group take time to discuss each question so that everyone is thinking about the same thing at the same time, and contributing collaboratively to the conversation. The questions on the handout included: Why does Charlotte decide to join the crew? What other options are available to her? How is the request to join the crew realistic and/or unrealistic? How should the crew respond to Charlotte's request? If Charlotte heads the crew, will she be able to be a part of it?

Upon visiting Violet, Monet, Brandy, and Steve(recorder), Steve interpreted that Charlotte's reason to join the crew was due to the fact that she had no one else to turn to. An on-going conversation between the group members embodied that being on the crew was better than being alone, and that the best protection is the crew. Charlotte could have joined the captain, but they agreed that that was problematic because he shot Cranick.

Regarding the second question, Steve questioned whether or not it was feasible for Charlotte to be on her own team. Brandy knew she couldn't turn to Zachariah, and Steve raised an interesting question that led to the possibility of Charlotte's suicide,

when he asked, "Wasn't she Zachariah's final friend?" They began debating about throwing a dead body overboard, because clearly one couldn't keep it on the ship to rot. They also problematized that being on her own might lead to starving to death.

As for the third question, Brandy interpreted that she couldn't handle a knife, let alone a gun to kill the entire crew.

The culminating written artifact reveals the following jottings: In response to why Charlotte decides to join the crew:

"because she was afraid to turn to anyone else; it would be better to be friends with the crew than being a loner; her best protection was with the crew."

In response to what other options are available to Charlotte, the written response read:

"she could stay in her room for the rest of the trip; she could kill herself; she could go mentally insane"

In response to interpreting how Charlottes' request to join the crew is realistic or unrealistic, the group wrote:

"it is unrealistic that she is trying to join a crew of all men; realistic because if she were to get into that much trouble it would give her something to do."

In the moment observations suggests that students enthusiastically sustained a conversation where they were able to explore multiple interpretations. Examining the spoken and written discourse side by side reveals that the culmination of the first discussed question was jotted on the handout. Somehow, by the second and third questions, there was a mismatch between what students said and what was written. Perhaps this was a matter of the recorder losing sight of the group's contributions, or

deciding to appropriate their own ideas. Whatever the circumstance, the written artifact does not accurately depict the discourse that students contributed.

When I joined Abe, Julie, Kiki, and Pippen, I assumed they were off task because they were talking about their personal experience on a ship and boat. What seemed to resonate was that they had been on a ship or boat before. When I asked if they were on topic, in a voice that inferred my suspicion that they might not be, they eagerly confirmed relevance because their descriptions were an attempt to determine if Charlotte could realistically handle the position of being on a ship. Julie sensed that the only thing Charlotte could do is climb the ropes. I prompted them to discuss jobs that have occurred on the ship, to determine which ones she could handle, given that one must know what the jobs are to determine ability. I also reiterated that 1832 was the context, for any experience they had recently would be significantly different than any experience they would have had. Julie asserted that Charlotte could help clean and definitely climb the ropes because of her size. Abe disagrees because being on a motorized ship nowadays is hard, and it would be even harder to maneuver a ship that size without a motor in 1832. In this realm, the students are appropriating existing knowledge to develop new understanding and to determine that personal response is within the realm of the text.

Peer-led discourse transitioned into the following written artifact surrounding the question, "If Charlotte is allowed to be part of the crew, will she be able to handle the position? Why or why not? Especially salient is the jotting, " No because it's hard; yes because the crew will help her; no you need more ship background & you need to know how to move the boat without wind."

This peer-led written and spoken discourse combination suggests consistency. Students thoughtfully contributed by determining their knowledge and experience about ships and boats. Initially, it appeared that they were off topic, but they were genuine when they confirmed relevance of personal experience.

On one occasion in early March, teacher-led discourse was sustained for the duration of the entire class. This was unusual, given the typical 15 to 20 minute time block, to balance peer-led discussion groups. Numerous students were eager, participatory members, and it became a matter of students wanting to continue the conversation, rather than suspend it. The discourse embodied Charlotte, who had not been entitled to a fair trial. To begin, Mr. Lehrer referred to the notion that people in America, according to the constitution, are supposed to get a fair trial. He referred to the actual document itself, which documents what a fair trial is. The following excerpt reveals that teacher-led discourse emerged upon being prompted about elements that comprise a fair trial:

Violet: Evidence. In the Laci Peterson trial there was enough evidence for a conviction
Melissa: There are lawyers
Kim: And witnesses
Phoebe: There was evidence when Charlotte went to trial, but they weren't allowed to tell anyone and the captain wouldn't let her talk.
Mr. Lehrer: You're about 5 minutes ahead, but we will get to that point
Abe: There is a judge and a jury, along with the right to a bipartisan judge
Mr. Lehrer: You must mean impartial. Can you explain what you mean by that?
Abe: You can't know the person, or you will favor them.
Mr. Lehrer: The judge must be neutral, and cannot maintain a stance going into it.

At this point, Mr. Lehrer described his experience on a jury, when he became number 4, out of 30 people. They asked him questions about where he lived, who he

knew, and where he worked. After learning this information, he learned that number 4 to his dismay was dismissed. This generated some laughter, and he further explained that they never gave him a reason. After learning about the nature of the trial, however, he suspected that he may have known the person who was suing, who happened to be from a well to do area.

This pattern of teacher-led discourse reveals that Mr. Lehrer listens carefully to his students' queries, in order to respond meaningfully, in the moment, and in a manner that is improvisational (Sawyer, 2004). Abe's miscue with the term bipartisan could have been easily overlooked in the moment, but Mr. Lehrer prompted Abe to explain what he meant by impartial, in order for the class to gain a full grasp of the terminology.

Getting back into the text, the following responses occurred, blending the terminology with the plot line:

Violet: Captain Jaggery was badgering the witnesses
Mr. Lehrer: There was no way for them to be impartial because they were too afraid to be impartial.
Kiki: What exactly is a jury, and where are they in the courtroom? (Mr. Lehrer provided necessary information)
Phoebe: The judge was threatening the crew
Abe: Charlotte was guilty until proven innocent
Mr. Lehrer: Has anyone ever seen someone object in a court TV show? Think about how important that is. If the judge sustains objections, you cannot weigh that into evidence. If it is overruled, it is kept. The overall setup is to ensure fairness.
Abe: When a suspect is arraigned, they keep the suspect for 3 days to determine admissible evidence against the suspect
Jack: Is your father a lawyer?
Abe: [proudly] My mother is.
Moe: Charlotte never had a chance to defend herself or explain what she wanted to do.
Mr. Lehrer: Captain Jaggery was not interested in the truth.
Jason: He had a grudge against her.
Mr. Lehrer: Turn to page 165 in your books, where it mentions that the trial began by not being impartial. Captain Jaggery was the judge.
Lennie: And he was also the jury.

Mr. Lehrer: He is actually something very different, a prosecuting attorney.
Helena: He asked yes or no questions that didn't allow Charlotte to explain her side, which was extremely biased.
Mr. Lehrer: Lawyers want you to explain your side, which wasn't the case for her.

The teacher-led discourse pattern continued in a manner that juxtaposed legal terminology with Charlotte's circumstances of not being granted a fair trial. Moreover, students were genuinely interested in contributing to the conversation, particularly Abe, who considered himself well versed within the realm of the legal system. Sustaining this discourse required knowledge about complex legal terms, along with the content in the book, hence deep knowledge of the subject matter.

The interactions that led to the construction of the group artifact (Figure 3.23), with the topic "Captain Jaggery's Unfair Trial of Charlotte" were not observed. However, the written peer-led discourse suggests that discursive practices in class greatly influenced jottings. Monet's group jotted the following:

"I think that Captain Jaggery was unfair because he wouldn't let Charlotte finish anything he was saying. Captain Jaggery being the judge wasn't fair either because he was angry with Charlotte. Whenever she spoke he wrote something in his journal then look at Charlotte & the crew meanly. It's not fair that the judge was the true murderer. Charlotte is a threat to Captain Jaggery so he pushes her harder than the other crew members "

It is also important to note that the students who contributed to this artifact did not participate during the teacher-led component. Therefore, they were provided an opportunity to respond and enact collaborative responsibility in a small group setting. Raphael, et al., (1994) suggests that some students are more comfortable interacting in small peer-led settings, without adult intervention. In addition, this reifies Ladson-

Billings' (1994) notion of equitable classroom relations in small peer-led groups, termed culturally relevant.

*Summary*

Essentially, the components of a balanced literacy program encapsulate reading, writing, listening and speaking in an on-going manner, recommended by Pearson and Raphael (1999) that can be termed culturally relevant to the students' experiences by experts in the field (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Morris, 2004). Therefore, Mr. Lehrer was cognizant of what experts recommend of acknowledging and valuing students' differences when making pedagogical decisions (Tyack, 1974; Paley, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane & Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 2002).

To build a foundation for this nature of pedagogy, class time at the onset of the year was dominated by teacher-led discourse, read aloud, and the writing process.

The manner of on-going construction of multiple interpretations and in-depth meaning (Wertsch, 1991; McGee, 1992; Almasi, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978) during teacher-led discourse and the read aloud component established a foundation for the addition of peer-led literature-based discussion groups.

The read aloud component of *Nightjohn* and *Seedfolks* and Mr. Lehrer's influence, or stamp of approval, was an impetus for students to appropriate nonstandard conventions in their writing.

Emically, the Grade Level Content Expectations and Mr. Lehrer's acceptance of conventions reified for students the distinction between standard and nonstandard conventions. It is important to note that Mr. Lehrer did not have access to the literature

grounded in accounting for language varieties in literacy acquisition. He sustained a balanced enactment on his own volition, based on his experiences with language varieties.

Transitioning to etic perspectives, the on-going enactment of the expectation for the errorless draft provided students opportunities to access standard conventions with students' home language as a foundation, and aligns with the work of sociolinguists (Adger, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Gee, 1996; Wolfram, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2002; Smitherman, 1999; Vaughn-Cooke, 1999) in a manner that Delpit (1995) would term nonthreatening. As for the balanced enactment of nonstandard conventions, students were able to appropriate cultural and linguistic strengths, posited in what Delpit (1995) and Meier (1999) would suggest is embedded in their cultural heritage. Students were also facilitated an awareness that everyone speaks a deviation from standard English, in a manner that resonates with Wolfram's (1999) work. Also facilitated fit under Gee's (1996) suggestion that people from varying races and backgrounds are tied to varying literacies that are connected with varying Discourses.

Moreover, for the duration of the entire year, students actively engaged in assigned and self-selected reading at home, along with leading a writerly life in their writer's notebooks. Culturally responsive pedagogy is aligned within that realm, for students could appropriate writing and literature that was relevant to their experiences.

## Chapter 4: Mr. Lehrer's Orchestration of Peer-led Discourse

In Chapter Three I documented the manner in which Mr. Lehrer engaged students in peer and teacher-led discourse surrounding of one core novel. Mr. Lehrer deliberated about effectively grouping students in peer-led groups and facilitating what Cazden(2001) terms student collaborative responsibilities. He additionally affirmed students' responses and sustained a classroom community.

This chapter will describe the enactment of the balanced approach posited in a improvisational transition from peer-led groups surrounding the core novel *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, to four curriculum titles: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*(1976), *Dragonwings*(1953,1981), *My Brother, My Sister and I* (1994), and *The Outsiders* (1968). Teachers are required to select one novel. However, many teachers in Oak Valley teach *The Outsiders* with the entire class, but do not select any other curricular titles from the text set that Mr. Lehrer selects. The rationale for literature selection and rejection will also be explored.

In addition, this chapter will explore Mr. Lehrer's continued deliberation about regrouping students, in an effort for students to sustain collaborative responsibilities. The nature of teacher and peer-led discourse, within the enactment of controversial literature and critical race theory (Decuir & Dixson, 2004) will also be examined. Similar to Chapter Three, this chapter will document the manner in which Mr. Lehrer possesses the pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1997) to affirm student queries in a manner that is improvisational (Britzman, 2003; Sawyer, 2004). Additionally, discursive practices impart tenets of "I Can Statements", recommended by Raphael, et al., (1995, 2001)

On many occasions, students brought their interpretive frames from their own experiences (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) and provided multiple interpretations (Rosenblatt, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; McGee, 1992; Almasi, 1995). In addition, students read against the text (Nodelman & Reimer, 2001), engaged in counterstorytelling to interpret prejudice and the historical construct shaping the novels (Morris, 2004), and engaged in discourse surrounding the realities of race and racism. To that end, students' co-constructed written artifacts will illustrate the nature of collaborative responsibilities to develop new understanding (Barnes & Todd, 1997) and their culmination of learning through discursive practices. The nature of these interactions were facilitated by Mr. Lehrer. During the pilot study, students engaged in discursive practices surrounding the same novels, but discourse engendered underlying themes and student generated questions to invite in-depth responses. However, as Mr. Lehrer's classes have become more racially and ethnically mixed, the nature of discourse during the dissertation study reifies the situation in the classroom, school, and surrounding community.

Read alouds of multicultural literature were on-going, to facilitate discursive practices embedded in valuing language varieties(Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996; Cazden, 1999; Smitherman, 1999) through the enactment of *Nightjohn* and *Seedfolks*. Additionally, read alouds were enacted to sustain complex matters of critical race theory (Decuir and Dixson, 2004).

The reader response journal is a venue for students to explore themes they deemed pertinent to assigned reading. Students' reader response journals will illustrate the influence of discursive practices, both teacher and peer-led, and student writing.

*Literature Selection in Mr. Lehrer's Class that is not Selected by Many Teachers*

The grade 7 curriculum comprises of five protected titles, and teachers must choose at least 1 for instruction. Protected indicates that the title is exclusive to that grade level, so that children will not have instruction with the novel, prior to their entry into the specified grade. Mr. Lehrer selects 4 of 5 novel choices for grade 7, and varying titles are distributed among eight literature-based discussion groups. Two groups are assigned to each title, so that groups make up 3 to 4 students. During the previous year, all 5 titles were implemented, and 5 students were grouped to each title.

*Wolf Rider,* the suspense thriller, was included in last year's line up, but was not included this year. Before deciding not to implement it, Mr. Lehrer deliberated about whether or not to include it. An interview with Mr. Lehrer revealed that *Wolf Rider* fit in with the remaining titles, due to the notion of the main character as an outsider. However, the main character could have chosen to be an insider by his own volition, by doing what everyone else wanted him to do. Moreover, it didn't naturally match the overarching themes and students in previous years did not fully interact as he intended:

Mrs. Hill: So you still plan on the text set
Mr. Lehrer: Yes. You know I might eliminate Wolf Rider because it's so different than the others.
Mrs. Hill: You know what I noticed from my data from last year, the Wolf Rider group didn't get along
Mr. Lehrer: and you know what else, it wasn't only in that class, and I remember that. Even though Wolf Rider is a thriller, is like an intriguing book and so forth to talk about and think about, I don't think it lends itself to depth of discussion the way the Outsiders, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, of My Brother, My Sister and I, all 4 of those books
Mrs. Hill: They deal with matters of race and classism
Mr. Lehrer: Wolf Rider doesn't
Mrs. Hill: Right, it really doesn't
Mr. Lehrer: The way I tied in Wolf Rider, really the thing that cause that

grouping to occur, ,was that it was a protected title. And I thought, all similar in the sense of there is an outsider, there really is an outsider in Wolf Rider because it's Andy himself. He ends up being distrusted by his father, the police, the school psychologist, I mean no one is believing him and he is right. Nina, herself, and he ends up being this lone rider and there

Mrs. Hill: I don't think they arrived at that

Mr. Lehrer: Gosh, they didn't arrive at that

Mrs. Hill: I remember Evelyn, one of the things she said, it was something where they, you came up to the group, this was on tape and I can't remember what you said, but you walked away and Evelyn said why did you have to say it was a curiosity book? [Laughter]

Mr. Lehrer: Who did she say that to?

Mrs. Hill: I can't remember. Everything that they said was I don't know! I don't know why I said that! I just remember her tone, it was so funny that somebody said it was a curiosity book to you [laughter]

Mr. Lehrer: They must have thought man, he wanted you to say something else. I have some like that this year, but that book, I don't think lends itself as well to that, and it's different in genre, and I think the nature of the thriller is maybe that kind of book that you want to race through. It does lend itself to good questions , and there is the idea of being an outsider, but I don't think it's the kind of book that, sitting around in a group works so well, and I've learned that over the past two years, because I don't know if there's any group over the last 2 years at the end where I thought, wow, they did a good job exploring that book, diving into it,

Mrs. Hill: Right, it was a curiosity book.

Mr. Lehrer: Who would choose a curiosity book for an in depth discussion?

This excerpt divulges that Mr. Lehrer had the autonomy to implement or reject the novel. Limited success with prior implementation and Mr. Lehrer's deliberation resulted in the decision not to implement *Wolf Rider* into the text set.

The remaining titles engender the notion of outsider by manner of race, class, or ethnicity. The titles include: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), *The Outsiders* (1968), *My Brother, My Sister, and I,* (1994) and *Dragonwings*(1953, 1981). In order to encapsulate the basis for rejection and acceptance of titles, a brief synopsis of each novel is provided. Additionally, a general understanding of each novel will be

necessary, for it undergirds patterns of teacher and peer-led discourse described later in the study.

S.E. Hinton's (1968) *The Outsiders* emanates the complications of gang life among the working class Greasers from Ponyboy Curtis's point of view. The Greasers sustain an on-going , violent rivalry with the affluent Socs.

Mildred Taylor's (1976) *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* encapsulates the Logan family, an African American family living during the 1930s. The Logans' tensions with racism and their pride in sustaining the land purchased by their grandfather is told from Cassie Logan's perspective.

Yoko Kawashima Watkin's (1994) *My Brother, My Sister, and I* is based on the experience of Yoko and her siblings during post World War II Japan. They live in abject poverty and face adversity as they struggle to survive without parents.

Laurence Yep's (1953,1981) *Dragonwings* is inspired by the true story of a Chinese flier, Fung Joe Guey, who flew his own flying machine in 1909. Although Yep did not have all of the facts to construct this historical fantasy, it was his effort to explicate the humanness of numerous Chinese immigrants in the United States, whose history was lost and not well documented by researchers.

The most popular choice among grade 7 English teachers throughout the district is *The Outsiders,* (1968) which is typically enacted with an entire class.

This study was conducted during my sixth year in the district. Two teachers at Brownstone selected *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976) during their two years of transferring to teaching grade 7. In addition, new books were purchased for the occasion. Prior to these two years, former grade 7 teachers had not selected the novel.

Copies were old and tattered and may have been used prior to my teaching at the school. Aside from *Wolf Rider,* (1993) which is rarely chosen, and *The Outsiders,* (1968) the remaining titles do not exist in my building and are consequently not used. In fact, my study in Mr. Lehrer's classroom was the first time I had seen them.

Beyond Brownstone and Mr. Lehrer's classroom, my awareness of literature that gets enacted among the six grade 7 English teachers in the district is based on informal discussions during inter building meetings across the three middle schools. In other words, during my attendance at these meetings, teachers inform about the literature they select, confirming the popular choices. Because the protected titles are a choice, the selection of one is sufficient, and the rejection of remaining titles is not a basis of discussion or scrutiny.

An informal conversation with Mr. Lehrer revealed his disappointment that teachers were not selecting titles beyond *The Outsiders*. He further confided that he attempted to convince other teachers to implement the novels, but their discomfort with the content resulted in the option to not implement them.

The protected titles largely engender matters of race, ethnicity, racism, classism, and adversity. The popularity with *The Outsiders* indicates that teachers sustain a comfort level dealing with matters of tension among class lines between the affluent Socs and the working class Greasers.

The overall rejection of the remaining novels among most teachers, however, makes implicit that there is a discomfort with the issues that are raised, because they are regarded as controversial and posit culture, ethnicity, race, and class that differs from their own background (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Given the increasing student

diversity, the rejection of titles that posit the othering of outsiders aligns with the ultimate othering of students from nondominant groups. To suggest discomfort with the novels suggests an underlying discomfort with students, whose background differs from their teachers. To not engage in discourse that aligns with their experience as outsiders is to ignore matters that are relevant to the students' experiences, which is an integral facet of literacy acquisition.

Wollman-Bonilla's work draws directly from teachers' rejection of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*(1976). Teachers expressed concern that it calls explicit attention to race and racism, and may provide a misconception for students that White teachers are racist, as several Whites are depicted in throughout the novel (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Although Wollman Bonilla's (1998) work did not reveal teachers' concerns with African American Vernacular English in this particular novel, she provides evidence of teachers who reject other texts, based on this feature. Teachers interviewed claimed that the use of nonstandard English would result in children who would regard it as acceptable in school, when standard English was regarded as acceptable. Thus, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976) explicitly embeds the use of African American Vernacular English across characters. Teachers' opinions based on other texts may transition to imply that the rejection of Mildred Taylor's work may be also be based on its rich language features.

Mr. Lehrer and the teachers cited at Brownstone welcome this work because of its rich use of African American Vernacular English. They acknowledge and validate the dialectical differences as another form of English. During an aforementioned interview, Mr. Lehrer revealed willingness to expose students to

nonstandard English conventions in *Nightjohn,* to validate and provide contexts for students' nonstandard usage in their writing.

Moreover, informal conversations with Mr. Lehrer suggests that he welcomes controversial and multi cultural literature. He encourages students to explore underlying themes of race, racism, and ethnicity in an in-depth manner. On-going discourse is an opportunity for students to explore cultures and experiences that compare and contrast their own, and is regarded as an integral facet of learning.

*Patterns of Teacher and Peer-Led Discourse—Text Set Novels*

It important to note that prior to gathering in peer-led discussion groups across the text set, Mr. Lehrer made changes with grouping. This decision-making process will be further illustrated in Chapter 6. However, two groups of 3 to 4 students were assigned to each title, to facilitate collaborative responsibility and more equitable participation. Dividing 29 students across the 4 novels would mean that groups would contain 7 to 8 students, which was too large to sustain equitable responsibility and participation. Students were placed in the following groups:

Group 1--Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: Kiki, Jack, Taye, Mickey
Group 2: Abe, Jessie, Student who did not consent to study
Group 3--The Outsiders: Bert, Kim, Stephanie, Student who did not consent to study
Group 4: Violet, Julie, Jared, Student who did not consent to study
Group 5--My Brother, My Sister and I: Helena, Steve, Jennifer
Group 6: Marissa, Brandy, Jason, Phoebe
Group 7—Dragonwings: Melissa, Dave, Student who did not consent to study
Group 8: Monet, Moe, Lennie

Although a majority of discourse surrounding the text set was peer-led, there were opportunities for teacher-led discourse to determine common, overarching themes. In order to prepare for the initial discussion during the onset of the novels, each student

was required to read the first chapter in their books. The teacher-led discourse surrounded each curricular title, and individuals were given the opportunity to report to the whole group, describing anything worth mentioning about the first chapter and its main characters.

Students who read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* decided that the main characters were important to mention, along with the manner in which adults dealt differently with matters of racism:

Mr. Lehrer: Who is the main character?
Jack: Cassie Logan
Will: Cassie's mom is a teacher who stands up for what she believes in
Mr. Lehrer: Her mom is a teacher where Cassie goes to school
Kiki: Her brothers are Stacey and Christopher John
Mr. Lehrer: There is one other brother
Unidentified: Little Man was the other brother
Mr. Lehrer: Do you know what his real name is? [No one knew, so they were prompted to look in the chapter where the teacher drew attention to his real name)
Abe: Little Man's name was Clayton Chester
Mr. Lehrer: That is Little Man. Is there anything else that is important to know?
Jack: Cassie is in 4$^{th}$ grade
Abe: The school she goes to is grades 1 to 4, and it is the same school house, and Little Man was particular about getting his clothes dirty. He did not want to accept a book that was not clean, old, and tattered (from his teacher)
Jack: Is Mrs. Crocker White or Black?
Mr. Lehrer: Why would you wonder about her race?
Jack: She was different from Cassie's mother because she seemed to accept things as they were. She accepted the poor condition of the text books, that were given to the Black school after they were unfit for the White school. They were labeled Nigra where students sign their names.
Mr. Lehrer: At that time if you were a Black person who didn't agree with something, you might challenge the system. Others would accept the conditions and accept that things might change. Mrs. Crocker has a different approach from the Logans.

This teacher-led discourse pattern was a beginning space to explore matters of racism in a welcoming, non threatening environment. Jack's critique of Mrs. Crocker's acceptance of the hegemonic system is embedded in critical race theory. Mr. Lehrer affirmed Jack's response about Mrs. Crocker in a manner that suggests that he exhibits pedagogical content knowledge. Hence, he possesses knowledge about the historical construct that shapes the novel. During an informal conversation after school, Mr. Lehrer indicated that Jack's question was definitely unexpected, but welcome. Therefore, Mr. Lehrer affirmation of Jack's query suggests that Mr. Lehrer has deep knowledge of the subject matter to provide a meaningful response. For Jack, this became a manner of affirming a critical examination of the historical construct that shaped teacher attitudes about racism in the novel.

As aforementioned, Wollman-Bonilla (1998) has cited teachers who expressed discomfort with the pervasive and realistic descriptions of racism in the South. Mr. Lehrer's affirmation further suggests a comfort level sustaining and welcoming discourse surrounding complex matters of race and racism.

In the following excerpt of teacher-led discourse in late April, students who read *The Outsiders* decided that Ponyboy, as an individual among the Greasers, was worth mentioning:

Violet: Ponyboy did not have parents
Kiki (not reading this novel) Dawg! No parents!!! (in a manner of call response)
Mr. Lehrer: Ponyboy is the youngest of 3 boys.
Bert: The Greasers and the Socs (pronounced Socks) fight (students respond to this pronunciation, that c is soft to sound like soshes, with a long o sound)
Mr. Lehrer: The pronunciation is based on their social class, so Socs (soshes) is the way to read it from this point on.
Kim: Ponyboy moved up a year for being so smart. He had different relationships with different brothers because of their differences and ages.

Mr. Lehrer: His older brother by one and a half years would always run away from him growing up. You can notice Ponyboy's differences by reading the first page in the novel, by the way he has two things on his mind: Paul Newman and ride home. Why did he like to be alone? (in the context of leaving the movies by himself).
Violet: Ponyboy likes movies and they don't.
Mr. Lehrer: He's tuned into things in an artistic way. His brothers don't appreciate movies the way he would.
Kim: They stuck together, but the only reason for that is that they must stay out of trouble

Although this novel doesn't deal with matters of racism, this teacher-led discourse pattern reified the divisions of groups by social class, an important theme that will resonate throughout discursive practices. Providing in-depth characterization suggests strong familiarity with the novel. It is important to also note that Kim offered very little to teacher and peer-led discourse during observations in Charlotte Doyle. Perhaps Helena's influence helped Kim to assume a more participatory role, in a manner that learning is facilitated through the assistance of more knowledgeable others.

Additionally, Kiki's response to Violet's utterance is indicative of the class's overall interest in the nature of the discourse. Most students were listening to the circumstances shaping novels intently, even if the discussion was not about their book. That Kiki responded in a more overt manner suggests her natural reaction to something that she is interested in, and what resonates is the call and response pattern that is rooted in African American culture, as spontaneous, complementary variation. Her reaction could have been misread by many teachers as rude and disrespectful. However, Mr. Lehrer's response, which affirmed Violet and Kiki's utterances collectively, suggested familiarity with Kiki's reaction as natural.

In the following excerpt, teacher-led discursive practices surrounding *My Brother, My Sister, and I* embedded the abject poverty endured by main characters, and the historical context defining the novel:

Mr. Lehrer: What should we know about Yoko's situation?
Steve: She gets made fun of at school for being poor.
Mr. Lehrer: What does this say about her situation?
Helena: Her father had not returned home yet during World War II, and her mother died two years ago.
Mr. Lehrer: What can you say about the time period?
Jason: They lived in North Korea, and then they had to flee to South Korea.
Mr. Lehrer: Japan occupied Korea for a significant time during the beginning of the century. Yoko loved Korea growing up, until the communists took over and they had to flee. Is there anything else?
Phoebe: There was a bombing in the street, which injured Yoko and made her go deaf in her right ear. Her siblings lived in a warehouse.
Mr. Lehrer: She wanted to make money to provide for her brother, Hideyo. she tried to get this together for him.
Helena: Yoko and her younger sister Cho referred to her brother as honorable brother, and they called her honorable sister. Cho is called little sister.
Mr. Lehrer: One thing I like about this book, along with other depictions of Asian cultures is that they deal with honor

Mr. Lehrer's affirmation of responses surrounding the occupation in North Korea and its impact on the characters' circumstances provides another example of pedagogical content knowledge that is needed to sustain meaningful discourse. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer's responses suggest that he has a deep knowledge about the book, a necessary ingredient to sustain meaningful discourse.

Students who read *Dragonwings* talked about Moon Shadow, as a main character. The following teacher-led discourse pattern reveals Moon Shadow's depiction of White Americans, along with an element of Asian culture surrounding birthdays:

Mr. Lehrer: Who is the main character?
Moe: Moon Shadow

Mr. Lehrer: Tell me some things about Moon Shadow worth mentioning
Moe: He wants to go to the Gold Mountain
Dave: His dad left for the Gold Mountain, and Moon Shadow made kites.
Mr. Lehrer: His dad left before Moon Shadow was even born.
Unnamed: Moon Shadow calls people Demons
Mr. Lehrer: That's what he called White Americans, and that confuses people
Moe: He brought a letter that said that Moon Shadow should go back to America
Mr. Lehrer: Was he 7, 8, or 9?
Pippen: In America he's 7, but in Tang, he's 8
Mr. Lehrer: In China, when you're born, the culture dictates that you're already one year old. [Surpise and confusion among students]
Kiki: If they move here, what age are they?
Mr. Lehrer: This aspect is actually addressed in the book, because when they go to America, it's better to be the same age as American age, in order to not be suspicious

What resonates in this teacher-led discourse pattern is the Chinese who express hatred against White Americans. Although it was given in-depth treatment during this time, it was a beginning space for a form of racism that is typically not talked in classrooms. Mr. Lehrer demonstrated a comfort level when he expressed that the Chinese during this time disliked White Americans. This is a sensitive topic, given the composition of the class, along with his background as a European American. Moreover, it is uncommon at the middle school level for students to read literature that exerts racist thoughts against the dominant culture. This discourse became a beginning space for critical race theory, because they are examining the hegemonic system of white supremacy on the meritocratic system.

By late April, students established a foundation for discussing in-depth matters of racism, classism, and ethnicity when they contributed to the group handout, "Book Group—Establishing a Foundation". The handout was aimed for them to figure out what they understand or don't understand about their books. Students were also invited

to examine what they wondered about. Mr. Lehrer reiterated that they needed to go beyond the obvious, and to critically question why certain things were happening.

Kiki expressed initial confusion about the "What I don't understand" portion, because she was confident that she understood everything that was happening, and was insulted that Mr. Lehrer would assume that she would not understand something. Mr. Lehrer reiterated that the "What I don't understand" component was not intended for students to simply collaborate on ideas in the plot line they could not comprehend. Rather, it was intended for them to jot ideas that they understood, and to collaborate about not understanding why characters are experiencing unjust and prejudicial treatment or why circumstances are the way they are. Hence, students might understand that characters are treated poorly or are experiencing troubled circumstances. However, they might not be able to understand how or why it could happen to someone.

In order to effectively contribute to the peer-led discourse, students were given a significant amount of time to jot down their ideas. Students were informed that they needed to complete the sheet well, in order to sustain a meaningful discussion. Hence, Raphael's, et al., (1994) suggestion to bring writing to facilitate a meaningful discussion resonates. Students were provided into the following class day to complete the task, for the teacher-led discourse dominated a significant portion of time.

Therefore, the following day became a balance between completing the written prompts individually, then bringing the ideas into discussion groups. Before gathering, students were told to not simply tell everything on their sheet, but to focus on contributing to one column at a time.

*Outsiders* students Julie and Violet engaged in the following peer-led discourse, as they built on each other's ideas to wonder about how Johnny's tragedy. In the following excerpt, they wondered if things could have happened differently if Ponyboy and Johnny would have gone to the police after Johnny killed Bob, a Soc, rather than fleeing :

Julie: I think that, I don't know if this is anything, but I wonder, they should like go back, and tell police that uh, Johnny was going to die and it was self defense. It wasn't that he just did it because otherwise Johnny, like
Violet: he would have killed him
Julie: Yeah, Pony would, and he would have like beat Johnny to like death or something
Violet: Yeah
Julie: So, basically on self defense. The guys were drunk and looking for a fight and
Violet: they brought it on themselves
Julie: Yeah

Julie and Violet interacted in a manner that Mr. Lehrer more than likely would have intended. They discussed their jottings thoroughly, building on each other's ideas, in alignment with tenets espoused in Book Club's "I Can Statements." A close analysis of their discourse reveals that they completed each other's sentences, and interacted naturally. Their participation was also equitable, and a collaboration of student responsibility.

The second group of *Outsiders* students were able to also sustain a conversation a they discussed what they understood, but provided in-depth treatment of ideas:

Kim: Um, he lives with his brothers Darry and Soda Pop
Stephanie and Bert: Yep
Stephanie: I know that Darry is strict to Ponyboy and he is the older of the brothers
Kim: Bert, do you have something?
Bert: Well, his brother Soda Pop works as a mechanic and he had to drop out of

school to be a mechanic so he could pay for Ponyboy's education. That's all
Kim: Yeah, he's only 16
Bert: I know. And his brother Darry is 21 and he works like he's 80
Stephanie: And then I know that Johnny is a very quiet, delicate teenage boy because he got beat up by the Socs and his parents pushed him around a lot
Bert: His parents were very abusive of him
Stephanie: Yeah

This peer-led discourse pattern suggests that the group discussed topics they knew about in a manner that posited concern that the brothers faced a great deal of responsibility and commitment to each other, more than what should be expected of them. Additionally, they built on each other's ideas. Hence, describing what they understood invited discourse to provide more in-depth treatment to the nature of the characters.

Later, they described issues they did not understand:

Bert: What I don't understand is why Cherry, she throws a pop in Dally's face and calls him all those bad names, because she
Kim: But she liked him
Stephanie: Not all girls do what the guys like
Bert: Ok, well why did she tell him off and stuff?
Stephanie: Because she was offended. You can still like guys that you're friends by

These utterances constructed through peer-led discourse suggest that the group provided multiple interpretations to make sense of matters that were difficult for them to fully comprehend. As intended, they provided in-depth treatment about the ambiguous nature of relationships.

*My Brother, My Sister and I* students engaged in peer-led discourse that embodied what they did not understand about the things the family could afford, given the magnitude of Cho and her family's abject poverty:

Jason: How could Cho afford to be in the hospital because
Phoebe: They had some extra cash that their mom left them, but it's not enough
Marissa: ok, I have one
Jason: How much is it?
Phoebe: Have you ever had surgery?
Jason: Yeah
Phoebe: A lot of money
Jason: But this was World War II, it could be like 20 dollars
Phoebe: Oh, I like that one, too, you can write that one down.

Later, they discussed:

Marissa: How can they afford school? I mean, I know that the brother has a job and stuff
Phoebe: No, public schools are free aren't they?
Marissa: No
Jason: Isn't it a school for girls and they have to afford book and stuff, too
Phoebe: I was gonna say why don't they accept her, but we know why they don't accept her

In these peer-led discourse patterns, students are building on each other's ideas and thinking critically about what Cho and her siblings would realistically be able to afford, given their circumstances. Because they are questioning the possibility, they are also reading against the text by challenging its content.

Later, the group discussed what they did not understand about the missing father, who was away at war:

Marissa: How did Yoko's brother return from the war so soon?
Brandy: Like, I know it was over for two years and stuff, but don't you think the dad would come back with the brother?
Jason: Unless of course
Brandy: They could be separated from war, but
Jason: Well his dad could have been like, here he goes, don't you
Brandy: Don't you think the dad would find out where they went?
Jason: Maybe he's trying
Brandy: Why would he take two years if he was trying?

Again, this peer-led excerpt reveals that students are building on each other's ideas. Brandy's comments provides a varying interpretation of the father's intentions

and is another example of reading against the text. Discourse patterns suggest that the prompt serves as an impetus to critically examine the tragedies faced by the family, as Mr. Lehrer intended.

Helena was initially absent from the additional *My Brother, My Sister and I* group. This left Steve and Jennifer to contribute numerous ideas over a span of ten minutes, which included what they understood:

Steve: One thing I got was they live in South Korea
Jennifer: Don't they live in Japan?
Steve: No, they're Japan people, but they live in South Korea
Jennifer: I thought they lived in South Korea, but then moved back to Japan
Steve: No, they're Japanese people. Let's ask Mr. Lehrer. Ok, let's not. Uh, their mom is dead
Jennifer: yeah
Steve: She died in a train station
Jennifer: Oh, let's ask Mr. Lehrer
Steve: Mr.Lehrer, do they live in South Korea?
Mr. Lehrer: That's a good question
Steve: They're Japanese people, but they live in South Korea
Mr. Lehrer: Well, you say Japan, he says Korea, right?
Jennifer: Don't they move back to Japan?
Mr. Lehrer: You're right. Here's the thing. You know what? They were in Korea, but the Japanese occupied Korea for a long time.
Steve: So they do live in Japan

In this excerpt, patterns of peer-led discourse suggest the curiosity of confirming information, hence the desire to know.

The conversation progressed, and they discussed what they wanted to find out, surrounding Cho's hardships. The patterns of peer-led discourse suggest sharing and reading written ideas, rather than sustaining a natural conversation. Nevertheless, they are conscientious of contributing and building on each other's ideas, based on the following excerpt:

Jennifer: If Cho will be okay

Steve: Like if she'll ever be able to walk again
Jennifer: Yeah
Steve: One of mine was if the robber will come back
Jennifer: How will she get new shoes?
Steve: Where are her, her brother and sister gonna live now?
Jennifer: Yeah
Steve: One of mine was, will Yoko's mom keep an eye out for them?
Mr. Lehrer: Do you have any questions about anything? Good thing Helena's not here, huh [jokingly]? I'm kidding!
Steve: She would actually help contribute

Steve's comment during peer-led discourse suggests discomfort interacting with Jennifer, and perhaps a lack of confidence with the ideas they discussed. Clearly, both students contributed. Helena is noted for providing complex ideas, so her temporary absence forced them to interact without her. In spite of Steve's assertion that he and Jennifer did not contribute, they built on each other's ideas for a 10 minute time span and contributed things they wonder about, within the context of the circumstances in the story. They assumed the responsibility and took it seriously. Students who rely on the student regarded as more knowledgeable will often avoid responsibility in their absence by not contributing or engaging in off topic talk. Their long interaction before Helena's arrival creates the possibility for feeling pressure to contribute, but running out of things to say as time progressed.

When Helena joined the group later during the class, the peer-led discourse became more conversational:

Helena: I don't understand why they don't try to contact their father
Steve: They have no way
Helena: They could write a letter to somebody
Jennifer: And they did
Steve: The people read their letters, that go through the mail, and they would know where to find them
Helena: That's my point, why don't they try to contact
Steve: [overlap] look, you can't send the letter from there to there. They go through the mail. The people at the border, you know, how they go through

your mail
Helena: Are you talking about real life or in the book?
Steve: Don't they go through the mail, like if they tried to send their father a letter it would get searched through the mail and they'd be found?
Helena: But it doesn't say that in the book
Jennifer: That's what they usually do
Helena: I think they should be able to contact their father in any way possible
Steve: You said that already!

According to this excerpt, Helena's presence seemingly transformed the pattern of sharing written responses to argumentative discourse. Steve became more confident about contributing his ideas, and passionate about proving his point. Rather than reading and sharing their written responses, due to running out of things to say, their writing became a springboard for discussion.

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* students appropriated what they do and do not understand to begin peer-led discourse surrounding matters of racism:

Jack: Stacey is mad because his mom is his teacher
Kiki: He go to Jefferson Davis School, and he don't, she don't get on the bus because they go to segregated schools. But the white kids they get on the Jefferson Davis bus
Taye: All right, but like I was saying, though, they all spiffy and clean and junk, like when they was dry the other day. And Jeremy, who's Jeremy, dawg?
Jack: Jeremy's a white kid that always walks with them, that he's always walking to school.
Kiki: Do you mean Caucasian?
Taye: Don't say nothing like that
Jack: Have you even read the book? You're crazy, Taye, you record!
Mickey: Are you not understanding this book? Why do the white people have racist problems?
Taye: I don't understand that, that's what I don't understand. Why do they gotta be so racist?

This pattern of peer-led discourse reveals that discursive prompts created potential for students to interact about the realities of race and racism. Student

interactions suggest a comfort level discussing sensitive matters of racism and segregation and a space for critical race theory, because they are addressing matters of hegemony. Taye's sensitivity to the term Caucasian is indicative of his sensitivity to terms that define race affiliation. Mickey was the only white person in the group, so perhaps Taye sensed the term Caucasian might offend him. The teacher-led discourse about *Seedfolks* will further explicate his sensitivity, when the term Negro in the book resulted in a serious conversation.

Based on the excerpt provided, there were additional matters Taye did not understand:

> Taye: Ok, now we're going to be doing what I do not understand and how I might find out. Really, I don't understand is how old is Big Ma, and who is that one guy that arrived with the father
> Jack: Who?
> Taye: You know that one guy, you remember that one dude? Why do they name their own land different? And are they rich, or are they poor? I know they own a piece of land, so you really don't know.
> Mr. Lehrer: That's a good question. Because they do seem impoverished, yet they own property. That's a very good question.
> Jack: Well they might be poor.

This peer-led discourse pattern suggests that Taye shared an enthusiasm for so many thoughts that he had difficulty narrowing his focus. However, Mr. Lehrer was able to pinpoint and affirm Taye's question about the Logan's social standing. Mr. Lehrer's response reified that there is not necessarily a correct response to Taye's question. Mr. Lehrer welcomed this nature of uncertainty in the discourse, so that students could construct in-depth meaning of the text.

Upon completion of designated time for peer-led discussion groups, students were invited to share the outcomes of their peer-led discourse with the whole class. The

nature of teacher-led discourse was similar to Raphael's , et al., (1995, 2001) closing community share, a component in the Book Club curriculum. Therefore, one member from each group represented their book and reported important facets of their discourse with the whole group. The underlying goal was to espouse the commonalities across the literature:

Mr.Lehrer: Jack, tell us something about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, from your list—oh, who's gonna talk? Kiki! Tell us one thing from that first column.
Kiki: Cassie, she got 3 brothers, Christopher John, Stacey, and Little Man
Mr. Lehrer: Alright, Cassie has 3 brothers, Christopher John, Stacey, and Little Man—thank you! Cassie Logan, right? Jessie, nice and loud
Jessie: After a few years of schooling, they leave
Mr. Lehrer: Oh, they're done. That's their formal education, right? Yes. Another thing, Kiki?
Kiki: The Logans live in Mississippi
Mr. Lehrer: The Logans live in Mississippi? Kiki, another thing.
Kiki: The Logan family doesn't want to surrender their land
Mr. Lehrer: The Logan family doesn't want to surrender—are they in a war?
Kiki: No, the Logan family doesn't want to give in
Mr. Lehrer: They're not willing to give into a system that would have them give in, right? So, for people like, I think you read about, who are the guys who want the land back?
Kiki: Mr. Granger
Mr. Lehrer: Mr. Granger. They're not willing to give in.

For Kiki, it is important to note that this was the most she had been observed contributing to teacher led discourse, providing equitable classroom relations in a teacher-led setting. In addition, Mr. Lehrer affirmed her responses, as she assumed the role of expert for her group. It is important to also mention that her shared ideas were raised during peer-led discourse, but no one in her group responded fully to her ideas. Therefore, her contribution during teacher-led discourse served as a venue for her to share ideas she felt strongly about. She had the opportunity to share with the entire group, and Mr. Lehrer affirmed her ideas when her group did not. The nature of

discourse, in which students do not effectively build on each other's ideas will be explicated in Chapter 6.

Morever, Jessie was in the additional *Outsiders* group, which has three members. However, one member did not consent to participating in the study, so it became difficult to include discourse patterns. Her contribution, however, reflects the nature of their group discussion.

Upon completion of Kiki and Jessie's contributions, Mr. Lehrer transitioned to *The Outsiders* in the following excerpt:

Mr. Lehrer: Outsiders, who's going to say something from that group, nice and loud.
Brandy: The Greasers live in the poor part of town.
Violet: Ponyboy likes to go to the movies by himself.
Mr. Lehrer: Ok, maybe not what you'd expect if you were thinking about the kind of person his is, right. One more thing.
Brandy: Ponyboy likes to read a lot
Mr. Lehrer: That says a lot about the kind of person he is, when you think about what that says about him. Violet?
Violet: Darry and Ponyboy argue a lot
Mr. Lehrer: Darry and Ponyboy, Darry the older brother and Ponyboy don't get along so well. And that leads to something in the story.

Essentially, Brandy and Violet reported important elements that were discussed in their groups. Mr. Lehrer's affirmation of their responses about Ponyboy validates that they constructed in-depth meaning in their groups.

Mr. Lehrer transitioned to *My Brother, My Sister and I* students:

Helena: Um, they're poor
Mr. Lehrer: Who's they?
Helena: Um, Cho, Yoko and um..
Mr. Lehrer: Hideyo. They're poor, yes.
Helena: Yoko, Cho, and Hideyo's mother died
Mr. Lehrer: Yoko, Cho, and Hideyo's mother died, and they live without a

mother. Helena?
Helena: They live in Japan
Mr. Lehrer: They live in Japan. That's true, that is where this story is taking place. It's sometimes confusing. Is this Korea? Is this Japan? They're in Japan. Marissa, nice and loud .
Marissa: Yoko and her family live during the war
Mr. Lehrer: They were living during WWII? Is that what you said? This does take place right at the end of WWII. Another thing, Helena.
Helena: They don't know if their father is dead or alive.
Mr. Lehrer: The father who had been in the war hasn't returned from the war, even though the war ended. They don't know whether he's dead or alive. Marissa?
Marissa: They used to live in Nanam.
Mr. Lehrer: Nanam? N-A-N-A-M? Yes. And do you know anything about that, what that means, like where is that?
Marissa: North Korea?
Mr. Lehrer: Yes, in North Korea. And they lived in Nanam. But that was when the war was going on and Japan was still occupying Korea. So they ended up having to leave their home, which was there.

Mr. Lehrer's interaction with Helena and affirmation of her utterances reified much of the complex ideas that were discussed when he joined the group during peer–led discourse. Although he did not interact with Marissa's group surrounding her contributions, the nature of discourse builds on Helena's contributions and reifies for the entire group the complexities embedded in a war torn country.

Mr. Lehrer transitioned to the *Dragonwings* group:

Dave: Moonshadow's dad left him when he wasn't born yet?
Mr. Lehrer: Yes, Moonshadow's dad left the country before he was born. He moved from China to America. Lennie, were you going to say something?
Lennie: Well, Moonshadow wants to go to the land of the Golden Mountain?
Mr. Lehrer: Yes, Moonshadow's family wants to see his father in the land of the Golden Mountain, right? Another thing from Dave.
Dave: Moonshadow's name for white people is Demons
Mr. Lehrer: Alright, his name for the white people is Demons. By the way, if you're hearing some of these things, you may be thinking of your own books, I wonder if anything comes to mind. Like I heard in a couple of different groups throughout the day that people have different names for people from different
groups. Certainly that comes up in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry, It comes

up with the Greasers and the Socs.. It comes up with My Brother, My Sister and I, we'll have to think about that.
Lennie: Moon Shadow has never met his father?
Mr. Lehrer: Ok, prior to going, they had never met before

This teacher-led discourse pattern revealed White Americans perceived in a derogatory manner, and reified a form of discrimination that is typically not discussed in school, hence incorporating critical race theory. Simultaneously, this became the thread that wove all of the literature together, regarding the names of people from varying groups. Therefore, the students and Mr. Lehrer co-constructed commonalities in a manner that was improvisational, for Dave provided a spring board for that connection. As an entire group, students were able to experience a portion of the literature that other groups were reading, along with common overarching themes. To conclude the closing community share format, Mr. Lehrer invited concluding ideas about what they do not understand, and what they wonder about:

Mr. Lehrer: We're short on time. I would like to hear one thing from the 2nd column, and one thing from the 3rd column. The second column is what we do not understand or know. Why don't you look at yours, and think of what would be a really good one to share? Who's going to share first?
Kiki: I am
Mr. Lehrer: Kiki, you shared last time, give Taye a chance.
Taye: Why are they so poor, because they have their own land?
Mr. Lehrer: Taye's saying, are the Logans rich or poor, because on one hand They own all this land, yet on the other hand, they seem so impoverished. That's a good question to figure out. Abe.
Abe: Um, why don't they take a different route to school to avoid the bus, from the whites?
Mr. Lehrer: That's a really good question, because when you have a problem that occurs over and over again, you wonder, what are they going to do to avoid that happening again? That seems pretty consistent that they have a problem, and hm, will they do this to solve it

Mr. Lehrer's act of inviting Taye to speak affirmed that his idea was important. In addition, Mr. Lehrer affirmed Taye's idea during the peer-led component, and provided a more in-depth response to Taye's ambiguous query the second time around. Abe's contribution provided for the entire group the magnitude of racism faced by the Logan children, and provided for him an opportunity to consider the permanence of racism and the manner in which it has privileged whites.

Ultimately, the teacher-led discourse that posited the closing community share format provided students the opportunity to learn about each title, and invited a space for them to explore similar overarching themes. Students listened intently to those who assumed the role of expert for their groups, and contributions were affirmed and regarded as important. Furthermore, students were able to observe others, as they critically provided in-depth treatment surrounding matters of racism, classism, and ethnicity. This interactive style was conducive to informing about students' critical understanding of their historical and cultural heritage.

The following fieldnotes illustrates an example of students drawing from their writing to inform peer-led discourse:

Students were invited to engage in discussion surrounding a freewrite. They could therefore write about ideas that come to mind about their books, but thoughts did not necessarily need to be complete. On one occasion, before joining their text set groups, they were directed to circle or highlight two of the more important ideas, as two topics to bring to the group. They could separate those ideas and rewrite them. Before getting into groups, he told them to be active participants. They needed to respond naturally to peers, share their ideas, and take turns responding to them.

Upon meeting, *Outsiders* students engaged in peer-led discourse about the Curtis family hardships and sacrifices:

Bert: I feel bad for Ponyboy, though, even though he's not real because he has to grow up the rest of his life without parents and his brother Darry and

Soda have to work hard to put him through school.

Kim: I put that Darry could have been a Soc and the only thing holding him back was Ponyboy and Soda. He could have been a Soc because he was smart and he got, he had a scholarship to college, but since their parents died he couldn't go, he had to take care of Ponyboy and Soda Pop.

The notion of what Darry could have been raised ideas that were not previously talked about. Moreover, *My Brother, My Sister and I* students described Mrs. Minato, a character who allowed Yoko's family to live in her house:

Marissa: I also put how they've been really been living at Mrs. Minato's house
Brandy: Yeah
Marissa: She's been very giving to them
Brandy: Yeah, like she's the first, it's kind of odd, I'd be so scared because she was just in a house by herself.
Phoebe: But what it says, like, over here, when she got in the hospital, um, there were like other people living there.
Brandy: Yeah, there's a lot of people
Phoebe: With no homes, but who, like who around there, would they just go into their house and take their stuff? Would they actually go in and do stuff to it?
Jason: And then, Cho said, Yoko said she would love to live there but she didn't have the money to pay the rent, but Mr. Minato said helping me with the errands would be enough to pay or something like that.

This peer-led discourse pattern provides another example of raising a topic of choice that was not previously discussed. The notion of providing generosity to a family experiencing abject poverty is a relevant, underlying theme.

In the following excerpt, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* students engaged in peer-led discourse surrounding TJ, a troubled friend of the Logan children who got into trouble with the Simms brothers:

Abe: Did you get to the part where TJ and the Simmses are breaking in to the Wallace store? TJ and RW and Melvin. They broke into the store. And stole the...
Jessie: Wait! Isn't TJ Black?And he was with the Simms? Why was he with them?

Abe: TJ leaves his friends and says I don't need you anyways. And he hangs out with the Simms.
Jessie: And then they break into the store.
Abe: And try to pick up a gun and Jim Lee comes out and the boys whacked Jim in the head.
Jessie: Did they kill him?
Abe: Well, he died a few hours later. And then they broke into TJ's house and started beating him. And so Papa and Mr. Morrison went down there and Papa started the fire on the farm so that the people would have to stop the fire

The story's denoument and climax were aspects that were not previously explored by the group, and are suspenseful. Although Jessie had not read as far as Abe, her curiosity and questioning illustrates her interest in Abe's detailed description of the plot line.

*Dragonwings* students were compelled to discuss the notion of the Tang people who believed that White people were demons. They interacted during peer-led discourse, with no apparent concern that hateful sentiments were based on the race affiliation of the students in the group and did not engage in counter storytelling to challenge the message conveyed in the story:

Dave: I don't know. Demons. They call White people demons. And I think that's because White people are mean.
Mrs. Hill: What do you think about that?
Dave: They're uh, mean
Pippen: They kill Tang people!
Dave: Yeah, they're mean to the Tang people and I think that they're called that because like, Demons are evil.
Pippen: They're evil spirits from the underworld
Mrs. Hill: What do you think that says about their experiences, certainly it's not all White people that did this.
Pippen: No, it was all White people.
Dave: I mean, it's all Americans.
Pippen: Because the Americans were mean to them and killed their people. And they stole from the gold rush

The group spoke comfortably about the cruelty exerted by Whites in the context of the novel, but it seems ironic that they would overgeneralize when there was evidence of White characters who did not fit into the realm of evil. They provided specific examples of the cruelty in the literature, a facet Mr. Lehrer looks for. However, Mr. Lehrer more than likely would have invited them to challenge in a manner of counter storytelling their expressed notion that all White Americans were responsible for abusive treatment of the Tang people.

On numerous occasions, students engaged in discursive practices that challenged commonly held perceptions of competence, perceptions of people who are different, and language diversity. These enactments of critical race theory sustained for African American students competence and a sense of self efficacy that their home language was valued, especially upon learning they were not the only students who held a linguistic deviation from the standard form. In addition, they recognized that they were not the only race that was subjected to being prejudged. The class, as a whole, became a community of learners as they critically examined commonly held perceptions people hold about others they do not know.

During peer-led discourse surrounding *Dragonwings*, Monet and Moe's discussion about the Tang people prejudging Whites led to a discussion Ana's prejudging of Kim in *Seedfolks*. The underlying negotiation of prejudice leading to good was an impetus for Monet to describe the manner in which she was prejudged:

> Monet: I've never been in a situation where prejudice leads to good
> Moe: Most often it doesn't lead to good, but in the book Seedfolks where Ana suspecting Kim was burying a gun or drugs, and then she went over to try to dig it up and she figured out it was plants. That wasn't good at that time, but if it was drugs or a gun, that would have been good if she acted like that.

Monet: But that really in a way wouldn't be good because she's jumping to a conclusion about how a girl looks. That's not a good thing, like, sometimes when people see me, they think trouble already. Like a trouble maker or a bad person.

Moe: I think it kind of depends on also what they are doing. But yes there are people who just look at you and think one thing of you.

Monet: Like I could be walking down the street on Division (pseudonym for a street where the school is located) and someone would think trouble.

Moe: Yeah, there are people who do that, and there's also the people who think of who they are and what they are doing right then. But overall, it's pretty much bad.

Monet: Prejudice is like what Phoebe said, when she said prejudice can benefit some people in getting a job. Some people, which, it don't benefit, like if I was gonna benefit from getting a job. My name benefits me from getting a job because my name is Monet, it's nothing like a ghetto person's name. So, if somebody was to see me, they'd be like no, she's a Black person. So, I'm still faced with prejudice a lot. When I lived in Detroit I was not really faced with prejudice at all because most of the people are Black

The interaction between Monet and Moe suggests competency to challenge and negotiate people's initial assumptions about others they do not know. Monet's ability and comfort level to explain how she is perceived indicates that she is a member of a classroom environment that is supportive and welcoming of critical race theory. Moe's ability to respond thoughtfully to Monet's replies suggests that he has benefited from on-going interactions in a classroom community that engages in thoughtful deliberation and respect for others' ideas.

Kiki and Taye engaged in peer-led discourse about *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* and illustrated a readiness to describe matters of racism that were episodic in nature during mid May:

Taye: The topic we are talking about is prejudice and triumph over good. Yeah. Prejudice in our book, which is *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is because it's segregated. The whites is prejudiced to the Blacks because they're segregated.

Kiki: In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* there was a time when everyone was

segregated, and I'm not necessarily going to say that all the Whites were prejudiced, I'm just going to say that most of them was.

Taye: Blacks was prejudiced too, don't forget.

Kiki: Yeah, because they didn't want slavery to be over in the South. One way is that the schools were segregated. Cassie and her siblings attended a school called Jefferson Davis and Blacks had to walk on and the Whites got to ride the bus. Ok, go.

Taye: I already said mine, because the segregated, it's not just on me, Blacks are too, because

Kiki: You're prejudiced.

Taye: Listen! The Blacks are gonna be prejudiced back

Kiki and Taye sustained discourse that was away from Mr. Lehrer's expectations in this excerpt, due to the manner in which they did not draw explicitly from examples of triumph overcoming good. However, they demonstrated their competence and a level of comfort to discuss the nature of prejudice. Moreover, Cazden (2001) suggests that taking a closer look at the cause of a students' failure to meet a teachers' expectations divulges a reason other than the deficiencies in the children themselves (p. 16).

Cazden's (2001) work with young children who recite episodic narratives reveals that they are complex, with shifting scenes and multiple events (p. 16). Taye and Kiki did not recite narratives, but rather a juxtaposition between a retelling and the segregation and prejudice that was embedded in the plot line. Hence, their nature of speaking was episodic because it fit into the realm of shifting ideas about their knowledge of prejudice and segregation. In spite of speaking off topic, Taye and Kiki found a competent space to discuss matters of racism. Their intonation during the discourse suggested that they were confident with their ideas. Therefore, their participation provided for them a comfortable venue to discuss matters of their cultural and historical heritage, within the realm of their readiness.

Ultimately, excerpts reveal patterns of student utterances, which suggest natural, open ended responses intended by Mr. Lehrer. Additionally, students raised ideas that were not previously discussed through the more clearly defined discussion prompts. The open ended nature of responding to the literature provided an opportunity for them to respond in a low stakes manner. In addition, the nature of critical discourse reflected Mr. Lehrer's improvisation of discussion prompts, which coincided with the changing demography in his classroom.

*Read Aloud Component—Establishing a Foundation for Complex Discourse*

Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn* (1993) is the first read aloud at the beginning of the year, and was an on-going frame of reference as themes from other literature become relevant during class discussion. The premise for the book is the main character, Nightjohn, who challenges his circumstances as an escaped slave to give Sarny, a slave, the power of literacy. I did not observe its implementation because I did not begin data collection until February of that year. Its enactment is a beginning space for students to respond to literature in a manner that is expected in class. It is also a space for students to learn about the value and beauty of nonstandard varieties of English, and unlearning the common notion that they are wrong and inferior. For students who speak nonstandard varieties of English, particularly the African American students in Mr. Lehrer's class, they experience the value of their language that is traditionally devalued in school.

Near the end of the year, Paul Fleishman's*Seedfolks* (1997) was implemented as a read aloud. *Seedfolks* is the story of Gibb street, in a Cleveland neighborhood that has experienced urban blight and patterns of residents who move out as a result of

upward mobility. Residents are racially and ethnically diverse, and working class. Essentially, the Cleveland neighborhood represents urban centers that become neglected, due to patterns of residential flight. Each chapter is named by and narrated after a character, from their perspective. The garden is the focal point of each chapter, beginning with Kim, a young Vietnamese girl who plants lima bean seeds in a run-down vacant lot. She plants the seeds, in honor of the tenth year anniversary of her father's death, hopeful that the father who died before she was born will be able to recognize her. Each chapter builds on the "Kim" chapter, as characters observe and contribute to the garden. As the story develops, community members, from a multitude of races and ethnicities begin to transform a vacant lot into a garden, and their prejudicial treatment toward each other. It was intended as an impetus to explore complex multicultural themes, during a time in the year when students have developed a foundation and comfort level to discuss them. This was the first time Mr. Lehrer utilized the novel, and Mr. Lehrer informally expressed that he selected it as a result of changing demography in his classroom. Such an enactment became an improvisational act of representing the growing diversity in his classroom.

Because students in the class represent a multitude of backgrounds, *Seedfolks* is culturally relevant, particularly in a manner that they learn that prejudging people spans across people from numerous backgrounds. As aforementioned, each student wrote their own *Seedfolks* chapter, in which they were required to research their own ancestry and culture and write a chapter that represented themselves. Written artifacts will be explicated in Chapter 7, to reify the manner in which written tasks foster an understanding of student identity.

The final peer-led discourse of the text set was a culmination of the first two chapters of *Seedfolks*, enacted as a read aloud, and their recently completed text set novels. Therefore, *Seedfolks* was implemented in a manner of tying the literature in the text set together, and prejudice became the underlying theme.

One day in early May, students were given initial writing time in class, along with a few more days to provide additional information before gathering in groups. This would facilitate the construction of optimal ideas to bring to the group. Prior to writing, Mr. Lehrer engaged students in a read aloud of the first two chapters discourse embedded in the first two chapters of *Seedfolks*, which served as a foundation for students to examine their ideas critically.

The chapter titled "Ana" sparked a controversial discussion. Ana is a Russian immigrant born in 1915. The basis for this chapter is her depiction of Gibb street as a cheap motel, because she has lived there for 20 years and observed the ethnic flux in and out of the neighborhood. She claims that people move out as soon as they can afford to move, leaving behind an ill maintained neighborhood. Ana's voice referred to numerous groups, and when Mr. Lehrer read "Negroes," this sparked a reaction from Monet, who nudged Kiki. Ana's voice then referred to the child with the black hair on the lot, suspecting that she was doing something inappropriate. Ana suspected drugs or weapons, and dug the seeds after Kim left, only to realize that she misread Kim's actions. Before enacting the read aloud, Mr. Lehrer engaged the class in teacher-led discourse and asked for a word to describe Ana:

Jason: She must use binoculars to see thoroughly. She is intrigued, curious.
Mr. Lehrer: Describe Ana when she first notices Kim. I like reading this chapter because we know more than Ana does. What are words to describe Ana when she first noticed Kim?

Phoebe: She was going to call the police and begin seeking out for herself.
Helena: She's judgmental.
Mr. Lehrer: That seems fitting. She judges ahead of time and is prejudiced. She employs some prejudiced thinking when she determined that Kim must be up to something bad.

This excerpt reveals a beginning space for engaging in critical race theory, to provide in-depth treatment of matters of racism and ethnicity, for Ana prejudged Kim.

Mr. Lehrer affirmed Pheobe and Helena's suggestions, jotted down the word prejudice in big letters, and defined the root word and the prefix. He suggested that when one is prejudiced, they are forming a conclusion before they really know. Mr. Lehrer prompted them to think about the book they had just been reading. They were informed that each book they have read has an element of prejudice. Students were given the Big Questions about the Book handout, requiring them to explore how prejudice is a part of the story they read. Students were given time to jot their ideas down on their handouts, and to save them for peer-led groups. During the next day, a few days prior to gathering in groups, the following teacher-led discourse ensued, and Mr. Lehrer was in a position of responding to ambiguous queries, while inspiring additional critical ideas about their books in the text set:

Mr. Lehrer: Let's review one thing from the chapter called Ana. One important thing you recall. Phoebe.
Phoebe: She's really, really judgmental
Mr. Lehrer: We see a moment of judgmental, we see a moment of that because she does kind of assume something about what Kim is up to. Jason
Jason: She said she saw a Negro girl in the lot
Unnamed: I thought she was Chinese!
Mr. Lehrer: It's interesting that you say that...
Monet: (with her head in her hands) I feel so violated (over random voices)!
Kiki: He should know better than to say that
Mr. Lehrer: Excuse me
Monet: I feel so violated
Mr. Lehrer: Excuse me. It's interesting that you say that. She actually is

Vietnamese, do you remember that? But, Jason, what you are remembering I think, is and I was wondering in any of my classes, if anyone was going to say this, because sometimes Ana, who we determined was born in 1915 and had been in Cleveland since 1919 has seen all kinds of changes. There's a lot of things she says when she talks about the neighborhood over time. She says it's like a cheap motel where people leave when they get enough money, (refers to the text) a lot of Slovaks and Italians moved in next, then Negro families during the depression, and when you heard that word, that's interesting because that's a word that you do not hear in 2005. People don't say that. And language changes and we take on, terms that sound really, hmm, outdated or offensive, or you know, they can be the wrong term. But here's what Paul Fleischmann does when he creates this narrator. He puts that word in Ana's mouth because she probably would say that. Just like, you know, when she refers to Black people, African Americans, coming to the neighborhood, she says, then Negroes, during the depression.

Later, during the teacher-led discourse, Mr. Lehrer attempted to acknowledge and affirm Monet's concern by prompting her to explain where she stood with the word:

Monet: Because, like, just because in the old times, people would say something mean about Black people.
Mr. Lehrer: So it's a mean term
Monet: Why can't they say African American, or Black?
Mr. Lehrer: Do you understand what I'm saying, though? About the author creating a character? Taye, what were you going to say?
Taye: I mean, he said that Negro girl, because he could have said that Black girl was. He didn't have to use the word out of the book, because he know what it means, because back then (Kiki and Monet attempt to talk over him) I'm talking. This is a racist word used. What if we called y'all like a word or something. He didn't have to say the racist word. He didn't have to say that. He should have said Black people. Or something like that.
Mr. Lehrer: Taye, I agree with you. I do believe Jason was pulling language out of the book and heard, was just getting a couple of facts from the book.

Additionally, Monet added:

Monet:Ok, when he said, um, it's a racist comment, it could be an offensive comment because it's offensive to us.
Mr. Lehrer: I agree
Monet: And for them, too, they like, well, he knew what he was saying when he first said it. He knew exactly what he was saying [overlapping of voices supporting Jason]. But he had to think about it.

Kiki: The reason what I'm thinking, is because every time you read a book, you don't never see like words, like, every time you read a book, I don't know what to say, you don't never see words like Cracker, and stuff like that.

Mrs. Hill: But what about white people being demons? (referring to Dragonwings—immediate reaction, laughter in agreement)

Lennie: Yeah, nice, I like that one! (continued reaction)

Mr. Lehrer: I don't see what you're saying, too, Kiki, and here's why. This is what I know about the literature. Literature, authors sit down and write to reflect what people think, whether those thoughts are purely correct in the way they are said, or not. You know, for instance, that was a very good example in Dragonwings,

Kiki: I don't want to hear this

Mr. Lehrer: Wait. Wait. The white Americans who don't treat the Chinese immigrants so well are referred to as demon. [Kiki, Monet, and Taye loudly disagree]

Taye: He raised his hand, and he was wrong. He know what it means. He know that's offensive to us! That's not right. If I were to raise my hand and say demon and be like, just shut up, shut up, he can raise his hand and say Negro.

Mr. Lehrer: First of all, and this will be it now, he did not say that word to you. He made an explanation [uproar from Kiki, Monet, and Taye]. By the way, expect more of this from the book. The next chapter is titled Wendell. And there is a picture of a man, and a pitcher

After school that day, Mr. Lehrer regarded this as the best teacher-led discussion of the entire year. The lack of comfort expressed by Monet, Taye, and Kiki reified for him the importance of having such conversations, to confront and deconstruct issues that are considered extremely sensitive. Moreover, their discomfort posited counter story telling and reading against the text, as challenging Ana's normalized dialogue that perpetuates stereotypes. By engaging in teacher-led discursive practices, they became the voice that illustrated their role of being the African American minority. They were expressing concern for the manner in which they were depicted, resulting in feelings of being singled out. They also expressed their problems with the book, which undergirds Dyson and Genishi (2005), who suggest that interepretive frames are brought from their own experiences. Their sensitivity to the appropriation of

the term in the book by a White student illustrates their experience with the term, which goes beyond the information conveyed in the text.

Patterns of teacher-led discourse embody numerous instances of unexpected, ambiguous queries, perhaps the most salient during the course of the study. In all instances, Mr. Lehrer responded thoughtfully, and in a manner that accounted for students' multiple interpretations. Such discourse is difficult to sustain, and Mr. Lehrer acknowledged that he was careful with his responses, for student behavior during this discussion could easily have gotten out of hand. Moreover, this example of teacher-led discourse suggests that Mr. Lehrer welcomes discussion of controversial matters embedded in controversial literature.

All in all, student interactions to comfortably express their thinking, in spite of feelings of discomfort, suggests that Mr. Lehrer provides students equitable opportunities to engage in controversial matters of race in a non threatening environment. For Monet, Taye, and Kiki especially, negotiating the word Negro provided them with a critical understanding of a term that is deeply embedded in their historical and cultural heritage. This was the most Monet, Kiki, and Taye contributed during observed teacher-led discourse, embedded in equitable classroom relations in the realm of controversial discursive practices. In addition to the read aloud discourse serving as an impetus for written ideas, these patterns of teacher-led discourse served as a foundation for the complex ideas embedded in their peer-led responsibilities.

Their job during the proceeding peer-led discourse, therefore, was to explore big questions about the book, by examining how prejudice was a part of the story, and the triumph of good. Examining prejudice prompted students to gather examples of who is

showing prejudice and towards whom, and how that prejudice is wrong and destructive. Examining triumph of good, they were expected to collaborate about how the story shows the triumph of what is good in human beings over what is bad in human beings. This practice was embedded in providing in-depth treatment surrounding matters of race and racism.

Particularly salient was Mr. Lehrer's visit with a group of *Outsiders* students, during their enactment of peer-led discourse, when he affirmed their recognition of prejudicial treatment by the newspaper, which documented Ponyboy and Johnny who saved the children in the abandoned, burning church:

Mr. Lehrer: Well I guess you can't help but like them, I got sad, I like him. ...They think of them in a certain way, right? They wouldn't even expect them to help the kids burning in the barn
Violet: You wouldn't expect Ponyboy to. He's like different, and like younger than everyone.
Mr. Lehrer: What you're saying, I understand because you're saying you feel like you know them, right? You spend time with them in a book, you feel like you know them?
Violet: Yeah.
Mr. Lehrer: People will just look at them and look at their hair, and their situation, their poverty and they're poor, and, you know, say, oh, those people
would never, they don't care about kids, save kids in a burning church. So this would surprise people. In fact, do you remember what the headline in the newspaper read?
Violet: Juvenile delinquent, they're like,
Mr. Lehrer: Isn't it interesting they identified them in that way?
Violet: But they never got in trouble, except for when they like killed the one dude. Dally, yeah, but Ponyboy is dying and he never got in trouble because they're not juvenile delinquents, whatever.
Mr. Lehrer: How would you throw out a couple of normal things you would talk about?
Julie: Ok, because of Ponyboy's background people say some things

The group's discourse transitioned into their collaborative effort to jot the following peer-led written response:

"The newspaper's heading said Juvinille Delinquents turned hero. Neither Jhonny and Ponyboy had police records. If it had been the Socs, the heading would say "heros save kids or something." They claimed it was wrong because "Jhonny and ponyboy never were juvenille dilinquints It could have hurt them".

As for examining "Triumph of Good," some of their peer-led written response

Included:

"The story show what is good in humans over what is bad because when Ponyboy and Jonny saved the children in the burning church they did something good and put all there bad things that happened away."

These examples suggest that with Mr. Lehrer's affirmation, students were able to construct in-depth interpretations of prejudice in their books. The students knew the characters well enough to know that the newspaper's construction of them was prejudicial, and they were able to read against the newspaper as an accepted text and challenge its interpretation. These constructions of false assumptions are similar to the acknowledgement of Ana's prejudicial treatment of Kim that were noted during teacher-led discourse.

During peer-led discussion groups, one group of *My Brother, Sister, and I* students were also able to identify and negotiate prejudicial treatment by a newspaper, while devising multiple interpretations:

Jason: What I basically said was prejudice is wrong because you're making an opinion about someone before you get to know them. I mean sometimes it could be true, but other times probably not. And like Phoebe said that prejudice can be a good thing if it's positive stuff that you're making an opinion of them.

Brandy: For prejudiced, I put Kyoto is showing prejudice to Yoko by saying that she stole her watch to get her money back because she is poor, and I put it was wrong because she is prejudging before she truly knows her.

Jason: Why it's wrong?

Marissa: Because they shouldn't have blamed her because she was poor and

doing something.
Brandy: The guy is accused of murder and stealing
Phoebe: It was wrong because the girl accused her of stealing because she was poor, don't believe what you hear because they turned out to be innocent?
Jason: Yoko, Hideyo were accused of murder, just because...
Brandy: Accused of murder, and that lady told the newspaper about it, and the newspaper printed it out, and then the girl thought it was true
Jason: No, the police put it out, she was at...
Brandy: Ok, what are you writing for the last part?
Jason: It was wrong because she did not have the correct facts. She, Junka was behind it all along.
Phoebe: So, wait, that wasn't really prejudice! She wasn't prejudging her, she knew![students debate about prejudging, clarifying what they said about being falsely accused]

The group was able to jot the following integrated peer-led written response :

"Yo, Hideya and Ko was accused of murder, theft, and arson by Junka just because they were poor and lived in the factory thing. The incedent was put in papers so the real criminals would feel at ease and easier to trace. It was wrong because she didn't have correct facts. She (Junka) was behind it all, all along"

For Triumph of Good, Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry students, Abe and Jessie jotted:

"The triumph of good in showing prejudice is you learn a good lesson. Knowing that once you have hurt someone else and humillated yourself would you want to do that again? Get to know the person and the facts, not some dumb newspaper. Make sure you judge them, make friends, help them out. Don't judge a book by its Cover"

Students interacted in a manner that suggests in-depth exploration, while challenging the nature of prejudice. They challenged the misinformation provided to and by the newspaper, as a manner of challenging the newspaper as normalized dialogue that perpetuates stereotypes. They also debated about Junka, who was not prejudging because she knew the truth. This is the nature of discourse that Mr. Lehrer would have intended.

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry Students*, Abe and Jessie discussed the manner in which good can overcome evil. In the following excerpt, the peer-led discussion embedded the Logans who convinced people not to shop at the Wallace store because they were racist shop keepers:

Abe: What I have down for triumph of good, is the Logans have encouraged people to shop in Vicksburg
Jessie: That's prejudice?
Abe: No, that's triumph of good
Jessie: Oh!
Abe: And that made the white people angry
Jessie: Oh, you have how they overcame bad in the world?
Abe: The Wallaces got really mad that people weren't shopping at their store, and they're white.
Jessie: How does that overcome bad?
Abe: It shows that the idea made a difference. The idea of making people stop shopping at the Wallaces made a difference. They (the Logans) made a difference

Because this was Jessie's first time considering the ideas raised by Abe, the written artifact was not co-constructed, but rather a direct reflection of his contribution. However, Abe's utterances provided an interpretation of triumph of good in a manner that addressed the hegemonic system of White supremacy. This is an interpretation that Jessie did not consider, and an aspect of the novel that perhaps she overlooked. Without having the opportunity to collaborate, Jessie more than likely would not have experienced or benefited from this construction of critical race theory.

During peer-led discursive practices, Monet and Moe discussed the prevalence of prejudice between the white Americans and the Chinese, the manner in which it was reciprocated between the groups, and why it was wrong in the following excerpt:

Monet: My prejudice from the book was that the Chinese thought that the whites were bad people
Moe: That is prejudice, but also being an act of prejudice towards the Chinese

people with the white people continuously being mean to them and suspecting that they were weird and fat

Monet: But they were actually prejudiced to each other. So, that's like, in a real situation, that's like

Moe: They're both bad

Monet: Some people are prejudiced to each other, that's like a black person white person not liking each other because of their skin color. Basically, or Mexican or a Chinese person and a Filipino person not liking each other because of their nationality or whatever. So, prejudice that's in the book, the whites were mean to the Chinese and they didn't like them and they thought they were weird and the Chinese automatically assumed that the white people don't like us

For Monet, this excerpt reveals in-depth treatment surrounding matters of racism and ethnicity. Reading and engaging in peer-led discourse enabled her to explore these matters beyond divisions between Black and White. This was an impetus for Monet and Moe to challenge the hegemonic system, posited in critical race theory and exploring Monet's cultural and historical heritage. In addition, she brought an interpretive frame, based on her own experience.

Later during the peer-led discourse, upon listening to ideas, Mr. Lehrer prompted Monet and Moe to provide more specific details from the book:

Mr. Lehrer: Do you know what I want to say about this? That is a little bit broad. To say prejudice toward Chinese people, and prejudice by whom, white people. Here's what I'd prefer. An example is an instance, in other words it's a time in the book when you saw that happening. So see if you can zoom in on a particular part of the book, a particular happening in the book where that's showing.

Monet: We're also writing that the Chinese were also being prejudiced to the white people

Mr. Lehrer: Ok!

Monet: Because they automatically assumed they'd be mean.

Mr. Lehrer: I think that's an insightful thing because, you know, a lot of the times we think of the prejudice going just one way, but really, unfortunately I think it's usually on both sides, so find some examples of that.

Upon hearing this feedback, Monet and Moe grappled to find specific examples, although Moe was more aware of them:

Monet: So what would we write down for that, how the Chinese people were mean
Moe: Well, they continuously called them Demons, one.
Monet: I mean, how the white people were mean.
Moe: They threw rocks at them.
Monet: Where is that?
Moe: The boys toward Moon Shadow, um, there's um, I don't know.
Monet: Where is that though? Where they threw rocks at them.
Moe: Well it says, at the part where his dad started, well for one, that's the part where the white men went through the streets of the Tang town in America and they would break windows and stuff.

The transition to the handout reflected the following integrated, peer-led written response:

"Moon Shadow said demons (white people) gave him a hard time when he was trying to get in America." It was considered wrong "because the could have been doing normal procedure and he just jumped to conclusions." Moreover, they jotted "The White people threw rocks and said mean things to the Chinese." This was wrong "because the white people were being very mean and prejudice."

Monet was providing a general scope, appropriating her awareness of prejudicial treatment based on her personal experiences. Mr. Lehrer's intervention, coupled with Moe's specific examples was helpful to integrating and applying her knowledge as a foundation with specific examples from the book. Hence, Monet was able to build on her existing knowledge with the help of a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1986).

The first written example provides a detailed description of why the treatment is wrong, but the second example is vague, by comparison. It is important to note, however, that Monet and Moe began a conversation about specific examples near the end of allotted time. Data suggests, therefore, that although they attempted to provide

written reasons, transcripts suggest that they did not discuss why the prejudicial treatment was wrong. This became an important space for them to address the hegemonic system, and for engaging in reflexive practices espoused by critical race theory.

*Reader Response Journal*

The reader response journal is a space for students to write complex themes about assigned reading. This is usually carried out as homework, and maintained in a composition book. I never observed students working on their reader's response journal in class. However, students have autonomy to respond to the assigned readings, providing flexibility in the nature of response. Writing, however, is often influenced by salient themes that emerge during discursive practices in class and in the readings.

To illustrate, upon completion of the text set novels, many students responded to the theme, "prejudice." This is particularly evident based on the integrated written response, when Abe wrote the following, in response to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*:

> "There are many instances where the Logans are victims of prejudice and racism. Such as where Lillian Jean makes Cassie go in the street; or where once the books or "readers" were in bad condition the whites gave the old out of date books to the blacks so they could get new ones that were up to date. When the bus driver, Mr. Grimes went through the mud puddles just to get Cassie and her friends wet, now that's prejudice. He didn't even know them."

Abe's response illustrates his understanding of the hegemonic system. His thoughts are more than likely a result of on-going peer and teacher-led discourse.

Moreover, Helena expressed the following about *My Brother, My Sister and I*:

"Both Junko and Kyoto were prejudging Yoko because they were just

> assuming that Yoko did this or that. They should find out the facts about Yoko before saying anything. If they tried to find out the facts, they would have found that Yoko didn't do anything. I wouldn't want to be in Yoko's place, when everyone is accusing her of doing things that she didn't do."

Similar to Abe, Helena's response reifies matters that were raised during peer and teacher-led discursive practices.

Additionally, Monet wrote the following about *Dragonwings*:

> "In this book Dragonwings , there was much racism. There was racism towards white people by the tang people (Chinese people) and the white people had confrientations against each other. The Chinese people automatically thought that the white people were mean and that's racist. The white people were also racist to the Chinese people because they were mean to them and they showed that in many ways."

This integrated written artifact is indicative of Monet's exploration of co-constructed racism between the Whites and the Chinese in the novel. It is also influenced by Monet's participation with her group.

Lastly, Stephanie's response about *The Outsiders* expressed:

> "In the Outsiders, Ponyboy grew up in a poor, rough town. He grew up with it so it was just regular living and he was judgmental of others. He learns that everyone has a good side whether it seemed like it or not. Ponyboy learns about how to just appreciate what you have and you always have more than someone else."

This integrated writing sample presented for Stepanie an opportunity to reflect independently about issues that were raised during the appropriation of peer and teacher led discourse.

These writing samples illustrate that the reader response journal is a space for students to openly explore overarching themes that resonate in class. Students were not required to write about prejudice. They were required to reflect on the book.

Therefore, that many students opted to write about prejudice comfortably, suggests that the classroom discourse surrounding the topic was an impetus for establishing that comfort level and students benefited from peers who responded in a variety of ways. Responses suggest that they were able to negotiate meaning to develop new understandings.

There is a space, on occasion, for student responses that are culturally relevant in reader response journals. To explicate, there was an instance in which students appropriated the theme of prejudice, given their experiences as a backdrop. For Monet, for example, this was a beginning space for her to see that there is more to prejudice than prejudging African Americans, thus providing a critical understanding of her cultural heritage and espousing critical race theory. In addition, Helena was very much aware of the fact that she was not considered an insider in the school, and was prejudged for not possessing the attributes of being one of the cool kids.

*Teacher-Led Discourse—Complex Underlying themes Embedded in Seedfolks*

The class engaged in teacher-led discourse about the *Seedfolks,* upon completion of the text set novels and reader response journals. The underlying theme prejudice, from the text set provided a foundation for on-going discourse about *Seedfolks.*

Especially salient was the chapter titled "Sam," who is Jewish. The chapter provided an opportunity Mr. Lehrer to affirm student responses during a discussion that posited the nature of self segregation in a community that is dealing with urban blight.

The chapter posits Sam's surprise when he noticed men in orange jumpsuits cleaning a vacant lot. He noted that his neighborhood had been neglected, and he was

amazed that there was land for anyone who wanted to plant, referring to it as a paradise that is turning into Cleveland. He poses problems that emerge, for the people who plant in the garden have become divisive:

Mr. Lehrer: He says the word paradise. It came from his mouth. He calls it paradise, which comes from a Persian word meaning walled park. By the end of Sam's chapter, he's saying that what he thought was paradise seems to be turning into Cleveland again. Sam's chapter presents some problems that emerge as the lot starts to become a place people come to plant something. Does anyone remember any of the problems? Moe?

Moe: People start getting in groups, uh, Asian groups would be over there, Black people would be over here, and... (motioning his arms in different directions).

Mr. Lehrer: Yes, basically people did what people tend to do, perhaps naturally, and that is to gravitate towards someone who speaks the same language, knows the same culture and so forth, and he says, you know, it's starting to look like the neighborhood. There are different kinds of people, but kind of, uh, holding close to one another. That was one problem he saw. What was another problem? Kim?

Kim: Um, there was a man upset about the empty couch.

Mr. Lehrer: Yes, the guy who used to like the fact that there was an empty couch in the middle of the lot, because he slept on it. He didn't (laughingly) like this new situation. So he got mad and pulled out someone's plants and the cops had to come.

Taye: The one guy threw the bottle out of the window.

Mr. Lehrer: Yeah.

Taye: And he threw it back at him

Mr. Lehrer: Yes, he turned around and threw it back at the same window it came out of, right? He says, some of the people were used to using the lot as a garbage can, because that's basically what it was, they couldn't get out of the habit. Sam's chapter ends this way. God who made Eden also wrecked the tower of Babel by
dividing people from paradise, the garden turned it back into Cleveland

This conversation draws parallels to divisions that exist in Southeast Michigan. Although not explicitly stated, implicit is the manner of people who self segregate by race and class in the region. Additionally, students gather at a place that was once an exclusive walled park that has become Barrington, who self segregate for similar reasons. Students are aware that divisions exist. Hence, at Barrington and other

similar school communities, varying groups of students congregate in the same edifice, but forces of human nature shapes clear divisions between students who are indigenous to Oak Valley, are from Detroit or Huntington. Students getting out of Detroit were able to leave behind, in many instances neglected neighborhoods in search of better opportunities. Visible, in the halls and in classrooms, however, were Detroit students who shared a similar culture and experience, and therefore sustained close ties, often to the dismay of teachers (Tatum, 1997).

Mr. Lehrer's practice of affirmation and ability to sustain on-going discussions in class about matters of divisions was conducive to students who were able to comfortably express to me their experiences of being divided, along with the racial and cultural climate of the school. They were provided with a venue to understand that such conversations are important and necessary. Kiki, for example, cited an African American student who always lived in Oak Valley, who told her that she did not belong there.

Essentially, students might attend the same school, but similar to Cleveland, experience tension that corresponds with consequent divisions.

Additional teacher-led discourse surrounding *Seedfolks* chapters served as a foundation for students to explore their linguistic differences and affirmed their ethnic and cultural heritage. These discussions will be examined in Chapter 6, for they fostered a connectedness among students and served as examples for students who wrote their own *Seedfolks* chapters.

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# A GRADE 7 TEACHER AND HIS STUDENTS' NEGOTIATION OF LITERATE IDENTITY IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURB EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS OF RESIDENCY: THE ENACTMENT OF LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION, CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

VOLUME II

By

Kirsten Dara Hill

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*Summary*

The pattern that emerges across varying discourse patterns is a balance and negotiation between teacher-led discourse and peer-led discourse. Given time constraints in a 46 minute period, the transition to peer-led discussion is conducive to student dominated discourse, providing everyone an opportunity to participate in the conversation, where more opportunities resonate in small groups. Additionally, this challenges Cuban's (1993) claims that teacher-led discourse dominates in secondary classrooms, due largely to time constraints, large classes, and management issues.

Data suggests that Mr. Lehrer constructs a plethora of prompts to facilitate peer-led discourse, in a manner that is improvisational and reifies circumstances shaping the lives of many of the students, the school, and community. Mr. Lehrer additionally affirms student responses during teacher-led discourse, which are lead-ins to significant underlying themes for peer-led discussion.

Variations included transitioning from teacher-led discourse to a written prompt, then drawing from the prompt to inform peer-led discussion groups. On occasion, teacher-led discourse called for students to report to the entire group about their books. This is similar to constructions embedded in the Book Club curriculum framework (Raphael, et al, 1995, 2001). He also provides prompts in which students devise collaborative written artifacts. Additionally, he encourages that there are no right or wrong answers. He also devises prompts that facilitate in-depth meaning of text, and encourages students to remain on topic and to have a conversation. Multiple avenues to prompt discourse, along with the juxtaposition of peer and teacher-led discourse aligns with Philips'(1972) notion of multiple participation channels. The

ability to devise prompting that is conducive to multiple interpretations (Rosenblatt, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; McGee, 1992; Almasi, 1995) also requires deep knowledge of the subject matter (Lanier, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Britzman, 1986) and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). There were numerous instances, in which Mr. Lehrer sustained in-depth knowledge beyond the text in order for students to sustain a deeper understanding of events that were occurring.

Moreover, patterns of contributions embedded in the artifacts are indicative of relationships among members, and their dedication to working collaboratively and responsibly (Cazden, 2001) to construct multiple meanings (Rosenblatt, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; McGee,1992;Almasi, 1991). These patterns resonated over the duration of their time in groups.

Regarding teacher-led, whole group discourse, Britzman (2003) acknowledges this complexity in discursive practices in her work, due to the manner in which one must be prepared to respond effectively for unintended consequences and ambiguities. Further, Britzman (2003) claims that facilitating participatory learning with students requires a teacher's ability to deeply understand the subject matter. Lanier's (1986) notion of the liberal professional approach is also embedded in this discourse, for it suggests a deeper understanding of curriculum and the manner in which it is played out in the classroom.

Responding thoughtfully to students' interpretations in the moment is a challenging process, one that many practitioners avoid, due to the unpredictability of responses students might bring. Ultimately, these interactions encapsulate classroom discourse that is engaging, sustaining student interest. In this instance, Mr. Lehrer is

providing opportunities for students who, near the year's end are gradually establishing the comfort to make interpretations of this magnitude. Unfortunately, such opportunities, based upon student interviews, are rare at Barrington Middle School. And they are definitely essential to the self efficacy and achievement for students who ordinarily struggle with traditional, top down pedagogy where they do not have opportunities to appropriate their voices.

Students who participated during teacher-led discourse illustrated the preparedness needed to enact a dualism of student contributions and teacher affirmation. Hence, Mr. Lehrer was able to sustain engaging conversation with students and affirm their responses. These discursive practices illuminate the potential in literature-based instruction during a whole group discussion.

Keeping up with assigned reading is integral in contributing to classroom discourse. This became an issue among many students when some students had not read the required reading to contribute effectively to the discussion.

The written collaborative tasks reified for students the necessity to read according to the plan. In order to jot down specific details surrounding big ideas in the assigned readings, students must be prepared. Hence, this assumes student responsibility in order to use text effectively as a resource.

The culmination of reading and engaging in peer and teacher-led discourse influenced the multiple constructions of meaning that transitioned into students' reader response journals. Moreover, for the duration of the entire year, students actively engaged in assigned and self-selected reading at home, along with leading a writerly life in their writer's notebooks.

## Chapter 5: Dilemmas of Practice

In Chapter 3 I documented numerous examples of on-going literature-based practices, entrenched in a balanced literacy program. Mr. Lehrer established a foundation for students to interact daily in their writer's notebook. In the expectation for the errorless draft, students appropriated standard writing conventions in a nonthreatening manner by responding to Mr. Lehrer's feedback and conferring with peers. Mr. Lehrer also guided students as they employed nonstandard conventions in their writing. Mr. Lehrer also sustained a reading requirement for instructional and self-selected literature. Observations revealed that a typical class period was dominated by teacher and peer-led discourse. Time was delegated on occasion to confer with a partner to revise and edit a piece of writing. Students were allotted a block of reading time approximately one time per week. A 46 minute period called for constraints, and students were expected to fulfill many of their work obligations outside of class. In spite of documenting optimal practices, Mr. Lehrer negotiated matters of standardized testing, and unsettled student behavior. Additional constraints included larger class sizes, and problematic student responsibility posed on-going dilemmas, surrounding the on-going enactment of a balanced program.

Chapter Five will document numerous dilemmas, which resonated during the time of the study. In a climate of declining resources and increasing class sizes with increasing diversity, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation provides added pressure for practitioners to prepare students for high stakes testing. Given these demands, this chapter will examine the dilemmas Mr. Lehrer pays attention to, and the manner in

which dilemmas are an impetus for Mr. Lehrer to make adjustments in a manner that is improvisational.

Standardized testing schedules often interfered with existing class schedules, posing complications to teach effectively, because a balance between test taking preparation and sustaining existing practices is necessary. Mr. Lehrer's adjustments for imposed standardized and district testing constraints will be examined.

This chapter will explore dilemmas in Mr. Lehrer's classroom that became what Lambert (1987) and Osborne (1997) would term unresolvable, along with attempted modifications as a result of what Erickson (1986) terms on-the-spot analysis of enacted practice. Modifications were also a matter of dilemma management (Lambert, 1987) in his effort to teach all students.

On a regular basis, Mr. Lehrer and I exchanged dialogue about dilemmas, and were able to compare and contrast our observations. Mr. Lehrer would notice student activity that I would not recognize, and vice versa. This became helpful for Mr. Lehrer to modify instructional decisions in a manner that resonates with Erickson (1986), in order to address students individually who needed to modify their behavior.

Class composition and unsettled behavior among students will be explored within the realm of Erickson's (1986) definition of social participation task structures. These actions include taking out a sheet of paper, filling in a planner, or moving desks to accommodate the transition in and out of peer-led discussion groups. These structures are regarded as what Erickson (1986) terms concrete practical knowledge required to accomplish tasks that are seemingly simple. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer was the recipient of 3 new students from Detroit, mid year, which compounded his already large

class enrollment. One student enrolled during the class period I observed, so his accommodations for new students will be described. Lastly, given numerous students who are not responsive to deadlines and responsibilities, this chapter will explore the manner in which Mr. Lehrer sustains high expectations.

There were numerous instances when instructional modifications were conducive to meeting the needs of students with heterogeneous learning abilities. In a class of 29 students with a wide range of abilities from the span of grade 3 through 9, this was regarded as a problem of practice. Where applicable, the manner of teaching in accordance with heterogeneous learning abilities will be explored. Also salient is the manner in which Mr. Lehrer negotiated between what Nieto (2000) describes, of accommodating students and expecting them to assume responsibility.

*Dilemmas Mr. Lehrer pays attention to, within the realm of current demands embedded in Standards and High Stakes Testing*

The era of high stakes testing and reform and mandated standards poses concerns, regarding what teachers pay attention to. Grade 7 is a pivotal year, according to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test. It is not uncommon, therefore, for teachers to devote a great deal of class time during the onset months of the school year to the five paragraph essay, in preparation for the test. Because MEAP scores determine a school's annual yearly progress and funding, there is pressure for teachers to make sure their pedagogy is in alignment with curriculum and testing objectives. Districtwide English department meetings delegate disproportionate time to aligning curriculum objectives with what is mandated by the state's Grade Level Content Expectations. Since the Grade Level Content Expectations provide teacher autonomy to align the curriculum through teacher-led professional development

(mich.gov/edu.), there is a great deal of confusion, surrounding what teachers must do.

As a teacher myself who attended these sessions, at the forefront of many teachers are concerns that the curriculum is changing, that they must change their pedagogy to match grade level content expectations, yet teach all of their students who possess heterogeneous learning abilities. Moreover, teachers are experiencing a higher number of low achieving students, and there are expressed fears that test scores will decrease. On several occasions, for example, I would hear teachers refer to African-American students who simply could not read, and it seemed as if their coming from Detroit normalized the stigma of being illiterate. Troubling was the manner in which students referenced during meetings were my former students who possessed foundational strengths that I was able to tap into. As a district that prides itself of sustaining among the highest test scores in the state, the thought of declining test scores as a result of students regarded as non readers was deeply problematic for my colleagues.

Although there is a sense that teachers have a say in aligning the curriculum, there is a feeling that the administration that designed the existing curriculum have abandoned teachers and their concerns. There were expressed sentiments that the administration was not doing their job, for they delegated teachers to enact the alignment, but did not assert a collaborative role.

Because of on-going concerns expressed by my colleagues about changes, along with the manner in which mandated standards have been pushed more pervasively in Oak Valley than the previous year, I had an expectation that Mr. Lehrer might express

frustration with mandates and testing. However, during our meetings after school, Mr. Lehrer never mentioned standards or Grade Level Content Expectations as an on going concern, nor was he fearful about teaching individual skills. When asked about them directly, he expressed that he was meeting them, but in meaningful contexts. To illustrate during an excerpt in a formal interview, he expressed:

> "You know, I am certainly meeting them. I do want to meet the standards. You now have national standards, state standards, and school districts tap into that. And they have so many in the curriculum now per grade, and are broken down perhaps to curriculum, let's put it that way. To meet the standards you have curriculum that helps you meet the standards. And so, I think our curriculum is so full, that you just have to be satisfied that you're meeting these broader standards, even though I can't necessarily plug in this piece of curriculum and then meet everything they want me to meet...I think standards are important, but I also think a lot of them are sort of, when you do a class in a way that says this one is done, that it's like a big umbrella, and those standards are under that, it's sort of like we said before about, when you have, just like, with the skills, if you're doing meaningful reading and writing on a regular basis, you know, and the kids know that's what you do in there. Not only are you going to encounter and use all of these skills, but by doing that, you're going to be reaching all of the standards that are, you know, it's just in line."

Many teachers have expressed concern that there are not appropriate curriculum materials and worksheets delegated appropriately for grammar and conventions. This is not a concern Mr. Lehrer pays attention to, because the workshop approach embodies grammar and conventions through written revision, in the context of topics that are relevant to the students and their experiences. Mr. Lehrer's existing enactment aligned very closely with the state's mandates. Much of what was mandated, therefore, fit into the realm of many of his transformative practices. He did not worry about isolating skills that were mandated, for he expressed that he implemented them within meaningful contexts, in the context of their reading and writing.

In spite of confidence that he was meeting mandates within the parameters of his practice, he also expressed mixed thoughts about standards and their sincerity in the following excerpt:

Mr. Lehrer: I think standards like, state of Michigan having standards for reading and writing, and for the reading association and NCTE, it's awesome. I believe we have to follow standards, it's something that keeps us focused on what we're trying to tie our instruction to do, and I know pretty regularly, if I'm like wait, where am I? I go back to things like that. But my problem is, NCLB and first of all, I won't get into that, but I think Federal testing, national testing, state testing, I mean we have national testing coming up, we have districts, and I think most districts like to do this to some degree, district testing, and then of course you have the kind tests that teachers give in their class, so test test test test, now they've been talking about the
possibility of teachers teaching the same grade in the same department giving the same test, you know about that, right? You've heard some things about that?

Mrs. Hill: No

Mr. Lehrer: That's a possibility, you know, where is the autonomy, and the respect for my professionalism, and my ability to do this job as I would do it? I think to give me a good framework with curriculum and standards, oh yes, you know. But let me with what I know with my training, you know, tap into that and say ok, here's how we're going to accomplish it. Instead of saying if I have to give the same test that Ms. Kelly does, you know, quarter by quarter along the way to see that our students, know, how did they do,
and this prepares you for that standardized test.

Hence, in spite of benefits that provided a framework of what he should be doing, he questioned the sincerity of mandates, and viewed them as compromising his autonomy as a professional. He also questioned the nature of accountability, for he noted a mismatch with perceived writing scores and what defined quality writing and development over time, in the following excerpt:

"In the educational community we're so bent on, and know this a word you're supposed to say with a smile and you're supposed to say it's all good, and I understand why. Everything has to be held accountable. But when I say accountable, I'm not against accountability, I think it's not possible to the degree they're saying. I think what it means in a sense, if you take some of the letters out of that word, C O U N T, they want everything to be a number, they don't

want to talk about qualitative assessment, they want, and then they pretend they do because they say we're gonna have the kids write, but I think in my classes there are not a whole lot of tests and stuff, but we do things by writing, and I think we want to narrow everything down to a number in the end and say see? They were at 6 and now they're at 9, that's the proof that something good has happened. It's like today when I was talking about the writer's notebook. I think that if they do it with sincerity and with care, and each day, for at least a ½ page, they take something out of their mind, out of their heart, out of their observation, their awareness, their memory, whatever, and write about it. And then close the thing and do it the next day and close it and do it the next day, or even if it's an assortment of things that come to them throughout the day, by the time you do that 180 days of the school year, in other words something like 90 to 100 pages of that journal is full of your consciousness and so forth, well no one's going to say what's the, that's an informal way of moving through your language development, right? Someone might say that's trash because I can't turn it into a number that shows me."

This excerpt reveals that Mr. Lehrer focused more on supporting students of varying ability to become thoughtful, comfortable writers. Their on-going development and documented improvement in a journal meant more to him than on a number score.

In addition, the dilemmas of practice he paid attention to surrounded the students themselves, situated in his everyday interactions with them. He expressed on-going concern about being able to effectively teach each individual student, due to the manner in which increased class sizes, heterogeneous learning abilities, and growing unsettled behavior among a significant number of students challenged his ability to teach everyone. He felt often times that he was shortchanging his students because of class size and not having enough time to address student needs individually. During a formal interview, he expressed:

> " If you want no child left behind, give us the kind of funding that lets me have the time I need to process and edit their writing in a timely way and give it back and spend the one on one, if want no child left behind, then why are my classes, why did I have 89 students in 1989 and now I have 138? It's only 16

years later. How can I have 60 per cent more students?"

He also paid attention to the wide range of skill levels, based on the following excerpt:

> "So, I mean, that's one of the challenges. Skill levels, I believe that's getting wider every year. The wider the range gets, the harder the task, because if you have people, maybe it used to be 5th, but now it's a 3rd grade level. That's a challenge. I think their behavior is not where it should be, what's appropriate."

Mr. Lehrer admitted to having a student who would criticize him for reading at a pace that was too slow:

> Mr. Lehrer: I have a girl in my 7th hour, who I think is wonderful, not 7th hour, 2nd hour, but she does every thing 5 times the speed of everyone else, so this girl, she has been pretty straight with me about the way we're reading Charlotte Doyle, and how slow we are going, so I said ok, you have to understand that you're the sort of person who would read the book three nights, and she corrected me and said she would have read it in a night (laughter). And she's right. But that would be actually be impossible for many of these kids. We're just talking the speed of it, let alone, they couldn't do that speedwise and they couldn't sustain for how many hours it would take them, and by the way that's 3 hours for her,
> Mrs. Hill: it's a complicated plot line
> Mr. Lehrer: you know, but she's pretty tough on me, she just thinks it's absolutely horrible to do this.

Essentially, students who read at a faster pace created as many dilemmas as students who read at a slower pace, and this became an on-going matter that he negotiated. He never talked about their standardized test scores. Rather, he pondered about his students who were highly capable of fulfilling their potential, yet made choices not to, by arriving unprepared and not completing assignments. Student responsibility was a great concern, because for many students, inconsistent responsibility and motivation led to impeded achievement that did not reflect their ability. In fact, there were moments when Mr. Lehrer admitted uncertainty about

making necessary adjustments to manage his balanced approach, given the demands and overall student lack of motivation:

> "But I still don't know the answer. In many ways I just think that what we learned, you know it's one of those things, I've made a lot of changes in the last five years, and it's not always that I want to be more idealistic, sometimes with this class is, what adjustments does one make with a class that tends to be unprepared, tends to have behavior problems, but has so much to offer to one another, to help one another, the kids they are unprepared and so forth, but they have a lot to offer."

Hence, dilemma management and pedagogical modification of daily implementation of meaningful progressive pedagogy was something he paid attention to. He wanted to sustain practices because he knew his students had a lot to offer.

Exerting high expectations was a concern, something he paid a lot of attention to, particularly because he provided students with numerous opportunities—beyond what he should have allowed—to turn assignments in. In addition to numerous observed collection attempts, to be cited later in this chapter, particularly salient was a parent who confronted him because of a low achieving grade:

> "Yeah, and I had a student several years ago whose mother just lit into me because of how poor her son was doing. She said if I did my job the way you are I would be fired! I listened to her for about 5 minutes without saying a word, then I said to her, may I ask you, what is your job? And I had been trying to get work from him for so long. She said she was an X Ray technician. And first of all let me say how important that is. Thank goodness you do your job well, the way you impact people's lives. For them to get that kind of information, what you do is so important. I said let me just draw a distinction. If you get everything set up and do your job well, let's say you push the button and it doesn't work. Someone is going to service the machine and get it to work when you push the button, right? But in this job and we're talking about your son and my ability to get him to succeed, you know the machine doesn't have a will, but your son and every student has a will that they're going to assert."

Ultimately, in an era of standards based reform, dilemmas Mr. Lehrer paid attention to were manifest in determining the most effective manner of teaching all of

his students. On-going concerns aligned with declining resources that resulted in increased class size. This made it difficult to teach to students' heterogeneous learning abilities, and problematic student responsibility.

*Adjustments for Standardized and District Mandated Testing*

The MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program) test and a district writing assessment were mandated during the course of the study. The assessments posed scheduling constraints that required adjustments. Mr. Lehrer negotiated constraints by balancing test preparation and a balanced literacy approach.

Before the enactment of daily instructional activity, Mr. Lehrer provided test taking strategies that were relevant to the component they were going to take on the following day. For the required reading selections, for example, Mr. Lehrer informed about the nature of the test. Students would be reading two cross text selections. The recommended strategies included bringing a highlighter, if they were accustomed to using one, and to look over the selection, paying attention to the content. Moreover, students were encouraged to utilize good reading practices by reading well, and to read at a regular pace because it was untimed. At the same time, they were reminded to not slow down their pace. Each question was worth a lot because there were only a few, so they needed to read questions carefully, and to go back into the text to find and check answers.

The MEAP test was mandated during the onset of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* instruction. This led to class time that was reduced to 35 minutes, posing constraints for enacting the components of a balanced program in class. To compensate for the reduction and for the text's difficulty, Mr. Lehrer introduced the novel slowly. This was enacted with the aforementioned read alouds to establish a

foundation to better facilitate an understanding of the text's complex nature. Moreover, read alouds were balanced with teacher-led discourse and the readings during the two week time span were assigned at a slower pace. Twenty minutes of self selected reading that was typically assigned nightly became optional during the testing window.

The writing component during this time was enacted in the manner that students received drafts they had written, with Mr. Lehrer's feedback for revising and editing. Therefore, students were responsible for preparing an errorless draft. On a nightly basis, the requirement to write at least a half page in their writer's notebooks became optional.

Increased reading responsibilities, written responses based on *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and peer-led groups were implemented after the testing window ended. Therefore, the slow, in-depth implementation of Charlotte Doyle during mandated testing presented an opportunity to establish a foundation for peer-led discussion groups and the construction of in-depth thinking.

By early May, the mandated district writing assessment became problematic when teachers received late notice of its implementation. Late notification and directives were provided on a Friday, and implementation was to occur the following Tuesday and Thursday. Problematic was interference with existing scheduling, and the late notice, making it difficult to plan and prepare students. This led to an immediate, exerted effort to modify the reading plan, and to devote a short amount of time to preparing students for the assessment.

The test format was to occur over two class periods. During each period, students have a choice of topics. Common protocol in grade 7 is to write an essay in accordance with the topic. The topics are impromptu, meaning that the topic is given at

the onset of testing time, and the final product did not need to be fully edited. Teachers are familiar with directives to write in the essay format, and for students to choose topics designated for their grade level, or from one grade level beyond the students' level. In order to prepare, students were directed to take out their essay format sheets, which had been utilized earlier in the school year. Students were at least familiar with this genre of writing, because it was assessed during the MEAP test earlier in the school year. They were advised the day before test day that they were expected to grab a sheet of paper and to bring a pencil to write with. The written impromptu topic would be provided at the beginning of class. Mr. Lehrer informed explicitly that prewriting should take approximately 5 to 10 minutes, drafting should take 25 minutes, revising and editing should take 5 minutes, and proofreading 5-10 minutes. The assessment was in-class, meaning that they could not write beyond the class, out of fairness that all students in the district would be writing for the same length of time.

Students were presented with one of last year's topics, "My pet peeves." Everyone has them, and he clarified what a pet peeve was. He informed that that was the extent of the help he could provide for the assessment. They were asked to pre write by brainstorming, webbing, and letting whatever came to mind on the printed page.

Upon completion of brainstorming ideas, Mr. Lehrer informed about guidelines, which included skipping lines, using a ^ to insert words, not to turn in a perfect draft, and no aid from dictionaries. Impromptu meant that they would not receive topics until testing day. The nature of the essay espoused using the style of explanatory language. This was an essay, not a story. Because they were required to write in accordance with a thesis, they needed to explain their topic, and to make the purpose clear. In

accordance with the guidelines for essay writing espoused by the MEAP test, Mr. Lehrer told students that they needed to write the basic essay structure.

He also shared the highpoints of the scoring rubric, graded on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest, 1 the lowest. Scoring a 1, which was very unlikely, indicated that the writing was difficult to understand. A 2 indicated numerous errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation. This means in every sentences. Mr. Lehrer expressed to students that he doubted anyone would score a 1 or a 2. Scoring a 3 was considered marginally competent, but not the skills of a 4, which encompassed competence, sentence structure, vocabulary, awareness of paragraphing and organization. Essentially, one knows how to write in paragraphs. 5 was highly competent, with sentence structure, vocabulary, thinking and interpreting. A 6 and 7 embedded degrees of sustained use of conventions, sentence structure, and use of vocabulary.

Students were told that they did not need to write a 5 paragraph essay. They were told that they should know how to follow their thesis by body paragraphs. Since everyone at this point had the opportunity to freewrite, he prompted them to determine how they would follow up. When he prompted them to figure out a possible thesis, Kiki mentioned that there were three pet peeves in her family. As a thesis, Mr. Lehrer suggested, my three pet peeves are _____, _____, and _____. He reiterated that each body paragraph would be aligned with the order from the thesis, where they would provide details and explanations. The final paragraph would be a concluding paragraph.

The intended test was the following day, but there was a great deal of confusion about the assessment's implementation. The writing test was temporarily canceled as scheduled because teachers expressed uncertainty about test directives. Instead of

testing on the planned Tuesday and Thursday, the testing window was delayed to Wednesday and Thursday. They were notified at the last minute, meaning that planning was uncertain.

I attended the meeting with teachers, raters of the test, and administrators that addressed the delay and teacher concerns. The major concern was whether or not students should write in the essay format, as Mr. Lehrer thoroughly explicated. Confusion and dismay, therefore ensued when teachers, who worked hard to prepare students for essay writing, learned from the rater in attendance that the narrative writing approach scored higher during MEAP testing. Ironically , administrators confirmed that the expectation was to write in the essay format. This was grounded in the fact that they look for 6 traits of writing, which posits conventions, fluency, ideas, sophisticated word choices, voice, and grammar. Also of concern was the nature of topic selection. In previous years, students have been able to select topics above their grade level, which was eliminated this year. This posed a concern, due to the nature of topics, in which some were deemed appropriate for narrative or essay writing. Teachers were told that they could include the above grade level topics, and to encourage essay writing, even if narrative was more conducive to a higher score. When the meeting was adjourned, there was confusion as to when and how testing would begin. Testing was delayed one day, and students in Mr. Lehrer's classes wrote in the essay format.

Once testing was over, Mr. Lehrer acknowledged with the class that the writing assessment raised a lot of scheduling changes. Things that should have occurred as planned did not happen, and when he thought things would return to normal they did

not. He apologized that students were fulfilling reading requirements, without the support he ordinarily would have been able to give them.

The matter of interrupting the nature of on-going instruction led Mr. Lehrer to be improvisational and modify the nature of discourse during the text set. Hence, rather than prompting specific topics to write and bring to the group, he encouraged students to enact the freewrite and to bring two salient ideas to discuss openly with their groups, which was described in Chapter 3.

*Accommodating a Student from Detroit who began Mid Year*

Taye, an African American male enrolled in Mr. Lehrer's class after the first week of March. Mr. Lehrer mentioned that he received new students from Detroit during previous weeks—one in his second hour class and the other in his fourth hour class. He had not anticipated a new student in his sixth hour class, until he received an email from Taye's counselor that morning. Mr. Lehrer sincerely wondered if the counselors were accounting for numbers with the other 7$^{th}$ grade English teacher, because he was left with a feeling that he was the only one getting all of the new students.

An immediate concern for Mr. Lehrer was the overall welcome the class had given Taye, illustrated in the following fieldnotes:

Mr. Lehrer addressed the class and welcomed Taye, while helping him adjust to the new class. However, Taye was welcomed with the cacophony of tapping, talking, and a few students who called out, asking during an inappropriate time, about his previous school. Mr. Lehrer brought the class to explicit order, making it clear that he should not have to. He told them that he did not sense that they were being welcoming and sincere, which is expected when a new student arrives.

Once class was situated and students were in their discussion groups, Mr. Lehrer took Taye aside and asked him about the most recent book he read. When Taye replied that he read *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis (1999), Mr. Lehrer asked him to tell about it, since he read it also. He was glad that Taye was able to recall important events in the novel, and invited him to read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963,* also by Curtis(1996).

As for *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle,* Mr. Lehrer compromised and assigned it to Taye as a self selected reading book, from this point until June. This was necessary because Taye arrived at the completion of the novel, but every 7th grader must read it.

Mr. Lehrer made similar arrangements with his two other transfer students, and expressed that they also exhibited competency to do well. He noted one student from another period who arrived when the class had already read to the twelfth chapter in Charlotte Doyle. To get him caught up, Mr. Lehrer explained in the following excerpt:

> "We were on chp. 12, and I asked him to, he can see obviously each day, we're on chapter 17 but he's on chapter 5. So what I told him today is that kids are typically the kids have been reading a chapter a night. And I told him that I wanted him to make some ground on that so that however many chapters ahead would start to diminish. Yet, he's on 5 they're on 17 that's still 12 apart. So I was telling him I don't want you to be doing something that is not possible for you, but I'm kind of asking you to sort of double up, where if they're reading a chapter, you can read 2 and if possible, maybe some nights even 3, so that you can start to close the gap because I'd really like you, I was telling him, to take part in some of our discussions so I talked to him individually about some of the things he's reading, and talked to him about some of the things we talked about in our groups, today, when the group was going on 4th hour"

In addition, he assumed competency for the student:

"...so the student I got last week is from Detroit Public Schools and he seems like a very nice boy, is responsive to things I ask him to do, in terms of getting what he needs, which is the thing because I've had students come before and I say you need a couple of these composition notebooks, and try to get them to know what is this writer's notebook, the reader response journal, he came in the next day with them. And I told him what to do with his writer's notebook and he's been doing that."

In spite of assuming competency, another concern was Mr. Lehrer's on-going process from August, of preparing children to think and write critically, and to interpret literature thoughtfully. Students arriving so late in the year miss these opportunities:

Mr. Lehrer: It seems like maybe it would be easy to get someone into what we're doing sort of coming in January, ok you need a book, we're reading Charlotte Doyle, but it isn't so easy because they have missed so many of the structures of what we do when we are reading literature, reading literature closely, responding to it in a journal and in whole class and small group discussion, you know, so many of the things that we have done earlier in the year, setting up, starting the year with Nightjohn, part of the reason I do that over and over again, it doesn't have to be Nightjohn, although I do think that there are a lot of things I like from the start, but it's really about having shared experiences with literature, having, showing, modeling some of the ways that we think about literature, modeling response, starting to make distinctions between what's in the text and what we're bringing to the text, you know taking from the text and starting to interpret and, you know, they miss, and you know, and I guess what's tricky about that or deceiving with some classes you look at what you've done and you say, we've done this, this, and this, because I've had grades for these tests in my gradebook. Well, all of the kinds of structures and modeling of things that we do when we read literature, that's not the sort of thing I give them a handout and memorize terms. We learn them together in that way, over a period of time, we learn it through the experience of doing that and for someone to walk in, it's oh boy.

Mrs. Hill: Where do I begin?

Mr. Lehrer: Where do I begin and how do I find the time to sit down and start to, and would it even come across if I just gave the shortened version that we've done in the first five months of the school year?

Mr. Lehrer's treatment of new students suggests that he assumes competence, not a deficit. The fact that I observed Taye reading *The True Confessions of Charlotte*

*Doyle* during designated reading time in June suggests that Mr. Lehrer explicitly took the time to follow through with Taye, to ensure that he was experiencing the book. Given the magnitude of responsibilities in the class, following through with this was important. At the same time, enrolling mid year made it difficult for Mr. Lehrer to effectively make up for months of foundational lost time.

*Increased Class Size, Unsettled behavior and impact on instructional practices*

Having average class sizes of 28 students across 5 sections meant that Mr Lehrer's total class load was 138 students. This was a stark increase from previous years, noted during an interview:

Mrs. Hill: Can you describe the changes this year and the problems of practice you're experiencing?
Mr. Lehrer: Well, the classes are large. These are the largest classes I've ever had.
Mrs. Hill: In your whole career
Mr. Lehrer: Yeah, 18 years, and so, I told you that the finances in the district were such that they had enough money to do this and we had a reading lab, a skills lab that classes used to rotate through, so English teachers had four classes and then one stint in the reading lab, so I would have 4 classes, then the reading lab. When I was in the reading lab, other classes would be rotating through. Now that means that I'd have no papers to check, no prep to do, because it was really programs kids would go through, go to the next level because, you know it was set up for them already
Mrs. Hill: And it would support the English class?
Mr. Lehrer: Yes, and it was skills-based. But the thing about it that I'm saying is that so I had 4 classes times whatever, so I would have, in one year, I think it was 1988 or 1989, I had something like, as a matter of fact, 89 or 90 students. That's how many I had. It was something like 22 times 4.

Essentially, Mr. Lehrer revealed changes over time that resonated with Proposal A mandates and declining resources. Having fewer students during the late 1980s was more conducive to meeting individual students' needs.

A precipitous increase of students over the years meant that Mr. Lehrer spent significant amounts of time grading writer's notebooks, reader response journals, and essays. Many teachers at the middle school level, for the sake of time constraints, might opt for assigning tasks that require less time intensive grading. Informal conversations with other teachers expressed that he was diligent about grading substantial amounts of work, claiming they could never manage grading of that magnitude. However, modifying the assignments to lessen the grading would mean compromising a balanced literacy approach. Hence, increased class sizes and precipitous increase of grading did not lead to a lighter workload for students.

From the onset of the study, Mr. Lehrer expressed deep concern about students who expressed unsettled behavior. Individually, he claimed that each of his students was a delightful person. Collectively, however, as a group of 29, they were a challenge to manage.

Unsettled behavior occurred often during the beginning of class and during transition times, embedded in social participation task structures. Upon student arrival and immediately before the beginning of class, the expectation was that they would write their homework assignments in their planners. This was often a disruptive time because students would visit each other, and lose sight of jotting down their homework. Often, students would appropriate voices that were louder than necessary. During this inopportune time, Phoebe, aspiring to be the center of attention would interrupt, almost daily, by asking three irrelevant questions, which included asking Mr. Lehrer how he was doing, whether she was getting an assignment back, what they were doing in class, and so on. Kiki would also talk at random. On one specific occasion in late May she

asked the student sitting next to her why her face was so red and asked another student why they wore their outfit. Compounding loud voices, tapping, drumming, slouching, and so on by a disproportionate fraction of 29 students resulted in a difficult beginning. Students received explicit directives to fill in planners, and to immediately get started. Although many students would oblige, they were often overshadowed by those who did not. Mr. Lehrer expressed concern in the following excerpt by saying:

> "I don't know if it's the combination of kids, or whatever, but you've seen them. There are kids in there that are, there's just an assortment of things, many students, that creates a problem. First of all, it shouldn't be a problem. You say, well what am I gonna do. Am I gonna pass out materials everyday on their way in? Well, that's ridiculous. They're 13."

Ultimately, Mr. Lehrer was concerned about social participation task structures that he personally believed grade 7 students should have been able to enact. Spending disproportionate amounts of time managing matters of behavior and responsibility was problematic.

In addition, another complication would emerge and compound when students would arrive late and/or without needed materials and assignments. To manage the arriving late dilemma, Mr. Lehrer would allow students to get needed materials that were forgotten, but he informed that he would enter them in late for attendance. The new attendance rule at Barrington delegated that 3 late arrivals would result with a detention. He explicated the detention rule with the need to arrive to class on time and with needed materials.

In spite of making this explicit, there were at least two to three students on a regular basis who were consistently unprepared and late, and consequently faced detentions. Ultimately, on-going reminders to students interfered with beginning class

time as intended. As explicit as directives and consequences were with expectations, enough students did not consistently follow through, in a manner that was expected of them. The rough class beginnings often spiraled into the remaining class time, resulting in on-going improvisation to make up for lost time.

It was common to see students walking in the hall to their lockers as I was arriving. They were retrieving needed materials after arriving to class on time, but unprepared. Kiki and Monet, among others, would do this repeatedly. As it became more problematic, Mr. Lehrer began allowing students to retrieve what was needed, but would make them late if they did not arrive on time. During one occasion in February, Monet misunderstood the directive and assumed she would not be marked late. She became angry and defensive with Mr. Lehrer, claiming she didn't know, and class had not started anyway. Mr. Lehrer remained firm to expectations and told her clearly that she would need to come to class on time, with needed materials.

Transition times embedded in social participation task structures include the act of taking out a sheet of paper, giving assignments back, beginning a class discussion, transitioning into peer-led groups, and so on. Students were consistently told to respond better and more quickly and quietly to what was expected and asked. On one occasion in early February that is reflective of several, for example, Mr. Lehrer returned essay drafts with feedback to students, so that they could engage in the workshop approach. He explicated the need for students to take the time to look closely at feedback before asking him or peers questions for improvement. Several hands were raised, suggesting the need for individual help. Individual help, however, became problematic for those who could not be helped immediately. Scanning around the room, it was apparent that

about half of the students were not fully transitioning well from receiving the paper, to looking carefully at the comments that were given. Many regarded this wait time for assistance, which was brief, as an invitation to disregard the directive to carefully read their draft. A few students made a horn or tube out of their drafts, and never looked at the feedback.

At the same time, however, there were students who were taking the time to read their drafts, as expected, even when Mr. Lehrer was not in their presence. In spite of the unsettled behavior from the remainder of the class, there were a few that clearly understood what was asked. Monet and Phoebe shared their drafts with neighbors, while Kiki and a few others received individual help upon reading comments, having their hand raised, and waiting patiently. The students who were on task illuminated what the entire class should have been doing, but illuminated an unresolvable dilemma. The directives were clearly stated, so the on-going dilemma embedded when to reiterate them. Reminding off task students takes away from those that are on task. What resonates is whether or not to accommodate students or to back away and allow them to accommodate and assume responsibility. On other occasions, I observed students who would eventually note those students following directives and comply without being reminded. In this instance, however, approximately half of the students were off task and did not make necessary changes to remain on task.

For the duration of the revision time, Mr. Lehrer focused his energy on the students on task, but upon completion of the delegated time, he immediately needed to improvise and direct students to remove everything from their desks, telling them that they required redirected attention to getting to a focused "there." Students were

directed to take their notes from the previous day and they took out their Charlotte Doyle books. They did settle, in alignment with frequent requests to be still and silent for their teacher-led discussion. But problematic to Mr. Lehrer was the manner in which he constantly was in a position to explicate for students behaviors they should know by grade 7, along with the time of year. Mr. Lehrer reflected in the following excerpt:

"They should be able to..it seems like a little thing in one regard, but when I have kids take out a sheet of loose leaf and other required materials, and all of a sudden everyone's looking around, and what should take 15 seconds takes 2 minutes, and totally unsettled, and you're trying to get them back."

Such concerns inspired him to modify pedagogical decisions to match the learners who confront the tasks. Hence, he negotiated between accommodating students and explicating directives or allowing them to assume responsibility. To illustrate, the next workshop occurred when students were writing poetry at the end of March. Mr. Lehrer raised the matter of conferring by writing it on the board, in capital letters. He asked students what this meant, and Jessie said that it was the same thing as a conference. When asked what that was, Jessie guessed that it might mean talking. Mr. Lehrer approved, and modeled what conferencing looks like. He walked to a back corner in the room and sat in one of the chairs, designated for conferencing. She was prompted to sit in a chair next to him, and he told everyone to look at what this looks like. During this time, everyone was told that it doesn't mean to just hand the poem to a partner and have them read it. A conference was intended for them to share the poem and talk about it. The author should walk in with a question, goals, or a concern. The author holds the draft, while the partner follows the directive. This process was intended to help the author put concerns into words, to listen closely and respond

naturally. Before students transitioned into writing and conference time, depending on how far they had gotten, students who agreed to conference were reminded to be quiet.

Many students were still drafting, but Phoebe and Jessie were conferencing in the corner, sharing Jessie's poem. Phoebe offered feedback, and Jessie was jotting down suggested ideas. As Mr. Lehrer requested, they read each other's drafts together.

Taye and Jack also conferenced, but I noticed that Taye's draft was the only one visible. I encouraged Jack to bring his draft, too. Taye read Jack's poem aloud, and Jared also joined in. Jared commented on word choices, and believed that the word bee was used too much. Jack defended that the word bee was used through the seasons, to reflect the different seasons throughout the year. I encouraged Jack to prove to Jared that his word choices worked for the poem. Taye noted that this was about "expression through the seasons," and worked well for the poem, which read:

> "Comin home from school/Bored out of my mind as/A bee in winter/I get a snack and go to my room/Done with my homework and I am joyful as a bee in spring /I get on the computer/To play some games, then/Pops up an instant message."

For students who opted to work alone or seek feedback from Mr. Lehrer, a noticeable pattern was the manner in which he would approach students randomly to ask how they were doing and if they needed any feedback. This aligns with Atwell (2002), as a management system that prevents students from approaching the teacher.

Embedded in this process was a manner of teaching students of heterogeneous learning abilities, for Mr. Lehrer would provide more individual help to students who needed it. Students who required more help were typically in the pre writing and drafting phase. They required more time to pre-write and draft. Students who required

help from a peer through conferring typically were able to generate ideas and write more expediently. There were also students in the middle, who continued to draft without assistance, but were not quite ready to confer. All in all, allowing work times that facilitated simultaneous teacher assistance, working alone or with a peer, were processes conducive to teaching students with heterogeneous learning abilities.

Also, based on Atwell's (2002) management system, students were more likely to be on task because they did not know when and where Mr. Lehrer would approach them. Some of the needier students in a class of 29 would approach anyway, but Mr. Lehrer suggested that it was an effective management system.

Ultimately, explicit modeling of conferring was conducive to the class working more effectively. This example reifies the nature of modeling that is required by the class. Certainly, Mr. Lehrer wouldn't model conferring during each occasion. Therefore, this example espouses the need for teachers to revisit directives if the occasion calls for it. This is particularly true if students exhibit a deviation of what is expected, but have enacted expectations appropriately on other occasions. What resonates is the on-going decision making that is required to sustain progressive pedagogy. Teachers must decide when to model or step in, and when to step back. On some occasions, students might follow the example of those on task, which does not require teacher intervention. Other occasions, such as the initial workshop described, call for making necessary changes and explicit modeling to clarify directives for students.

This decision making process is similar to the fishbowl model that is embedded in the book club curricular framework. It calls for modeling of a book club discussion

among select students, while the remaining class members look on. In this manner, all class members have a model of what the discussion looks like before they gather in their own groups. On occasions when the book club discussions are not occurring as intended, Raphael (1995, 2001) recommends revisiting the fishbowl process, to explicate student expectations.

Although data suggests numerous instances of optimal teacher-led discourse, there were also occasions when Mr. Lehrer needed to address student behavior. The beginning of the *Charlotte Doyle* read alouds required on-going reminders to focus on the words embedded in the complex language on the page. Given the magnitude of discourse that emerged among most students, the on-going attention to complex language was a necessary component to establish the needed foundation. However, unsettled behavior needed to be addressed, along with reiterating the importance of understanding the complicated wording.

In early February, unsettled behavior occurred initially as a recognizable number of students appeared distracted from the words on the page. They were watching Mr. Lehrer read aloud, and two had their heads down, and many others were slouching. For a long duration, Jack looked straight ahead in a daze, and Monet's head transitioned from being down, then up. Mr. Lehrer reminded them to keep their eyes on the words, noting that some are too relaxed with their head down. Mr. Lehrer's on-going directive to follow the complexity, along with devising discourse that engaged most students, eventually transformed the level of student interest, as indicated from the aforementioned discourse patterns in Chapter 3.

Off task behaviors were also noticeable during teacher-led discourse when numerous students were contributing to the preface discussion about *Charlotte Doyle.* For example, Monet's head was noticeably down for a majority of the time. She eventually transitioned in and out of having her head down, but she appeared lethargic, and not fully interested in the activity.

One day in mid March, as Mr. Lehrer was collecting reader response journals, Julie and two other students who did not consent to the study did not turn them in. Mr. Lehrer urged them to turn them in the next day. As a response to that, coupled with a few students each collection time that did not have their work, Jared commented that this was the weirdest class. This prompted Mr.Lehrer to address this matter and improvise, because he had been grappling about an optimal time to bring matters of behavior more clearly to their attention. Mr. Lehrer wanted to know what Jared meant by this comment. In Jared's estimation, Mr. Lehrer wanted to know if these behaviors could be noted in other classes, too. Jared said they were, but Mr. Lehrer took Jared's statement personally and really wanted to know what Jared meant by the "weirdest class," and drew attention to this notion.

Ironically, Mr. Lehrer and I discussed the behaviors he was struggling with the day before, in a manner that resonated with on-the-spot analysis of enacted practice and determining modifications to manage dilemmas. Mr. Lehrer made a list of concerns on a sheet of paper that he shared with me, and was determining an optimal time to share it with the class. Therefore, Jared's timing provided a perfect moment to discuss concerns, and Mr. Lehrer decided to share the list with the class, which comprised of: tapping, drumming, sprawling, no materials, zoned out, slouching, talking, shouting,

doing other work, playing with things, making noises. He informed that certainly not everyone is responsible for these behaviors, but they were critical enough to address.

The expressions on a few faces spelled amusement, and Mr. Lehrer commented on that, noting that there might be comic relief, similar to television. But students needed to understand that these matters were a reality they needed to deal with. Students began to listen more intently, for there was a need to acknowledge the regularity of behaviors. Mr. Lehrer suggested that it affected him, but more importantly, it affected them. This list was serious enough to mention, and he asserted that they needed to change behaviors that were a habit. He noted that they would more than likely have to revisit these matters, and his intonation suggested that this was something worthy of on-going consideration and attention.

As this list was being devised on the previous day, we discussed the matter of balancing the needs of the group and the individual. Such behaviors compromised the fabric of classroom practices, particularly teacher and peer-led discursive components. Essentially, regardless of what gets enacted in a constructivist classroom, there is room for students who reject practices and demonstrate patterns of resistant behaviors. There was an added notion that many teachers do not sustain on-going discussion with their students and do not sustain discussion groups for that very reason. But the downside is that familiar teacher-led discourse patterns that posit the correct , anticipated response has its disadvantages for students who benefit from meaningful interaction.

On days following the list of problematic behaviors, it became important to determine and pay attention to its impact on student responses to concerns he expressed. In addition, it became important to distinguish between students who were the root of

the problem, and students who followed directives. Certainly not all students exhibited unsettled behaviors. However, so many students were unsettled during different times, that students that followed directives could easily be overlooked.

In mid May, by the time students received the "big questions" handout to explore prejudice and triumph of good over evil, I made a concerted observation to identify who began working effectively and immediately. Because on task behaviors had been explicitly and recently discussed with students, it was important to determine students' responses to directives that were clearly stated. More students began working immediately: Jennifer, Phoebe, Pippen, Abe, Taye, Violet, Bert, Marissa, Jack, Dave, Jessie, and Mickey. They worked as if no distractions were interfering with their task at hand. Everyone else casually sustained a conversation, and Mr. Lehrer opted not to draw attention to them. About three minutes had passed before everyone caught on to the fact that this time was intended for work time.

Therefore, his decision to sustain student responsibility and require student accommodation was an effective method to sustain student behavior, and student behavior sustained social participation task structures.

Within a week, after the district writing test was taken, it became necessary for students to decide, in collaboration with Mr. Lehrer, to select the better draft for submission. He ultimately made the final decision, but usually he was in agreement with the students' choice. Students were directed to reread their drafts quietly, and place the better draft on top of the draft they did not want to submit. In this manner, they would be able to appropriate ownership over their writing and selection.

Upon paying attention to students who did as expected, there were numerous students who were enacting behavior intended by Mr. Lehrer, illustrated in the following integrated fieldnotes:

Jennifer, Julie, Jack, Melissa, Violet, Jessie, Phoebe, and Marissa. However, there were numerous students who were visibly exhibiting signs of resistance: Monet, Kiki and Taye were staring straight ahead, not reading their drafts. Other students were simply talking to each other. Kiki and Taye were physically sparring with each other, and every time Mr. Lehrer's back was turned, they were motioning to hit each other.

Eventually, the group cooperatively came together for the teacher-led discourse about "Ana's" chapter, but the duration of interrupted time from numerous students suggests that an on-going problem of practice was manifest in determining when it is appropriate to intervene and accommodate for student behavior, or to require student responsibility.

*Maintaining High Expectations When Students are not Responsive to Deadlines and Responsibilities*

There were numerous occasions throughout the study when students turned assignments in late or not at all. Additionally, there were students who did not respond to feedback with revised drafts, and students who did not fulfill their reading requirement. Mr. Lehrer consistently managed and reminded students of student responsibilities, often taking more initiative than many of the students. A source of frustration was the manner in which matters of responsibility resulted in achievement outcomes that did match student potential.

Since the first day of school, self selected and assigned reading books, writer's notebooks and reader response journals were a daily requirement. In spite of that expectation, there were several times when students would forget them.

A daily requirement was to bring self selected reading books, whether or not they would read them in class. On occasion, particularly on reading days, Mr. Lehrer would keep track of titles students were reading and note who was bringing books. He would do this by standing in the hallway before class and checking them off as they arrived. There was one instance when eight students forgot their books. This was problematic because it meant that students would need to go to the bookshelf and find a book, for not having what was required. Searching for a book interfered with the time provided, but also was a disruption to everyone else. Mr. Lehrer told them that not having their book in hand created the possibility that they had not fulfilled their nightly reading requirements. This being the case, he suggested to students if they had not been reading all along, to read for at least an hour as opposed to assigned 20 minutes in order to keep up. On the aforementioned reading day outside in June, it is important to note that the days preceding that were filled with reminders for each student to bring their book. Students were aware that if one person forgot to bring their book, no one would be going outside. This provided an incentive for them to remember to bring them, and they were rewarded by going when everyone brought them.

Mr. Lehrer regularly collected writer's notebooks. During one collection day in mid March, Mr. Lehrer could not help but mention the light load of submitted writer's notebooks. One student pleaded to go to her locker to get it. Mr. Lehrer responded by informing that bringing the notebook is a provision since day one. In addition, rather than disrupt the class, they could turn them in after class, in order to be on time. They would not receive a late pass to their next class. Any time after school, in addition to the next day would be considered late. Writer's notebook became a

source of contention for many reluctant students. On one occasion, Mr. Lehrer expressed disappointment that approximately nine people did not have their writer's notebooks. He regarded writer's notebook as a gift, and expressed that no one can say that it's too hard for them, as a ½ page daily requirement. He refused to back down, because it was in their power to do something about it. During an occasion in mid March, Kiki, who regularly turned in her writer's notebook late, asked in a disaffected tone the point of a writer's notebook. Mr. Lehrer kindly acknowledged that he has referred to and obliged by research, which suggests that if students write regularly about their own life, it is good for their writing. The act of putting words on the page is important, so grammar and spelling is not necessarily stressed. He further suggested that the 20 minute task is not that difficult, but is a matter of discipline.

Mr. Lehrer was consistent about expectations for late work. The overall grade would be marked down an entire grade for each day that it was late. On many occasions, for example, I would notice an A marked on a student's paper. However, it would be crossed out and marked with the earned grade, in alignment with the number of days it was late. A few students, regardless of this consequence, were repeat offenders. Turning assignments in is an expectation, and repeatedly turning in a piece of quality work late was a source of frustration for Mr. Lehrer.

During the poetry unit in mid March, there was an occasion when students were asked to take their lists of topics from the previous day. Students who had not completed a list of 10 items were required to finish the list at home. When Steve had no list, Mr. Lehrer wanted to know why he did not have it. Steve admitted that he had no paper yesterday, which was problematic. Mr. Lehrer checked his assignment

planner, and noticed that Steve had not written it out. As a result, Steve was urged to be more mindful of his responsibilities, and to catch up on his list.

Mr. Lehrer heavily stressed the notion of the errorless draft on formal assignments, and students were required to submit the draft with his comments with the revised, final version. On numerous occasions, students would attempt to turn in a final draft without the previous draft. Mr. Lehrer would comment during informal conversations that a few students would simply reprint a fresh draft without making any changes. Upon discovery that the original draft was located, aligning them side by side would reveal that no changes were made. With few exceptions under extenuating circumstances, Mr. Lehrer did not accept a final draft without a previous draft. He recalled that a few students would turn in draft after draft until it became errorless. Although many attempted to resist making revisions, Mr. Lehrer consistently expected that the errorless copy was necessary to their writing improvement.

On one occasion at the end of April, before final drafts of poems were due, Mr. Lehrer was explicit about expectations for students to indicate the draft number, to staple the final draft on the top, with preceding drafts in order. While this was being explained, Kiki rudely and impulsively announced that she would turn hers in without a previous fine. Mr. Lehrer took her aside for taking it upon herself to make her own arrangements for turning in drafts. She appeared disgusted, and provided no additional commentary.

Minutes after, Taye attempted to turn his poem in early, Mr. Lehrer noted that he had not included his previous draft, the poem was not double spaced, and it was not a

final revision. Because Mr. Lehrer explicitly informed the class about expectations prior to Taye's request, he was advised to turn the poem in by the due date.

Mr. Lehrer systematically showed the entire class his tracking sheet, so that they were aware of assignments he collected. On one occasion, he indicated to the class that more than 50 per cent of students did not turn in their reader response journals, letters, and self stamped addressed envelopes. Mr. Lehrer advised that students were given advanced notice, and suggested that many students must be simply saying that they would not turn in assignments. He added that they were making poor decisions about optimal work turned after the due date. He expressed being alarmed that students would accept a full marked down grade for turning in an assignment late, and that some would accept a failing grade after four days. During this entire time, Kiki exerted her silent protest by turning her back and folding her arms because of his correction of her behavior.

During the day when students were gathering in groups for the "Establishing a Foundation" discourse at the end of April, a significant underlying tension resonated when numerous students had not fulfilled obligations. For example, seven students forgot to bring their books, when Mr. Lehrer clearly stated that they would need to bring them. He compensated by loaning books, but reminded them firmly to bring the book every day. Along with that, reader response journals were due the previous day. Mr. Lehrer referred to his records to request them from the following students: Kiki, Abe, Kim, Jared, Monet, Julie, Marissa, Pippen, and Moe, but no one budged, to his dismay. Each student was given a firm reminder to turn them in the following day because they would now be two days late. Kiki, Stephanie, Jack, and Melissa did not

have final edits of their essays. Especially troubling for Mr. Lehrer was the manner in which he firmly reminded Kiki to bring these items. To add to the numerous students who exhibited problematic responsibility, Phoebe arrived to class 20 minutes late for the second day in a row because she was working on another assignment. Mr. Lehrer appeared disgusted, for she was just as late on the previous day for the same reason.

During pre writing time in preparation for the district writing assessment in early May, Mr. Lehrer did not miss an opportunity to collect required assignments. Reader response journals, essays, and letter to future self drafts were due.

Upon request of the letters, Monet, Pippen, and Moe were called upon, but they did not have them. Final poetry copies were requested, and Kiki, Dave, and Jared immediately turned them in. However, Pippen, Monet, and two others did not have them. When prewriting time was over, Mr. Lehrer advised that he would no longer take such measures to collect assignments. His concern was that too many students were not thinking as much about their individual work as he was. This was especially a concern, because he had 130 students across all of his classes. Assignments needed to be turned in, upon arrival.

Typically, teachers do not collect assignments during the last few days of school, and are certain to return all graded assignments to students. High school teachers are known for a no nonsense policy of simply awarding low grades for students who decide not to turn assignments in, without constant reminders or "hounding." In preparation for that, informal conversations with many middle school teachers over the years suggests similar treatment, in preparation for high school. However, Mr. Lehrer collected *Seedfolks* chapters as late as the last instructional school day. As final

collections were being made on the last instructional day of school, there were a few students who still did not have them. Because he collected drafts so late, he informed that he would not return them graded until school was officially over. He recommended that they may return for them in the fall, suggesting that many previous students have returned from high school to collect graded assignments. This suggests that Mr. Lehrer took the time to respect his students' work, while providing additional opportunities to submit final assignments.

Earlier that week, Mr. Lehrer expressed frustration when he held students accountable for jotting down remaining assignments in their planners. When he confirmed to see that students were actually writing their responsibilities, he drew attention to the fact that too many students needed to borrow pens. He noted that this indicated to him that they were not planning on writing their responsibilities down, and reminded that they needed to follow through in order to remember them. This led to Mr. Lehrer's recollection with the class during the last week of school, of some of his students last year who literally "checked out" during the last quarter when students decided not to do assignments. He informed that he did not want to be in the position of assigning low achieving grades and urged applicable students to at least turn in assignments for him, even if they did not care for themselves. Mr. Lehrer pondered the seriousness of his expectations, sustaining the tone of the class and the unresolvable manner of ensuring that students would be more responsible in the following excerpt:

> Mr. Lehrer: But the question is, what adjustments need to be made, how do you, do I do things earlier in the year, do I emphasize zero tolerance of unprepared? In terms of do I make it like I'm saying, that's a question, it's not really an answer, because if I do that, then do I risk that because there is an inviting feel. Do I risk setting a very different tone? Maybe not. Maybe I would just get people to realize, which I think they do, but to

acknowledge how serious I believe it is for them, so I think it's about the adjustments.

Mrs.Hill: They have amazing things to offer

Mr. Lehrer: The amazing thing is that it can come from the most unlikely sources. When I think of that class and I think of kids like Helena, I think great, but we can be talking about someone like Julie and in the course of this year there have been a couple of occasions where I called on her to say something but as she started to speak I thought, I looked at her, I mean, what instinct are we getting from all of us? She's very quiet, but there are times when I'd overhear her say something in her group and think, oh my gosh!

*Aptitude and Ability among Detroit Focal Students*

In spite of on-going reminders to turn in assignments, Kiki, Taye, and Monet made the decision to not turn in their *Seedfolks* chapters. Kiki additionally did not submit her reader response journal, and Kim did not submit her letter to future self. Not turning in important assignments resulted in achieving grades that were below their aptitude, and Mr. Lehrer found this problematic, especially because they were fully capable of doing the work. Moreover, I observed them during work in progress. There was advanced notice to suggest that they were given optimal time to complete tasks in and out of class. In spite of being reminded, and having nearly completed drafts in class, they simply made the choice not to turn in designated assignments, impeding on their final grade for the course. For purposes of confidentiality, their grades in the class may not be revealed.

Among students from Detroit in the lobby after school, Mr. Lehrer would additionally remind students to turn in assignments, illustrated in the following excerpt during a formal interview:

> "A lot of these kids are kids that I'll see, and I'll say, you know, have you done that homework. You seem to have a lot of time here, and I'm constantly trying to get that homework from him."

Houston's work (1988) attributes low performance of minority students in non urban schools to the fact that there has been little pressure on districts to address low performance. Gilbert and Gay (1985) suggest that non urban schools do not provide necessary conditions and attitudes to stimulate achievement. Although Houston (1988) calls for standardized testing achievement, low achievement in a core class warrants consideration and is relevant.

More recently, as No Child Left Behind Legislation calls for diminishing the achievement gap among minority students, there is heightened pressure to address low performance (Hilliard, et al., 2004). Mr. Lehrer, furthermore, represents teachers in a non urban setting who provides, as the data suggests, necessary conditions and attitudes for students to achieve, so the claims of Houston (1988) and Gilbert and Gay (1985) do not explain the underachievement of the Detroit focal students in this study. In spite of opportunities and high expectations exerted to Monet, Taye, Kiki, and Kim, all earned English grades were slightly or significantly below their aptitude and ability. Hilliard, et al., (2004) contends that the achievement gap is defined as a gap in performance, not ability, but in the context of pedagogy that is discordant with the child. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged that the grades of many of his students, including focal students, was below their ability. His frustration was that they performed well on assignments they completed. In addition, data reveals numerous examples of heightened ability during the enactment of reading, writing, and discursive practices. Hence, ability was not the root of the problem. Inexplicable and problematic was therefore not a matter of ability, or Mr. Lehrer's assumed deficit, but the decision of the students not to follow through and turn in assignments. It is important to note that this phenomenon was not limited to

Detroit focal students. A significant proportion of students in the class made the decision to not turn in assignments, impeding significantly or slightly on their overall achievement. Mr. Lehrer expressed the reality of turning in assignments, given expectations exerted by No Child Left Behind legislation:

> Mr. Lehrer: "And no matter how hard I've tried, I tried 50 different things with your son. Whatever, and yet I haven't been able to get him, yet you're blaming me, and it's his will not to do this work. What else can I say to him? He knows he's supposed to do his homework.
> Mrs. Hill: And he's not doing it
> Mr. Lehrer: and so it's connected to what we're talking about because no child left behind, well it's nice, but what about when you come into reality, say gosh I have to figure out ways(to get students to turn in assignments), it's just not reality.

Ladson-Billings (1995) acknowledges the urgency of teachers not permitting students to fail, and to exert high expectations. However, students must also assume responsibility, and ambiguity emanates as caring and committed teachers are forced to negotiate when to be accommodating and when to require student accommodation. Additional interpretations, surrounding Monet and Kiki's ultimate refusal to turn in their *Seedfolks* chapters will be addressed in Chapter 7.

*Summary*

In an era of high stakes testing, many teachers place the enactment of standards at the forefront of pedagogical decisions. Because Mr. Lehrer's transformative practices are aligned with mandated standards in meaningful contexts, he pays attention to the students directly, and is improvisational, in the act of accounting for unsettled behavior and students who choose not to turn in required assignments. In addition, maintaining a class of 29 students who possess heterogeneous learning abilities was a concern he paid attention to. Additional problems of practice embodied the negotiation

of imposed time constraints as a result of mandated testing and accommodating students who enrolled during the middle of the school year.

Addressing unsettled behavior required deciding when to accommodate student responsibility or when to accept student responsibility. On numerous occasions, data suggested the necessity to make explicit directives and to clarify and model practices that required revisiting. This became the case during conferring time, and during peer and teacher-led discourse. When dilemmas involved individual students, he addressed them appropriately. This was especially pertinent with Kiki. Although she demonstrated improvement on occasion, expectations needed to be revisited. These concerns became a matter of Lambert's (1987) notion of on-going dilemma management, that were often unresolvable.

Mr. Lehrer made numerous efforts to teach students with heterogeneous learning abilities. Efforts were embedded in daily, on-going practices. Whether it involved student reading requirements, the workshop approach, grouping students in peer-led groups or helping students individually, teaching all students was an on-going concern.

In spite of literacy practices that acknowledged students' differences (Tyack, 1974; Paley, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane and Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003, Delpit, 1995, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 2002) and facilitated optimal learning conditions, Mr. Lehrer made an on-going concerted effort to collect assignments from unmotivated students. This poses implications for students who resist their responsibilities in spite of high teacher expectations, for students who decided not to turn in assignments earned grades that did not match their ability.

Ultimately, unresolvable dilemmas (Lambert, 1987; Osborne, 1997) are posited in progressive pedagogy that is intended to facilitate optimal learning and achievement for students. Although this study and additional research suggests potential for heightened literacy acquisition when teachers utilize the culture of the home and students' linguistic differences as a foundation (Delpit, 1995, 2002; Gee, 1996; Smitherman, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2002), students must assume responsibility and become accountable for submitting their assignments.

## Chapter 6: "Mr. Lehrer, This is Foul"—Dilemmas of Teacher and Peer-led Discourse, Crisis and Connectedness

In chapters Chapters 3 and 4 I demonstrated the manner in which Mr. Lehrer transitioned from teacher-led discourse to peer-led discourse. He worked toward affirming and guiding students, and responded to their ambiguous queries. I documented instances of the construction of multiple interpretations. Additionally, Mr. Lehrer guided students as they responded critically to literature. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer supported these processes in an on-going manner, from the beginning of the school year. The interaction and facilitation of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are needed components in a balanced literacy program that prepare students for complex constructions of meaning and facilitating collaborative work.

Establishing this foundation and sustaining group collaboration was an on-going dilemma, in an effort for students to sustain what Cazden (2001) terms equitable collaborative responsibilities and what Ladson-Billings (1994) terms equitable classroom relations. Sustaining progressive practices required Mr. Lehrer's reflection, frustration, improvisation, and explicit attention to directives among students who were often behaviorally unsettled. Mr. Lehrer regularly negotiated between Nieto's (2000) recommendation of accommodating students by reiterating expectations or expecting students to assume responsibility. In the appropriation of discursive practices, unsettled behavior became problematic. Unanticipated dilemmas were posed, for Mr.Lehrer expressed that he spent disproportionate amounts of time managing students' behavior.

In addition, unintended consequences of peer-led discourse will be documented, along with varying participatory patterns that emerged across Detroit

focal students. Also salient were patterns of teacher-led discourse that posited Decuir & Dixson's (2004) notion of critical race theory and counter storytelling. In spite of Mr. Lehrer's attempts to be improvisational, in a manner suggested by Sawyer(2004), there were moments when norms embedded in the discourse of African American focal students reified what Dyson and Genishi (2005) suggest is within their interpretive frame, and unpleasing to white students during peer and teacher-led discourse. This led to discord and disagreement. Mr. Lehrer's reflection and adjustments to alleviate these dilemmas will be examined, in a manner of what Erickson (1986) suggests is needed to best meet student needs.

*Unintended Consequences of Peer-Led Discourse*

In spite of numerous student interactions that posit multiple interpretations and in-depth comprehension in Chapter 4, a pattern that resonated was the manner in which one to two students in any given group would resist participation. Although aforementioned discourse patterns will be cited, patterns that have not been mentioned will also be included. Aforementioned patterns will receive a brief reference, and additional patterns will be further explicated.

On Taye's first day in early March, once the class was settled, Mr. Lehrer was able to sustain meaningful, in-depth discourse in preparation for peer-led groups. Students were invited in the following excerpt to explore the theme in *Charlotte Doyle*, beyond the events that have happened in the book:

Abe: About truth
Mr. Lehrer: This is the direction we need to head in. This is a beginning. What does this book say about that? Before getting into groups, I want to explore other words that capture the theme
Julie: Friendship
Mr. Lehrer: That's worth talking about, along with what the story has to say

about that
Phoebe: Scary
Mr. Lehrer: This must be in relation to how Charlotte had to overcome fear. We'll see.
Kiki: Confidence
Mr. Lehrer: These are good responses
Bert: Honor
Mr. Lehrer: Sometimes you can go right to the book and say I saw that coming a few times. Remember after the trial? Charlotte didn't want to foil Zachariah's plan
Abe: Justice
Mr. Lehrer: What did Zachariah call Charlotte? The very soul of justice. This is a big idea.
Lennie: Betrayal
Mr. Lehrer: This is the opposite of honor and justice

The nature of affirmation embedded in teacher-led discourse and modeling seemingly constructed enough of a foundation for students to gather in their groups.

Groups needed to contribute to a handout titled "Ideas/themes in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*."

The directions called for students to think about a list of eight overarching ideas that are involved with the book. Students needed to consider how ideas connect with characters and actions, and to consider how the ideas might contrast each other in different characters. They were also supposed to consider ideas in relation to each other and put ideas about these sentences.

A visit to Monet, Violet, Steve, and Brandy indicated that they took a long time to get started. Brandy began by reading directions on the handout, but she was interrupted by other students in and out of her group not gathering appropriately and speaking too loudly to hear each other. As she clarified the directions, Steve was doodling on artwork, which looked like a sports team symbol. During Brandy's attempt to get the group started, I was distracted by the drone of Kiki, yelling at her group over Abe, who

has apparently and deliberately dropped the group's paper on the floor, causing it to wrinkle. Although Brandy was initially the recorder, the paper was passed to each group member at random until Monet finally agreed to assume the role.

The length of time it took to get adjusted interfered with the time needed to construct in depth responses intended by Mr. Lehrer. To illustrate, the following integrated writing constructed by the group reads:

> "Charlotte told the truth about the crew. She honored Zachariah when she didn't tell on him. Zachariah trusted Charlotte to be his final friend. Charlotte thought that it was unnatural to go back home."

Based on directions that were given, the group seemingly took the terms and simply put shared ideas into sentences, without exploring the numerous, in-depth ways that were modeled during teacher-led discourse. The nature of remaining groups presented similar outcomes.

Mr. Lehrer expressed a great deal of disappointment with the onset of class that day with their insincere welcome of Taye's arrival, which was enough for students to effectively contribute to the teacher-led discourse. One would assume that it would not be necessary to explain what was needed to transition into groups. That students took such a long time to gather suggests the on-going dilemma of when to reify expectations and when to assume that students are able to manage independently. Inconsistency among students suggests that dilemmas are not only unresolvable, but unpredictable.

Another occasion that invited meaningful peer-led discourse and collaboration was when students were expected to consider the manner in which Charlotte has transformed into a completely different character in early March. Mr. Lehrer mentioned that she was not the same Charlotte Doyle that lived in the Doyle household. The way

she sees things and the way they see things are no longer the same. The group work was therefore centered around the notion of this change as a result of her voyage. The task involved becoming Charlotte and writing a letter to her family. Directions were shared and included the enactment of becoming Charlotte: 1)Write a letter to your family, explaining fully why you've decided to leave for the Seahawk. 2)Provide reasons and connect the details from the book. Be specific about referring to the book. 3)Use the letter format. Regarding procedural steps, the first five minutes was directed as an individual endeavor, and students needed to brainstorm ideas about the letter. They were directed to remember what brainstorming is, and to jot ideas as quickly as students could think of them. For five minutes the group members were to share ideas from their brainstorming lists with the rest of the group. Students were directed to compose a rough draft of the letter as a group, with everyone contributing ideas and suggestions to the recorder. As a group, they were required to revise the rough draft, focusing on wording and detailing, among other improvements, and edit for correctness. Students were then required to write a strong final copy and proofread before handing it in.

Abe wanted to know if they could write something that could have happened, but Mr. Lehrer said that they would need to be tied to the text. Five solid minutes was devoted to brainstorming in class. Upon completion of writing time, I noticed that Pippen did not have any ideas jotted down. Abe jotted that Charlotte got married, which is precisely what Mr. Lehrer said not to do.

In Jack, Jared, Stephanie and Jessie's group, it became apparent that they were quick to find a recorder to jot ideas immediately. There was no advanced, collaborative

discussion, based on the ideas that were written in advance. Students exhibited a complete disregard for directions, a pattern of resistance when they wrote:

> "...I just want to be treated like an equal citizen, where my ideas and opinions count. On the "Seahawk" everyone lived as friends and was in the same class. No one was higher than another, everyone was treated the same. It's very different from home. And I feel that I have made the right decision. I know you are mad. But over time you will grow to understand why left, and agree. I love you all so much and maybe someday will meet again."

Mr. Lehrer wanted students to treat Charlotte Doyle's point of view and the historical construct of the novel with considerable depth. More than likely, the nature of this response would not be pleasing to Mr. Lehrer. In addition, Figure 6.3 illustrates a closing that depicts the manner in which many students write a closing during the present day, which is not how Charlotte Doyle's character would have written it.

Marissa, Dave, Jennifer and Lennie, were in the drafting phase and Lennie was speaking in a repetitive way that was annoying to Jennifer and Marissa, and then Dave began speaking in the same manner. The girls gave me a look of disbelief, ignored the boys and mustered a way to work around them. Marissa was able to jot Charlotte's change, and the crew's acceptance of her as a reason for leaving home.

As a result, they were able to jot:

> "...I have left home for various reasons. I have changed a lot during my voyage and I am not the same Charlotte Doyle that I once was. The sailors on the ship understand and accept me better than you do. I enjoy the shipwork and being part of the crew. You don't understand what I had to go through during my voyage and I know you think I was lying about the stories in my journal, but they are all true. I would rather stay on the ship than live with you. It's just the lifestyle I prefer."

Similar to the previous example, the group did not fully deliberate in order to construct a fully informed response. This integrated artifact more than likely did not draw from the context of the text as Mr. Lehrer intended.

On-going concerns about the degree of problematic social participation task structures and interactions across Charlotte Doyle groups led to significant modification of grouping for the text set novels. In addition, increased class size impacted the grouping of students across the text set novels, for 29 students needed to be effectively grouped across 4 titles. Initial grouping of the text set groups began with the "Establishing a Foundation" collaboration. The on-going magnitude of students who came to class unprepared also posed concerns, so it became necessary for Mr. Lehrer to explicate his expectations. In addition, the grouping required more decision making, for Mr. Lehrer exerted the effort to oblige student requests for titles, while grouping 29 students in a manner conducive to effective group work. Mr. Lehrer created eight groups, which allotted two groups of three to four students across each title to facilitate more effective participation than the Charlotte Doyle groups, which had four to five students.

Having eight working groups required more explicit attention to directives, because students were accustomed to their previous group arrangement. Additionally, Mr. Lehrer was thoughtful about the nature of previous grouping. He was particularly mindful of the best fit, indicated in the following excerpt during an interview:

> "I don't know if that changes because either way you are looking at that group and trying to make the right matches, but uh, in that regard you have to work with what you have, whether you have 22 or 23. And you try to make good choices for who might work well together, do I have a leader in here? Do I have 4 people here who are all not gonna talk to each other for group work?"

This excerpt divulges that Mr. Lehrer was thoughtful of effectively grouping heterogeneous learners. It took time to deliberate about students who are likely to work well together. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer gave a great deal of deliberation to the nature of

grouping, prior to deciding on facilitating eight groups. To illustrate, the following excerpt reveals his decision making, prior to deciding to modify and enact eight groups:

> "I don't know that it's different this year from other years, but it stems from class size, and when you have a group of 28, breaking them into groups and making it work successfully, it's not as easy as easy as a group of 25, a group of 23 or 22, just because these rooms that were built in 1950, or whatever, in the 50s. Nowadays they're building rooms and saying, let's add another 10 feet on here, another 10 feet on there, let's make these rooms a little bigger, let's have desks and some tables you could go to, and sit around a table, but for this class, which is so cramped, especially with all the books on the bookshelves and stuff, for them to, and I think they've been doing a good job, actually, they've been pretty successful getting into the groups and out, and I think that happened, when we started to get into this group work again, some kid came up to me and said, Mr. Lehrer, why are you talking so much about moving our desks? And I answered him and I said, believe it or not, that is so important to the success of this, because if I don't tell you exactly how I want you to do that, and if I'm having to go from group to group to say well, set yourself up this way, get in a circle, this person over on the fringe can't hear, this person seems to be excluded, or there's 3 times more noise than I would desire, you don't recover from that. So one problem is that there are so many kids, that even though I do think my 6th and 7th hour, those classes are doing a pretty good job with it. I just think that when the classes are so big that many groups and that many voices talking, it's distracting, compared to a group of 22 that might be split up into 5 groups instead of 6 groups that are even larger than those 5 in a smaller class. So, that's the thing."

This excerpt reveals that significant deliberation and planning was required to enact peer-led discussion groups, especially with constraints of large class sizes. Effective organization, given constraints was something he paid attention to. He recognized that not making explicit directives was conducive to grouping that may not have desired outcomes. Additional concerns espoused the notion of the fifth wheel that occurred during Charlotte Doyle groups, while also expressing concerns about having numerous group of three to four students:

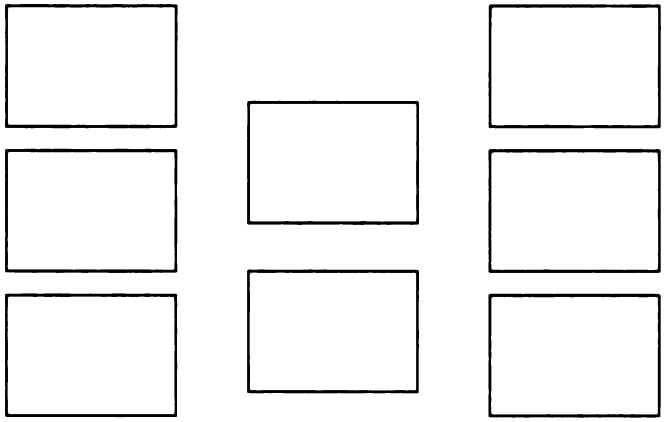
> Mr. Lehrer: and actually that's one of the things, referring to your first question, I thought abotthat afterward.. We had talked about the fifth wheel, how many are in the group and that's impacted by class size, if we want to keep it to four and we have 28, and you have this much space, so now you have seven groups, and I don't even like the idea.

Mrs. Hill: You'd have seven groups
Mr. Lehrer: if I kept it to four.
Mrs. Hill: Right, you would have seven groups. Right now you have five.
Mr. Lehrer: Six groups. But if I wanted to say four members into 28, ok, seven groups of four, but how am I gonna do that in this room? I see some teachers use the hallway in that way, that's fine, but I'd like to be able to observe what they're doing. Even if they go in the hall and do what they're supposed to do, I like to be able to go by and hear what they're saying, I mean that's important.

Ultimately, Mr. Lehrer paid a significant amount of attention to grouping students in a manner that espoused optimal grouping, intended to enable more students to be participatory members and equitable classroom relations. On-going concerns about the large class and potential for unsettled behavior led to providing students with distinct directives. Where students sit and rearrange desks into tables is important. The first three groups were arranged where the first row was situated. Groups four and five were arranged in the middle of the room. Groups six to eight were closer to the edges, for it was necessary for students to talk and hear each other.

Although initial deliberation prompted him to avoid having seven groups, on-going attention to grouping led him to the enactment of eight groups to avoid having a fifth group member that would likely result in leaving a person out of the discussion. Hence, his intent was to facilitate equitable collaborative responsibility and equitable classroom relations. In addition, his experience and reflection of the nature of grouping from the enactment of *Charlotte Doyle* was conducive to improvising and modifying groups in an effort to best meet everyone's needs. The following illustrates the positioning of groups:

Group Arrangement for Text Set Discussion Groups



Groups 1-3 Groups 4-5 Groups 6-8

Upon delegating explicit directives before transitioning into new groups in the middle of April, Mr. Lehrer explained to students the potential that it is possible for groups not to be productive. He informed that groups can be bad when members do not accept responsibility, but good when members are responsible. He fully clarified the need for students to read in accordance with the reading plan, for not doing so would make it difficult to perform duties well. Not preparing would look obvious, and everyone must be participatory. He reminded students to gather in groups quietly and quickly, and reminded them to be the person who offers to be the recorder, rather than argue over not wanting to take the role. Before gathering, groups were announced, and students were told not to move yet :

Group 1--Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: Kiki, Jack, Taye, Mickey
Group 2: Abe, Jessie, Student who did not consent to study
Group 3--The Outsiders: Bert, Kim, Stephanie, Student who did not consent to study
Group 4: Violet, Julie, Jared, Student who did not consent to study
Group 5--My Brother, My Sister and I: Helena, Steve, Jennifer
Group 6: Marissa, Brandy, Jason, Phoebe
Group 7—Dragonwings: Melissa, Dave, Student who did not consent to study

Group 8: Monet, Moe, Lennie

Before moving, Mr. Lehrer checked for needed "Book Group—Establishing a Foundation" handouts and books. Although most people had sheets, there were seven without them or without a book. Not having what was required, they were firmly reminded that they needed to have these items.

In spite of optimal discourse cited in Chapter 4, problematic were instances during the peer-led text set in April when students did not fulfill their reading requirements. This was pertinent in Julie and Jared's interactions during their discussion of *The Outsiders:*

Julie: Yeah, I wonder why Cherry is the Greaser's spy
Jared: She is?
Julie: Yeah, you haven't been reading, have you?
Jared: We're supposed to read chapter 5 at least?
Julie: We were supposed to read chapter 6 tonight
Jared: I have to read 6 chapters tonight

During the open ended discourse near the end of the text set in early May, Jared's limited preparedness affected his participation when he did not know that Johnny died and group members acknowledged that he had not read in the following excerpt:

Jared: Johnny died?
Violet: Yeah, maybe you should read the book!
Jared: Wait, who's in the hospital?
Julie: Johnny and Dally. Dally broke his arm in a fight and Johnny got paralyzed
from
Jared: From what?
Violet: From the beam. It hit him in the back.
Julie: He's paralyzed and they like burned. The beam fell on him in the fire.
Jared: He's dead?
Julie: Yeah, and so's Dally

Eventually, Mr. Lehrer joined the group, and Jared attempted to contribute based on their previous discussion:

Mr. Lehrer: Tell me one thing that you talked about. The fire?
Julie: Yeah
Mr. Lehrer: Who said something about it? How did it start?
Jared: It was in the church and they were helping children. Johnny and Ponyboy. And then something fell on Ponyboy.
Julie: No, Johnny!
Jared: I mean, Johnny.
Mr.Lehrer: So, what were your thoughts about that?
Jared: Uh, tears

In addition, Monet's interaction with Lennie revealed a similar occurrence:

Monet: Lennie, stop! What do you actually understand about the book, how much have you even read?
Lennie: I have read the first half of chapter 1 and the first half of chapter 2
Monet: So you read the first half of every chapter
Lennie: This is a pain, isn't it? Monet's cool, but she's a nerd

Excerpts of Jared and Lennie's admissions suggest that they made a decision, in spite of Mr. Lehrer's consistent reminders, not to read, or to not fulfill the requirements. This impacted their ability to be a participatory member of the group. After Jared's admission, the group engaged in random, off topic talk for the duration of allotted time. Mr. Lehrer provided a reading plan, and expressed the need for students to read in accordance with their schedules. However, he also made it clear that they must take their reading pace into account, acknowledging that some students read faster than others. In this regard, Mr. Lehrer was meeting his students' heterogeneous learning abilities.

In addition, Lennie's lack of preparation led to Monet's frustration that he was not contributing ideas. Moe's participation was also questionable:

Moe: I really don't have much. But I still don't understand why Moon

Shadow
Monet: Why must, or why would they...ok, someone else should help. Ok, someone else say something, please
Lennie: um
Moe: um
Monet: Something smart, Lennie, not nothin'
Lennie: I, like, hi!
Monet: That's not something smart
Moe: I want to know more about the father's dragon wing reincarnation thing
Monet: You already wrote that
Moe: I did?
Monet: Yeah

Compared with Monet's previous Charlotte Doyle group, which posited minimal participation, she began a more participatory role with Lennie and Moe. However, Lennie's limited participation became a source of frustration for her. The lack of preparedness influenced student perceptions of interaction in the smaller groups, to Mr. Lehrer's surprise when I spoke with students:

Mrs. Hill: We talked about the bigger groups with Charlotte Doyle versus the smaller groups with the text set, and they said they liked the smaller groups
Mr. Lehrer: I thought so
Mrs. Hill: less
Mr. Lehrer: That's amazing! I'm surprised by that! (laughter)
Mrs. Hill: Me too!
Mr. Lehrer: I wonder if it's just those individuals who felt that way.
Mr. Hill: Helena was saying that because in a smaller group you can tell when someone wasn't prepared
Mr. Lehrer: Yeah, once you said that, that's the first thing that popped into my head. And that is the very thing. That's related to what we were saying before
Mrs. Hill: Exactly, the overall preparedness
Mr. Lehrer: and that's the very thing I emphasized from the beginning of group work, have a responsibility. You might think, oh , that's no big responsibility, but be sincere about what you can take from and get from literature. If you're sincere about being here
Mrs. Hill: mm hmm
Mr. Lehrer: but you may not be, and in that case, it has to kick in that this is my responsibility. But if you aren't at all, you have to come prepared, because that's what it's about. You know, that moment of discussing and thinking about what really is going on .

This excerpt echoes Mr. Lehrer's awareness of the possibility that regardless of the time he devoted to being improvisational and ensuring collaborative responsibility and equitable classroom relations, some students will not be participatory members of their group.

Additionally problematic during the peer-led text set was the matter of students who read ahead in late April, which often resulted in more harm than good. Mr. Lehrer addressed that students who read ahead must reread and prepare for discussion planned for that day, so that they could effectively participate. To illustrate:

> Pippen: I wonder why the book is called Dragonwings
> Dave: Look at the back
> Pippen: Ok, never mind, I already know the whole book, I know why
> Dave: Does he ride the wings of a dragon?
> Pippen: No
> Mr. Lehrer: Don't forget something I told you. Even if you've read the whole book
> Pippen: Don't say the facts
> Mr. Lehrer: No, what I was gonna say was
> Pippen: I know, reread
> Mr. Lehrer: Can I finish my sentence? I want you, leading up to the day that you're coming here, focus on what was in that chapter

Pippen's act of bragging was not conducive to the group's participation. Rather than contribute to the topic embedded in the chapter, he chose to keep the group in suspense about events he read about, in a counterproductive manner. Pippen's actions suggested he knew everything about the book, posing no need to benefit from any perspectives group members may have held. Pippen's actions did not fulfill Mr. Lehrer's expectations.

Also problematic was the discussion about prejudice in mid May, when most members of one of *The Outsiders* groups did not have their sheets or other required materials and Mr. Lehrer addressed them:

Mr. Lehrer: Do you know what I just noticed, what I couldn't help but notice? Three of you don't have a sheet in front of you.
Julie: I forgot my sheet and my book
Mr. Lehrer: How about you Violet, where's your sheet?
Violet: I forgot it?
Mr. Lehrer: Is that a question?
Violet: No.
Mr. Lehrer: Is it in your folder and done?
Violet: No
Mr. Lehrer: You don't have it, what about yours?
Julie: I did it last night but I left it
Mr. Lehrer: You guys need to especially think about the kinds of thing that you thought about when you did it or if you didn't do it, you should think about what you need to do

Mr. Lehrer's interaction with the group suggests that he expects students to arrive with necessary materials. It is possible to interpret that students felt awkward, upon Mr. Lehrer recognizing and conferring with them.

Lack of preparation was additionally a problem when Mr. Lehrer walked away and they experienced difficulty finding specific examples of prejudice:

Jared: The Socs beat up Ponyboy and he was gonna attack them, but you know...
Julie: The newspaper people, how they just say like hero. I need another one.
Violet: I know another one. The Socs like always judging the Greasers when they don't really know them
Julie: I have one. At the movie theater, Dally is always talking trash because Cherry is there (A long pause)
Jared: Prejudice is when the Socs treated the Socs, the Greasers bad
Violet: That is too general

Violet's suggestion that Jared's idea was too general corresponds with everyone's attempt. Violet and Jared's contribution about the Socs' prejudicial treatment was the closest to what was intended, but no one offered specific examples. Other contributions are elements of the plot, and are seemingly guesses. Mr. Lehrer rejoined the group, and, as illustrated in Chapter 4, helped them raise the matter of prejudicial treatment of

Johnny in the newspaper. Thus, students co-constructed with Mr. Lehrer the notion that the newspaper assumed that Johnny was a juvenile delinquent.

Although the group arrived unprepared, Mr. Lehrer made a commitment to help them. The decision to help them became a matter of Nieto's (2000) notion of determining when to accommodate and when to require student accommodation. Mr. Lehrer's initial departure from the group indicated that the group needed assistance, and would not have been able to read against the text had he not intervened.

Another matter that became problematic was the apparent lack of respect for student's ideas. According to Raphael, et al., (1995, 2001) one tenet of successful peer-led discourse posits respecting others' ideas. In the other *Outsiders* group, for example, Bert was rudely repeating what group members were saying, in spite of the group's effort to work collaboratively to negotiate prejudice in their book:

> Stephanie: No, but you pretty much got it down.
> Bert: No, but you pretty much got it down.
> Kim: I put Dally really did care about people. He cared about Johnny, that's why when Johnny died he set himself up to get shot and killed.
> Stephanie: That's not really why it was wrong, but it was what happened. And the other one, I guess we'll put Darrry...
> Bert: No, you could have put the Greasers here and the Socs here.
> Stephanie: That's what I had on my thing, but it was just too general
> Bert: It was just too general [exaggerated].

This excerpt reveals the potential for one member of the group to make it difficult for the remainder of students who have good intentions and want to enact collaborative responsibility and equitable classroom relations.

Among *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* students, insincere was the manner in which students engaged in the open ended discourse, but did not include assigned reading and discussed topics Mr. Lehrer suggested were already exhausted:

Taye: I also don't get, are they rich or poor, what's up with that, man?
Jack: They're poor because they have to pay taxes on their land.
Taye: But they have that big piece of land.
Jack: Exactly
Taye: But they can sell the cotton
Jack: But they have to pay taxes
Taye: But they should have extra money left
Jack: But it's only 250 dollars for that whole cotton field
Mickey: But they only have to pay taxes because they have 4 acres of land
Jack: 4?! 400!
Mickey: Ooh!
Taye: We had a mistake there.
Mr. Lehrer: I'm pretty sure that that's what you talked about last week. And certainly there's been a lot of reading since then, and I feel right now that you're not taking this as sincerely as I want you to. I gave you clear instructions. You each have two topics. I want you to read yours. I want them to be read and for other people to respond, and to go to the person. He or she can read that one, and discuss it. So please go around the group.

After Mr. Lehrer walked away, Kiki offered the idea that Cassie, Big Ma, and her brothers all stay in one place. When Taye suggested that they needed to get back on topic, the group began random, off topic talk, which included put downs, expletives, and singing. Repeat offenders were Taye and Kiki. These actions suggest a lack of sincerity, particularly when Mr. Lehrer explicitly requested it, and students knew what was expected of them.

*Unintended Consequences of Peer-Led Discussion Groups Among Focal Detroit Students*

Upon reflection of discursive practices in Chapter 3, what resonates is the manner in which focal students from Detroit often did not share collaborative responsibility until the enactment of the text set novels and the *Seedfolks* read aloud. On numerous occasions during *Charlotte Doyle*, for example, most students in the peer-led groups were active participatory members, but the notion of "the fifth wheel" emerged, as an unintended consequence. In other words, close observation of the data

reveals with few exceptions, that Kim, Monet, and Kiki were predominantly not a part of the discourse during peer and teacher-led discourse. I often observed them distracted and detached from discourse patterns where most group members were deeply immersed in the activity. Therefore, I examined observations during those moments, along with improvised modifications provided by Mr.Lehrer, which resulted in more collaborative participation among them during proceeding *Charlotte Doyle* groups and/or text set groups. On a few occasions, where applicable, discourse patterns and topics that were not included in Chapter 3 are utilized.

Additionally, Taye became a focal student, but did not enroll in the class until the end of the *Charlotte Doyle* unit. For this reason, he is not documented initially, but his participation in the text set posed issues surrounding appropriate participation that encapsulated not listening to group members' ideas and unofficial talk. I examined his reactions to Mr. Lehrer's suggestions.

Monet's initial small group participation was observed upon the task requiring students to analyze conversations between Charlotte and Captain Jaggery, illustrated in the following integrated fieldnotes in late February:

Monet was absent, on average one day per week during the study. On occasion, this would impede with her participation during peer-led discussion groups. For example, Steve, Violet and Brandy were actively working on an assignment where they analyzed Charlotte's conversations across Captain Jaggery and Zachariah. Because Monet was absent, she had not read the required reading. She wasdistracted and commented that she had not read. As she was expressing her own confusion, Kiki, who was sitting with her group at the next table was distracting Monet and making random, joking comments. Eventually, Monet managed to confront Mr. Lehrer and explain that she had not read. Mr. Lehrer suggested that she read to catch up on her own. Because she delayed telling Mr. Lehrer, there was not much time for her to effectively read. The time that she delegated for reading was inundated with Monet, who grabbed much of her attention by joking with her.

This observation suggests that Monet's absenteeism and unpreparedness led to difficulty with effective participation. Although she confronted Mr. Lehrer, it is possible to interpret that she could have sought his assistance earlier. In addition, her attention was focused more on Kiki, who was a constant distraction. Monet's responsibility to catch up seemingly became an insincere effort.

On one occasion during *Charlotte Doyle* groups in late February, students were asked to explore varying characters, and their actions, events, and emotions surrounding the death of Cranick. They were expected to contribute as a group to the handout. They were reminded to be mindful not to forget big things Zachariah does, now that Cranick has been shot.

This led to the following teacher-led discourse:

> Jack: He (Zachariah)wanted to see if Cranick was dead.
> Mr. Lehrer: Why is it so remarkable that he checked?
> Neil: Captain Jaggery held a gun.
> Mr. Lehrer: Everything we've talked about are actions. There are so many references to character's emotions by what they say and do. You can say they're all terrified. There are so many things by so many actions and characters. Chart as many of them as you can.

From this point, Mr. Lehrer modeled the handout on the board, to provide an example of Hollybrass's action:

> Mr. Lehrer: The captain orders the body over. That's a good enough description. Hollybrass's emotion is uncertainty. He hesitates, and doesn't want to do it, and questions order. This is a lot to ask. To proceed is to have your book open. Reread parts of the chapter, find the part where Cranick was shot, and his body was thrown into the ocean.

Upon visiting Abe, Kiki, Julie, and Pippen, there was noticeable participation across group members. Abe was determined to find proof of Captain Jaggery's action. Pippen prompted him to write that Cranick got shot. Mr. Lehrer noticed what was

written and prompted them to think about how this action proves the crew is sad. They were asked to identify what they noticed in the text that makes the character feel the way he or she does. Julie referred to page 90, acknowledging that the crew stepped back and Cranick fell, yet no one caught him.

Abe, Julie, and Pippen were working in a diligent manner, but Kiki was noticeably distracted by Monet. She continued to call her from the neighboring group, and joking with her. She complained loudly that Pippen was not following along, but he was searching actively for proof of information while her book was closed. She seemed to detach herself from the conversation, while everyone else gathered ideas. She also accused the group often of leaving her out when it appeared that she had deliberately taken herself out.

After class that day, the following reveals how this dilemma was addressed:

> Mr. Lehrer and I talked about Kiki's inattention during group discussion time, and he said that he did not notice this behavior in the moment of observing other groups. On the following day, Mr. Lehrer brought this matter to her attention. He explicitly told her that rather than criticizing participation of group members, she needed to be a part of the conversation.

This observation illustrates that our exchange of dialogue divulged problematic behaviors I observed that Mr. Lehrer did not, while working with other groups of students. Hence, our interaction about Kiki resonated with co-constructed dialogue between researcher and teacher, recommended by Erickson (1986). Kiki's participation, in the context of Mr. Lehrer's concern will be explored in an on-going manner in this chapter. As Mr. Lehrer became aware of the situation, he knew that Kiki's behaviors were important to pay attention to.

The notion of choosing to become the 5th wheel also occurred with Kim in late February, surrounding her group's discourse about characterizing Zachariah:

Although Helena, Bert, and Mickey interacted effectively, and on task, Kim was reading through the text, but later had her head down with her book in her lap. She did not offer to contribute, although Helena invited her to participate. This occurred, in spite of Mr. Lehrer's insistence that she participate with her group. It is important to note that on numerous occasions, Kim would have her head down in class, and be reminded often and appropriately, to sit appropriately. It was difficult to interpret if Kim was tired or disaffected from participating. In spite of high expectations exerted by Mr. Lehrer and Helena, Kim's behavior persisted.

During the discourse surrounding Charlotte's decision to join the crew, I observed Monet, Violet, Steve, and Brandy. As the group was coming to order, it was difficult not to notice Kiki's echoing voice, from the neighboring group. In a threatening boisterous tone, she was complaining about who the recorder would be. In spite of Mr. Lehrer's recent reminder to be a more active participant, her loud intonation made it difficult for her group to come to order. Additionally, she grabbed Monet's attention.

Violet, Steve and Brandy interacted really well in early March, but Monet did not include herself in the discourse, illustrated in the following:

She asked me what I was writing, but I told her to act as if I was not there, because her question interfered with my observations. She appeared completely distracted. Somehow, Kiki appeared to weave in and out of the group, and continued to manage interaction with Monet. I noticed that Monet had her book open to the first page of the current chapter, but she never read to find additional information to contribute. Kiki's interactions for a moment interfered with everyone's concentration.

These observations suggest another example of Monet's distractibility. It is important to mention that the group did not invite her into the discussion, perhaps as a result of interpreting that Monet was not interested in participating. Mr. Lehrer additionally noted that Steve confronted him after class and commented that not everyone contributed to the task. Mr. Lehrer and I noted that more than likely, Steve's concern was about Monet, unless the situation changed after I visited their group. Mr. Lehrer further contended that Monet is smarter than she lets on.

Ironically, a visit to Kiki's group a few moments after visiting Monet's group indicated that she was more responsive to her group members. Kiki included herself in the discourse about their boat experiences, to determine the magnitude about the work it takes to maintain it, cited in Chapter 3. It is possible to interpret that Mr. Lehrer's enactment of confronting her about problematic behavior was conducive to her change in participation.

Although she was more involved than during the onset of the group, it seems unusual the energy she exerts focusing on Monet. This occurred often, whether or not Mr. Lehrer and I were standing close by. As I stood there facing her while interacting with her group and conducting jottings, Kiki had no problems focusing disproportionate energy on Monet and on exerting off task behaviors. Mr. Lehrer and I commented about being the invisible teacher and researcher. It would seem that between two adults in the room, that she would not blatantly exhibit off task behaviors. Kiki and Monet highly distracted each other, and were inseparable. He also commented that on occasion, while sitting in their assigned seats on opposite ends of the room, they would

somehow by radar connection raise their voices over everyone else's voices talking in the middle.

Kiki and Monet have similar backgrounds. Both lived in and attended school in Detroit, and attended a charter school and private school respectively. Their closeness and solidarity is more than likely based on similar experiences and backgrounds, as Tatum(1997) suggests about African American students in predominantly White schools.

On another occasion, Kiki assumed the role of recorder during discussion groups in early March. Their task was to pay attention to the old and new Charlotte, to contrast them and tell how they are different. They were directed to include details from the novel, and to find details that show changes before and after she joined the crew. Written contributions were jotted on the handout (Figure 6.5). Abe was providing information and Kiki was vigorously jotting down ideas. The discourse in the group was about Charlotte, who initially thought she was above everyone, and Abe included that she was a proper young lady. Pippen was scanning his book for additional detail, and Julie, between contributing was in and out of her journal. Kiki did not contribute anything verbally, but unlike the previous interaction, she never complained or raised her voice toward anyone.

As for the jottings on the handout, Kiki jotted Abe's aforementioned ideas in a manner that suggests she was on task. Regarding Charlotte's opinion of herself, Kiki jotted in the before column, "highly standard, thought of herself better than everyone else. In the after column, she wrote "thinks of herself as equal."

Perhaps her actions were a result of speaking with Mr. Lehrer, but Monet was absent. It is possible to interpret the turnout may have been different, had Monet been there.

Observing Kim during the same task revealed my initial observation of her as a participatory member of her group:

> Helena: Let's discuss Charlotte's feelings toward Jaggery
> Mickey: Before she had respect for him. He was a gentleman
> Kim: She thinks he's self centered and thinks of himself
> Helena: She doesn't think he's like her dad anymore. Would you like to describe Charlotte's feelings of the crew? (motioning toward Kim)
> Kim: She's around them more and more
> Mickey: She respects them, but didn't respect them before

Later on, Helena offered the group to discuss Charlotte's physical skills. They discussed that she couldn't climb before, but now she can, in a much faster time than before. Kim mentioned on her own that this was a rat line. Throughout this peer-led discourse pattern, Helena invited Kim to participate, and she responded each time. On occasion, she required additional prompting to remain a part of the conversation. Helena's act of bringing Kim into the conversation may have been the boost she needed to establish a comfort level to interact in a small group.

On another occasion during the construction of the letter to Charlotte's family, Kiki became the recorder and contributed to the discourse in mid March. She contributed the idea of feeling pressure, and Abe confirmed that this has to do with having a lot on her mind. This became the first observed occasion where Kiki was a participant in the spoken discourse. Mr. Lehrer's talk with her seemingly resulted in a gradual decline of inappropriate behavior and increase of becoming a participatory member.

The letter she drafted illustrated that students interacted in manner that prompted them to arrive at ideas that illuminated Charlotte's transformation:

> "I am leaving because I need to clear my mind. I have a lot of thinking that I need to go through. Trust me when I say that I return this all will have a meaning to it. I can't change back to what you want me to be. I have been in a different environment for so long. I feel that I have gotten attached to the Seahawk & the crew members. It seems as if they are my second family. I feel free when I am at the wheel. The person that I am becoming is not like I was before. I am more like a town boy. I'm not into all of the bonnets & white gloves and high button shoes any more. I want to be. I am Charlotte and that's who I'm going to be at the end."

Given the overall content and formal structure of the letter, Kiki played an important role in contributing to her group, and in carrying out intended directives. Additionally, I observed her contributing the idea about Charlotte facing pressures at home, and Abe added that this had to do with having a lot on her mind. She appeared more involved than usual.

By late April, the transition into the text set groups resulted in Monet, who became a more participatory member and facilitator. Mr. Lehrer's seating arrangement called for Monet and Kiki to be placed on opposite ends of the classroom, in contrast from being in neighboring groups. Hence, he made adjustments to better facilitate their learning. Alleviating distractibility can also be regarded as accommodating heterogeneous learning abilities. The noticeable change for Monet occurred during the discourse when students discussed what they did and did not understand, and what they wondered about in the following excerpt:

Monet: Ok, what do you understand about your book?
Moe: Moon Shadow is from China
Monet: Ok, do you understand why Moon Shadow is going to China?
Moe: What? (uncertainty, perhaps expecting to hear going to America)
Monet: Do you understand why Moon Shadow is going to China?
Moe: Yeah

Monet: Why?
Moe: Because, Moon Shadow is going to China because he wants to see his father and he wants to know about the land of the golden...wait, I said that wrong. Moon Shadow is going to America to meet his father and to learn about the land of the golden mountain.
Monet: Ok, what else do you understand about your book?
Moe: You're supposed to read
Monet: I'm supposed to what?
Moe: You're supposed to say something. Me, then Lennie, then you, then Me, then Lennie, then you

Although Monet initially provided misinformation about the book, her initiative to invite group members to participate is a stark contrast from her performance with her previous group. Moreover, Moe helped clarify the distinction upon her miscue. Perhaps her initiative to contribute was a result of being in a smaller, 3 member group.

Data provides evidence that Monet, Kim, and Kiki demonstrated improved performance during peer-led discussion groups. Problematic, however, was the matter of Taye who did not respond to ideas raised by group members in late April. In many instances, ignoring an idea impeded on the group's potential to have a critical and in-depth discussion about topics that were raised. This was particularly salient with *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* students who were talking about ideas they understood:

Kiki: In Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Christopher John, Stacey and Little Man, they live in Mississippi. Her and her family work in a cotton field and her family is determined not to surrender their independence or their humanity because they are black

This was followed by a long moment of silence.

Taye: Why isn't anyone talking?! (A loud screech in his intonation)
Kiki: I just told you. Her family works in a cotton field
Taye: And they don't surrenderJack: All right, I understand that
Kiki: They are determined not to surrender. They will not surrender their independence
Taye: You just said that!
Kiki: Just listen (followed by long pause of off topic talk, and no one builds on Kiki's idea).

That Kiki mentioned her idea again during the aforementioned closing community share suggests that she believed her idea was important. Upon asking the group to listen further, everyone lost sight of her contributions, with Troy's panicked intonation as the initial response to the group's silence. It is highly probable that she was hoping for the group to contribute the notion of Mr. Granger who challenged their independence, as Mr. Lehrer did.

Jack also had an idea that he believed important enough to develop, yet became ignored by the group. He raised the idea of the textbooks that Little Man rejected. Perhaps he had the expectation that his contribution would sustain meaningful discourse, based on Mr. Lehrer's patterns of affirmation in chapter 4. However, Taye became fixated on Little Man's cleanliness, which led to losing sight of Jack's idea:

Jack: I understand that Mrs. Crocker doesn't care that the books are old
Taye: Little Man makes sure everything is clean. He all spiffy. You wouldn't want to come to school all dirty.
Jack: That's why he walks so slow to school. I understand that Jeremy Sims is their friend, and he doesn't care what other people say
Taye: Little Man don't like to be dirty. He always spiffy. He kind of nerdy
Kiki: Just because you clean doesn't mean you're nerdy
Taye: I know
Kiki: I'm not nerdy and I'm clean

Taye's mention of Little Man's cleanliness changed the focus of the discourse, for a disproportionate amount of time. To illustrate, Jack attempted to revisit Mrs. Crocker's treatment of Cassie and Little Man, in the context of not understanding. However, Taye immediately moved away from Jack's contribution, to argue more about Little Man:

Jack: I don't understand why Mrs. Crocker
Taye: I don't understand why Little Man walk all slow. It ain't like he

won't get dirty if he walks slow. You will get dirty because you walking

Jack: No, if you walk fast, it will make dust, and the dust

Taye: Oh, yeah, they did have dirt roads, didn't they?

Kiki: When it rained, like in the rainy month, allthat dust piled up. That's why he be walking slow.

Taye: But no, but listen but like, if some other kids are walking really fast

Eventually, this debate continued until Mr. Lehrer insisted that they move on to the next item:

Jack: I don't understand why Mrs. Crocker would whip Cassie and Little Man for taking that book because it said

Taye: Can you say that again?

Taye: I don't understand why Mrs. Crocker whipped Cassie and her little brother because she saw the page that said, good, good, poor, poor, and very poor, and he gets that, and he's thinking why are we getting these books? While the white kids are getting..

Taye: I don't understand, are they rich or poor?

Kiki: They poor. Put it like this. Because first of all, they gotta walk to school for like miles and they can't get on the bus

Taye: They can't get on the bus because of race and segregation. That was pretty smart, wasn't it? Race and segregation

Taye's actions of not allowing Jack to complete his thought about something Mr. Lehrer highly affirmed suggests that Taye's concern was to feed his own curiosity. Taye seemed only concerned about his own ideas. The second time Taye immediately disrupted Jack's topic, he at least built on Kiki's idea to suggest that their having to walk was not relevant to their socioeconomic standing, but as a result of racism. Raising the issue of class was previously affirmed by Mr. Lehrer, so Taye more than likely sensed that is was important to mention. However, he expressed no genuine interest in Jack's ideas, although Jack was willing to build on Taye's ideas. Essentially, Kiki and Jack raised topics that were not fully developed, but they helped

develop Taye's ideas. Addressing all ideas thoroughly as Mr. Lehrer directed would have resulted in a more fully developed discussion.

Similarly, Jack raised the idea of Mr. Logan, who set fire to the land to save everyone, upon raising the topic of triumph over good in mid May:

> Jack: I think that their dad is really smart because he must have started the fire in the cotton field so no one would attack them, but I see no one else paying attention to what I'm saying. (overlap of Kiki and Taye)
> Taye: They're on the little thing, I mean the strawberry plants, not the strawberry plants, but the
> Kiki: The strawberry shop. They on the strawberry shop, and Big Ma and Cassie go there every morning.
> Jack: He started the fire in the cotton field so they didn't have to shoot the white people because Stacey was in the woods, so he sacrificed all the cotton just for him and I think that's a huge sacrifice. I don't have no more to say (Kiki and Taye talk over Jack, putting each other down)

The nature of these discourse patterns are manifest in what Cazden (2001) terms episodic, for Kiki and Taye are raising multiple events. Their responses and building on each other's ideas led to Jack's feelings of frustration. The discord also led to feelings that Jack's topic centered ideas, as intended by Mr. Lehrer were ignored and not respected by his group members, again, beginning with Taye who immediately introduced an idea unrelated to the book's climax . Another matter that resonates is that Taye and Kiki have developed a sense of identity and belonging, which Dyson and Genishi (2005) suggest forge ways of interacting with each other in a manner they would deem appropriate, but immature and unpleasant by the remainder of the group. During the group's next meeting, Mr. Lehrer affirmed for Jack that his idea was important:

> Jack: What about when Cassie's dad started the fire in the cotton field?
> Mr. Lehrer: And why did he do that?
> Jack: So he could protect everyone.

Mr. Lehrer: So he did that to protect the people, didn't he? And look at what he did. He brought all those people together in a common cause by doing that, right? And by doing so, look at what was avoided. So that's a good example. Somebody going out there, in a way that harms his own property, yet he did that, that's good overcoming potential bad, right? That's the kind of stuff you want to talk about. You guys should get going on that.

In an effort to continue the conversation, Mickey wanted to know if Whites killed Black people or if Black people killed White people, resulting in the following response:

Taye: Don't say that racist word
Mickey: Ok.
Kiki: What did he say?
Taye: He said that white people killed black people
Mickey: That's not what I said. Did you read the book?
Taye: Oh, I thought you said...

From that point, the opportunity to discuss Jack's discussion of the triumph over good was lost. Although Mr. Lehrer returned to the group during two occasions to remind them that their written response required more detail, the moment he walked away, they engaged in random, off topic talk. The opportunity for critical discourse, again became overlooked and disregarded.

However, the onset of the discussion about prejudice and the triumph of good over evil in the group illustrates evidence of Taye and Kiki, who discuss ideas about segregation, and build on each other's ideas, but without providing specific examples, in a continued manner that is episodic:

Taye: The topic we are talking about is prejudice and triumph over good. Yeah. Prejudice in our book, which is Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is because it's segregated.The whites is prejudiced to the Blacks because they're segregated.
Kiki: In Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, there was a time when everyone was

segregated, and I'm not necessarily going to say that all the whites were prejudiced, to say that most of them was.

Taye: Blacks was prejudiced too, don't forget.

Kiki: Yeah, because they don't want slavery to be over in the South. One way is that the schools were segregated. Cassie and her siblings attended a school called Jefferson Davis and Blacks had to walk on and the Whites got to ride the bus.

It is possible that they initiated the conversation with a set of initial ideas in mind, for their initial utterances are fully expressed ideas. They dominated the discourse and built on each other's ideas, but there was no co-construction of specific details. Cazden (2001) cites young pre school African American children's episodic narratives that are complex, with shifting scenes multiple events. Taye and Monet's discourse is not a narrative, but speech patterns are episodic in nature. Cazden (2001) additionally refers to teachers' lack of familiarity to interpret the meaning of episodic narratives, and often had difficulty communicating with the children. Mr. Lehrer was not a participant with the students, but his visits to the group were a balance between affirming responses or reminding them to fulfill on-topic expectations. Reminders were often during times when Monet and Taye were off topic, immersed in their episodic talk, that led to eventual random, off topic talk across all members. What resulted, therefore, was a mismatch between Mr. Lehrer's directives for students to remain on topic and Monet and Taye's episodic, off topic discourse. Moreover, Jack and Mickey were not familiar with Monet and Taye's speech patterns and manner of interacting, resulting in difficulty building on each other's ideas.

Additionally, the remainder of Taye and Kiki's utterances often became condensed versions of their original contribution, rather than thinking about specific examples intended by Mr. Lehrer:

Mickey: The white kids are prejudiced to the Black kids because they say things about the Black kids before they even know them.

This presents an opportunity to provide examples. Taye's response becomes a general statement about prejudiced people. Although it is not specific, he has good intentions:

Taye: They do that before they even get to know 'em. But not only are whites prejudiced, it's blacks, too. Everyone is prejudiced, we have a lot of prejudiced people in this world. Slavery is over, but it's still a lot of racist people.
Kiki: It doesn't matter, if slavery over, it's still gonna be prejudiced people in the world

Otherwise, off topic talk ensued between them. Patterns suggest that Taye would be more likely to build on Kiki's ideas, than on anyone else's. Perhaps Taye and Kiki sustained solidarity based on their Detroit connection, and on sharing similar experiences, along with the fact that they fully understand each other, based on sharing similar language features. Their manner of interacting that they deem appropriate, as aforementioned, was uncomfortable for the remainder of the group. However, problematic is the manner in which everyone seems to respond toTaye, but he is absorbed in what he wants to contribute to the magnitude that he does not fully reciprocate group members.

The pattern of on-going episodic responses espouses Taye and Kiki, who expressed ideas that appear without sequencing or organizing of expressed ideas. They express a foundation to discuss racism as a problem. Patterns of discourse and discord with the group suggest multiple interpretations. It is likely that although Mr. Lehrer advised everyone to include specific ideas consistently, building on Taye and Kiki's existing foundation was a challenge because Jack and Mickey were unfamiliar with

their manner of off topic talk. It is also possible that Kiki and Taye were unfamiliar with Jack and Mickey's topic centered talk. Moreover, there is possibility in the interpretation that on numerous occasions, Taye and Kiki disregarded directives and high expectations that were explicitly given by Mr. Lehrer. There were several opportunities for them to construct or co-construct specific examples with their peers. Instead, they focused more on themselves or with each other, and interrupted topics that had potential to develop specific detail and in-depth, critical meaning. Lastly, there is possibility that they simply may not have possessed the readiness to apply complex ideas embedded in Mr. Lehrer's directives. A dichotomy emerges, for there is ultimate discord between Mr. Lehrer's high expectations for all group members to construct in-depth comprehension. However, Kiki and Taye's episodic talk impedes with the group's collaborative responsibilities, making it difficult for them to co-construct meaning.

Their nature of episodic talk, taking into account the Logans as outsiders in the community resonates with their experiences as outsiders at Barrington. Kiki was aware that she did not fit in, and not willing to surrender her identity. One of her writing samples, which will explicated in Chapter 7 divulged her concerns about fitting in: "I don't feel like I belong here...I know who I am." Although Taye never expressed concerns about fitting in, he lived in Huntington and was aware of the perceptions students held about Huntington kids being poor. This may explain his infatuation with the Logan's financial status, as outsiders in the community.

In late April, Kim continued to be more participatory, in the enactment of discussing what she does not understand:

Kim: I don't understand why the Greasers and the Socs go to the same school

and they don't like each other
Bert: Yeah, really, how come there aren't two different schools if there's two different sides of town?
Kim: No, no, how come they're in the same school, but they don't like each other, two different, Socs and the Greaser
Bert: I know they go to the same school

Although Bert did not respond in a manner she had anticipated, her assertion suggests that she has become an active participant in her group. Moreover, she is confident about expressing her ideas.

Upon discussion of good overcoming evil in her group in mid May, Kim contributed to the negotiation that Ponyboy's essay was an example, to that effect:

Stephanie: I think Ponyboy realized what was really important, and what did he realize? Why did he start writing the story? Like, the paper?
Kim: Because when he was out, you know, he missed so many days of school. He had to do an essay?
Stephanie: But he wrote the essay on his life. The whole book is an essay he wrote.
Kim: Because he started off at the beginning of the book
Stephanie: Yeah, he did it at the beginning, so why did he
Mr. Lehrer: What was your question here? This is an interesting topic.
Stephanie: The good that came out of it, was Ponyboy realizes, but I don't know what he
Mr. Lehrer: Right
Stephanie: That's the thing, the essay he started writing at the end.
Mr. Lehrer: And think about it. He had to live through it and learn something before he could write about it.
Stephanie: Yeah! What did he learn?
Mr. Lehrer: What did he learn?
Kim: Um, that there's still good in the world
Mr. Lehrer: Um, think about this. How does he approach the Socs at the...

Again, this excerpt illustrates that Kim became an active and integral participant in her group. Perhaps on-going participation and placement with supportive group members who respect her ideas were elements that were manifest in her improved

performance. Helena's initial prompting was helpful in establishing a foundation and comfort level.

*Unintended Consequences of Teacher-led Discourse*

Data suggests that the there were moments of unsettled behavior during the *Charlotte Doyle* read aloud, along with instances of students needing reminders to follow directives more expediently. In Chapter 4 I use critical race theory to inform in-depth analysis in Ana's chapter in *Seedfolks* in mid May. Simultaneously, in this chapter I inform about salient moments of unsettled behavior that became dilemmas of practice.

For example, upon Jason appropriating the word Negro from the chapter in the following excerpt, there were patterns of students talking over each other, or among others while one student had the floor. In addition, the following excerpt reveals the manner in which Mr. Lehrer responded to ambiguous queries, in a manner that was improvisational:

> Mr. Lehrer: what, what is funny
> Monet: I just feel hurt. I feel so violated [Taye and Kiki echo frustration loudly, in undecipherable terms]
> Mr. Lehrer: Let's have one person talk at a time [additional undercurrents of voices echo]
> Mr. Lehrer: This is my objection to this class, because I would really love to hear what people are saying, but here's what I want to do. Right now I'm calling on Monet. I'm not sure, Monet, that you are being totally sincere, or maybe you are and you're saying in a funny way, but tell me what you're thinking about it.
> Monet: You know, like [laugher and undecipherable comments]
> Mr. Lehrer: Listen, we can't get anywhere like this. Sometimes when you have a response to what somebody says, you have to keep it in your head until your chance comes.

What occurred in the moment was that students were talking simultaneously about the comment Jason made. Students were in a position of taking sides, and it was a matter of Jason who was drawing the term from the book or of him intending to offend the African American students. In the excitement of overlapping talk, it became difficult to hear the students who were trying to speak individually during the teacher-led discourse. Moreover, it became difficult for Mr. Lehrer at times to effectively assume an improvisational role.

Later, during the teacher-led discourse, the following ensued, prompting Mr. Lehrer to further reify the author's craft to students:

> Monet: Why can't they say African American or Black? [undecipherable from Kiki and Taye]
> Mr. Lehrer: Listen, Jason was pulling language out of the book, that
> Taye: [rude intonation, that suggests verbal sparring] The book is foul too, Mr. Lehrer [undecipherable laughter].
> Mr. Lehrer: You have to listen to a full idea before you can respond to it. Jason was pulling a word out of the book that he heard yesterday and he got some of his details wrong. But the truth is that, Paul Fleishman, who made up Ana, very purposely put that word there because she is probably a 90 year old Romanian lady who would think that way. Perhaps the same way she would think prejudicially toward that little girl down in the lot, burying something, she's up to no good, right? So, it's just because an author puts something out there that seems objectionable, and I agree with you. Just because the author puts something out there, doesn't mean that the author is espousing that view. Or saying this is the right terminology. You understand that.
> Monet: Yeah, I mean, if a black person said something, y'all would be mad, too.

Reactions and facial expressions from Taye, Kiki, and Monet suggested that they were perhaps misreading the book's appropriation of Negro for the derogatory N***** word. Their exerted concern became a matter of counter storytelling, for they were giving a voice to a term they believe marginalized them, while being able to reflect on being a minority in a predominantly White setting. In addition, their act of solidarity to

challenge a term that was offensive to them was a cultural norm to them, but not pleasing to everyone else.

In an effort to further explicate Mr. Lehrer's point, Kim attempted to explain Ana's character. At the same time, she was attempting to explain why Jason should not have used the word, even if it was acceptable in the book:

Kim: Um, I agree with what you saying, that lady, she's like
Mr. Lehrer: Who's talking now? [Addressing students speaking over Kim—Rude laughter from Monet, Taye, and Kiki]. It should be Kim
Kim: I agree with what you said about what that lady said, because she's like born in 1915. She old, she probably don't get out much. Don't hear the words they got for Black people and stuff, like African American, but it ain't like he don't know what the word Negro means. Like Black or African American.
Kiki: When he said it [referring to Jason], he should have said or
Monet: He was like that Negro girl
Mr. Lehrer: Language changes over time, too, and sometimes people don't think they have to be politically correct. But, being politically correct means you're being sensitive to other people. So when language changes and we come up with better terminology that can describe anything, including people, I think we should acknowledge that, so I agree with what you're saying. But here's the other thing. This is the thing that this book is precisely aimed at making people think about. Exactly. This is exactly it.

Mr. Lehrer affirmed Kim's response, in an effort to convey to Taye, Monet, and Kiki, Paul Fleischman's craft of conveying a character's use of terminology. Mr. Lehrer and students were engaging in counter storytelling, in an effort to challenge and understand Ana's normalized dialogue, which was offensive to Taye, Monet, and Kiki. It was offensive to them, but also important to understand Ana's background, rooted in her appropriation of the term.

Mr. Lehrer's admission to welcome controversial, critical discourse could have ended the conversation there, until Lennie made comments that resulted in additional fury:

Lennie: Alright, one think I want to say, um, two things I want to say. One is, this is, what's the point?

Taye: [overlap, in a threatening manner, toward Lennie]You be quiet!

Lennie: I'm not gonna say anything. Can we just have Jason say sorry, and then can we move on instead of

Taye: [overlap] No! [additional voices chime in]

Mr. Lehrer: I will say this is not a waste of 10 minutes, because actually it goes along with what the book is supposed to bring up. Actually, it's probably better than other 10 minutes that we've had.

Helena: It's not Jason's fault [overlap of Monet, Taye, and Kiki].

Mr. Lehrer: If you have something to say, raise your hand and close your mouth. Taye, be quiet [laughter from Monet, Taye, and Kiki]. I want to point something out, and then I'm going to call on Jason. Helena, you said these word, it's not Jason's fault. And guess what, I agree, but here's the thing. I heard reaction to it, and I want to say this, we're not talking about fault right now, anyhow. I do not want someone coming out of here saying, oh, Jason, he said this, and it's his fault for saying it. Jason said something that is in the realm of the kinds of things that are spoken about in this book, and the language being spoken in this book is what we're dealing with. And actually, it led to a lot of interesting conversation.

Jason: Um, I didn't mean it against anyone, but, I just talked about Ana. I didn't mean it against any of you guys.

The fact that Taye became agitated was worrisome to Mr. Lehrer. Taye was deeply offended, and he felt, along with Monet and Kiki, that they were being denigrated and singled out, as if they were the only minority group in the class. Mr. Lehrer expressed worries that Monet's mother might misread the conversation, depending on her relay of information. A dichotomy became prevalent, for the act of having to be careful with a term such as Negro was regarded as a racist approach, but glossing over characters' thoughts did no justice to the character's authenticity. Mr. Lehrer referred to two students who accused him of being racist over the years, during moments when he expressed concern over their work habits. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged that he was struggling to live with how he should act with the class. Often times, he

admits to not feeling comfortable with them, for when he did not watch them closely or acknowledge wrong doing, they could easily get out of hand.

Taye had been in trouble outside of class for fighting, so another concern that resonated was Jason's safety after school. Taye's behavior can be noted by the fact that I observed him threaten students on two occasions, in and out of class, when it did not appear appropriate. During one occasion in the hall in early June, for example, Taye dropped his books on the floor. When a White male attempted to help him, Taye pushed him and verbally attacked him, as if he forced him to drop his books. During another occasion in class in mid May, Taye verbally threatened Brandy when she mistakenly bumped into him. When I addressed his harsh treatment of her, questioning if that was truly necessary, he became angry with me. Although Jason was not subjected to further scrutiny after this incident, my observations of Taye's anger management strategies suggested that Mr. Lehrer's worry for Jason's well being was reasonable.

Taye, Monet, and Kiki sat together during the discussion of the Ana chapter, which was not usual. Mr. Lehrer expressed reservations about the temporary seating arrangement, for seats were arranged in a U shape around the room's periphery, to allot for 8$^{th}$ graders' Shakespearean presentations in the middle of the room. This meant the desks were too difficult to rearrange into rows. The temporary seating meant that students would ultimately sit with their peers, so Monet, Taye, and Kiki sat together in solidarity, in a manner that Tatum (1997) suggests is common among African American students in predominantly White settings, who share common backgrounds and experiences. It also enabled them to challenge the contents of the book, in solidarity,

but in a manner that was uncomfortable for their classmates. Ordinarily, Kiki and Monet were assigned on opposite ends of the room, while Taye's seat was positioned in the row next to Kiki's. Perhaps their interactions would have been different, under normal seating arrangements.

Their comfort level to speak up when they have a problem suggests interpretive frames they bring from their own experiences. In this context, they were expressing their discomfort with what they perceived as antiquated and offensive race designation in a text. Also salient is the matter of the constant sidebar conversations. Such conversations, along with heated reactions from Kiki, Monet, and Taye were disruptive to discursive practices. This became a matter of enacting a cultural norm to interact in this manner, which was not pleasing to everyone else. However, it is possible to interpret these actions as heightened interest, resulting in students who were eager to reiterate or clarify what was happening.

Monet and Helena displayed differing viewpoints about this discussion during an interview at the end of the school year:

Mrs. Hill: In Mr. Lehrer's class, you've had opportunities to write, and read and talk about racism. I might say a lot more than your average class. I don't know if you agree with that or not, but I'd just like to know what you think about having those opportunities when those discussions happened?
Monet: It made me uncomfortable
Mrs. Hill: As uncomfortable as it is, you really did well and I was impressed with that.
Monet: Thank you.
Helena: I know we don't want to have this discussion anymore, I know maybe Jason made a mistake
Mrs. Hill: I'm sure he'll be more cautious in the future. I was worried about him after class that day.
Monet: I wanted to say that it was me, Taye, and Kiki. And Kim.
Mrs. Hill: There were some other people in my corner that I heard.
Monet: A lot of people were against us... The only people on him were me, Kiki,

and Taye. Everybody else was snobby and everybody was on us. There was more people on us than it was on him.

This excerpt reveals Monet's thoughts that she and her peers had been singled out. To her, it felt as if the group sided more with Jason than with them. Given Monet's perspective, along with the reactions of Taye and Kiki, it is possible to interpret that the class community was divided, between the Detroit students and everyone else.

Mr. Lehrer asserted during an interview that this discourse was important, based on his comfort level with confronting controversial issues:

Mr. Lehrer: I mentioned also that one of the things I learned through Mr. Rogers, that nothing should be unapproachable in terms of what we talk about. That's true. That doesn't mean you want to just throw anything out there, of course, anything you do, especially with a group, you have to be responsible, you use caution. Instead of saying, ok, we just read this, you say, what are your thoughts and observations and responses, you're opening up to the possibility that that might offend someone else

Mrs. Hill: I tried to convince Kiki and Monet that, they don't like talking about controversy

Mr. Lehrer: Not only that, but when you bottle them up, you don't talk about it and also, where does that bottled up anger come from? In an appropriate, healthy way that doesn't hurt someone else. I think they were comfortable in the group, even if they felt uncomfortable from each other.

Mrs. Hill: If that conversation had occurred when I was that age, I wouldn't have said anything.

Mr. Lehrer: Yeah, you're right, at that age, to be saying some of the things , like they said that one day, you know, especially that day.

This excerpt echoes that Mr. Lehrer welcomed controversy posited in critical race theory. He did not want topics to seem unapproachable and he wanted students to read and interpret critically.

It is important to note that Mr. Lehrer described students' actions as unsettled before class began, and during the reading of their district writing assessments.

Although several students were observed, ready to listen and participate, most were not, overshadowed by those who opted to continue their conversations with each other.

The fractured relationship between Monique, Taye, and Kiki and the remainder of the class resonated with the diversity problem that so many community members were not confronting in Oak Valley. Confronting controversy within the appropriation of counter storytelling and critical race theory in Mr. Lehrer's class split the class apart, and Mr. Lehrer was confronted with alleviating the tensions in his classroom. Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests that when a class is a community, there are times when the class experiences a downfall, but works together to restore the sense of community. Mr. Lehrer needed to be improvisational, and make instructional decisions that would bring the class back together.

Taye's initial reaction the day after the incident confirmed his belief that the book was "foul," which singled out Black people exclusively. The following teacher-led discourse pattern became a turning point for Taye, for his ideas about the book changed, upon discussion of Wendell, the only other White resident in the building who looks out for Ana:

Mr. Lehrer: In the first few sentences of the chapter, he mentions his son has gotten shot down, and his wife died in an accident. And that both of these things are reasons he doesn't like to hear the phone ring, because that's how he got word of those things. Moe.
Moe: He says he looks out for Ana.
Mr. Lehrer: He kind of looks out for her. He lives on the first floor, and she on the 3rd. He goes to see her. By the way, who lives in the rest of the building?
Taye: Black people [with a defensive intonation]
Mr. Lehrer: That's part of the answer. Phoebe?
Phoebe: Uh, Vietnamese people.
Mr. Lehrer: I'll read you a sentence from Ana's chapter [overlap, rude laughter]. Here's what she says. Now I see families from Mexico and Cambodia and countries I don't know. 12 people sometimes in one apartment. New

languages and shops down the street. These are people who move when they can like the others, I'm the only one staying. So I think the picture of her neighborhood and apartment building is that she sees it as multicultural. There are White people, there are Black people. There are various Asian nationalities. And so, you know, this is a real mixture of a lot of different kinds of people

Later during the conversation, Mr. Lehrer drew attention to Ana's labeling of Kim when she called Wendell to help her with the dying plants she dug up:

Mr. Lehrer: What did Ana say to Wendell about Kim? You might have noticed that. Did you notice it? (some mumbles) I'll read you the words. This is in Wendell's chapter. It says "What?, I yelled back. The plants, she said. I was mad." He was mad because she woke him up...she gave me some binoculars and told me all about the Chinese girl.
Mr. Lehrer: What were you gonna say about what I just said, Melissa?
Melissa: He's racist?
Lehrer: Is who racist? Why?
Melissa: Because he said she's a Chinese girl.
Mr. Lehrer: And what's wrong with that?
Unnamed: She's Vietnamese!
Mr. Lehrer: She's Vietnamese! She's Vietnamese! Did Paul Fleischman make a mistake? I don't think so. So how do you explain this. Violet?
Violet: Well, he probably thought that someone, if I thought, I probably would have thought she was Chinese, too.
Mr. Lehrer: Ana might refer to every Asian person as Chinese. Whether they're Filipino or Korean, or whatever. Little Chinese girl. So again, that gets us into
something, that he's trying to represent the character's way of seeing things.

Two pertinent matters emerged as a result of this discussion. Taye's initial response suggests that he was offended by Ana's use of the term Negro, along with Jason's appropriation of the term. However, the discussion of Wendell's chapter suggests that prejudice in *Seedfolks* espoused more than Black and White divisions. Perhaps Taye's experiences, coming from Detroit, resonate such tensions, particularly given his tense interactions with students in a predominantly White school. Ana used improper terms to identify other ethnicities, providing for Taye, Monique and Kiki an understanding that Blacks are not the only minority that face issues of prejudicial

treatment and labeling. The discussion about Wendell's chapter, therefore was an impetus to change Taye's perspective of *Seedfolks*. From that point, he never expressed negative feelings about the book. Melissa is a Filipino student. Hence, *Seedfolks* raised the issue of improperly labeling a person's ethnicity, and it became real for the African American students that they were not the only minority students who experienced it.

Ultimately, Mr. Lehrer's in-the-moment improvisation of counter storytelling and critical race theory suggests that it is possible to unlearn commonly held notions of prejudicial treatment and assumptions of race affiliation. The act of asking about other people who lived in the building became a turning point, perhaps for all students.

A beginning space for Taye to appreciate the novel occurred that same day, during the teacher-led discourse of the "Gonzalo" chapter, manifest in Tio Juan's newfound competence:

> Mr. Lehrer: He changed from a baby, and back into a man. He has reconnected with something that was meaningful to him. Taye.
> Taye: Is Tio Juan not smart?
> Mr. Lehrer: You know what? That's an interesting question, Taye, because imagine this, they said that when he was in this village he was old and respected. But when you take someone who has always known one thing, which is a small village in Guatamala, speaking an Indian language, not even Spanish, but a language not many people in the world even know. If you take that person, pick him up, and drop him into literally a whole new world. Could you imagine being dropped into a big city after 80 something years? This is a culture shock, isn't it? He is, literally, he knows almost nothing about what he sees around him. And so, in a sense, his knowledge is completely wiped out, until he sees a vacant land sees someone doing something that he knows, right?

Tio Juan's circumstances drew a parallel to Taye's experience. Mr. Lehrer's affirmation that Tio Juan was intelligent, in spite of not speaking English or indigenous

to Cleveland is relevant to Taye, who arrived at Barrington late in the school year. Taye speaks a variation of English that is valued at home, at the barber shop, and in the Detroit neighborhood where his father lived. However, his use of African American Vernacular English was deemed not intelligent by the dominant culture, and he is not indigenous to Oak Valley. Therefore, Taye's experience of being dropped into a middle school culture in an affluent suburb is culture shock. Fortunately, for Taye, Mr. Lehrer assumed competence, rather than a deficit approach, for he understands the nature of language varieties. By doing that, Taye was able to appropriate what he knew in Mr. Lehrer's class. Although Taye did not always oblige in accordance with Mr. Lehrer's directives, Mr. Lehrer always maintained high expectations of Troy, and everyone else.

Taye found a beginning space to appreciate *Seedfolks,* but Monet's sensitivity to labeling people continued to be a source of contention. During the read aloud of the chapter titled "Gonzalo," for example, one portion mentioned his fear that his father would become an easy target for a gang if he wandered off into the street alone. Mr. Lehrer noticed Monet's alarmed reaction, which implied offense that gang members were Black. It is important to note that gang activity among Whites was pertinent in *The Outsiders* and in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* and Gonzalo did not mention the race affiliation of gang members. In addition, Monet expressed during peer-led discourse with Moe the importance of not automatically jumping to conclusions. In spite of explicitly acquiring these notions, there was a space for Monet to exert feelings of contention.

Monet expressed her first visible liking for *Seedfolks* with the "Curtis" chapter in late May, perhaps due to his manner of speaking. Taye and Kiki were also attracted to this chapter:

> Mr. Lehrer: Curtis was an African American man that was kind of macho, right? And he had a friend named Lateesha [laughter and giggles from Kiki and Taye]. But Lateesha, it didn't work out too well between the two of them. And mostly because of Curtis, because, uh, he wasn't paying enough attention to her, she wanted to settle down, he certainly didn't, so what did she do, Monet?
> Monet: Cut him loose.
> Mr. Lehrer: Cut him loose, right? And, that was fine for Curtis at the time, so he went off to Cincinatti, but 5 years later he was more mature and wanted to settle down and move back to Cleveland and looked for her. She doesn't give him the time of day, though.

Furthermore, Taye likened himself to Curtis. When asked about his favorite *Seedfolks* character, he smiled and expressed to me that he liked Curtis because he could relate to his character, illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Mrs. Hill: Were there any moments when you found the reading, the writing, the speaking, relating to your background and your experience?
> Taye: Yeah. Curtis
> Mrs. Hill: You could relate to Curtis? How so?
> Taye: He was like. I don't know, he was just like a cool person to be around and stuff [laugher]

Hence, although Monet, Taye, and Kiki initially did not connect with *Seedfolks,* the multitude of voices, races, and ethnicities throughout the novel, and Mr. Lehrer's explicit attention to them, forged identity constructions they could relate to. A novel that they initially could not relate to became culturally relevant for them because Mr. Lehrer was improvisational and deliberated about connecting the characters to the students.

*Summary*

Chapter 6 documented numerous examples of what Lambert (1987) terms unintended consequences and unresolvable dilemmas embedded in peer and teacher-led discourse, which prompted Mr. Lehrer's on-going reflection, improvisation, and deliberation. Matters of unsettled behavior became problematic. In addition, there were occasions when African American focal students appropriated norms that Dyson and Genishi (2005) might suggest were embedded in their linguistic discourse, within in their interpretive frame, which was unpleasing to the class. Such matters impeded on collaborative, co-constructed discourse.

During any given dilemma, Mr. Lehrer made adjustments in an on-going manner to sustain what Cazden (2001) terms collaborative student responsibility and what Ladson-Billings (1994) terms equitable classroom relations. In many instances, his reactions to students fit Sawyer's(2004) notion of improvisational response to ambiguous queries to sustain discursive practices. His deliberation about grouping students for text set groups and on-going behavior modification illustrates his attempt to best meet the needs of his students, in a manner that resonates with Erickson's (1986) work.

Moreover, this chapter documents numerous examples of improved participation and behavior as a result of Mr. Lehrer's careful modification and intervention. In spite of documented improvement, he continued to negotiate between allowing students to assume responsibility or whether he should explicitly inform about expectations in a manner of accommodating them (Nieto, 2000).

Mr. Lehrer's discursive practices with *Seedfolks* illustrated the potential for discourse that posits critical race theory and counter storytelling to divide the students, as an unintended consequence. At the same time, improvisation within the realm of *Seedfolks* and determining student connections to the novel became a vehicle to reunite the group.

## Chapter 7: The Seedfolks—Connectedness, Self Efficacy and Professional Development

Morris (2004), Rose (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) assert the importance of fostering a connection with students, to sustain their sense of competence, self-efficacy, and achievement. According to Nieto (2000) and Morris (2004), there is a need for teachers to foster connectedness, community, and collaboration. Teachers who know students are indigenous to, or know intimately the communities they serve. Connectedness is posited in participating in activities in and out of school, and sustaining a strong community connection(Morris, 2004; Rose, 1995; Hilliard, 2003; Scheurich, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In chapters 3-6 I documented the manner in which Mr. Lehrer deliberated about best practices to teach all of his students in an improvisational manner, situated in a culturally responsive balanced literacy program. Students were regarded as important, and connectedness was sustained by pedagogically connecting their lives and the culture of the home.

This chapter will explore the manner in which Mr. Lehrer facilitated a connection with his students, personally, and pedagogically. Mr. Lehrer fostered a personal connection and participated in activities in and out of school that were important to students and became what Morris (2004) would term parentlike. Pedagogically, Mr. Lehrer provided opportunities to connect the culture of the home that is recommended by Heath (1983) and Delpit (1995), along with matters that are important to their identity. He drew from what Moll & Greenberg(1991) term funds of knowledge and maintained Ladson-Billing's (1994) notion of high expectations. This was embedded in discursive and reflexive practices and through written tasks. As a

former Detroit resident, Mr. Lehrer expressed a love for the city, was aware of its circumstances, and nurtured among focal Detroit students a sense of belonging. Additionally, he provided opportunities to build what experts in the field term student competency, self awareness and self-efficacy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Rose, 1995; Morris, 2004;Goddard, 2004), embedded in Decuir & Dixson's (2004) notion of critical race theory. In addition, students' self efficacy was nurtured when home language was valued in their writing (Delpit, 2002; Wolfram, 1999; Baker, 1999). Especially salient among Detroit focal students was the manner in which they understood that they were not the only students who spoke a deviation from standard English (Wolfram, 1999). Moreover, Mr. Lehrer supported students in a manner that espouses Sach's (2004) notion of positive self-ethnic identity.

Lastly, professional development that influences Mr. Lehrer's practice will be explored. Research suggests the need for professional development to consider teacher concerns, and to be on-going and relevant to the circumstances shaping the context and culture of the school, requiring support and guidance (Erickson, 1986; Ball& Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999; Anyon, 1997). Professional development options for exploration include what the district provides, development enacted as a teacher-researcher, and taking the time to reflect on his practice with a researcher (Erickson, 1986).

*Personal Connection and Knowing, in and Out of School*

Mr. Lehrer lived in Huntington, the neighboring suburb to Oak Valley. His daughters attended Oak Valley Schools and Barrington Middle School. In addition to sustaining a close connection with the Oak Valley community, Mr. Lehrer also

maintained a liking for Detroit, for he lived in Detroit for several years before moving to Huntington. He regularly attended Tiger games and posted Tiger memorabilia in the classroom. His on-going expression of loving the Tigers was conducive to his students knowing how much he loved the team.

In fact, opening day was regarded as a big deal and was widely anticipated by students. Lennie requested the game be turned on the monitor, to help him write his poem. This became a prompt, as if it were rehearsed to happen this way, to turn the Tiger's baseball theme song on the radio, which happened to be on a CD. He also had a stuffed Tiger, and wore an orange shirt with blue pants. A bag of Tiger peanuts was in hand, but for decoration only, because of peanut allergies, to the dismay of students. At one point during class, Mr. Lehrer turned on the TV monitor, to check the status of the game: Tigers 3, opposing team 0.

Mr. Lehrer exerted a positive attitude about the city and about urban settings in general. During one occasion when students were asking questions about their *Seedfolks* chapters, a topic was raised about limitations students had to write attitudes people have about others. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged living in Detroit for many years, and he loved it, although he did not live in a rough area where people had negative attitudes toward each other. He allowed students a space for referring to rough neighborhoods, in a manner that was similar to the novel, as long as they were careful not to offend anyone. Additionally, during an interview he expressed his personal connection to the city:

> "It's not just saying you're proud to be from Detroit, I lived in Detroit for a little while, but I've been mostly a suburban person, and I still feel like a Detroiter, I've always loved Detroit. People think I'm, what is your thing about Detroit? I love

Detroit. And I love so much about it, even with all its problems.... There are areas that I thought where I used to live on the east side in East English Village, all from there, there's beautiful areas. There's so much associated with that word, Detroit... That goes way beyond our area, Detroit has such a power of suggestion, people, even, beyond our nation. It's been so difficult for the city. Not just automobiles, but the importance during world war II, things happening culturally and racially, music, there are so many things about Detroit that are, intriguing to people, but I think the idea of what Detroit is. Some of the scary things associated with it. I've done that before in a concert in Toronto. Oh, where are you from? I'm from Detroit. And there is some kind of respect that goes along with that, or maybe it's me. And people back up, and they'll tell you their impression of it. That's an interesting topic on its own."

As a previous Detroit resident, and teacher of a growing number of students who recently lived there, Mr. Lehrer became a successful teacher of African American children because he was fully aware of the circumstances that shaped the city and a majority of its schools. At the same time, he loved the city. His awareness, valuing and knowledge of language varieties and cultural differences was conducive to successful teaching and to sustaining student self- efficacy. He identified the potential when students from Detroit arrive at Barrington and what teachers generally needed to tap into:

Mr. Lehrer: It brings so many multiple issues. Cultural, educational, conduct, that comes from typical behaviors, there can be wonderful things that come out of it, that's the thing. And, thank goodness, if it's approached right and if it's , I really think that if we have people making good decisions for these kids, about how to meet their needs, I think great things can come of it.
Mrs. Hill: Absolutely.
Mr. Lehrer: For everyone, not just those kids coming in but the ones here

Mr. Lehrer's statement suggests the importance of meeting the needs of all students. In addition, data suggests that taking the time to know students and to ponder about good decision making was salient in his practice. Recognizing the potential, rather than assuming a deficit approach was also important.

On numerous occasions, Mr. Lehrer was approachable to students for a variety of reasons. On a regular basis throughout the study, students would visit Mr. Lehrer's room after class or after school with a question, concern, or to share a personal accomplishment. Mr. Lehrer sustained a connection with students that was parentlike. Parents would regularly visit after school with questions and concerns. Because he taught in Oak Valley Schools for 18 years, it was common for parents to know him and for Mr. Lehrer to have taught older siblings. Parents would regularly comment that they were pleased with Mr. Lehrer, for he took the time to know their children. He also received accolades for the "Letter to Future Self" assignment. The secretary at Brownstone recalled her son who had Mr. Lehrer for English when he attended Barrrington. She noted the personal touch, upon receiving his letter in the mail when her son graduated from high school. She expressed that Mr. Lehrer was among the more memorable teachers when her son was in middle school. Ultimately, that he was well regarded and available to parents suggests a connection with the community he served.

One of Mr. Lehrer's students earned a space in the national spelling bee in grade 7 and 8, and Mr. Lehrer tutored the student on a regular basis after school during both years. Mr. Lehrer attended the spelling bee competition to provide support.

Mr. Lehrer would regularly attend Barrington sporting events after school, as a timer for volleyball games or basketball games. He also attended high school athletic events, where he was easily recognized by former students. On one occasion, Lennie attended a basketball game and sat with Mr. Lehrer for the duration, and Mr. Lehrer

assumed a parentlike role. Mr. Lehrer suggested that this was a good opportunity to bond with Lennie. Hence, Mr. Lehrer sustained a connection with the community.

Mr. Lehrer regularly attended choir and band concerts as well. On one occasion near the end of the school year, Mr. Lehrer likened seeing Helena during her performance to a vignette before class began one day. He enthusiastically noted her ability to spot her parents in the audience, in a sea of 600 people. Because approximately half of the students in the class performed also, they were given accolades, as he asked them to raise their hands. He acknowledged that he did not realize there was concert until that afternoon, after he assigned their homework. With that in mind, he gave students an additional day to complete a writing assignment. Mr. Lehrer affirmed student talents outside of class and committed to sustaining a connection with students.

When asked during an interview about the qualities that made him so approachable and welcoming to students and parents, he suggested that it was the nature of discursive and reflexive practices about meaningful topics:

> Mrs. Hill: What makes you so approachable? Every time I come to meet you after school there is a parent or a student.
> Mr. Lehrer: I smile (laughter). I think this is true. For the kids I believe, it is because, right from the start the very first day of the year we're involved in, put it this way, literature that involve important things about human beings, courage, I'm someone they can talk to about something. It's different if I were saying, ok, we're gonna do some long division or something. Or even if I said on day one, open up we're gonna talk about periods and commas, which is important in its own right, but I think I think there's that building of that connection right away.

Essentially, the on-going enactment of discursive practices about important topics

was conducive to students who felt a connection with Mr. Lehrer, from the onset of the school year.

*Opportunities to Build Competency and Self Efficacy within the realm of critical race theory*

The reading of the "Gonzalo" chapter in *Seedfolks* presented students with Gonzalo, whose family immigrated to the United States from Guatamala. The underlying context behind Gonzalo's family is the manner in which his father, Tio Juan, was a well respected and competent farmer in Guatamala, but became childlike in the United States. In contrast, Gonzalo has assumed the role of adult because he has been able to learn English and has assumed the role of translator for his father. Tio Juan does not find a sense of competence until he sees Wendell working in the garden, and transforms from being a baby to a man again. The discussion about Tio Juan provided for students an awareness of the fact that competence in gardening can be regarded as intelligence, and sense of competence during the middle of May:

> Melissa: Like, Tio Juan, he was like planting at the end of the chapter?
> Mr. Lehrer: Oh, yes, that's, I think the most important thing about this chapter. I love the end of this chapter because think about the end right now compared to something that was said earlier.
> Melissa: The chapter's over?
> Mr. Lehrer: Yes, the chapters are very short. Here's what it said earlier. It said, he, Tio Juan, wandered around the apartment all day, wandering in and out of rooms, just like a kid in diapers. Truly, imagine that, he had to be babysat. And now look at the end when the last paragraph of the chapter says, he poured them into his hands and smiled, he seemed to recognize them like old friends, watching them carefully. I recognize I didn't know about anything going through the net. He knew everything. I stared at his busy fingers. What a contrast to someone blankly watching the rooms of the apartment. Busy fingers. Then his eyes. They were focused, not far away or confused. And then that last wonderful sentence. He changed from a baby, and back into a man.

Gonzalo's chapter draws a parallel to the students from Detroit, who are automatically assumed as not intelligent or competent by many teachers when they enter Oak Valley. Although this discussion never led to that, that Gonzalo revisits something he was competent in, is a reminder of the fact that Mr. Lehrer identifies and builds on students' competence and funds of knowledge. Providing students with opportunities to utilize their linguistic differences in their writing, for example, provides them with a sense of competence. Hence, when students are not provided with such opportunities, their confidence becomes depleted, and it is difficult for them to exert their full potential and aptitude. Additionally, this chapter and discursive practices posit critical race theory by challenging the common assumption that non English speakers are not intelligent and giving a voice to the marginalized.

As aforementioned, this chapter became a beginning space for Taye to appreciate the novel, manifest in Tio Juan's newfound competence. Mr. Lehrer's affirmation that Tio Juan is intelligent undergirds the competence he assumes for all of his students, for Mr. Lehrer always maintained high expectations of Troy, and everyone else.

The "Amir"chapter raised the notion of crossing boundaries and deconstructing stereotypes, in a manner that resonated with issues that were emerging at Barrington and Oak Valley. Amir is from India, where he was among millions, but knew his neighbors. He could not say that here, in America, where the goal was to avoid contact. He felt this way until he came across the garden and began planting eggplants there. Gradually, compliments about his eggplants from neighbors who ordinarily would not speak was a force that drew them together. Their improved relations led to overcoming crime in and around the garden, in a manner they ordinarily would not enact. He

learned about his Polish neighbor who was a survivor of the holocaust. He also learned that Royce, the young teenage African American male who was initially feared, but ultimately revered and nurtured by the neighbors.

The harvest celebration the neighbors concocted presented another opportunity for him to overcome barriers with his Italian neighbor, who, a year prior, called him a dirty foreigner. Upon meeting him during this occasion, he gently reminded her of that fact, and she revealed with surprise that she did not know it was him back then.

After the initial read aloud at the end of May, Mr. Lehrer discussed with students the nature of the exchange between Amir and the Italian woman:

> Mr. Lehrer: Let's talk about the exchange between the Italian woman and Amir. What is that about? He says he remembers that a year earlier she came into the store and demanded to see him because she didn't get the proper change and called him a dirty foreigner. Now he reminded her of that. And her words are, back then, I didn't know it was you.
> Helena: Now that she found out he did that, now she, um, thinks it's all good.
> Mr. Lehrer: I don't know if she really knows anything about them, necessarily. Melissa?
> Melissa: She's prejudiced.
> Mr. Lehrer: She was, wasn't she? That's exactly what she was telling him. She was making her complaint and she started to talk to him, perhaps he had an accent, and was very dark skinned to her, and different, and she looked at him and called him a dirty foreigner. She knew nothing about him. But when she noticed his eggplants and was talking to him about those, and started to talk to him about those, and started to talk to him like family, now that she felt that she knew him. And that is exactly it. That prejudice means you doubt people. To act like I know something, even when I don't know the individual.
> Dave: When she said I'm sorry I didn't know that was you, wouldn't that be wrong to say that to somebody else?
> Mr. Lehrer: Absolutely. That's a great, insightful question. Because obviously there's no good apology or explanation for what she did, is there? And so hopefully by saying back then I didn't know that was you, hopefully she'll rise beyond that, for her and other people who need an awareness that there's something wrong with that.

Mr. Lehrer affirmed students' responses manifest in their acknowledgement and challenging of the woman's prejudicial treatment of Amir. A message that undergirds this discourse is the manner of people who must rise above making immediate assumptions about people they do not know. This facilitation of critical race theory engenders acknowledging and challenging the Italian woman's perception of Amir. Students were prompted to think about her expression about not knowing it was him, and why it would be wrong to make prejudicial assumptions about anyone. Conversations of this magnitude became a force that sustained a caring community of learners, engaged in discourse about complex topics manifest in race and racism.

"Florence" was the final chapter of *Seedfolks*. Florence identifies with her great grandparents, who walked from Louisiana to Colorado in 1859, as freed slaves who wanted to get away from cotton growing country. Her grandfather, father and siblings were born there, and the first African Americans, to which they called themselves Seedfolks. The growing comraderie of the garden was a reminder of her family, and she was saddened to see the fall-winter emerge, which resulted in the dwindling to absence of garden dwellers. By this point, anyone with a garden view had higher rent to pay, and it became the focal point of the community. The community was extremely protective of the garden and looked after it. Florence became a watcher, since her arthritis prevented her from tending to it. A Christmas tree lasted from December to March, and she worried that people might not return to it. Spring finally broke and she noticed a little "Oriental" girl she did not recognize, planting lima beans, with the man in the rocker overlooking and waving. The following discourse occurred, reifying the difficulty of the first year and the community that was forged at the end of May:

Brandy: It sounded like of all the chapters, in one year we see what's going on.
Mr. Lehrer:Yeah, you know what, and actually I think sides of what you said are true. They do go through a year. But what Florence does in her chapter, she makes references to how, years, we know the garden will be around for years, even though that first year was hard, because she says, I'm talking about that first year before there were spigots and hoses and tool shed and new soil and before landlords started charging more rent for the apartments that look over the garden. Right? So we know it's been around for awhile, and she's bringing that first year to a close. And brings us around to next spring.
Dave: Why exactly did the author title the book called Seedfolks?
Mr. Lehrer: Great question (overlapped complaining voices—c'mon, we know why it's called Seedfolks!)
Mr. Lehrer: Try to got a little bit beyond just what was said in the last chapter. What might be the significance of the name?
Violet: People in the book, uh, they're all seedfolks
Mr. Lehrer: Because there's a connection between what they're planting and so people...ok
Unnamed: Uh, maybe the people in the garden in the community
Mr. Lehrer: I think that's a good thought. I was saying in an earlier hour that this book is a lot about community. And Amir talks about that too, doesn't he? How it was such a community that they would help each other get tires out of the lot
Lennie: I wanted to say that they were all from different countries, they're all from different areas. And they come together.
Taye: At the end, when they was talking about seedfolks, uh, like, they started a garden. And she said that the people who became seedfolks started the garden.
Mr. Lehrer: She refers to the people who started the garden. How interesting that Florence said I think the people that started the garden are seedfolks.

Lennie's suggestion that they are all from different areas and they come together is perhaps the most insightful thing he contributed during the time of the study. In addition, Taye's suggestion that the people who started the garden, referring to the people from different areas builds on Lennie's idea. What resonated from their statements was the manner in which the class seemingly came together, as a culminating result of people who are seedfolks and the preceding text set novels.

The onset of *Seedfolks* raised tensions between African American students and White students, especially when Taye regarded the book as foul and Lennie deemed the controversial discourse incident as a waste of time, to the scrutiny of Taye. In addition to that dilemma, there were problems of practice throughout enacted practices. Similar to the community in *Seedfolks*, the community in Mr. Lehrer's class, who are from varying geographic areas, cultures, and races, faced a variety of tensions and dilemmas. Working together in an on-going manner, and unlearning stereotypes through discursive practices by negotiating problems of practice resulted in Mr. Lehrer's classroom community, which came together. Essentially, Mr. Lehrer sustained a commitment to fostering a classroom community and students' sense of self-efficacy. Mr. Lehrer's affirmation of student responses suggests implicit acknowledgement of the class's transformation and better understanding of each other.

During an interview, Mr. Lehrer revealed his nature of caring about social issues, as an impetus to facilitating controversial discourse:

> Mrs. Hill: What is it in your background that makes you comfortable having these controversial discussions in your class?
>
> Mr. Lehrer: Um, honestly, I suppose this comes down to, I think, even more than the teacher in the room. I don't, that's the way I am. These are the kinds of things I think about in my life, uh, I care about social things, I care about human things. I suppose the whole world does in a way, but, for instance, in 1989, what was going on in the Tiarenen Square, the guy in front of the tank, taking on the tank and what the Chinese government was doing to the people and oppressing them. You know, the truth of things. that's always been the kind of thing that's intrigued me, and care about, and what I want to learn about, the world, in art, in music. It's all of that is writing about important things
>
> Mrs. Hill: Like directly to social movements. Do you know the artist who wrote the song about the Hurricane?
>
> Mr. Lehrer: Hurricane. Hurricane Carter? That's a great example. Even with Dylan, that came out in the late 70s, that song, when that was going on. But when I was barely born, he was singing times they are changing. Songs like that, and paying attention to things like that, which is

> controversial, because you could just accept that it's this way, maybe there are things that are wrong about it, maybe there aren't, so I just think all of that is something that we should talk about .

Therefore, Mr. Lehrer's background and commitment to understanding of social movements and matters of social justice were worthy a foundation for facilitating discussion with students. Providing students opportunities to engage in discourse about controversial matters was not always comfortable. Addressing the discomfort in an improvisational manner, as Mr. Lehrer carried out with the *Seedfolks* chapters, was integral to challenging the way things are and to forging an understanding among students in the classroom community.

*Written Tasks that Foster Student Identity*

Students wrote poems that revealed who they were as individuals. Mr. Lehrer's previously mentioned enactment of poetry instruction that called for students to draw from matters in their own life resulted in a plethora of outcomes.

Dave, for example, illustrated his love for music by writing:

> "Who are they?
> Dire Straits.
> What do they do?
> Rock & Roll
> Their guitar is absolutely indescribable
> And their lyrics simply cannot be beat."

Dave expressed in another writing sample that he was obsessed with music. Poetry within the realm of his social world (Dyson, 2002) presented him with an opportunity to make a connection between his life and his writing.

Phoebe was deeply immersed in the "Friends" sitcom, and utilized this opportunity to write about its ending:

"Seasons one through ten were great,
they always make you laugh.
*Friends* ended in 2004
Farewell to *Friends.*"

I had the opportunity to speak with Phoebe about her poem and about the show. She proudly admitted to seeing every episode, and for as long as she could remember, the sitcom was a part of her life and defined who was. She was elated to have the opportunity to write a poem about something that meant so much to her within the realm of her social world (Dyson, 2002), hence, sustaining a connection between her life and her writing. It is important to also note that on a regular basis, she wanted to make sure she would have the pseudonym Phoebe for the study, for she likened herself to the character Phoebe from the show.

Kiki experienced a loss of a loved one before she started middle school, and she wrote more than one poem about it over the course of the school year. This sample illustrates the loss of her cousin Dana (a pseudonym):

"Is her heart still mine,
I want to cry sometimes
I miss you
Leaving Elementary that's when she left me
We were close friends also cousins did everything for one another"

Kiki conferenced with Mr. Lehrer on a few occasions during allotted time, indicating that she felt comfortable interacting with him about a loss that was a deep source of pain to her. She eventually found the courage to share the poem with me, and was confident that her cousin would have appreciated it. We talked about her feelings that it was hard to move on, although she knew Dana would have wanted her to do that. This writing opportunity presented for Kiki a connection with Mr. Lehrer, her writing, and her identity. Kiki often demonstrated a tough exterior and did not always appreciate

Mr. Lehrer's enactment of regularly reminding her to turn assignments in and to remain focused. However, she was appreciative of the opportunities to write and interact with Mr. Lehrer about issues that mattered to her. On the last day of school, she gave a letter to Mr. Lehrer, thanking him for helping her become a more confident writer, especially when she did not think she could succeed in that realm. In the same letter, she likened Mr. Lehrer to one of her friends during a yearbook signing, when she expressed that he would succeed in life. Ultimately, a caring classroom community nurtured her writing and fostered a sense of self-efficacy.

Participating in Honors band was an important part of Helena's identity, and she was dedicated to performing well. The following poem illustrates her disappointment with her band's low scores, in spite of thinking they had done well:

"Why—
Why did we get twos?
Judge number three gives us a one,
Sight reading judge gives us a two,
Final score two.
I'm disappointed,
Unhappy."

Mr. Lehrer was aware of Helena's connection with band, for, as aforementioned, he acknowledged her performance to the class, during an occasion when he attended a school concert. Helena's poem reveals that performing does not always meet her expectations, but also illustrates her commitment. Having the opportunity to express these thoughts in a poem forges a connection between her writing and experiences that matter to her.

Abe indicated his concern and disappointment about Detroit politics in the following integrated poem:

"The aquarium is the oldest aquarium in
America.
The mayor just had to say yes
To the city council's budget plan to keep it open
Until June 30th
He can say yes to a new Navigator with city money
But
He can't say yes to the aquarium
That supplies Detroiters with fun"

Abe's expressed disappointment with the closure of the Belle Isle Aquarium illustrates that he appropriated poetry as a vehicle to challenge a political system he did not agree with. Poetry writing became a space for him to assume competency to express his thoughts about the issue. Perhaps the activism and agency of characters in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* inspired him to challenge and problematize the mayor of Detroit's decisions. Encouraging students to challenge and read against current events is manifest in Ladson-Billings' (1994) work.

*Seedfolks* served as an impetus for students to write their own *Seedfolks* chapter, which called for them to figure out how they fit into the story. Because each narrator in the novel offers racial, ethnic, and national pride, students were invited to think about their own background. Mr. Lehrer encouraged students to tap into who they were, providing a sense of positive self ethnic identity. Before prewriting could occur, research was necessary, for they needed to include knowledge of their background in their story. This process embodied inquiring with parents, taking into consideration what students did not know already, in order to tap into their family heritage. Mr. Lehrer modeled an on line search with his classroom computer, by going to google.com and typing up keywords, "German heritage." The search divulged culture and life topics, and also illustrated the importance of the fact that Mr. Lehrer was aware of his

racial identity, in contrast to Bank's (1994) term, cultural encapsulation. The search was intended to take approximately 20 minutes, and students were told to jot down some ideas.

Students often lined up after class, and approached Mr. Lehrer with questions, artifacts, among other things. They would often approach Mr. Lehrer about matters they were not comfortable addressing in front of the whole group. After class on this particular day was particularly salient, for the nature of the *Seedfolks* chapter prompted visits from Melissa, Kim, and Monet.

At the end of class that day, Melissa privately told Mr. Lehrer that one of her ancestors was the president of the Philippines, but was banished, had to leave for another country, and died. Mr. Lehrer was fascinated by this information.

Monet and Kim approached Mr. Lehrer privately with concerns that they did not have internet access at home. Mr. Lehrer gently told them that they could search on one of the school computers during Advisory, which is 20 minutes, or during lunch. Because they could easily get permission to do both from teachers, these were viable options. Their request for assistance was assurance that they regarded this assignment as important.

The teacher-led discourse, surrounding student web search findings and family discussions led students to findings that Mr. Lehrer deemed important. This became the case, even when students did not believe their ideas were interesting at the end of May:

> Abe: We don't know if this is true or not, but um, my grandma said, I'm not sure if there's still royalty anymore, but my grandma said that if there's still a king and queen, I'm 490$^{th}$ to the throne.
> Mr. Lehrer: Ooh! As long as you're in the top 500, you know what that means from now on, we have to bow to Abe. King Abe! How did they co to 490? But someone else saying there's a connection between their family

and royalty. Kim.

Kim: My mom says that I'm part Spanish, Black, and White.

Mr. Lehrer: So you have a lot of uh, influences mixed together. And some really, wow, I'm thinking of those cultures. No wonder why you're so wonderful. Violet.

Violet: My grandpa told me that my great grandpa was part of the mafia.

Mr. Lehrer: Really? Violet, I didn't mean what I said to you last week, about the one thing you didn't turn in. (laughter) That's all done now, right? Ok, Helena, I'd like to hear from you.

Helena: My family is not that interesting.

Mr. Lehrer: No mafia stuff?

Helena: Everyone in my family is a French citizen except my brother.

Mr. Lehrer: I find that extremely interesting. And you were about 7 when you came here?

Helena: 6

Mr. Lehrer: Are you the first member of your immediate family? Like when you think of your mom and dad, they might have siblings. Do they have siblings?

Helena: Yes.

Mr. Lehrer: And you've gone back

Helena: Yes

Mr. Lehrer: Melissa

Melissa: My mom's dad is second cousins with the last president of the Philippines. And

Mr. Lehrer: Was that Ferdinand Marcos?

Melissa: Yeah.

Mr. Lehrer: Ferdinand Marcos, 2nd cousins? They did discover that he was not doing the best things for the citizens. I don't remember all the details, to tell you the truth, but

Melissa: He took money and abused it.

Mr. Lehrer: And that can be difficult, obviously because especially if there are people living in poverty. So poor, that he accentuated poverty. Ferdinand Marcos, Melissa, that's a name around the world that people know. You're related to someone who is one of the more famous people in the world. And he and he had a wife who really liked shoes. Like houses and houses of shoes.

Mrs. Hill: My mother's nickname is Amelda Marcos.

Mr. Lehrer: Amelda, that was her name. Whenever I found someone who just needed to get more shoes, I would say, Ok, Amelda.

Mr. Lehrer's affirmation of Abe, Helena, and Melissa's replies sustained students with a sense that their ideas were important. His acknowledgement with Melissa after class during the previous day gave her enough confidence to share her family history with the class. His affirmation of Helena's family provided her with a

sense that her family is more interesting than she thought it was. For Violet and Abe, comic relief affirmed that their ideas were worth noting. Essentially, Mr. Lehrer facilitated a comfortable environment for students to interact and share facets of their family heritage.

Additional discourse surrounding students' heritage is important to note:

Brandy: My great grandma was a one room school house teacher
Mr. Lehrer: Do you know where? A one room schoolhouse teacher.
Brandy: I'm not sure where. I have the information in my locker.
Mr. Lehrer: Do you have a general idea of where?
Brandy: I'm not sure.
Mr. Lehrer: That's kind of neat when you have relatives who had certain jobs. Kiki.
Kiki: Do you know people from Brazil? What are they called?
Mr. Lehrer: Brazilian
Kiki: Yeah, my great grandma, she was from there. I forgot what her name was, but I found that out, too.
Mr. Lehrer: Your great grandmother was Brazilian?
KiKi: She was not half, but like 30 per cent.
Mr. Lehrer: So you have some Brazilian in you. And that's where they have wonder Amazon rain forests. And the Amazon River goes through there. I am very interested in Brazil because some years back, my daughter, you know how you see those things about adopting a child?
Kiki: Mm hmm
Mr. Lehrer: She picked this little girl who was Brazilian. And so, we've been helping to support her and her village for a few years now. So we've done a lot of research about parts of Brazil where this girl lives. And then some things about the culture. That's where I'd like to live someday.
Monet: I found out that my great grandma was 100 per cent Indian and my great grandfather was 50 per cent Indian. And my grandparents moved here from Mississippi.
Mr. Lehrer: Moved here from Mississippi. Do you know when?
Monet: Like in the mid 1900s.
Mr. Lehrer: And what kind of Indian? Did you find that out?
Monet: Cherokee.
Moe: My grandfather said something about my great grandfather who had a high ranking in the army.
Mr. Lehrer: In this country?
Moe: I'm not sure.
Mr. Lehrer: I would like you to know that the kinds of things you wrote down

> there are definitely going to come in handy when you start to figure out, what are some of the specifics of the chapter I'm going to write? So you may not, there might be some things you don't need at all, and things you do use, so right not just be satisfied with that.

After class, Brandy was inspired to return to her locker and showed Mr. Lehrer a picture of her great grandmother with other school teachers in Barrington, Michigan from the turn of the century. Mr. Lehrer affirmed that this was a fascinating artifact.

Furthermore, for Kiki and Monet, Mr. Lehrer expressed interest in their ancestry, affirming for them the value of their heritage.

Providing students with opportunities to share their heritage in connection with the novel illustrates caring and taking the time to know and value students as human beings. He sustained for students a positive self ethnic identity and affirmed their cultural identities, in addition to his own German identity (Sachs, 2004). This was conducive to students, who felt comfortable seeking Mr. Lehrer out after class and sharing intimate details of their family history. Furthermore, these opportunities enabled Mr. Lehrer to know more about his students and their backgrounds, beyond his day to day interactions with them. Moreover, the discourse and nature of the assignment was a manner of viewing students as valuable and meaningful, integrating realities of their lives, experiences and culture into the classroom and subject matter.

By the time students gathered enough ideas, they were ready for pre writing their ideas. Mr. Lehrer provided them with a handout, which prompted them to write a fictional chapter in a fictional situation. Students were required to draw on elements they know about their own heritage, and incorporate that as they write their chapter. The first part of the chapter was a space for students to prewrite the setting, and students were encouraged to move beyond Cleveland and the garden because settings in the

book intersect with the garden. They were told to be mindful of describing the setting, to inform about what it looks like. They were also told to acknowledge other characters in the book, and how they fit into this. The narration needed to be in first person point of view. As for writing style, students were reminded to acknowledge the characters' voices in the chapters. Students needed to include a conflict, and Mr. Lehrer provided Wendell's example of his wife dying and Leona's taking a garbage bag to the city as notable examples.

Three chapters influenced students to seriously consider utilizing their language features in their *Seedfolks* chapters: "Leona," "Sae Young," and "Curtis."

Leona was one of the African American characters who is an activist and speaks African American Vernacular English. A golden rod was a source of comfort in her family. Her grandmother used it in tea, curing any ailment better than a doctor: "She drank down a big cup of goldenrod tea every morning, with a nutmeg floating in it, and declared she didn't need no other medicine" (p.18). When she noticed all of the people on the vacant lot , planting and working, she recalled the lack of city services in the center city. She exhibited more activism than any of the characters mentioned. Seeing the action in the lot prompted her to go to the city downtown to complain about the litter. To make her presence real, she went to the city offices downtown to complain about the litter, and brought a bag of it. In this manner, she was waited on immediately, without having to wait. In spite of wanting to contribute to the garden, she wants the city to take its part.

When Mr. Lehrer read that she had Miles on the CD player as she noticed the vacant lot, which was hardly a vacant lot, he asked the class to indicate if they knew

what that meant. Nobody knew and thought he might be a singer. Mr. Acknowledged that he has few of his jazz CDs. Leona's activism to challenge the city's negligence, along with her dialectical features validated for students the value of writing the way they speak and appropriate their voices in their *Seedfolks* chapter.

As aforementioned in Chapter 3, Taye, Monet, and Kiki especially liked the "Curtis" chapter. Mr. Lehrer pointed out, that similar to
Sae Young's chapter, there were features in the writing that students were expected to carry out. Curtis had a macho style. In addition to Lateesha "cutting him loose," other phrases that incorporated his macho style and elements of African American Vernacular English included expressed sentiments that he was trying to win her back and change his ways: "I was showing Lateesha that just cause I got muscles don't mean I'm some jungle beast (p. 43)." Curtis wanted Lateesha back and attempted to entice her by planting tomatoes across the street from her window in the garden. When someone began stealing them, he hired Royce, a teenage African American male who was sleeping there because his father threw him out. In reference to Royce, "Royce was like that. Except that he didn't want nobody knowing he was there" (p. 44).

Because a great deal of attention was devoted to Sae Young 's language features, Monet was inspired after class to express concern with Mr. Lehrer that she writes more proper than how she talks. Although this example was mentioned in Chapter 3 for acknowledgement of opportunities to write in non standard forms, this example is pertinent as an illustration of connectedness and knowing. Certainly, Mr. Lehrer's acceptance of appropriating her voice is a space to acknowledge dialectical differences and sustaining a voice, within the parameters of a formal assignment, while also

acknowledging appropriate contexts to preserve home language that is intimately connected with the child. Mr. Lehrer was therefore acknowledging students' cultural literacy traditions, as a manner of building on their cultural linguistic resources and strengths.

At the same time, that she is comfortable asking this question, suggests her ability to negotiate her identity and background, within the context of the dominant culture. She regarded her speaking as not proper, and sustained a clear notion of what was regarded as proper and not acceptable and valued for school. Monet's question espoused the underlying thread in *Seedfolks*, for characters' voices are manifest in the writing style. Mr. Lehrer acknowledged her sophistication:

> Mr. Lehrer: Yeah, Abe and Monet asked about voice of their narrator for the chapter and I thought that was very insightful. It wasn't something I had raised as a topic, I did say pay attention to style and voice, but for them to get it down to that, you know, 7th graders, asking about using proper language or giving that dialect.
> Mrs. Hill: Monet talked about her mom who told her to speak more proper, and we talked about that, so she certainly knows. She's able to talk about it at such a young age. I told her she was smart and she smiled a little bit
> Mr. Lehrer: Well, you know she knows she is, she really goes at a different speed, her own
> Mr. Hill: Right, and I think she is aware of having to write in the standard form
> Mr. Lehrer: and of course there are times you do have to, and there are times you don't have to.

Ultimately, Mr. Lehrer's openness led to writing samples provided influences of students' background and/or language features. In addition, many of the drafts accounted for characters, events, and features that were prevalent in the novel. Melissa's chapter explored her Filipino culture in her chapter titled "Rose:

> "Ever since I moved here from the Philippines, my life has been so quiet. When I was back in Ilocos, Everybody was so lively. We'd always have fiestas, and every Christmas, we'd go to the Rizal Day party. Now that I am here in Cleveland, everything has been so

Quiet."

Her chapter posited connectedness and knowing, for she was able to sustain a positive self identity, and Mr. Lehrer viewed her story as valuable and meaningful.

Helena's chapter describes vegetables in a manner that is soothing to her French culture, and, as aforementioned, she utilizes French as a foundation for the accent that is prevalent in the English:

> "I walk to the store and try to look for some fresh tomatoes, onions, olives to make a gateau au olive. This is French meal. Back where I live in France, our family loves to make homemade food. My husband, Patrick likes to come home to a nice cooked meal. I try to look for fresh fruit and vegetable until I find a place to grow my own food. Patrick likes to garden too; he's a very good gardener. In France we used to have a little garden in our backyard"

For Helena, writing this chapter fostered a deep connection with her culture, and a strong sense of self-ethnic identity . Moreover, it is important to note that Mr. Lehrer affirmed for Helena that her culture and heritage was interesting when she expressed that it was not. Also salient about Helena's chapter was that she wanted to know if was acceptable to write about a parent. In early June, Mr. Lehrer referred to Tio Juan, as a parent in the novel, to suggest acceptance. On one occasion after school, Helena's mother visited Mr. Lehrer and her language features detected French as her native language. Helena's integration of a parent, along with her mother's voice, became a distinct feature in her chapter.

Brandy's chapter was titled "Pam" and she wrote a chapter that was influenced by her great grandmother, who was a one room schoolhouse teacher. Her chapter described a dilemma she was having with students who were not getting along with each other:

"I did not know what to do about the situation. One day, when I was walking back from work thinking about the problem at school. I was trying to come up with a solution to the problem but could not come up with something to fix the problem. Just when I was saying there is nothing to do about the problem I walked right past the garden and saw a strong man planting tomatoes and women look out the window at him so I taught it was for her. That's when it hit me I could come and bring the children here to plant strawberries or something. I could pair them up in threes so they could work together to help plant and grow thing. Molly and Zach could be together with me so that they would have to be nice to each other when they are growing their plants. So the next day I put the class in groups of three's and Zach, Molly were put together."

Writing this chapter provided Brandy an opportunity to connect with and explore her ancestry. Brandy took pride of the fact that her great grandmother was a teacher in a one room schoolhouse, so this task fostered a feeling of self efficacy.

Kim's chapter, titled "Kimberly" described inviting her friend Monique to help her plant tomatoes, melons, and cucumbers, and her troubles with a person in the apartment who was littering on her plants. In her manner of speaking, her style of writing was exaggerated to prove her frustration:

"A couple of weeks later when my tomatoes were a dark green color, more trash was thrown out that same window and it looked as if the person who owned all that trash had dumped their cans directly on ALL of MY plants I was so mad I took my phone out and called the police right then and there"

Having the opportunity to appropriate her voice in the manner she would say it is a manner of acknowledging her ethnic self-identity. Her exaggerated intonation and diva stance embedded in her home language was regarded as a linguistic strength (Delpit, 1995; Cazden, 1999) and Black Artful Teaching (Meier, 1999), hence resonating with the writing style of Terry McMillan.

Monet and Kiki did not finish their*Seedfolks* chapters, but commented on being able to write about their identity:

> Monet: So you're saying when we write about our ethnicity.
> Mrs. Hill: Right. What really stands out for you. Do you want to speak about your Seedfolks chapter?
> Monet: I didn't even do it.
> Mrs. Hill: You didn't do it?
> Monet: I'm not finished with it, but I was glad to write about my ethnicity
> Kiki: Yeah, me, too!
> Monet: To let people know where I come from. Because, I want you to know, uh, this was where I came from
> Kiki: This is me!
> Monet: Right.
> Kiki: This is me!

For all *Seedfolks* chapters, a connection and sense of knowing is embedded in Mr. Lehrer, who was able to sustain an enhanced knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds.

*Seedfolks* chapters additionally illuminated background and language features espoused in the notion of connectedness and fostering self-efficacy. As aforementioned, Kiki did not turn in her *Seedfolks* chapter. However, her writing sample that was not selected for submission for the district writing test provided for Mr. Lehrer a more in-depth look and awareness at her thoughts and feelings of being a student from Detroit in Oak Valley, away from Detroit:

> "I'm still tryin to fit in with the school because I'm still a girl from the ghetto. The struggle and hard times. I don't know if I will be fine. But I don't care what people say because this is me. My mother, sister, and brother changed when we moved here. But I'm still the same...I don't feel like I belong here. I need to go somewere I can fit in...I know who I am"

This writing sample was not selected for submission as a standardized test, because the test called for standard conventions. Therefore, Kiki's submitted draft was

considered the best of two because it was more conventional. However, her appropriation of exploring and negotiating her identity as a minority within the culture of an affluent school is espoused in critical race theory. Her decision to write about her commitment not to change suggests that these issues are at the forefront of her thoughts, and preserving her identity was of utmost importance to her. It also provided for Mr. Lehrer a better understanding and knowing about issues Kiki was experiencing. Her mannerisms are manifest in the habitus (Wilson,1996)of working class African Americans from Detroit: loud talking, verbal sparring, and speaking African American Vernacular English. Choosing to preserve her identity usually conflicted with students at school, making it difficult to fit in. According to her writing, she wanted to be in a place where her mannerisms would be more accepted. During an interview, she revealed:

> Kiki: I've been going through a lot of ups and downs because people here say that oh my god, look at how ghetto she is.
> Mrs. Hill: To you? Or you hear them saying it about you?
> Kiki: It really doesn't matter, because like, I said, this is me. Some people, like last year,but right, it doesn't matter... This year I started to fit in more with the white people because I start talking, like whew,and they start to say some of the stuff I say, like you would hear them say it, and it made me feel good, looking at them, that they might say like the words I use.You would hear them, Kiki's saying skillet biscuits
> Mrs. Hill: Skillet biscuits?
> Kiki: It's just a really funny word. But you would hear them say it and that made me feel good, that I don't have to change who I am that they understand who I am
> Mrs. Hill: so you get along better with people when they understand who you are, rather than saying oh my goodness, she's so this, she's so that
> Kiki: Last year I was just so into getting into everybody but this year I think like who I want to be

During the same interview, Kiki and Monet described their awareness of preserving their identity and speech patterns. They were also aware of the broader society and the manner in which people perceived them:

Mrs. Hill: So when you're in a classroom and when you're writing you know how to write formal and
Monet: Right, I write formal
Kiki: But it's different for me because when we moved over here my mother, my sister, my brother they were all changed, but it's hard for me
Monet: I didn't change at all
Kiki: Like my whole family changed when we moved over here
Monet: I won't change my way of speaking. I would use better words, but I wouldn't try to change
Mrs. Hill: But you do have to speak more formally at a job interview. I think we all have to give up who we are when we go to a job interview, when I say I'm gonna do this or I wanna do that, I can't say that at a job interview. I have to say I'm going to do this or I want to do that
Kiki: My mom says when you go to a job interview, they might not see you but they can look at your name and like tell if you're Black
Kiki: You know how your name could be Shalonte
Monet: Or Shequinte
Kiki: Yeah, and they'd know she's Black
Monet: If somebody saw my name on paper on an application and then saw me in person they'd be like, oh no, this is not right!
Mrs. Hill: There's everything right with who you are
Monet: I think so

During a teacher interview, Mr. Lehrer mentioned Monet, who expressed deep feelings about being torn between Oak Valley and Detroit:

Mr. Lehrer: Monet wrote something, it might have been her essay, I think, about how sad she is that she ever had to leave there. So that's another thing, you see people who come from Detroit Public Schools or wherever they come from
Mrs. Hill: against their will?
Mr. Lehrer: Yes, because their parents wanted it. And they left a place they had some pride in. They left a lot of friends they felt comfortable with and were really their friends and now they're around people that seem so different from them. It's interesting because that's another layer of it. It's not just necessarily the students' choice, it's the parents
Mrs. Hill: It's the parents' choice in a lot of cases.
Mr. Lehrer: And certainly there are kids that are really glad, too, and in Monet's case,

she has a lot of friends. You watch her out in the hall and you'll see

Mrs. Hill: But she still has that connection with where she came from

Mr. Lehrer identified a student from his class that I observed during the previous year:

"And who else from what you remember? You remember Evelyn from last year? She wrote some things about being torn between where she was now and her old friends and neighborhood".

Cited students therefore, felt a sense of belonging in Mr. Lehrer's class to express their mixed feelings in their writing. Because of that, he was aware of the circumstances that shaped their experience at Barrington.

Mr. Lehrer additionally noted the complex matters of students who continued to identify with Detroit:

> Mrs. Hill: I think it's harder when you get older and go to college, I remember, if you were Black from Southfield it wasn't the same as if you were from Detroit. Don't say you're from Detroit when you're not. And we were the soft Detroiters but we were from the more affluent. They'll probably have to contend with that. Oh, you're from Oak Valley, you're not Black enough, you don't count.
>
> Mr. Lehrer: That's a real issue. That's interesting if you look at identity, that aspect of identity, so many from the black community do promote, and so many that do not. There are so many who speak out. I'm intrigued by what Bill Cosby, just as a person with clout to say things recorded and written down and you can read in newspapers or whatever, his, the way he promotes the idea of being an African American in the society of today. He very much tries to break off from that idea of where you might identify yourself with, hey, I'm from the innercity, tough, murder capital of the world maybe, I come from, I really have come from the experience of our people, but you were in Oak Valley! It's probably from a complex psychological study, you ask why people define themselves, not just pride of where they come from, but wanting to be associated with those characteristics of the innercity, maybe an impoverished area or an area with a high crime rate, or whatever...But, it has so many problems. I don't understand why, it's interesting to look at why people want to be associated with those aspects of inner city life.

Mr. Lehrer, therefore, was aware of the complex factors shaping students' perceptions of who they were, and the sense of Detroit selves they were determined not to

abandon. To sustain this understanding of students' background and allowing them to express their identity in their writing additionally suggests a connection between Mr. Lehrer and his students.

Mr. Lehrer additionally acknowledged Kiki's assertion to maintain who she is, but acknowledged a discord with behavioral expectations and his efforts to raise her awareness of expected behavior:

> Mr. Lehrer:That's a challenge. I think their behavior is not where it should be, what's appropriate. For instance, Kiki, who, again, I really like her, but she literally will just talk the whole hour.
> Mrs. Hill: If she could, she would?
> Mr. Lehrer: Probably no one in particular and everyone in particular. I mean, it's just a running commentary. Even though I've told her a million times this year, on a level that is certainly not something she'd like, she doesn't even know she's doing it because I'm pointing it out. But it is who she is.
> Mrs. Hill: She talked about who she is, too, and not willing to really compromise who she is, and having a hard time because who she is
> Mr. Lehrer: she just goes about her business even though some of the ways she has, those ways don't translate necessarily to the class, because she constantly, and of course, she can, everyone can, and it's really a challenge.

It is also important to note that Kiki was a nickname she only allowed few people to address her by, which included family and close peers. Mr. Lehrer was among the few teachers she felt enough of a connection with to call her Kiki. Moreover, he was among the few teachers she would reveal many of her deep thoughts to through her writing.

Kiki and Monet's connection with Detroit and internal conflict about not changing may provide insight, surrounding their decision to not turn in their *Seedfolks* chapters. To begin with, it is possible to interpret that turning in assignments and being high achieving is aligned with Ogbu's (2003) findings among African American students' refusal to turn in work, due to their perceptions of "acting White". For

Monet and Kiki, it is possible to interpret that acting White and turning in all of their assignments meant changing who they were. Monet and Kiki were entrenched in preserving their identity, and vocalized often that they were not interested in changing.

Given the nature of what students revealed about their culture and ethnicity in their *Seedfolks* chapters, it is also possible to interpret that in spite of revealing much about their backgrounds on many occasions, they did not have enough trust in Mr. Lehrer to submit thoughts that divulged too much in-depth treatment about their families. This notion aligns with Ogbu's (2003) argument of student discomfort when an assignment risks too much openness. On the other hand, in spite of their admission that they welcomed having the opportunity to inform about who they are in their writing, it is possible to conclude that they might sense that they should not have to be told that it is acceptable to write the way they want to. These reasons for resisting the *Seedfolks* chapter are merely speculative. Whatever the reason, their choice to not submit their work presents the potential for future research from the perspective of students, regarding why they did not turn in assignments.

The "letter to future self assignment" is Mr. Lehrer's trademark task. It calls for students to acknowledge their grade 7 selves, elements of pop culture that defines them, their clothing style, appearance, interests and so on. The task is intended to be handwritten, so that by the time it is mailed to them by the end of their senior year in high school, they are able to reflect on their handwriting, and the aspects that defined who they were when they were in grade 7. As aforementioned, students were required to acknowledge the formal letter writing format, while applying their varying

topics into paragraphs. Connectedness and knowing are posited, for students are tapping into facets that define their identity.

For example, Jack acknowledged important people in his life:

> "There are many important people in my life right now. I will start with my parents, who helped me get up to this grade and helped me through the rough times (though they still sometimes can be annoying)! I will also have the pleasure of mentioning my best friends at this age and grade... My first and still best friends are Jason and Stan (pseudonym)"

Jason wrote the following, in acknowledgement of important people in his life:

> "My mom and dad for always being there when I'm sick, have a sports game, and much more. My friends are Stan and Jack; without them I wouldn't survive in school. They make me laugh a lot!"

Mr. Lehrer was aware of Jason and Jack's close friendship. Their close friendship, which transcended racial boundaries, was one of the reasons Mr. Lehrer understood that Jason's miscue with the word Negro during the controversial *Seedfolks* discourse. He knew that his appropriation of the context was from the text, not intended to offend anyone. That both students acknowledged their close friendship in their letters is a matter of fostering a connectedness through writing.

Kiki tapped into her family relationships over the course of the school year:

> "A lot has changed in my life. I have built a relationship with my father. I have met new friends and lost some as well. I fell madly in love with the singer Omarion." Moreover, her future aspirations were salient: "In the future I see Kiki as a graduate student from Spelman University, pursuing my dream of being a lawyer."

Especially salient for Monet was her mother's upcoming wedding, which she enthusiastically told Mr. Lehrer about:

"So many people are in my life: my mom, Donald, my family and some special friends. My mom is special because she is what I have and I love her. Donald is going to be my step dad in sixteen days, and he's important because he's just Donald. Some stuff has happened this year. My mom is getting married in sixteen days, and I'm her matron of honor."

This letter was important to Monet and she frequently spoke to Mr. Lehrer about it during the drafting phase. She was comfortable enough to let him know that her father died when she was very young, and she anticipated having a step father.

For Kiki and Monet, writing about personal matters of single motherhood suggests that Mr. Lehrer sustains a welcoming environment where writing posits a connectedness with students. Perhaps Kiki and Monet's closeness was also a result of having in common the fact that they each had shared histories of being reared in single mother households.

Taye described his personal appearance by writing:

"I am writing a letter in Mr. Lehrer's sixth hour class. Right now I am 5'1" tall and always have my hair cut. I just got braces and I dress really nice (designer clothes). My hair color is black and it is very wavy. I weigh 120 lbs., and my shoe size is a 10. These are things that when you see me, you would notice...As for things he enjoys: "These are some of the things that I enjoy doing. Mostly I like to go outside and play basketball. I played for a football team. I played for a basketball team. My favorite food is anything with chicken in it. My style of music is rap and r and b. They have a nice sound to them. They are poetry."

Dave acknowledged aspects of his social world:

"Right now I am obsessed with skating and music. I have an Element and Almost decks, I love them both like a man loves his first car. I love music too. The bands I listen to know are: Black Sabbath, the Doors, Queen..."

Phoebe also included salient aspects from her social world that define who she is:

"I just finished my favorite book; it's called Best Friends for Never. I guess I like it so much because it relates to our everyday life. I am really into the sitcom

Friends right now. It always makes me laugh, even when I am in the worst mood.

Violet also included aspects of her social world:

"Some of my favorite things are fantasy books, such as Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, and Eragon. I like movies like Anchorman and Napolean Dynamite, while my favorite TV shows are Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel, and Charmed. I love to play volleyball but I have running...I love punk and rap music. My favorite rap singer is Eminem and my favorite punk band is Bowling for Soup."

Taye, Dave, Phoebe and Violet were among students who provided clearer distinctions of their social worlds in their writing. Divulging their interests reveals another aspect that espouses the diversity in the class, and the manner in which an interest to sustaining a community transcends boundaries. Providing opportunities to write about their social worlds (Dyson, 2002) in school espoused matters that defined students' identity, and provided for them a connection between their writing and their own lives.

*Professional Development that Influences Mr. Lehrer's Practice*

Data suggests that Mr. Lehrer has enacted transformative pedagogical changes, which requires on-going deliberation and decision-making. Oak Valley Schools provided professional development that complemented Mr. Lehrer's practice. Especially salient was a workshop that informed about the Book Club Curriculum Framework, a 6+1 Writing Traits workshop and a Diversity workshop. Research suggests the need for professional development to align with teacher concerns, and to be on-going and relevant to the circumstances that shape the context and culture of the school, requiring support and guidance. These workshop opportunities were relevant to

circumstances in the school, but problematic was the fact that they were offered on one occasion, with the exception of the diversity workshop, which offered limited availability and slots. In spite of limitations, Mr. Lehrer utilized references that were provided by workshops and followed up by integrating newly acquired pedagogy into existing parameters of practice. In addition, Mr. Lehrer sought his own resources to transform his practice.

The Book Club workshop was offered during a scheduled district wide meeting for middle school English teachers and spanned approximately one hour. The workshop occurred during the 2001-2002 school year. The presenter was a teacher in the district, and the text *Book Club for Middle School* (Raphael, et al., 2001) was provided for all teachers who attended. Although teachers had the autonomy to revisit a source that provided an in-depth description of implementation, there was no on-going support to share and reflect on implementation, problems of practice or success, as recommended by Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George (2001). Mr. Lehrer drew from the reference on his own to inspire the on-going plethora of written literature-based prompts and peer-led discussion groups, posited throughout documented data. Raphael, et al., (1995, 2001) recommends applying strategies in a manner that fits existing practices, which is exactly what Mr. Lehrer did. My role as a researcher became what Mr. Lehrer regarded as a source of on-going reflection as he negotiated practices and determined what worked well and what required modification.

The 6+1 Traits of Writing workshop was offered as an all day workshop for the district's middle school English teachers, where presenters were from out of the district. However, teachers regarded the information as valuable, and the premise for

the pedagogy was embedded in the mandated standards. 6+1 Traits offered teachers strategies to apply the varying traits as they were pertinent to writing instruction. Traits included voice, fluency, word choice, ideas, organization, and conventions. The additional trait, hence the +1 called for presentation, meaning that it was neat, fully edited and revised. Teachers were provided with a comprehensive package that they could revisit, and Culham's (2002) book, *6+1 Traits Writing Assessment* was available for purchase and in the district's staff development library. Data suggests that elements of 6+1 Traits were weaved into instruction, within the realm of the workshop approach and varying genres. Expectations for an errorless draft across written genres was embedded in the presentation component, along with and conventions; the notion of voice was espoused in the *Seedfolks* chapter, poem, and Letter to Future Self; word choice was conducive especially to the *Seedfolks* chapter, given the aspect of finding the word to depict the narrator's voice. Fluency was particularly evident across all opportunities to draft and in the writer's notebook.

In an attempt to address growing diversity concerns among teachers, Oak Valley Schools, in partnership with a corporation, devised a series of diversity workshops. The monthly workshops were available with limited slots after school, so they were not available to everyone. However, a major districtwide workshop was available to high school and middle school teachers during a district mandated half day. The nature of the presentation was similar to what was offered during the after school series. It was well intended, but the partnering corporation provided for the district the same workshop format that it provided for its employees. A presenter performed a skit, manifest in diverse people and their experiences of being prejudged. The presentation

was a quality, thought provoking enactment, according to Mr. Lehrer and other teachers who attended. Mr. Lehrer, however problematized the impersonal question and answer session that followed, noting that it would have been more relevant to teachers, had they been able to break up into smaller groups to discuss their concerns and observations. The high school auditorium audience was too large to address personally. When teachers began asking questions in response to circumstances relevant in their schools, the performer, as an outsider to the district was unable to address them.

The district has good intentions to address matters of diversity, for the intent was to raise awareness. But it is fragmented from the parameters of classroom practice and matters that concern teachers. Also problematic is that it did not address teacher concerns of unlearning beliefs about perceived language deficits of students, in an on-going, reflective manner that was embedded in the work of Flores, et al.(1991) . Nor did it offer the benefits of an on-going book club of multicultural literature to unlearn assumptions of students from varying backgrounds, espoused in the work of Florio-Ruane (2001) and Flood et al.(1995).

Teachers must unlearn their own bias and recognize their own ethnocentrism (Banks, 2004) before transformation can occur. Additionally, transformation cannot occur without a true understanding of taken for granted assumptions and a better understanding of the circumstances that shape the context (Anyon, 1997).

In spite of limitations with the existing diversity initiative, Mr. Lehrer is fully aware of the hand in history and the circumstances that shape the conditions of Detroit Public Schools and consequent changing demographics at Barrington. According to Anyon (1997), this is a necessary component for teachers to transform their practice.

Mr. Lehrer understands the circumstances of increased diversity and is conscientious of modifying pedagogy in an effort to teach all of his students. He is fully aware of the community outlook on demographic changes, and avoids interacting with members who exert negative sentiments about it. Ultimately, the diversity workshop, aside from heightening awareness, did not influence Mr. Lehrer's pedagogical decisions that posited critical race theory. Transformative practices, within the realm of addressing diversity, matters of prejudicial treatment, and codeswitching pedagogies was based on his own volition.

In addition to professional development opportunities required by the district, Mr. Lehrer sought resources on his own to influence his teaching. Mr. Lehrer sought writing opportunities that provided relevant and meaningful contexts for writing. For instance, Atwell's (2004) work influenced the poetry enactment, and data suggests that he drew explicitly from that to determine that a poem is manifest in every aspect of a person's life. The writer's notebook, as a tool to lead a writerly life, in the context of everyday experiences was manifest in Calkin's (1990; 1994) work. The on-going workshop approach was manifest in Calkins (1987) *The Writing Workshop,* Calkin's (1994) *The Art of Teaching Writing,* and Atwell's (1987) *In the Middle.*

An additional form of professional development was mandated by the No Child Left Behind Legislation, which called for changes demanded by reform visions that rely on teachers (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Spillane, 1999). This professional development component is intended to be provide teacher autonomy and was on-going, but teachers had concerns that current meetings did not define optimal professional development (Borko, 2004). For the duration of the 2004-2005 school year, teachers

met during districtwide and department meetings to align the existing curriculum with the standards embedded in the Grade Level Content Expectations, but there was expressed frustration that teachers were not receiving administrative support. Mr. Lehrer claimed that revisiting and studying mandates confirmed for him that much of what he was already doing was manifest in the changing curriculum.

Lastly, Mr. Lehrer welcomed my role as a researcher. He regarded working with me as a professional development opportunity to reflect on on-going dilemma management (Lambert, 1987), practices that worked well and on determining decisions that required further deliberation. An on-going support system was integral to discussing problems of practice and determining that most students were benefiting from pedagogical decisions. By taking a longer look at in-the moment occurrences (Erickson, 1986), there were benefits of reflection that was constructed between teacher and researcher and benefited his practice. We exchanged dialogue to focus on similarities and differences in the contexts of our stories (Erickson, 1986) and both accounts were valued. None was judged as superior or more objective. This became a source of affirmation, sustaining Mr. Lehrer's beliefs in his instructional beliefs (Goddard, et al., 2004). In addition, on-going inquiry sustained an effort to make fundamental pedagogical changes. This was particularly salient when it did not always seem that instruction is effective in the moment. Hence, the presence of a researcher provided development that was on-going and relevant to the circumstances shaping the context of the class and school, in an effort to make fundamental changes.

*Summary*

Mr. Lehrer sustained a sense of connectedness and knowing in and out of school (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995; Rose, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Morris, 2004). Attending functions after school and acknowledging students' successes in the classroom affirmed for students that they were important. As a long standing member of the community himself, Mr. Lehrer was well recognized by community members and held in high regard by former students. As a former Detroit resident who expressed his love for the city, he provided a space for Detroit students to feel a sense of community in his classroom, maintained a caring connection and instilled in them a sense of belonging. His relationships with all of his students was parentlike (Morris, 2004). For many students who struggled to fit in across varying channels in and out of school, Mr. Lehrer exerted the agency and withstood the challenges to facilitate a space that emanated belonging and fitting in. He was aware of what it took for teachers to teach all students in this context and his personal investment with his students:

"And who knows, if that comes from their own training and upbringing, naturally it does to some degree, if it comes from frustration, other things, it's a complicated thing in education and I love my job. But as the years go on I acknowledge more and more the difficulty of the job. Not that I'm getting older, which I am. And I don't think it's just the kind of changes that are, because, for the most part, I welcome the changes that come my way, from day one, I feel invested with those students.

In the classroom, Mr. Lehrer fostered a sense of caring and connectedness by appropriating the culture of the home (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1995) and tapping into students' identity by utilizing the reading component, discursive practices, and writing opportunities. The interaction of these practices, while applying elements of critical race theory provided students with a strong feeling of self-efficacy, a positive sense of self-ethnic identity and competence (Sachs, 2004; Goddard, 2004).

Ultimately, data suggests that the enactment of literature-based instruction that employs the culture of the home (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1995) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994,1995) is optimally enacted in caring classroom communities. The notion of caring, knowing, connectedness and family (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Rose, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Morris, 2004) are necessary components for children to sense that they are cared about and respected. Only then will children possess the competence to comfortably draw from their funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) to influence their literacy acquisition.

## Chapter 8: Looking Back and At Mr. Lehrer And Looking Ahead:

**Lessons Learned from Research on Mr. Lehrer's Teaching and Their Implications for Teachers... On Teachers Who Will Need To Learn To Teach Classes At The Border in Changing Communities**

Looking back at the study, I would like to re-visit two themes of the analysis: improvisation and context. The first of these is to dwell on several key themes I found to be "key linkages" (Erickson, 1996), or themes around pertinent data clusters and in terms of which discrepant data could be understood. Each of these pertain to the work of both teacher and students, and while observed within the classroom, they are reflective of and responsive to contemporary problems in the wider society. The primary theme is "improvisation." This term referred in my study to Mr. Lehrer working within the social order of the school and using its canonical material to teach a newly diversifying class. However, it also refers to his ability to "take off" on riffs from the melodic line that the school curriculum canon offers. This improvisational adaptation is essential, since the players are changing. Each brings his or her own voice and prior knowledge. Unlocking the curriculum by means of improvisation is not the same as introducing new material or information to students. On the contrary, it transforms a shared melody. All the students in this class have in common their status as public school students and the roles they play as learners. Regardless of the differences in community, US public schools hold many features in common, and teachers and students within them are held accountable to achieve culturally-shared goals of learning.

What has often been the aim of in-service education is to learn how to improve one's accomplishment of these goals and responsibilities. In-service education, therefore, looks remarkably similar across time, place, and even content area. It adheres to and helps reproduce the "culture of schooling." It is primarily intended to inform,

takes a pedagogical model where expert knowledge is communicated to students, and which takes place in truncated situations of limited time, discussion, and follow-up. We can learn from the case of Mr. Lehrer and from the accumulating cases of experienced teachers' creative responses to challenge and change within the culture of schooling. These are not examples of learning a bit more technical knowledge or being trained in a new procedure. They are, instead, self-directed, dialogic, and often peer-led projects, in which teachers engage with pupils and the mandated curriculum in powerful, transformative ways. One image of this is to move education to the center of the schooling systems.

This shift, made by Mr. Lehrer in response to a changing community and class composition, is often made by experienced teachers in response to major contextual change: new standards, more or less voiced in instructional decision-making as a result of policy change, the institution of high stakes testing, and so forth. Teacher learning viewed this way needs to be anticipatory and expressive rather than reinforcing conventional practice or tinkering at its margins. Instead, it actually provides new spaces, not only for the new entrants, but for the already experienced class members. This de-stabilizes the taken-for-granted. The "this is who WE are and how we do things HERE," impedes newcomers a place to assert their identities (which were not left at the classroom door). Instead, it is necessary to integrate who THEY are and how they did it before. Dialogue is ideally created—although we have seen in the dissertation that this is not easy, smooth, predictable work. But to the extent that we have an ensemble –both in the sense of performance and of group—we move past superficial politeness and enter engagement (Nieto, 1994)—where learning and acceptance can begin.

"Context" is a second theme of this dissertation. Its implications for professional development are that, while there is great similarity among schools with respect to their routines and mandated curricula, there is also great diversity of context—classroom to classroom, year to year, school to school. This study stressed that context matters. It helps to design teaching if one knows both one's students as individuals and also as participants in multiple discourse communities—and therefore as people who bring rich and varied experiences to the classroom as a discourse community in the making. What Mr. Lehrer is doing in one classroom—one that this dissertation has scrutinized by means of research and is reporting, in colleagueship with the teacher and students as an instance of complexity and the power to make by accretion of changes in talk, text, and social relations differences that "make a difference" within what seem inevitable structures (see, for example, Gee, 1996; Erickson, 1986, & Florio-Ruane and Raphael, 2005) on the power of small change as an important source of agency and, ultimately, a part of "structuration" in which institutions can be changed over time, even as they are changed in important local ways in everyday life).

The future of Detroit Public Schools and a majority of its students remain uncertain, and the outward exodus, for family oriented suburbs and school parity is at a precipitous increase. The fall of 2005 called for the possibility that a strike would ensue. Informal conversations with Detroit teachers divulged that one of the reasons school began without striking was due to fear of furthering the decline in enrollment. In fact, the strike in 1999 led to a precipitous enrollment decline, because students enrolled in charter schools in droves. Middle class Detroiters largely attend magnet schools or private schools, and are satisfied with the educational opportunities offered. There is

also satisfaction with a few segregated neighborhoods that succeed in spite of circumstances. Dissatisfaction with offerings in Detroit has heightened among the majority of students, particularly due to the school closures. Moreover, closures have led to frustration among parents who were satisfied with the successful segregated schools. As this series of events continues, the exodus of those city-dwellers who can, leave the Detroit Public School System. Some move their family out of the city entirely. Those without the means to do this rely on other financial and recruitment inducements to attend private, religious, corporation-run, and special interest charter schools. Others avail themselves of attractive recruitment, by means of print advertisements and television, to transfer to more middle and upper middle class cities with room in their schools.

Of course, all of this heightens the predictable mixing of previously tightly bordered districts—often in spite of the daily criss-crossing of the borders by adults for purposes of commerce and entertainment. It also threatens the ever-present economic borders, especially between upper middle class, geographically isolated (except for a shared border with Detroit) cities such as Oak Valley. It further heightens the opportunity for what was unsuccessfully tried two decades ago with enforced school busing—the integration of diverse local students into common school settings, curricula, and the richness that might come of many voices if only there were "world enough and time" to work on this authentic problem of practice—for the teachers and the students

However, as demographics are changing rapidly and with a sense of fear and urgency in both communities, teachers are pressed into service, teaching populations

they did not intend to teach. Many teachers who taught in Oak Valley at the onset of their career taught in an environment that resembled their background. Over time, as shifts have ensued and resources have declined, teachers in Oak Valley and other surrounding suburbs are facing conditions experienced for decades by urban counterparts: increased class size, heterogeneous learning abilities, and unsettled behavior. Many teachers, overt or covert, are uncomfortable with demographic changes and are uncertain about teaching diverse learners. Yet, for working class African American children who meet residency requirements and will continue to enroll in Oak Valley schools, demands on teachers to diminish the achievement gap will continue. However, lack of support in an era of increased professional development autonomy leaves teachers to their own devices to manage dilemmas of increased class size, unsettled behavior and heterogeneous learning abilities.

The fear and resistance is not limited to teachers. In this chapter I will not reprise the issue as it pertains to the Oak Valley families and students because it has been well-documented in earlier chapters. In addition, examples of on-going professional development (Erickson, 1986; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Ball and Cohen, 1999; Wilson and Berne, 1999) are a necessary ingredient to support teachers in contexts, suburban and urban, in the pursuit of teaching all students, regardless of background. One time professional development opportunities that are unable to address the parameters of teacher dilemmas (Anyon, 1997; Ball & Cohen, 1999), as posited in the diversity workshop will do little to transform teachers. Therefore, professional development opportunities must support circumstances, within the parameters and dilemmas of practice (Erickson, 1986; Anyon, 1997; Ball & Cohen,

1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999). More importantly, before teachers can attempt transformative practices, they must unlearn their own bias and grasp the historical construct that shapes circumstances (Anyon, 1997), existing demographic patterns, and deficit views. The notion that White middle class culture is normal and right must be unlearned (Sachs, 2004; Weinstein, 2004).

In addition, Bell (2004) found in a recent, innovative, and important dissertation study that some parents do not follow the "rational model" of moving to higher achieving schools and/or districts as predicted by social scientists.

I cite her at length on the reasoning parents used and expressed in her extensive field work and multiple interviews and survey. Among the reasons for not leaving the Detroit Public Schools or the city, parents, like social scientists, apply their own prior knowledge, logical system, and values to remain in their current situations. They perceive less risk of failure or ostracism of their children by teachers, peers and schools, where they may be the unwelcome minority. Relatively, there is concern about proximity to schools—especially when there is no family car or public transportation to get to the new schools. There is less focus on rigorous academic achievement in favor of training usable skills—based, perhaps—on years, at least since World War II, of lowered expectations, many based on the realities of racism in the workplace. Success is thus defined, especially for boys and young men, as training for a job in a service or technical field rather than a classical liberal education and college. Finally, there is satisfaction over multiple generations with the physical plant, teachers, and curriculum—however frayed at the edges—a "you can learn anywhere if you apply yourself" perspective. In another innovative dissertation, Williams (2006) even found

that the vision of city education since the turn of the 19th Century has been of individual African American teachers and students' advancement over time, notwithstanding the great population shift from Caucasian majority to African American majority—mini-narratives of hope, amid scholarly and popular press reports of despair, resulting from inevitable institutional structures and failure across the board, from CEO to kindergarten tot.

*How Improvisational Teaching of Literacy Matters in this Educational Context and Study*

Typically, professional development in the area of literacy is informational. It rarely involves teachers in learning or deliberating upon the dilemmas of practice. Moreover, it cannot anticipate the need for change in response to social and political shifts yet to come. These are part of the indeterminate complexity of teaching, which, while it can be observed and modeled in novices' fieldwork, mostly comes from prior knowledge garnered in the experience of being a teacher and openness to change. Retrenchment studies of this response are relatively new, and the research reported in this dissertation is part of this body of research (see, for example, Florio-Ruane, forthcoming).

Professional development opportunities in Oak Valley have good intentions to provide teachers with the knowledge to foster their autonomy to align the curriculum with standards, to provide diversity awareness, and foster development that sustains meaningful reading and writing opportunities for students. However, professional development in Oak Valley does not provide on-going support espoused by research, such as mentoring, coaching, peer-led study groups or inquiry projects, or networking

with other teachers in the building, district, or state (e.g. Wilson & Berne, 1999 ; Florio-Ruane (Ed.); & Rosaen, forthcoming; Feimen-Nemser,2001). Thus, there is a wide range of understandings and interpretations of "what to do in the classroom" and, as noted above, there are few opportunities for reflection or discussion related to the moment-to-moment changes that require the kind of improvisation Mr.Lehrer undertakes and risks (Cohen, 1990). This situation is part of the context of school teaching and is a source of teachers' characteristic minimizing of changes, difficulty integrating activities, tendency to approach the curriculum piecemeal. It is also part of the context for avoidance of engagement with students in subject matter outside their own (and students') comfort zone. This is evidenced in Paley's book, *White Teacher* (1989), and also when the subject is difficult (what Glazier (2003) dubbed the avoidance of "hot lava"topics such as of discussing race). What some teachers gloss as colorblindness in which color does not matter if youngsters are assumed to start on a level playing field, or more recently, what Pollock (2004) called, "Colormute" school, where all are invested socially and linguistically in not talking about race.

In Oak Valley, none of these responses address immediate pupil or teachers needs and concerns; none openly explore race, racism, or the politics of race within the literacy curriculum (an apt site for such study since it integrated language, culture, narrative, etc.). Teachers are lynchpins. They connect what is taking place nationally and locally in terms of changing borders and participation settings and structures in which urban and suburban children mix (or, similarly, re-settled refugees and non-native English speakers enter monolingual American classrooms). Thus, to teach critically, reflectively, and effectively, teachers like Mr. Lehrer have been both free and

independent to improvise their curriculum and instruction so long as they remain within the general framework set by the district in compliance with its own goals and standards and with those of the state. This is a very mixed bag, since this kind of work on the one hand is still beholden to achievement measured by standardized tests, which is at least as high (if not higher) than more conventionally-taught classes. Moreover, Mr. Lehrer must identify goals, activities, and discourse patterns—in short, most of what we call "pedagogy." Yet he does not have absolute freedom. Part of a large, high-achieving, and supervised educational institution, Mr. Lehrer must integrate newly acquired pedagogy into existing practice, improvise and modify instruction in a manner that is conducive to learning for all of his students. In addition, he must utilize his own resources and references on an on-going basis to influence his pedagogical decisions.

Mr. Lehrer and his students negotiate a transformation in how they communicate with one another in oral and written text. We have seen that their class provides many opportunities of the nature of this work in progress—and while not always smooth or successful, it often breaks through difficulties of sustaining a diverse community by means of powerful literacy.

This is not a cafeteria or patchwork approach. It is, as we have seen throughout this thesis in the examples and commentary, an attempt by an experienced teacher working in a newly complex and indeterminate setting. Perhaps literature, rather than social theory or admonitions, moves participants more passionately and with an image and language of possibility. Perhaps, as this dissertation describes, *Seedfolks* is a powerful instance of this. If improvisation is the ability to create within a normative system, then a garden is (and has been since Biblical times) a potentially powerful

metaphor.

Moreover, in this case study, the presence of a researcher and the chance, therefore, for both teacher and students to have opportunities for thoughtful conversation or observation may also have been conducive to on-going reflection and decision-making, entrenched in the enactment of literature-based instructional practices and problems of practice. This opportunity might be part of professional development and not only incidental to participating in research—this is a topic for future research.

The future of tensions at the border of Oak Valley and Detroit are of concern to both districts—and it may be that they will be addressed in professional development in the future. Similarly, changes in the Detroit Public Schools may stem the flow of students out of the district. This is all unpredictable in the rapidly changing politics of educational reform. However, research on this phenomenon is of interest both to these communities and to others in the US where similar problems of practice are prompted by demographic change. In this instance, for example, Detroit Public Schools and a majority of its students remain uncertain, and the outward exodus, for family oriented suburbs and school parity is at a precipitous increase. The fall of 2005 called for the possibility that a strike would ensue. Informal conversations with Detroit teachers divulged that one of the reasons school began without striking was due to fear of furthering the decline in enrollment. In fact, the strike in 1999 led to a precipitous enrollment decline, because students enrolled in charter schools in droves. Middle class Detroiters largely attend magnet schools or private schools, and are satisfied with the educational opportunities offered. There is also satisfaction with a few segregated neighborhoods that succeed in spite of circumstances. Dissatisfaction with offerings in

Detroit has heightened among the majority of students, particularly due to the school closures. Moreover, closures have led to dissatisfaction and frustration among parents who were satisfied with the successful segregated schools. As dissatisfaction continues, the exodus heightens the potential for changing demographics in neighboring suburbs, including Oak Valley.

As demographics are changing, in search for parity, teachers are teaching populations they did not intend to teach. Many teachers who taught in Oak Valley at the onset of their career taught in an environment that resembled their background. Over time, as shifts have ensued and resources have declined, teachers in Oak Valley and other surrounding suburbs are facing conditions experienced for decades by urban counterparts: increased class size, heterogeneous learning abilities, on-going student enrollment and unsettled behavior. Many teachers, overt or covert, are uncomfortable with demographic changes and are uncertain about teaching diverse learners. Yet, for working class African American children who meet residency requirements and will continue to enroll in Oak Valley schools, demands on teachers to diminish the achievement gap will continue. However, lack of support in an era of increased professional development autonomy leaves teachers to their own devices to manage dilemmas of increased class size, unsettled behavior and heterogeneous learning abilities.

Therefore, the matter of dilemmas and management are important to this study because this is a reality that is becoming more pervasive for practitioners at Barrington, and throughout the district. Teacher knowledge is needed to manage the dilemmas newly facing the Oak Valley teachers who find themselves on the front lines

of social change, for they are facing dilemmas that resonate in urban contexts, and many taught in Oak Valley to avoid such matters. Many teachers, given heightened emphasis on standards-based reform opt for more didactic practices so that behavior management, inherent in progressive pedagogy, does not impede with student progress, in a manner suggested by researchers (Lortie, 1975; Cuban, 1993; Britzman, 2003). However, this study investigated the improvisational ways in which Mr. Lehrer managed to adjust and tailor progressive practices to teach his heterogeneous learners.

Literacy practices matter to this study and also to the continuing education of teachers in a broad way. This is not a topic of concern only to the teaching of reading skills or literature. Literacy is fundamental to all school learning and also to the establishment and maintenance of community in the classroom. Thus in situations of population change, because the notion of participation for the students varies across cultural and social background, teacher and peer-led discourse, within the frame of a literature-based instructional approach, can be very useful in creating a climate where all students learn in equitable circumstances and across the curriculum. As a teacher in middle school, it would be easy for Mr. Lehrer to default exclusively to the teaching of the extant curriculum—leaving other content and also social justice at the margins. But we have seen that Mr. Lehrer is improvisational, as he negotiates curriculum demands as well as issues of social justice and multicultural education within the time constraints of a 46 minute period with his students. Hence, this study examined Mr. Lehrer's negotiation of time constraints in order to sustain this important choice. He sustained Pearson and Raphael's (1999) definition of a balanced literacy program, embedded in literature-based instruction, which embodies reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

In addition, this study examined Mr. Lehrer, who represents a minority of teachers among a majority at Barrington Middle School who enacts discursive practices and welcomes integration and diversity. Without integrating these facets of curriculum in integrated, authentic activity, one is left with an impossible number of things to do in a limited amount of time. Mr. Lehrer's class shifts the definition of activity—they do not approach learning as a list of chores to complete. Process, deliberation, engagement, effort, accountability—all matter in the long-term process of learning. Consistent with values of integration, dialogue, and social justice, the *Seedfolks* are an apt metaphor the educational process.

Instructional literature choices are important to this process and, thus, to this study. Mr. Lehrer implements grade 7 curriculum literature where he makes district-sanctioned choices of topic and text. However, these are, for most other teachers in the district, roads not taken. Reexamination of this implementation is important, for as further integration of diverse students at Barrington becomes more salient, once resistant teachers who have assumed a deficit approach are confronting with uncertainty that they must modify pedagogy in a manner that is more culturally responsive. Effective implementation of multicultural literature and appropriating discursive practices are an important ingredient to transforming in a manner that is more culturally relevant. Mr. Lehrer's choices deal with matters of social justice and cultural identity and are largely unused by other grade 7 teachers in the district. The examination of this implementation is important, for as integration at Barrington becomes more salient, once resistant teachers who have assumed a deficit approach are confronting with uncertainty that they must modify pedagogy in a manner that is more culturally

responsive. Effective implementation of multicultural literature and appropriating discursive practices are an important ingredient to transforming in a manner that is more culturally relevant.

The matter of knowing is important because Mr. Lehrer facilitates student participation and represents the middle class teachers in Oak Valley who draw from all students' funds of knowledge, not a deficit approach, as defined by Purcell-Gates (2002) Ladson-Billings(1994) and Moll & Greenberg (1990). He is a teacher who fosters this sense of belonging among his students and values their differences as an asset, not a deficit. This study examined Mr. Lehrer, as a progressive grade 7 teacher who enacts literature-based instruction with students who possess heterogeneous learning abilities. For teachers at Barrington and everywhere else, this focus is important because it illustrates the manner in which Mr. Lehrer made sense of the circumstances at Barrington, by welcoming controversial literature that invites student-led discourse about complex issues embedded in social justice and cultural identity.

In order to be improvisational and transformative, it is important to acknowledge and value students' differences when making pedagogical decisions (Tyack, 1974; Paley, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane and Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Delpit, 1995;2002; Purcell-Gates, 2002)in order to enact what Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) coins culturally relevant pedagogy. Not seeing students' racial and ethnic differences limits a teacher's ability to meet educational needs (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

As schools in varying contexts experience a precipitous influx of diverse student populations, teachers are determining that they must unlearn racism, (Cochran-Smith, 2000), deficit myths (Flores, et al., 1991) and adjust their pedagogy in a manner that is

culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). Moreover, for transformative change to occur, it is important to understand the hand in history and the failure of reform and how they have come to what they are (Anyon, 1997). It is also important to understand and critique notions of White privilege (McIntosh, 1989). Yet, professional development has traditionally been found to be a weak intervention in the crucial areas Mr. Lehrer's teaching displays. Moreover, professional development has traditionally been fragmented from the parameters of classroom practice, and does not take into account what researchers know about how teachers learn (Ball&Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997). Although recent No Child Left Behind legislation requires "high quality" professional development, it does not determine what constitutes optimal professional development (Borko, 2004). Furthermore, it supports teacher autonomy of professional development in the effort to align existing curriculum with standards, (mich.gov.edu) but provides no framework to support teachers. Although changes demanded by reform visions rely on teachers (Fullan and Miles, 1992; Spillane, 1999), development must be on-going and relevant to the circumstances that shape the context and culture of the school and requires support and quidance (Erickson, 1986; Ball& Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999; Anyon, 1997). This can occur through teacher networks and visitation to other schools (Anyon, 1997). According to Sleeter (1993, 2001), professional development that simply informs teachers about racism in education is inadequate.

Furthermore, Erickson (1986) recommends a sociocognitive model of teaching and learning that embeds research observations and collaboration with a teacher. Professional development must be research centered, to provide teachers with a

narrative understanding of enacted curriculum. This enactment posits researcher support with experienced teachers. Hence, telling stories is a recommended mode of inquiry, to make visible routines that tend to be overlooked (Erickson, 1986).

The work of Raphael, Florio-Ruane, and George (2001) demonstrate the benefits of a teacher learning collaborative, comprised of teachers of diverse learners across urban, rural and suburban contexts, in partnership with local universities. Participating teachers implemented Book Club Plus, a literature-based curriculum, within the parameters of the curriculum mandated in their school districts. The collaborative gathered monthly and engaged in discourse, regarding on-going problems of practice surrounding implementation. Students of heterogeneous learning abilities benefited as a result of teachers who made appropriate instructional adjustments, based on feedback from meetings. Florio-Ruane's (2001) work cites the benefits of an on-going book club to engage in discourse surrounding multicultural autobiography among student teachers. Learning about varying cultures and the experiences of the marginalized resulted in unlearning previously held stereotypes about people, and consequently students, from backgrounds that differ from their own. In addition, participants experienced discomfort in the act of confronting their bias and ethnocentrism. This discomfort was a necessary ingredient in the act of unlearning racism and in transformation to becoming more culturally responsive.

Flores's, et al., (1991) work illustrates teachers at a working class, urban elementary school, who were given on-going professional development through a university partnership to unlearn existing beliefs about the perceived language and culture deficits of students. Teachers participated in demonstrations, observations, and

coaching, where they engaged in conversation based in questions, concerns, and issues regarding their practice. This led to on-going study groups, where teachers read and engaged in discussion about relevant research, books, or chapters. By engaging in these practices, teachers learned to assume that children will best acquire language in a rich, integrated setting, where high expectations are maintained. Instead of maintaining the belief that standardized tests can accurately identify and label at-risk students for learning and language problems, teachers learned that language development could best be monitored by observing language use in authentic settings. They were more likely to accept their students' experiences, and to respect their differences. They learned that positive and negative attitudes makes a significant impact on students, and recognized the harm they caused when they lowered expectations and upheld cultural myths. Their change in pedagogy resulted in student academic improvement.

The work of Flood, et al., (1995) illustrated the potential of educators in a multicultural school, who formed a book club to better serve their students. They wanted to address the miscommunication that occurs between children when verbal responses are a representation of their cultural experience. The book club engaged in reading a common multicultural novel, and members maintained a response journal. Texts represented the background of the student body. Over time, conversations let to better understanding of the text, and helped them comprehend personal differences. Members acquired an enhanced understanding of multiculturalism. Rather than making preconceived judgments about students' ability based on background, for example, they learned to expect more from their students. They gained insights into students' lives, as they made connections between their reading and their students, and teachers began

introducing students to literature written by authors from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Another factor that is significant to enacting transformative, pedagogical change is exposure to successful teachers of children from marginalized groups, to illustrate the possibility and potential when teachers sustain a commitment to the communities and students they serve. One of the practitioners who has done this in both autobiography and descriptive case writing is Mike Rose. In his autobiography, *Lives on he Boundary* (1989), he tells a personal story embodying many of the issues of "borders" discussed in this dissertation. No extraordinary educational "hero," Rose is a narrator who takes us along on a fairly typical journey of a lower middle class youngster who has low expectations about his educational future. Yet, like many of us who become educators, special people and situations open the world of literacy—the life of the mind—to him. And, as he relates in many examples, his experience re-focuses his sense of self and his activities in the direction of literacy. As a teacher, he works with adults seeking literacy in order to better their lives by increasing their education. In his life as a scholar, he teaches others this commitment and craft especially by means of his mentoring and his own research and writing.

His second book is also very relevant to teachers "on the borders." *Possible Lives* (1996) illustrates his four year journey through classrooms in urban and rural areas across the country, to gain a more accurate portrayal of the activity that occurs in classrooms in low income communities. Covering contexts where success was not expected, populations included students who are categorized as deficient, due to possessing non mainstream cultural and linguistic backgrounds, working class and/or

immigrant status. Rose wanted to contradict the one-sided generalizations constructed by policy makers, legislation, and books written by non teachers, as portrayals that present a distorted image that these are mediocre places to learn, that students are unteachable, and teachers are unmotivated. He sought to find examples of dedicated teachers who succeeded in spite of adversity, in the context of teaching and learning in classrooms. Rose's visits led to schools and classrooms that were warm, vibrant, caring environments. There were numerous examples of teachers who maintained high expectations for students, and were mindful of constructing learning environments that connected culturally to their students' lives. Instruction was authentic, meaningful, and engaging for learners.

In addition, Ladson-Billings' (1994, 1995) work cites characteristics of teachers who are successful teachers of African-American children, in a marginalized context where children succeed in spite of circumstances of poverty, in schools that are consequently underserved. Among cited teachers of varying races and ethnicities, many lived in, were indigenous to, or knew intimately the communities they served. They consequently gave back to the community by participating in activities in and out of school, and encouraged students to do the same. Teachers assumed the role of conductor, meaning that they did not accept anyone's failure, but rather sustained high expectations for each student and maintained that all of them could succeed. Students were regarded as important, and teachers sustained a connectedness with them by connecting their lives and the culture of the home when appropriating instructional decisions.

There is an array not only of important examples of teachers who improvise the

means of their success and that of their students. There are also a wide variety of gatherings for sharing these stories and otherwise growing as educators that extend beyond the staff room walls, beyond the bounds of building or district. Too many to describe here, it is important to acknowledge that by means of innovative professional development, innovative schools for youngsters, and new technologies linking all of us (as do the older technologies!) over time, place, and history. In short, though difficult and challenging, what is being experienced at the border between the two communities in this dissertation is becoming less the exception and more either the "inevitable" or, more hopefully, the norm. The hope in this norm is that it will foster greater contact, permit examination of similarities and differences in authentic projects. In this way, students will learn literacy and they will understand the meaning of "border." This is a dynamic that could be reified at the levels of public policy, educational policy, teacher education, and many other spheres of civic life. The idea is not to live without boundaries, but to live in socially just ways notwithstanding our differences and not entirely in terms of our similarities. At the array of unusual but promising approaches just reviewed, it is interesting that we often need to go outside of the structures of school to have new ideas, to experiment with innovative teacher education, and to experience authentically the very ideas we are trying to change.

*Implications for Detroit and its Schools*

Detroit is experiencing challenges in an effort to retain and provide incentives to attract students into its schools. An advertising campaign ensued during the summer of 2005 to entice an inward exodus, but became shortchanged in the news by the potential for a strike. The campaign was seemingly too little, too late. Sustaining a few magnet

schools that attract the middle class and few segregated schools that succeed in spite of the odds, but face the threat of closure, is not enough to retain and invite new students. A majority of Detroit's schools enroll minority majority students who endure the conditions of poverty in high concentrations and low performance. Such conditions are hardly conducive to welcoming an inward flux into the city or its schools, unless they sustain effective, caring communities and foster high achievement.

Paley(1989) suggests that the optimal learning environment is in a diverse multiracial setting, and few Detroit schools provide that, particularly because it is a racially polarized city. The reality is that Detroit must sustain the majority of working class children that currently are enrolled in its schools. Somehow, Detroit Public Schools must provide learning conditions that are offered, at least, in segregated neighborhood schools that are high achieving. Perhaps there is potential in researching a school, such as Gompers Elementary School on the West side or Guyton Elementary School on the East side. Both schools are successful, in spite of enrolling a majority of students who are living in poverty. Their performance illuminates schools described by Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), Rose (1995) and Morris (2004). They are welcoming places for parents and students, and parental involvement is a key factor in their success. Teachers are deeply involved in communities and often reside in communities where they work. These schools are located in close proximity to schools that enroll similar populations of students in like neighborhoods, but struggle, and matters of behavior and low achievement resonate. I have worked in struggling schools and observed too often, teachers of varying backgrounds who exhibit an "us versus them" ideology, and exert negative attitudes about students. It is possible to interpret potential

for struggling schools, if there is a collaborative effort between the neighboring struggling schools and the high achieving schools, and a university research partnership. Schools will not succeed if they are deemed unsafe or inadequate, regardless of the neighborhood. However, success, collaboration, and community building will sustain and attract students.

Given Paley's claim, historical and existing demographic shifts make it difficult in Detroit and Southeast Michigan for multiracial settings to become a reality in immediate years to come. Patterns reveal that Whites disproportionately would prefer racially homogeneous schools, and sustaining low achieving and poorly funded minority majority schools, for decades has become an accepted, normalized dialogue. Before Detroit can begin to attract a diverse student body on a significantly greater scale, it must effectively retain its minority majority students and foster a welcoming and safe school environment across the district.

Effectively attracting students from diverse backgrounds, as circumstances exist, does not yet have potential to become realized in most schools, for this would initially require matters of racially integrating the residency base in neighborhoods throughout the city. Detroit currently attracts single professionals in its loft and apartment communities, but must devise on-going measures to build an image of being family oriented. As aforementioned, a realistic beginning space for attracting students is embedded in retaining its current residential base and making Detroit schools welcoming and successful places.

This is not to suggest that Detroit Public Schools should retain its students for the sake of not crossing boundary layers into affluent communities. Rather, this is to

suggest educational parity for all children. A majority of working class Detroiters need access to quality education in segregated neighborhood schools, in a manner that does not place parents in a position of desperation for their child's welfare. The decision to move to a suburban context should be based on desiring a different opportunity, not because the offerings in the suburbs are simply better.

Implications for Oak Valley and its Schools

Results of Detroit focal students in the study reveal feelings of being conflicted between Detroit and Oak Valley, and losing the sense of community that defined who they were. For parents, there is strong sense that segregated Detroit schools are simply inferior. On-going, collaborative efforts to dispel negative assertions is a necessary ingredient to ensure a feeling of satisfaction about each Detroit Public School, regardless of the neighborhood. Communities throughout the city are being disrupted at a rapid rate, in many instances against the will of the students. Should the exodus continue at its current rate, the decline and dismantling of the district poses severe consequences. The potential for Detroit to become a charter school district undergirds the discourse among many Detroit teachers, which would lead to a significant dismantling of the district.

The boundary between Detroit and Oak Valley is a real one with a social history and legal and political identity. For this reason, when the border is crossed in a way inconsistent with the extant laws and policies, two issues remain. This first, it seems, is educating the youngsters from both communities whose lives have been changed by this breach. The second is connected, but has longer term implications and affects many people. That is, of course, collaborative deliberation. While Detroit attempts to retain its

students, Oak Valley's re-enrollment procedures attempt to keep non residents, including students speculated to be Detroiters, out. Whether or not Detroit retains and attracts students, minority students will continue to enroll in suburban districts, including Oak Valley. Teachers in suburban districts must accept that demographic changes are inevitable. The notion of the racially homogeneous school is at a gradual decline. The act of sustaining and normalizing deficit views about "those" students, and of improperly placing students in special education based on linguistic differences is problematic (Delpit, 1995, 2002; Cazden, 1999). These matters, along with the act of not making pedagogical changes and ignoring the changing population, pose implications for the effective teaching of all students. In the past, limited diversity has presented for teachers an argument against culturally relevant pedagogy. Current circumstances, however, presents an argument for culturally relevant pedagogy.

*Implications for schools and the achievement gap*

Concerted efforts also suggests a dual commitment to diminishing the achievement gap, emanated in No Child Left Behind legislation. In fact, there is heightened pressure to close the achievement gap by race and ethnicity (Goddard, et al, 2004). Of course that "gap" is no easier to close than were the hardened borders that historically separated students of color from white students. It is naïve to think tat such a gap can be closed without changes in the wider community. Ignoring the changes or wishing children would simply attend school elsewhere to become someone else's problem will do nothing to address the current phenomenon. Therefore, ignoring existing circumstances with heightened pressure to effectively teach every child poses substantial consequences if schools do not meet Annual Yearly Progress. For Detroit,

low achievement scores pose implications for school closures. For Oak Valley, low scores pose implications for funding its schools, when declining resources are already problematic. There is potential for a slight drop in achievement scores to significantly lower its Annual Yearly Progress. Oak Valley wants desperately to preserve its resources, so it has become more important than ever, that all students earn high test scores. At Barrington and Brownstone, many students that were perceived as having residency issues returned during the 2005-06 school year. Because many remain, teachers cannot ignore the fact that they must modify pedagogy and utilize culturally responsive management strategies (Weinstein, 2004) to teach more effectively.

*Concluding Thoughts*

"The lot was big, there was plenty of room. But when newcomers joined, at least at the beginning, they could usually get a spot near people they knew. One Saturday, when the garden was fullest, I stood up a minute to straighten my back. And what did I see? With a few exceptions, the blacks on one side, the whites on the other, the Central Americans and Asians toward the back. The garden was a copy of the neighborhood. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. A duck gives birth to a duckling, not a moose. Each group kept to itself, spoke its own language, and grew its own special crops. One man even put a pole and flew the Phillipine flag above his plot" (Fleischman, 1999, p. 26).

*On Learning to Teach*

This excerpt from *Seedfolks* recalls the time in the community when members were beginning to move out of their residential enclaves and into the garden. Rather than utilize the land best suited for their purposes, they patterned their garden plots by race and ethnicity. The members eventually cultivated the garden in a more integrated fashion, but their degree of comfort needed to be disrupted in order for them to confront their own ethnocentrism and bias. A parallel process took place in Mr. Lehrer's classroom. Mr. Lehrer opened a facilitated a space that was controversial and disrupted

their comfort zone. In this process of improvisation, they reconnected as a community, upon learning that everyone has some sort of bias that must be confronted. In order for teachers in Oak Valley, Detroit, and everywhere else to transform, on-going professional development must cultivate a space to disrupt one's comfort zone. The circumstances in *Seedfolks* and in Mr. Lehrer's classroom embody the need for conflict to allow growth.

Existing professional development, as it stands in Oak Valley, might be conducive to reflecting on existing disparities across groups, but is not conducive to influencing transformative practices or confronting held biases. Diversity workshops, in particular, that do not account and provide support for teacher dilemmas in the context of their practice (Anyon, 1997; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999), provided by a corporation intended for its employees will only enable the district to announce that they paid attention to diversity. Diversity awareness does not translate to transformative teacher practices that take into account the culture of the home (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1995), nor does it facilitate the value in acknowledging and valuing students when making pedagogical decisions (Tyack, 1974; Paley, 1979; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane and Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 2002). Workshops posit valuing students and their differences, but does not account for pedagogical decisions.

Enacting the familiar color blind approach and claiming to teach all students in the same manner, regardless of background (Tyack, 1974; Purcell-Gates, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Florio-Ruane and Williams, 2004; Irvine, 2003) has good intentions, but does not account for students' funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg,

1990). This poses implications for student achievement, and sense of belonging in the district. Professional development must foster unlearning the taken for granted assumption that middle class pedagogy is normal and right (Weinstein, 2004). Only then will professional development that is on-going and relevant to dilemmas of practice (Erickson, 1986; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Anyon, 1997) facilitate significant pedagogical change that takes the language and culture of the home into account to facilitate literacy acquisition (Heath, 1983; Delpit, 1995, 2002; Gee, 1996; Purcell-Gates, 2002). Only then will students perceived as "those" kids, posited in the ethnic based paradigm (Florio-Ruane & Williams, 2004) sense that they are one of "our" kids.

Sustaining transformative practices will require on-going professional development, beginning with challenging and openly confronting deficit views and establishing teacher collaboratives, in partnership with a university.

Access to multicultural autobiography and engaging in related discourse (Florio-Ruane, 2001) is a beginning space to build a foundation. Recommended titles undergird the exploration of author's experiences of compromising their ethnic identity in order to acquire the dominant discourse: Richard Rodriguez (1982) *Hunger of Memory*; Richard Wright(1993) *Black Boy*; Maya Angelou (1997) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Such a discourse community evokes the potential for teachers to explore patterns of immigration in their families and to connect their ancestry's conflicts with the literature and with many of their students who arrive from different educational contexts and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to and upon exploring what it means to be a minority in the dominant

culture, it is important for teachers to examine their White identity. Dialogue can serve as an impetus to examine Whiteness and develop ways to think critically about race and racism in their practice, and the tendency toward the color-blind pedagogical approach described by Irvine (2003) and Florio-Ruane and Williams(2004) . In order to enact change, teachers must explore the taken for granted assumption that middle class values are the norm and that standard, middle class pedagogy is right for everyone (Freire, 1970;Paley, 1979; Irvine, 2003; Weinstein, 2004). Recommended titles include: Alice McIntire(1997)Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring Racial Identity with White Teachers; Susan Florio-Ruane(2001)Teacher Education and the Cultural Imagination. The nature of this discourse is a space for potential discomfort and resistance, in addition to challenging the notion that being of the same race implies similar experiences and circumstances. For instance, Florio-Ruane's work (2001) divulges the contrast between a White teacher from a privileged upbringing and a White teacher from an underprivileged background. Both members were taken out of their comfort zone, upon the realization that they were different, and the suburban teacher explicitly identified that she had benefited from her own privilege. In that process they developed empathy for each other and their students.

It is also necessary for teachers to understand circumstances that shape Oak Valley and Detroit, and similar rust belt cities that neighbor affluent suburbs throughout the United States. An on-going commitment to engaging in a discourse community surrounding literature that imparts historical constructs shaping current conditions is another necessary component for transformative practices. Recommended literature includes: Jeffrey Mirel's (1993) The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System:

Detroit, 1907-1981; Thomas Sugrue's (1996) Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit; both titles are grounded in the Detroit Context. Jean Anyon's (1997) Ghetto Schooling is grounded in Newark, New Jersey; and Wells and Crain's (1997) Stepping over the Color Line. African American Students in White Suburban Schools is grounded in St. Louis, Missouri.

Upon establishing a transformative foundation by interacting across autobiography, teacher identity, and an understanding of the historical constructs that shape current conditions, teachers must be supported in the enactment of culturally relevant pedagogy. Relevant literature to implement in a discourse community includes: Lisa Deli's (1995) *Other People's Children* and Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.* A recommended title to support an understanding of rule governed languages outside of standard English in support of the acquisition of providing access to standard and nonstandard writing conventions is Lisa Delpit's (2002) *The Skin that we Speak.* My work with White middle class teachers and engaging in Ladson-Billing's (1994) work was a space that prompted discomfort, for they sensed that they were blamed for the marginalization of African American students. Another sense of discomfort arose from sensing that African American children are not the only ones who struggle, and they wanted evidence of culturally relevant teachers for all children. Such interaction was my first experience with teachers who were critical of and offended by Ladson-Billings' work, and this was unexpected for me.

During the previous year teaching the same course with different students, *The Dreamkeepers* was looked upon favorably and I assumed that similar responses would

ensue for my current students. This nature of unstable discomfort was awkward for me as their instructor, and I inherently wanted them to feel comfortable. At the same time, I was conflicted because I wanted them to also identify that the disproportionate rate of underachievement of African American students was historically and socially constructed, and an on-going result of teachers who assumed the color-blind pedagogical approach—hence, the reason for Ladson-Billings' work. Engaging in these ideas was uncomfortable, but necessary for us to dig into. Ultimately, my act of improvisation and takig my students out of their comfort zone was a vehicle for them to explicitly confront their privilege and ethnocentrism. Additionally, to their dismay, many came to the realization that bias existed in their own families. To that end, what resonated among the group over the course of a semester was a sense that they should have learned about these matters earlier in their preparation and/or careers. In addition, they began their commitment to inquiring and digging more deeply into culturally responsive pedagogy, in an effort to teach all of their students.

To support a transformation, digging more deeply might include, for example, visitation and working with successful teachers of all students, through teacher networks (Anyon, 1997) is an important component in professional development that is relevant to the experiences and circumstances that teachers face (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Anyon, 1997). Rather than seek partnerships with corporations, school districts desiring to meaningfully reach its student populations must seek partnerships with universities that strive for promoting exemplars of on-going professional development and educational parity. The university partnership (Flores, et al., 1991; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, and George, 2001),

given that children are the focal concern of the school, is a necessary venue that would promote transformative changes in the best needs of all our children.

In school districts such as Oak Valley, the minority teachers, including Mr. Lehrer, must be sought in collaborative efforts, to inform about practices for all students, in the era of changing demography and declining resources. They must be identified at all grade levels, to support the potential and possibility in modifying pedagogy to teach students. There are benefits in learning from teachers who share similar circumstances, and the potential for change is illuminated. In addition to revealing benefits, collaborative efforts are a venue for recognizing the potential for problems of dilemma management (Lambert, 1987), and that practices require a great deal of work and deliberation.

On-going efforts and changes in Oak Valley, surrounding suburbs, and Detroit will diminish the phenomenon of students whose needs are not being met at either end, and establish a foundation for equitable opportunities. Results suggest that focal students felt a sense of belonging in Mr. Lehrer's class. Students, in contrast, are aware when teachers are not welcoming. Thus, unlearning deficit views will establish for students a sense that they are cared about and respected. A welcoming environment is conducive to high expectations and achievement, regardless of the school context.

*Implications for Teacher Education*

Circumstances in Oak Valley and other suburbs that neighbor rust belt cities present an argument that teacher preparation must better present an argument for culturally relevant pedagogy. Traditionally, the teacher candidate has argued against being culturally relevant, based on plans to teach in districts that resemble them.

However, circumstances in Oak Valley and other similar suburbs suggest an argument that teacher preparation must better prepare candidates for work in diverse settings. In addition, the reality is that it is significantly more difficult to be awarded a teaching position in an affluent suburb than an urban system.

Traditional teacher preparation programs employ a semester course in multicultural education, typically instructed by graduate assistants. It generally presents an overview, and is simply not enough to instill the need to be culturally responsive. The aforementioned topics for in-service teachers—autobiography, historical constructs that shape current conditions, teacher identity, and culturally relevant pedagogy—are necessary topics for pre service teachers. Given that the traditional teacher preparation program has two years of course work, I recommend a semester long course devoted to each topic. Content area courses, including literacy, must simultaneously implement the need to be culturally responsive.

Pre-service teachers must be placed with cooperating teachers who enact literacy instruction that is culturally responsive (Zeichner, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2000). They must be placed in successful schools that employ teachers who are aware of and respond to the circumstances that shape the school context.

Knowing schools and communities should be emphasized. Pre-service teachers should be required to participate in non-school settings with minority students, prior to applying to the program. This includes church functions, community centers, camps and day care centers (Irvine, 2003). Knowing this dimension of context should be a component embedded in rigorous recruitment efforts of committed teacher candidates who desire to teach all children (Anyon, 1997; Zeichner, 1998).

*Closing Thoughts—Mr. Lehrer as an example of acquiring transformative practices as improvisation ...On Transformative Practice As Improvisation*

Mr. Lehrer enacted literature-based instruction that posited controversial literature, culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) and critical race theory (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). While engaging in these practices, students who did not sense belonging in other contexts of school, felt that they belonged in his classroom. He affirmed their responses (Britzman, 2003) and responded to ambiguous queries (Sawyer, 2004). He co-constructed with his learners a caring classroom community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Rose, 2005; Morris, 2004) and assumed a parent like role. He provided for students non threatening opportunities to write standard and nonstandard contexts for writing. For many students, he provided access to the culture of power (Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1996; Cazden, 1999, 2001; Smitherman, 1999; Vaughn-Cooke, 1999). Because students were comfortable appropriating their voices, there was a sense that they could approach him about issues that mattered to them. Throughout his decision making, he improvised and negotiated dilemmas that resonated with increased class sizes, heterogeneous learning abilities as a result of increasing diversity, unsettled behavior, and student responsibility. Dilemma management (Lambert, 1987) posited the negotiation of when to assume responsibility and support for students and when to expect student responsibility (Nieto, 2000). As he enacted his practices, he was aware of the historical and current circumstances that shaped Oak Valley and Detroit. Mr. Lehrer's practices also required on-going reflection through professional development opportunities. Although professional development was provided by the district, much of his transformative practices were enacted on his own volition, through professional literature, and agreeing to work with me, a doctoral candidate.

For Oak Valley, Detroit, and everywhere else, Mr. Lehrer's on-going pedagogical decisions are an example of the commitment that is needed in an effort to teach all of our children. Current circumstances, in the wake of standards based reform, diminishing the achievement gap, and declining resources, require systemic change and deliberation.

*Returning to the Problem—Seedfolks and Border Crossing, Revisited*

"God, who made Eden, also wrecked the tower of Babel, by dividing people. From Paradise, the garden was turning back to Cleveland" (Fleishman, 1997, p.23 )

This excerpt from the chapter titled "Sam" in *Seed folks* speaks to the diversity problem in Oak Valley and at Barrington. It also speaks to Detroit's history. The notion of Detroit, as Eden in its heyday was wrecked by the tower of Babel, during decades of racial tension and white flight, forging the most racially divided region in the country. Oak Valley, as a paradise haven, has been facing dilemmas of a Detroit recurrence, a compromise of its privilege.

Embedded in this context is a 7$^{th}$ grade English teacher, whose improvisational instructional practices and literature choices emanate the circumstances shaping the school and community. Practitioners in Oak Valley, Detroit, and regions throughout the country that experience border crossing have a responsibility to their students and their practice. They have a responsibility to take into account the circumstances that divided people into their enclaves, safe havens, and comfort zones. Fulfilling this responsibility embeds looking inward, disrupting one's comfort level, and unlearning perceived deficit of poor and minority children.

The possibility of a return to Detroit, as Eden, and Oak Valley, as Paradise, might be desirable to numerous residents in this region, but the reality of a return to the

perception of the good old days is highly unlikely, given the comfort of enclaves. Detroit has decades of a tarnished image to contend with, and it is fighting to diminish the exodus out, as Ana said it in her chapter, as soon as people can afford to leave. In other cases, circumstances posit, as soon as people are able to manage their way into a more affluent school system.

Oak Valley and similar districts must openly confront the reality that a discomfort with diversity exists. This confrontation in itself, and accepting that there is a problem, is a source of discomfort. That Oak Valley's former school board president faced community scrutiny and resistance for openly bringing this issue to the forefront, along with the numerous examples presented in this paper, indicates that there is a diversity problem that is not being effectively confronted.

The racially and ethnically diverse community in *Seedfolks* unlearned held perceptions by leaving their comfort zone, confronting their ethnocentrism, and coming together as a community. That transformation echoed in Mr. Lehrer's classroom. Educationally parity is deeply rooted in a sense of community and belonging. The garden in *Seedfolks* is a metaphor for the components that have the potential to influence members in racially polarized schools and communities to unlearn held notions about outsiders, and include: encouraging teachers to look closely at their work (Erickson, 1986); on-going professional development (Erickson, 1986; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Putnam & Borko, 1997; Wilson & Berne, 1999); unlearning bias and deficit views (Sachs, 2004); understanding divisions of race and class and the hand in history (Anyon, 1997; and appropriating transformative pedagogy that takes into account language and culture of the home (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1996; Delpit, 1995, 2002). The

interaction of these components underlies a sense of discomfort, but one's comfort must be disrupted in order to be improvisational and transformative.

Acceptance of diversity is needed, along with the reality of demographic changes, without the normalized dialogue of deficiency based on difference. It must be exerted in the context of language and cultural diversity, in a heightened era of standards-based reform that calls for diminishing the achievement gap.

Although there are many who resist or are uncertain about changing for the sake of increased diversity, there are also many with good intentions, who would like to modify their pedagogy, but have not had the professional development or resources to exert significant change.

In the process of writing this chapter, I became privy to witnessing a special education teacher at Brownstone who shares my classroom during times when I am not teaching. Her class is predominantly African American and students appropriate African American Vernacular English. During this occasion, I witnessed her kind interactions with an African American male, on a written task. Her voice was well intended, for each time his writing indicated his linguistic features that were intimate to him, she gently prompted, "Does that sound right?" or "That doesn't sound right." He never answered her, but made necessary changes to make it sound right. She did the same thing whenever he spoke on his terms. She is a good teacher, with good intentions. We spoke after class that day, about her thoughts of teaching her linguistically diverse students, and she admitted that this was a dilemma for her. She welcomed any feedback that she could get. She wants her students to have access to the standard form of English, but never learned in her professional development or in her

teacher preparation program.

There is certainly potential for many teachers who are uncertain, but would welcome support that is simply not available to them. The support is in the garden, a force that would raise awareness for teachers. The existing diversity problem in Oak Valley has received a great deal of acknowledgement, and varying community members accept or reject that one exists. That there is scrutiny at the forefront from both perspectives presents an opportunity to openly confront the problem and its underlying discomfort. Efforts to raise awareness and unlearn misconceptions in Oak Valley is far more complex than Mr. Lehrer's classroom during the 2004-05 school year. The beginning space in the community is the support embedded in the garden. If addressed in an on-going manner that includes the recommended components, or seeds, there is potential for gradual transformation in the classroom and in the community. Mr. Lehrer and teachers like him are the Seedfolks in the community. Perhaps exposure to them, as there was with Kim's character, can raise an awareness in the community, one Seedfolk at a time.

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