MAKING A DIFFERENCE, TRANSFORMING LIVES: MEDIATING PRACTICES IN A CULTURE OF EMPOWERMENT AT SANTA CRUZ SCHOOL

DISSertation

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By

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ABSTRACT

This is a field study of what a small Catholic school community in an inner-city Latino neighborhood says and does in its mission to “empower” students through literacy. The purpose of my study is to describe how the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz School resonate with culturally responsive education practices identified in effective schools research. I represent my inquiry in two interrelated discourses that form a macro-micro textual pattern. In the macro textual discourse, I describe culturally responsive, empowering qualities in the mission, visions, beliefs, and organizational structures of the Santa Cruz school community. In the micro textual discourse, I describe responsive, empowering qualities in the culture of practice in one 8th grade teacher’s language arts classroom. I use a social constructivist lens, multicultural orientation, and activity theory framework to illumine responsive features of the school and classroom cultures. I use two activity-centered questions to guide my fieldwork: 1) How did the Santa Cruz school community construct a culture that mediated the empowerment of students? 2) How did an 8th grade language arts teacher and her students construct a mediating, culturally responsive community of practice in the classroom? My findings suggest that: 1) shared vision, personal and communal witness, and collaborative decision-making are definitive qualities of the school community culture; 2) creation and maintenance of a mediative network of support programs are explicit expressions of solidarity with neighborhood students and families; 3) a joint, goal-oriented process of identity formation involves the
entire school community; 4) reading as an empowering literacy is the core instructional commitment of the school community and one of its palpable daily cultural practices; and 5) recurring classroom themes of joint, goal-oriented activity and identity formation as a process of participation instantiate the Santa Cruz mission and vision of empowerment through literacy. My findings suggest strong philosophical and practical linkages between the Santa Cruz literacy initiatives and the culturally responsive education practices advocated in effective schools research. My findings also suggest coherent macro-micro images of the mediating processes whereby school members share in the construction of a transformative school culture.
Dedicated to the community of the Midwest District

and to my extended family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The path one travels winds dimly long, lonely,
In months of years with shadow light
But for trust of words shared, enfolded,
That the path is ne’er traveled alone

(May 28, 2004)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the education of Latino students in the United States, almost everyone has had a say. Educators, researchers, and policy makers have offered all manner of solutions for the massive educational problems faced by Latinos in our schools….In a word, most solutions offered…have failed to acknowledge that…[students’] identities as Latinos are dismissed as resources in the development of their literacy. That is, at the core of our society’s widespread negative attitudes and beliefs concerning Latino children’s intellectual abilities is their status as children of working-class and poor families who speak a devalued language and share a largely disrespected culture. (Nieto, 2001, p. ix)

This is a study of what a small Catholic middle school community in a Latino neighborhood says and what the school staff does in its mission to “empower” students through literacy (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002, p. 4). In contrast to the cultural negation and devaluation to which Nieto (2001) refers, what this school community proclaims is solidarity through commitment, compassion and respect through service. It is a message that addresses profound educational challenges with faith, zeal, and human affirmation.

Santa Cruz School (pseudonym) was founded in autumn 1995 in response “to a pressing need in the ‘hood’” where the middle school-age dropout rate had reached as high as 70% (School founder, interview, Oct. 21, 2002). As a responsive initiative, Santa Cruz represents a grassroots and an innovative, community-based, Catholic experiment in middle school education. Its public mission suggests both a multicultural philosophy of transformative education (Banks, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Gay, 1994) and a
“pedagogy of hope” (Freire, 1994). The Santa Cruz mission seeks “to liberate and empower [Latino] children and families spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and emotionally...to break out of the cycle of poverty, gangs, and violence.” (Faculty Handbook, p. 4)

At Santa Cruz, the linchpin of that transformative pedagogy is the teaching and the learning of English language arts. For those limited in English proficiency (LEP), the majority of Santa Cruz’s student polity of seventy-nine (School Profile, 2002-2003), the development of and sustained growth in English literacy skills serves as the foundation on which their experience of the school curriculum rests (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002). The emphasis on language literacy is not surprising. For most middle school teachers and support staff, language literacy is a common instructional goal for all students, but it represents a critical goal for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Manning, 2000; Alvermann, 2000). Since the publication of Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989), basic literacy skills development has become an instructional focus in middle school curricula across the country (Wheelock, 1995). School reform initiatives in the wake of that publication, Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000, P.L. 103-277) and the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA, P.L. 103-382), for example, have supported and strengthened literacy skills development programs in reading, writing, and numeracy. Most recently, directives in No Child Left Behind Act (2002) have identified basic literacy development in reading and numeracy as core skills to be assessed as standards in a national movement toward educational accountability and excellence (Gonzáles, 2002; Paige, 2003; Ravitch, 2003; Forgione, 1998).
How a school community builds an effective literacy program, however, comes from local and philosophical roots. The former involves the ways that students and staff create a particular culture of practice in day-to-day school life. The latter involves the educational vision that gives direction and coherence to that culture of practice (Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkart, 2000; Mizell, 2002; Conchas, 2001; Banks, 1995; Inlay, 2003). For some schools, the local character and the philosophical base of their literacy programs form dynamic parts of a transformative culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000; Rosado, 1996). Inextricably bound in my study of the literacy program at Santa Cruz are the concepts of vision and action, empowerment for change, holistic identity formation, relationship development, and joint productive activity. At Santa Cruz, they are the tools for building dreams.

**Literacy Research and the “At-Risk” Status of Hispanic Youth**

**A Shift in Perspective**

Reflective teaching, nurturing dreams, and building self-confidence in students represent buttresses of a humanistic tradition in education. They are concepts of practice rooted in the progressive philosophy of John Dewey (e.g. *School and Society*, 1971; *Democracy and Education*, 1966) where they form pillars of a democratic, student-centered pedagogy. At the heart of that pedagogical vision is an ardent belief in the transformative potential of the human and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001; Nieto, 1999) of students:

The imagination is the medium in which the child lives. To him [her] there is everywhere and in everything that occupies his [her] mind and activity at all, a surplusage of value and significance. The question of the relation of the school to the child’s life is at bottom simply this: shall we ignore this native setting and tendency, dealing not with the living child at all, but with the dead image we have erected, or shall we give it play and satisfaction? If we once believe in life and in
the life of the child, then will all the occupations and uses spoken of, then will all history and science, become instruments of appeal and materials of culture to his [her] imagination, and through that to the richness and the orderliness of his [her] life. Where we now see only the outward doing and the outward product, there, behind all visible results, is the re-adjustment of mental attitude, the enlarged and sympathetic vision, the sense of growing power, and the willing ability to identify both insight and capacity with the interests of the world and [humankind].

Unless culture be a superficial polish, a veneering of mahogany over common wood, it surely is this— the growth of the imagination in flexibility, in scope, and in sympathy, till the life which the individual lives is informed with the life of nature and of society. When nature and society can live in the schoolroom, when the forms and tools of learning are subordinated to the substance of experience, then shall there be an opportunity for this identification, and culture shall be the democratic password. (Dewey, 1971, pp. 72-3)

In *Democracy and Education* (1966), Dewey describes his vision of education as a social ethic: "the intention of improving the life we live in common so that the future shall be better than the past" (p. 191). Many literacy researchers studying the educational experience of Hispanic students build upon Dewey’s vision of education, turning critical attention to the implicit as well as explicit philosophies undergirding pedagogical practice (Halcón, 2001). In particular, they take special interest in the context-specific ways in which philosophies influence the literacy development of Hispanic adolescents in the curriculum of a school or classroom (Nieto, 1999). Moll (1988, 1990, 2001), for instance, articulates that vision in terms of a cultural embrace, a “funds of knowledge” perspective. The "funds of knowledge" concept refers to the social capital reservoir, the practical and intellectual knowledge, present in Hispanic households, distributed among all members of a family, and shared within communal networks of households (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). It is an omnibus expression that intimates the cultural vitality and strength of the Hispanic community and suggests the rich literacy learning experiences and expertise that working class, Hispanic students carry with them to school. Moll’s (1988, 1990, 2001) research brings home and classroom, parents and teachers, school and community
into constructive dialogue centered on an exploration of the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990) of Latino children and families. Moll (1988, 2001), Moll and Greenberg (1992), Rueda and Moll (1994), and Mercado and Moll (2000) document the potential such dialogical spaces hold in fostering a process of personal (student, teacher, parent) and communal (family, school, neighborhood, society) transformation.

Researchers contributing to the government-sponsored Hispanic Dropout Project (1995-98) articulate a vision of education as social ethic within school reform contexts. Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth (1995), for example, create a research framework to study why and how schools serving large numbers of Hispanic youth become transformative settings for student success. In their research, evidence of student achievement on multiple indices and dramatic, positive shifts in student-school affiliations serve as starting points for inquiry. Among the case studies of a spectrum of schools, they identify how two middle schools in Hispanic neighborhoods reconstitute their educational programs through reflective praxis, cultural affirmation, and a spirit of community partnership. Other studies (e.g. Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 1997; McLeod, 1996; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996) and theoretical critiques (e.g. McLeod, 1995; Chavez, 1997; Mehan, 1997) within the Hispanic Dropout Project represent the ethical dimensions of the literacy education of Latino youth as issues requiring “political and ideological clarity” (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001, p. 48). Considered collectively, these studies and critiques redirect research focus from a myopic preoccupation with “the Hispanic problem” of chronic student underachievement and/or educational disaffection (Secada, 1999) to a critical questioning of how schools and programs might better serve the needs of Hispanic students (Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Nieto, 1999).
More recent studies (e.g. Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkart, 2000; Díaz & Flores, 2001) describe settings in which the academic performance and school affiliation of young Hispanic students improve as schools and teachers re-envision their educational practices as collegial responses in a mission of service. Collections of studies (e.g. Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Reyes & Halcón, 2001) and research syntheses (e.g. Padrón & Waxman, 1996; Fashola & Slavin (1998); Zygouris-Coe, 2001; Waxman & Tellez, 2002) provide a breadth of scholarship describing, through case study analyses and site comparisons, how a critical, self-probing posture on the part of school community members serves as a catalyst for meaningful, responsive pedagogical change (Rosado, 1996; Inlay, 2003).

These reports represent a branch of the national movement known as “effective schools research” (August & Hakuta, 1997; Barrera & Jiménez, 2000). Culturally focused field inquiries and reports on effective schools have shifted ever so slightly the locus of school reform discourse in general. This shift has accentuated the need for extensive research attuned to theory-based practice (August & Hakuta, 1997) and has served as a stimulus for descriptive inquiry trained upon schools, teachers, and communities they serve (Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, & Mehan, 1998; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Mercado & Moll, 2000; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). Rather than reifying the image of Latino students as chronic underachievers, the shift has turned attention to explicating the cultural characteristics of schools whose literacy programs are effectively addressing the special needs of Latino young adults (Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 1997; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Gándara, Larson, Rumberger,
The recognition of the shift in literacy research focus offered me as well, early on in academic work, a way to link personal interest and the research enterprise in a mutually informative partnership. It provided a way to envision what I had heard and read about Santa Cruz and its literacy mission as an invitation to discover what others had identified as an effective and responsive school culture.

**Philosophical Underpinnings**

In subject and orientation, then, my literacy study appends to a growing corpus of literature on programmatic and instructional responses to the educational needs of “at-risk” Latino youth (e.g. Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Gordon, 1996; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Solo, 1997; Reyes, Scribner & Scribner, 1999; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Berzins & López, 2001). This corpus of theoretical and empirical literature is sociocultural and constructivist in orientation (Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Moll, 2001). The orientation offers a broader, often oppositional, perspective to the common cognitive representation of literacy learning as an essentially individual pursuit (Gardner, 1983; Bruner, 1986; Nieto, 1999, 2000). In the sociocultural/constructivist framework that Rogoff (1995) proposes, for example, literacy development occurs on three interrelated planes rather than on a discrete individual level. Rogoff (1995) argues that literacy develops holistically on the personal (individual) plane, the interpersonal (social) plane, and the community (institutional) plane. Although one plane might appear in relief as the focus of analysis, it is always part of, not separate from, the larger learning dynamic of a social and cultural context in which it is embedded. The school research of Moll (2001), Garcia (2001), Trueba and Bartolomé (1997), Conchas (2001), and Nieto (2000) also emphasizes the importance of an expansive view of literacy
in addressing the educational needs of Latino youth. According to Rueda, MacGillivray, Monzó, and Arzubiaga (2001), this broadening of perspective is “especially important for students from nontraditional and diverse backgrounds” (p. 4) because it embraces a holistic view of the learning process. Like Conchas (2001), Garcia (2001), and Nieto (2000), Rueda et al (2001) contend that a sociocultural view of literacy “may explain the variability in achievement patterns of [Latino] students in comparison to norms in the wider society” (p. 4) and offer a more profound basis on which to respond meaningfully to the educational needs of Latino youth (Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999).

During the past ten years, scholars contributing to this small but unified research corpus have tried to address what many educators and policy makers have called our nation’s urgent educational need—the establishment of effective instructional programs and strategies to stem the tide of unremitting low achievement and/or educational disaffection among Hispanic young adults (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Garcia, 1991; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Moll, 1990, 2001). Recent government statistics (NCES, 2003) identify Latinos/as as the segment of student polity most “at risk” of school failure, of language dysfunction, and, at the same time, those most likely to opt out of the nation’s educational system entirely. Latino students represent 17% of public school (NCES, 2003) and 11% of Catholic school student populations (McDonald, 2004), yet, according to the National Education Longitudinal Study (1988) (NELS:88), more than 50% of the total school enrollment in LEP programs and a disproportionate percentage of the student population in special education classes (Moll & Greenberg, 1992; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Warger & Brunette, 2000; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Halcón, 2001). Additional statistics, sobering in their starkness, punctuate that numerical portraiture:
three of every ten Hispanic students nationwide withdraw from school before entering the 11th grade (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000; Jose-Kampfner & Aparicio, 1998; Garcia, 2001).

For many sociocultural researchers in the field, however, a composite statistical representation conveys only a limited, faceless part of the Latino educational story. What is missing in a statistical description is a detailed accounting of young Latino/a successes in school and a explication of the ways that schools and teachers transform educational practice to respond more effectively to the needs of their cultural and language diverse learners (Borman & Racuba, 2001; Nieto, 1999; 2000; Halcón, 2001; Monzò & Rueda, 2001). Such accountings require field observations and interactions with practitioners and learners. They require lenses focused on why and how some schools succeed in effecting substantive changes in the life trajectories of Latino youth considered “at-risk” of school failure, school disaffection, and school attrition (Conchas, 2001; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Garcia, 2001).

Recent studies undertaken to offer a more encompassing picture of Latino school experience have emanated, in large part, from a multicultural perspective. Fundamentally, these studies reflect a strategic and philosophical departure from behaviorist models of prior research on “the Hispanic problem” (Secada, 1999). Prior studies relied extensively on basic psychometric data, large-scale statistical surveys, and clinical evaluations. They reflected an appropriation of what McDermott and Varenne (1995), Moll and Greenberg (1992) and others (e.g. Ladson-Billing, 1994; Tharp, 1997; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Conchas, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999; Halcón, 2001) have called “a culture-as-deficit” assumption. Practically speaking, the prior epistemic perspective led to diagnoses of young Latinos’ literacy capacities according to an uncontested mainstream standard (Moll & Greenberg,
Language-diverse students were then, in most cases, placed in special classes to remediate language-related insufficiencies and subjected to prescriptive strategies and programs to change their communicative behaviors (McDermott & Varenne, 1995).

Researchers with a multicultural orientation, in contrast, focus attention not on students’ deficiencies but on the educational process— from the role of the teacher, the curriculum, and the discourse patterns in classrooms to teacher-student-peer interactions, relationships between home and school, and the necessity of learning-oriented assessment (McLeod, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 1988; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). This contrast reflects the impact of sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Rogoff, 1995, 1998) and of critical pedagogical (Freire, 1994; Nieto, 1999) viewpoints and proposes ethnographic case studies and site-specific naturalistic inquiries, rather than standardized correlational instruments, as primary methods of investigation (e.g. Moll & Greenberg, 1994; Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Mercado & Moll, 2000). The paradigmatic shift in focus, according to Rosado (1996), foregrounds the political, ideological, and ethical dimensions of educational research and, for many scholars, serves as a catalyst for a renewed sense of the democratic value and purpose of educational research (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001).

It is possible to view this shift in research ethos within the wider framework of an increased receptivity among scholars of various forms of qualitative inquiry (Cabrán, 1997). But some scholars within the psychometric research community unceremoniously argue that a qualitative approach itself is a well-intentioned but hopelessly flawed effort to uncover “the truth” (Trochim, 1999) with a lesser, “softer” knowledge claim (Labaree,
1998). It lacks the “hard” science of rigor and methodical testing. Still others classify this research movement as intrinsically propagandistic (Ravitch, 1990) or essentially self-serving (Schlesinger, 1998) in its advocacy of an informed educational paradigm of pluralism and cultural inclusion. Despite one’s disposition on its merits as an educational perspective, little doubt exists about its conceptual origin. Most scholarly discourse on current issues or research associated with multicultural education begins with, and cites often, the work of James Banks (1993, 1994, 1995, 1998).


His school model neither invites disunity (Schlesinger, 1998) within the nation’s educational system nor diminution of the system’s capacity to create a literate populace (Hirsch, 1988). On the contrary, Banks’ (1993) model promotes the generation of new insights for all students through a process of making problematic “generally accepted mainstream knowledge” (p. 279) and advocates increasingly complex transitional stages in the transformational process. In his curriculum, what begins initially through the
“contributions” approach moves sequentially into the “additive,” the “transformative,” and the “social action” stages, each with a specific set of goals building upon a culturally-inclusive view of the world (Banks, 1994).

In essence, what Banks (1994) proposes in his school model entails a gradual expansion of perspective, a linear as well as spatial stretching of a student’s ability to understand, appreciate, and eventually participate within another cultural community: “When students are able to view the world from the perspective of different groups,” he said, “their view of reality is broadened and they gain insight into their own behavior” (Banks, 1994, p. 21). At its theoretical base, Banks’ (1994) model celebrates the strength of a diverse society and intimates the need for deep and more expansive probing of unquestioned social ideas and concepts (Freire, 1994, 1997, 1998).

The model also serves as an impetus for research. The notion that “education within a pluralistic society should affirm and help students understand their home and community culture [as well as] free them from their cultural boundaries” (Banks, 1994, p. 1) undergirds and commingles the field endeavors and approaches of researchers with a multicultural orientation (Gay, 1994). A pluralist worldview helps to explain, in large part, why multicultural research parameters are so broad and complex. On the one hand, the field burgeons with case studies focused on responsive public school programs (e.g. Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner, & Peterson, 1994; Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; McLeod, 1995; Fine, Weis, & Powell, 1997; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Ackley, Colter, Marsh, & Sisco, 2003) and teaching strategies (e.g. Gay, 1994; Harris, 1995; Dannis, Colombo, & Sawilowsky, 1996; Gordon, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 1997; Strickland, 1998; Green & Jennings, 1999;
Worrell & Hale, 2001; Borman & Racuba, 2001). But researchers also engage many of these field studies with the focused lens of a specific cultural advocacy (e.g. Mexican-American: Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Puerto Rican: Nieto, 1998, 2000; Mercado & Moll, 2000; African-American: Ladson-Billings, 1994; Blackburn & Stern, 2000; Asian/Pacific Islander: Fung, 1998; Yamauchi & Tharp, 2000; Native American: Stokes, 1997; Demmert & Towner, 2002).

Despite its dynamism and breadth, however, what the research field broaches only anecdotally (e.g. Irvine & Foster, 1996), and with some reservation (Nieto, 1999), is how many Catholic school responses to the needs of their culturally diverse learners fit within a multicultural education framework. Nieto (1999) reflects this ambivalence in describing "the Catholic school effect" (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Bryk, Lee, & Holland; Irvine & Foster, 1996) for students of color. On one level, she refers to 'the Catholic school effect' (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Irvine & Foster, 1996) for these students as a paradox of practice, saying that many African American and other non-mainstream students have "thrived in ways that only can be dreamed about in most public schools" despite "the fact that...the pedagogy and curriculum of Catholic schools can be characterized as traditional and Eurocentric." (p. 17) On another level, she contends that research related to the "favorable effects of Catholic schools on students of color" holds "great promise for public schools because it describes settings in which these students are academically successful in spite of what in other settings might be considered insurmountable deficits and disadvantages." (pp. 17-8)

It is in contested space, the ambivalent divide suggested in Nieto's (1999) view of Catholic school pedagogy and curriculum as a "paradox of practice" and the "favorable
effects of Catholic schools on students of color," that I try to build bridges between the public and private school sectors of responsive practice. It is in this same contested space that I seek to identify and describe, in thorough and unambiguous ways, the multicultural ethic at the center of the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz School.

Theoretical Framework

I planned my fieldwork as an ethnographic case study (Spradley, 1980; Yin, 1984; Stake, 1994; Hammersley, 1990). The theoretical lens I appropriated for my study is social constructivism (Cummins, 1986; Rogoff, 1995; Gredler, 1997; Au, 1998). Social constructivists posit “that the school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds will be improved as educators address the goal of instruction, the role of home language [and culture], instructional materials, classroom management and interaction with students, instructional methods, and assessment” (Au, 1998, p. 297). The theory is based on a premise that all knowledge and knowledge claims are human constructions. For a field researcher using a social constructivist lens, then, important foci are the processes by which knowledge is constructed in the social groups being studied and the patterns of intersubjectivity that distinguish interactions within the groups (Au, 1998, p. 299).

In school settings, researchers with this orientation attend to the ways in which psychosocial dimensions of learning (e.g. motivation, physical and emotional well-being, group membership) interact with more traditionally defined cognitive and strategic features of learning (e.g. comprehension, perception, conceptualization, application, teacher-student/student-peer interactions) to build a responsive culture of learning within schools and classrooms (Cummins, 1994; Au, 1998; Moll, 2001; Inlay, 2003; Valenzuela, 1997; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). With a social constructivist lens, a
researcher also focuses on identifying characteristics of relations and distributions of power within the local learning environment (Cummins, 1994; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Moll, 2001; Nieto, 1999, 2000). Relations and distributions of power range from the ways that teachers and students share responsibilities in the construction of school and classroom cultures to the ways that students exercise personal and corporate ownership of their learning (Au, 1998; Reyes & Halcón; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 1992; Inlay, 2003).

I develop the macro case— the school community culture and its relationship to the empowerment of Hispanic students—through analysis, interpretation, and integration of three databases. These data sources include a) the “public” language in Santa Cruz School documents (e.g. the school’s faculty/staff and parent handbooks, newsletters, public relations materials), b) sustained field observations, and c) informal as well as semi-structured interviews with school community members. I create a demographic profile of Santa Cruz to provide a foundation on which to represent the integrated syntheses of these data. The demographic profile includes descriptions of the school’s neighborhood, its student, staff, and faculty composition, its building, and its brief history as a school. The integrated synthesis of data from the field helps form a portrait of Santa Cruz as a school community with a particular culture of responsive literacy education.

I develop the micro case— the responsive culture of practice in one 8th grade teacher's language arts classroom— through analysis, interpretation, and integration of three databases that parallel the macro case. These databases include a) the "public" (explicit) language of teacher and students in the classroom (e.g. lessons plans, verbal interchanges, written discourse), focused field observations, and informal as well as semi-structured interviews with the teacher, brief "desk-side chats" with participating students.
I used my time in the field to study how community members socially constructed the culture of literacy at Santa Cruz School. Through a wide-angle lens, I observed the social construction process at a school level. Through a narrow-angle lens, I observed that process in the classes of an 8th grade language arts teacher. The wide-angle lens provided a way to identify and describe cultural themes (Spradley, 1980) that connect and sustain the organizational structures of the school. The narrow-angle lens offered a way to identify and describe the interlocking themes that situate the social construction of teaching and learning in the classroom within the culture of the school. Identification and description of connective themes at the school and classroom levels illumined the categories of meaning (Spradley, 1980) at Santa Cruz that form its responsive culture (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, 1993; Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Freire, 1970, 1994; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Inlay, 2003).

**Rationale and Significance**

*Motivation, belonging, care, community, hoping, and dreaming* are captivating words that have stimulated my imagination and guided my conceptual planning in this study. They appear as recurring themes in the literature review to accentuate their importance as critical features of the sociocultural perspective I have used in my research approach. But the value of the words goes beyond mere fascination or theoretical utility. They are the descriptive words I heard most often from Santa Cruz teachers and students during a weeklong pilot study I conducted in May 2000. They represent both the mesmerizing power of initial field impressions and the residual power of words to pique curiosity, to create a desire to understand more fully the meaning of such words for those who uttered them. In a simply human way, it is that desire to understand more fully that
drew me back to Santa Cruz School as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980) with a commitment to residing within the school community and sharing as much as possible in the daily activities at Santa Cruz.

An initial direction for my study arose gradually. Academic course work reading in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1994, 1995) helped me to envision an appropriate theoretical foundation for the study. Langer’s “Musings” (1984) and the literature review of Freedman, Dyson, Flower, and Chafe (1987) helped me to hone its direction. I wished to study the “how” of literacy events, the marks of passage in learning (Langer, 1984). I wished to describe in more detail and with purpose “how learning environments are organized and presented to learners and how learners subjectively respond to those environments” (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987, p. 8). In the research proposal process, the framework or design for my study emerged through the integration of theory, purpose, and pilot study data. During field research, I contoured the structural plan using the organizational principles of Sociocultural Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont’ev, 1977; Engeström, 1987, 1999; Rogoff, 1995; Wells, 1999). Activity theory served as the conceptual framework for the study’s textual reconstruction.

In its developmental stages, the study design resembled a series of interrelated conceptual photographs (Schwandt, 1994) shaped by a distinct cultural lens. The initial snapshot of the series focuses on core principles within the culture of Santa Cruz School. The salient concepts in the first picture are educational vision, program values, and community commitment (Rosado, 1996). A second photograph captures ways that a teacher’s patterns of culturally responsive practice spur the creation of a classroom literacy culture. Central images in the second snapshot are instructional goals/purposes,
instructional materials and tasks, and modes of presentation. A third photograph captures ways that patterns of student engagement become responsive, co-creative features of the classroom culture. I draw focal images within that photograph from student behaviors and oral/written discourse. I address specific questions through the formulation and use of a multicultural research lens. The lens represents empirical perspectives on culturally responsive practice (school/teacher-focused) and empowerment (school/student-focused).

I use concepts in Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont’ev, 1977; Engeström, 1987; Rogoff, 1995; Wells, 1999) to identify pivotal linkages among features within each conceptual photograph and to pair those linkages with field research questions. Activity theory is a general conceptual framework, a practice-based organizational construct that offers a cultural and mediative angle to describe cognition, language, and actions in a social setting. At the core of Activity theory is the concept of the social construction of knowledge (Engeström, 1987), the premise that knowing is a socially mediated process inextricably linked to culture and to context (Lantolf, 2000). In my study, activity theory provides a sociocultural base (Vygotsky, 1978) for analyzing complex interrelationships within the personal, interpersonal, and communal activities that define the culture of practice in the school and the culture of practice in one teacher’s 8th grade language arts classes at Santa Cruz.

The social constructivist foundation and the multicultural orientation of my study foster theoretical links to the current body of ethnographic research on the education of young Latinos (e.g. Nieto, 1999, 2000; Moll, 2001; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). Such a foundation and orientation establishes common ground on which to build a meaningful connection between research on responsive literacy initiatives in public schools and
classrooms and my research inquiry of literacy education at Santa Cruz. That connection provides a dynamic research context of public and private school settings that share the goal of effecting positive change in the academic and life trajectories of marginalized Hispanic youth (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001).

The choice to limit the classroom focus of my study to a description of language arts classes in Santa Cruz School's 8th grade reflects professional and specific research interests. An English teacher in Catholic high schools for twenty-eight years, I was drawn naturally to the language arts program. Since I have spent a good portion of my teaching career working with ninth and tenth graders, I had interest, on a professional level, in observing a middle school approach to the preparation of students for their high school language arts experiences. Directly related to Santa Cruz and its students, however, I hoped to uncover the ways in which the school community culture fosters the preparatory process as a mediating, transformative response to student needs.

Most important of all, the focused study of Santa Cruz’s literacy program I have undertaken is a form of participation in the school’s efforts to document and improve its literacy mission (School founder, Interview, Oct. 21, 2002). On one level, my study has offered a third-party perspective of the on-going improvement dynamic within the Santa Cruz School community (Field notes, Feb. 26, 2003). On another level, my literacy study has projected this school improvement dynamic into the wider public arena of culturally responsive practice. Since 1997, five new Catholic middle schools patterned upon the Santa Cruz model have been established in the midwest and a consortium of schools has formed. I hoped that an ethnographic inquiry at Santa Cruz would provide an additional resource for group colloquy and serve as a stimulus for other studies by school members.
themselves or outside researchers. I found anecdotal reflections on and reports about the
Santa Cruz literacy initiatives in my search for related literature, but this more formal
field inquiry of the literacy program situates the responsive ethos of the school literacy
mission within a broader sociocultural research context.

On a related plane, my study contributes to a woefully meager empirical base in
Catholic school responses to the needs of minority students (Greeley, 2000). Most of the
literature I reviewed on Catholic school responses comes from an anecdotal or reportorial
perspective (Irvine & Foster, 1996; Greeley, 1997, 2000). Several of these accounts (e.g.
Watters, 1994; Schnaiberg, 2001; Lefevere, 2003; Cooper, 2003) serve as conceptual
supports in my literature review description of Catholic school responses to the needs of
diverse student populations. By and large, however, recent research studies of Catholic
schools concentrate on governance, finances, and specific aspects of religious education
(Travis, 1997) or appear in comparative inquiries of wider scope. Bryk, Lee, and Holland
(1993), for example, present data from a longitudinal study of Catholic high schools and
probe the historical roots of the American Catholic education tradition. Grogger and
Neal (2000) discuss rationale for the school voucher movement through critical analyses
of NELS:88 and its follow-up studies in 1990, 1992, and 1994. Shokraii, Olson, and
Youssef (1997) advocate radical public school reform based on analyses of student
performance data in the Catholic and public schools of the District of Columbia.

My description of the literacy initiatives of a small Catholic middle school serves
as a contrast to such studies. I represent a field experience of school, classroom, and
literacy practice that is inextricably bound to neighborhood and community. In this
reconstructive process, the voices and perceptions of stakeholders inform, deepen, and
blend with my observations from the field as part of an integrated text. Rather than a cross-context comparative approach like that used in broader studies of Catholic school initiatives (e.g. Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Grogger & Neal, 2000), I employ an intra-contextual comparative approach, seeking to identify and describe the cultural themes (Spradley, 1980) woven in the school and classroom cultures of practice at Santa Cruz School. Rather than offering arguments supporting voucher programs or radical public school reform based on a Catholic educational model, I offer a research perspective of school practices that suggests a transformative school identity and a communal culture rooted in neighborhood solidarity (Freire, 1994; Sergiovanni, 2000; Inlay, 2003).

**Focus of the Study**

My decision to live in the school neighborhood and to participate as a school community member is an integral feature of my fieldwork at Santa Cruz. I wanted to share as completely as possible in the lived reality of the school, to be present everyday with school members as they worked to realize the mission of "empowerment through literacy" in their individual and communal practices. I wished to describe, in focused detail and through insider experience, qualities in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz that make a daily difference in the lives of students, teachers, and staff. To represent this perspective, I first seek to illumine the salient features of the Santa Cruz School culture. The illumination of these features occurs through integration and triangulation of emergent themes in school documents, field observations, and stakeholder perspectives. I use an ethnographic case study approach (Yin, 1984; Stake, 1994; Spradley, 1980) and a sociocultural lens (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1994; Wertsch, 1985) informed by the principles of multicultural theory (Banks, 1995; 1999; Gay, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Rosado,
1996, 1999) to shape processes in the field. The description of the Santa Cruz School community culture forms the ethnographic boundaries of the study, the particularized social context of inquiry. I then seek to describe how patterns of instructional and participatory practice in one 8th grade teacher’s language arts classes flow from and particularize the values of the school culture (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Berman et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Eisner, 1985; Gutiérrez, Baquedano, & Alvarez, 2001; Moll, 2001; Conchas, 2001; Inlay, 2003; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Borman & Racuba, 2001). The patterns of cultural practice at Santa Cruz School surface through an iterative process of analysis (identification of recurring themes), interpretation (triangulation of themes across datasets), and conceptualization (formation of interpretive constructs).

**Research Questions**

I refined the research questions I used in the inquiry throughout the process of data collection and analysis in the field. The initial questions with which I entered the field I reshaped through recurring stages of conceptualizing the direction and purpose of my research at Santa Cruz (Spradley, 1980; Patton, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Through these conceptualization stages, I honed the parameters of four initial research questions to the parameters of two interlocking questions that surfaced from reflective praxis in the field. The two questions are:

1) How did the Santa Cruz School community construct a culture that mediated the empowerment of students?

2) How did an 8th grade language arts teacher and her students construct a mediating, culturally responsive community of practice in the classroom?
Discussion

Beneath the surface of my literacy study of Santa Cruz School lies an embrace of three interrelated assumptions about literacy education. The assumptions influenced my disposition as a researcher and their explication in this opening chapter offers the reader a forthright statement of the personal advocacies that I carried into the field at Santa Cruz School (Janesick, 1994; Patton, 1990; Richardson, 1994).

The first of these assumptions is that truly meaningful pedagogical practice is vision-driven (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997), that it is the patient and persistent manifestation of an ontological view of education as responsive transformation. Freire (1997) views such a worldview as a reflection of “conscientização” (p. 17), or critical consciousness, of the unfinished nature of our world and of the human condition. In his vision of education, the school community mission involves active participation in collective praxis, in the ethical shaping of a freer, more humane, more democratic world through dialogue, reflexive thought, and social action (Freire, 1997, 1994, 1998; Darder, 2002). Literacy pedagogy guided by Freire's (1997) vision, then, has as a core principle to make critical awareness of the world and of humanity instructional themes for exploration. His vision entwines “a reading of the word” with “a reading of the world,” (Freire, 1998, p. 79) and proposes that teaching and learning are not discrete educative terms but inseparable dimensions of one responsive process:

There is, in fact, no teaching without learning. One requires the other. And the subject of each, despite their obvious differences, cannot be educated to the status of object. Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning…. to teach is part of the very fabric of learning.
When we live our lives with the authenticity demanded by the practice of teaching that is also learning and learning that is also teaching, we are participating in a total experience that is simultaneously directive, political, ideological, gnostic, pedagogical, aesthetic, and ethical. In this experience the beautiful, the decent, and the serious form a circle with hands joined (Freire, 1998, p. 31).

The second assumption that lies beneath the surface of this literacy study is that meaningful pedagogical practice is a response to the immanent (in-dwelling) needs of students. At the center of this assumption is a student-centered ethic, a process view of education that recognizes the giftedness of all students and proposes ways to enhance all students’ human and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). From this perspective, what students bring to school and classroom represents an integral component of a responsive curriculum (Dewey, 1966, 1971; Moll, 1988, 1992; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999, 2001; Halcón, 2001). Rather than something which is “done to students” (Kohn, 1999), meaningful pedagogical practice requires a shared enterprise, an ethical set of principles, behaviors, and commitments through which students and teachers “work together” in forming new understandings of “the word and the world” (Freire, 1998). In this shared enterprise, “the notion of community is at the center of learning” (Nieto, 1999, p. 84) and “deep and meaningful relationships” (Nieto, 1999, p. 96) between teachers and students become the animating features of a mutual project of “unpacking” and reflecting upon experience (Dewey, 1966, 1971; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1999).

Davis and Adams (2000) describe this shared enterprise as a movement toward self-disclosure, toward a conscious awareness of life experience as a way of constructing legitimate knowledge about the world. Their perspective rejects the notion of education as a neutral process (Freire, 1998; Nieto, 1999) and embraces instead an image of
teaching and learning as self-exploration in a community of practice (Moll, 1993; Aronowitz, 1998). For them, autobiography and the sharing of real life perceptions are primary tools of literacy growth. These tools represent, for learners, “ways to value their own life experiences as legitimate contexts of knowledge” (p. 18) and, for schools, ways to offer learners “an academic identity with which they can relate” (Nieto, 1999, p. 96).

The third premise beneath the surface of my literacy study is that meaningful pedagogical practice is based on a culture of caring service, dedication, hope, and collaboration. At the core of this assumption are two images of teachers. The first of these images represents teachers as mediators, facilitators, mentors, and advocates—caregivers whose mission is to help students realize their potential through personal and collective challenge, empowerment, and affirmation (Freire, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Moll, 2001). The second of these images represents teachers as community members who share in the day-to-day construction of a responsive culture of practice, a school climate of high expectations and support (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Inlay, 2003; Eisner, 1985; Cotton, 1995; Secada et al, 1998; Carnegie Council, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001). Each of these images portrays teaching as a social ministry (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972; Convey, 1992) built on a personal and shared commitment to students and families. A pivotal feature of this commitment involves solidarity as the enabling process and the democratic goal of education (Dewey, 1966, 1971; Freire, 1994, 1998; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Halcón, 2001).

On an initial level, meaningful pedagogical practice means personally “walking the talk” or “diminishing the distance between what [one says] and what [one does]…in
the art and practice of teaching” (Freire, 1998, p. 63). On a communal level, the power of shared witness in “walking the talk” fosters a creative dynamic, a responsive school community culture, for transformative “intervention in the world” (Freire, 1998, p. 90).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

*Establishing the Research Context*

Founded in 1995, Santa Cruz School began its literacy mission at a time during which a large number of school staffs across the country were engaging in a process of evaluating instructional programs and of implementing substantive curricular change (Cotton, 1995; Wheelock, 1995). Their engagement of that evaluative reform process was a response to a more directive standards-based reform initiative, a movement spurred by the Congressional passage of *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (Goals 2000, P.L. 103-277) and the *Improving America’s Schools Act* (IASA, P.L. 103-382). The Goals 2000 program “provided grants to states to assist them in developing academic standards and student performance benchmarks” (Gonzáles, 2002, p. 3). The companion program to the Goals 2000 initiative, *Improving America’s Schools*, “required states to show that they [had] developed or adopted challenging standards and high-quality assessments” (Gonzáles, 2002, p. 3). A point of emphasis in the second program was the “carrot and stick” (Wheelock, 1995) incentive offering additional funding, or threatening decreased funding, as an encouragement for “states to raise academic standards for all students, including English Language Learners” (Gonzáles, 2002, p. 3)
More matters of federal exhortation than mandate, these acts nonetheless signaled a significant shift in the view of language minority education policy at the federal level (Riley, 1994). With systemic reform rhetoric, the acts tacitly asked what schools could do more effectively to respond to the needs of LEP students whose low levels of academic achievement, and vapid connection to the educational system in general, continued to persist despite more than a decade of school reform. An important question it was then (August, Hakuta, & Pompa, 1994), and an important question it has remained— for politicians, teachers, parents, students, and researchers. At the heart of this review are accounts of how some schools have responded to that question in transformative ways.

**A Hispanic Focus in Standards Reform Research**

process, they have become a critical and unified force advocating transformational change in America’s public schools (Nieto, 1999; Halcón, 2001; Rosado, 1996, 1999).

Nationally disseminated reports and statistics have had a profound influence in creating the reform climate in which an advocacy-oriented Hispanic research perspective has germinated and matured as a political force. One of those reports, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and the initial statistical data of the *National Education Longitudinal Study [NELS: 88]* (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1988) are of special importance. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) has served as kindling to spark what has become a maelstrom of educational reform initiatives over the last twenty years. In a more focused way, NELS:88 (NCES, 1988) has served as the charting instrument for a national profile of 8th graders as they have moved through the secondary school system.

In substantive ways, as some scholars aver (e.g. Ravitch, 2003; Peterson, 2003), *A Nation at Risk* articulated, in 1983, a necessary and coherent agenda. The topic of that agenda was an under-performing school system whose lack of focus and accountability imperiled the nation’s security:

> Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being taken over by competitors… (Education) undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility…[and] the educational foundations of our society are being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people…If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves…We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (p. 5)

Strident martialist metaphors (Harvey, 2003), however, framed the necessary and coherent agenda for schools not in a discourse promoting transformative systemic change.
but rather in the modification rhetoric of the competitive marketplace (Houston, 2001). The report’s emphases upon higher expectations for all students, longer school days, a return to “basics,” and more reliable accountabilities of instruction and learning (Tyack & Cuba, 1995) heralded a business ethic of higher productivity through establishment and incorporation of workplace standards and evaluations. *A Nation at Risk* (Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) promoted a new direction for America’s schools. What it has bequeathed as public policy, however, is an image of educational excellence and a model for national school reform tied to the concepts of standardization, implementation, and assessment. “Whatever else one might argue is the legacy of *A Nation at Risk*,” one researcher (Forgione, 1998) has said, “it [clearly] signaled the recognition of *educational performance* as a national concern, an issue of national importance” (p. 19).

The statistical data of *NELS:88* (NCES, 1988) served, in initial respects, as a mid-term description of students within a context of school reform initiatives. “The study began with the administration of questionnaires and tests to a nationally representative sample of 25,000 eighth graders in more than 1,000 public and private schools in the spring of 1988. Data were also collected from the students’ parents, teachers, and school principals.” (Bradby, Owings, & Quinn, 1992, p. iii) A research enterprise supported by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), *NELS:88* has provided data guided by a holistic perspective of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in comparison to their mainstream school-age peers. As the base aggregation of data has grown with succeeding data collections from the cohort in 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000 (NCES, 2002), it has offered to educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public a more comprehensive statistical portraiture of the original cohort into early adulthood.
If, as Forgione (1998) contends, *A Nation at Risk* (1983) has sent clear signals about the national importance of educational performance, one might say that *NELS:88* has served as a series of report cards assessing the impact of a standards-based educational agenda.

Three presidential administrations and a series of legislations on Capitol Hill have shaped and honed the dimensions of the standards-based reforms outlined in *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The forceful rhetoric and directives of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) represent the most defining of those standards-based dimensions. During the past three years, the sequential implementations of its mandates have created at state, district, and local school levels a more intense concentration upon the development of more rigorous academic standards for all students. These implementations also have spurred creation of specific assessment procedures to measure student and school performance in relation to established standards (Paige, 2003).

Critical for all culturally diverse students and a matter of on-going interest for sociocultural researchers has been the fora through which such standards and assessment measures gain public assent at local, state, and federal levels (August, Hakuta, & Pompa, 1994). At stake is the process through which a particular vision of equitable education becomes public policy and the forms of educational practice endorsed through public policy—those that are traditional and bureaucratic, top-down and market-driven or those that are innovative and collegial, bottom-up and stakeholder-focused in philosophical orientation (Goodlad, 1992; Wheelock, 1995; Sizer, 1999). For "traditionalists," equitable education is often imaged as an accountability issue effectively monitored by statistical assessment; for "nontraditionalists," however, it is represented as a “high stakes” issue with ramifications far beyond the confines of schools (Freire, 1998; Bartolomé, 2001).
Given their locus of interest, it is not surprising, then, that most "nontraditional" (e.g. sociocultural) researchers studying the school experiences of “at-risk” Hispanic youth have taken special interest in the rationales used to support educational reforms (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Rosado, 1996, 1999). Core foci in the research of Moll (1990, 2001), Valenzuela (1999), Garcia (2001), and Reyes and Halcón (2001), for example, involve examination of the philosophical foundations from which reform standards emanate and evaluation of settings in which standards become structural elements of practice. These foci represent research efforts to construct a more complete picture of the educational experience of "at-risk" Hispanic youth (Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997) than that depicted in descriptive statistical research. Such efforts have probed how school communities are responding to the precarious social, economic, and educationally marginalized status of almost 40% of Hispanic youth in American schools (NCES, 2002; Chavez, 1997).

**Role of Middle Schools in Standards Reform Research**

Middle schools had nestled in the shadows as reform initiatives in response to *A Nation at Risk* (1983) appeared in elementary and secondary schools across the country. Early on, middle schools had neither the local resources nor the national directional impetus to engage in meaningful systemic reform (Lounsbery, 1996; Norton & Lewis, 2000). Largely organized on the high school model and often popularly known, from the 1930s to the 1980s, as “Junior Highs” (Ames & Miller, 1994), middle schools had no clearly defined identity in the educational system. The publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989), however, trained a national and critical metaphoric spotlight on middle schools (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997).
The colloquy and reform initiatives that the Carnegie report (1989) has advocated challenged middle schools not only to move from their shadowy retreat but to assume a leading position in the broader educational reform movement (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1995; Norton & Lewis, 2000). The report's outline of a clear systemic role for middle school education has become a call for practical and ideological reorientation and ongoing dialogue among all school stakeholders—students, teachers, administrators, parents, and communities (Lewis, 1999; Mizell, 2002). For researchers whose locus of interest lay in culture-specific educational issues, the Carnegie report (1989) and middle school responses to it opened new arenas for study. Researchers began studying minority students of a particular age group in contexts of middle school reform initiatives specifically attuned to the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse student constituencies (e.g. Pearson, Pilcher, & Weeks, 1996; Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997; Bodily, Keltner, Purnell, Reichardt, & Schuyler, 1998; Nathan & Febey, 2001; Cardemil, Reivich, & Seligman, 2002; Lange & Sletten, 2002).

The Carnegie Task Force report (1989) proposes a design for effective middle school restructuring. The report identifies eight steps to foster the kind of systemic and local reforms needed to make middle schools effective schools. The steps emanate from an evidence-based conclusion that “a volatile mismatch existed between the organization and curriculum of middle grades schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents” (p. 8). The task force recommendations accentuate the pivotal role that middle schools play in the developmental lives of young adolescents. Its primary recommendations challenge faculties and staffs in middle schools to begin the process of renewal from within—by reflection and open discussion about the special educational
mission with which they were entrusted. Brief and pointed, these recommendations envision a radically altered school structure:

- create small communities for personalized learning (small schools or small programs within larger schools);
- create successful experiences for all students by eliminating tracking and promoting cooperative learning;
- give teachers and administrators decision-making power concerning curriculum and instruction;
- employ teachers who like, respect, and appreciate adolescents;
- employ teachers who are experts in teaching young adolescents;
- improve academic performance through fostering health and fitness of young adolescents;
- encourage family involvement in the education process;
- connect middle schools with their communities (p. 9).

**Role of Catholic Schools in Standards Reform Research**

The potential role of the private sector, especially the role that Catholic schools might play in addressing national educational needs, also emerges in the ideologically and politically charged arena of reform discourse. The hotly contested issue of private school vouchers, probably the most prominent, well publicized, and “radical option” articulated in national rhetoric, is one of the ways that Catholic schools and their value have entered the public fora in a dramatic, polarizing fashion. The “high-stakes” climate of on-going standards reform and assessment has fueled the debate about a Catholic school role. The irremediably low achievement level of many urban minority youth has spurred the debate into a groundswell of support among inner-city minorities and others for “real” school choice (Decker, 1998). This movement, in turn, has led to the creation
of "experimental" voucher programs that extend, to economically disadvantaged families, the educational option of religious-affiliated schools (Kafer, 2003; Viteritti, 1999). The groundswell of support has come from a strong, although surely not pervasive, perception of Catholic schools as demonstrably different from, and more reliable than, their public school counterparts (Hawkins, 1992; Convey, 1992). In Milwaukee and Cleveland, for example, scores of inner-city minority families have used this educational option to enroll their children in urban Catholic schools. In their brief history, the voucher programs in these cities have withstood several court challenges to their constitutionality. Recently, however, Justices of the U. S. Supreme Court have brought some closure to the debate.

In Zelman v Simmons-Harris (2002), they delineated constitutional provisions supporting the Cleveland voucher program (Greene & Winters, 2003; Kafer, 2003; Peterson, 2003).

The public rhetoric generated on both sides of the voucher issue is often tainted with narrow ideological perspectives (Youniss & McLellan, 1999). Two frames of discourse seem to dominate the public forum. On one hand, the public role of Catholic schools is sometimes framed within a market-value construct where arguments are made for or against the fiscal benefits of using Catholic schools as already-existing, responsive, inner-city institutions (e.g. Henig, 1994; Coulson, 1999). On the other hand, the role of Catholic schools is framed in an outcomes-based construct where arguments are made for or against the Catholic school influence on standardized achievement levels of "at-risk" marginalized urban youth (e.g. Kafer, 2003; Gill, Timpane, Ross, & Brewer, 2001; Greene & Winters, 2003; Peterson, 2003). Each of those frames of discourse, I argue, focuses attention on discrete features of "the Catholic school effect" (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Greeley, 1982; Byrk, Lee, & Holland, 1993;
Convey, 1992). In so doing, each discourse undervalues, in some instances possibly misconstrues, the socially responsive ethic at the root of Catholic schools in the wake of Vatican II (1965) and its dramatic reorientation of the Roman Catholic Church (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Convey, 1992).

This observation points toward an alternative, and more holistic, construct in which to describe Catholic schools in general and their potential relevance in helping to address the educational needs of minority children and families. The construct involves the imaging of schools as communities of responsive practice (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000). Reframing the discourse in a different construct allows a more expansive exploration of the mission-oriented base upon which a Catholic school identity rests (Convey, 1992; Byrk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Davila & Willower, 1996; Irvine & Foster, 1996; Biddle, 1997; Convey, 1992; Greeley, 2000; Hansen, 2002; Sikkink, 2004). Such an exploration forms part of the critical framework of my ethnographic inquiry at Santa Cruz School.

**Framework of the Review of Literature**

The three aforementioned thematic domains (Hispanic education, middle school education, Catholic school education) form the parameters of my literature review. I use the tripartite perspectives to frame the review and, at the same time, create a niche within those boundaries to situate the literacy study I conducted. The creation of that niche facilitates the drawing of natural comparisons between the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz School and those that form the descriptive focus of many related research studies (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

I chose to structure the literature review using thrusts in conceptual and empirical scholarship that focus on Hispanic youth or appear bound to that focus by interest or
implication. The boundaries of the review are products of careful consideration. I try to capture the broader educational climate in which Santa Cruz School has developed. The boundaries also represent critical research strands within the school reform dynamic that elucidate and often contrast with features of the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz. The opening section of the review establishes research parallels in which I nest descriptive components of my study. I begin first with a discussion of the government-sponsored probing known as the Hispanic Dropout Project (1995), an important research linkage between standards reform and Hispanic educational disaffection. The review then branches into more fully detailed accounts of field-generated studies and reports from both the public and private sectors. The studies and reports focus in particular on a) descriptions of school-wide initiatives tied to a culturally responsive ethic, b) descriptions of responsive qualities within middle-school reform models, and c) descriptions of the communal, mission-oriented features of Catholic schools serving diverse student polities.

The second tier of studies I include in the review presents an extended discussion of the implications of the “funds of knowledge” perspective (Moll, 2001), a culture-as-strength concept that advocates a paradigmatic shift in the literacy education of Hispanic adolescents. The “funds of knowledge” concept embraces an inquiry-based, collaborative approach to education in which teachers, students, parents, and neighborhoods form a learning partnership to construct knowledge within a community of stakeholders. This concept represents a rejection of the compensatory instructional approaches typically associated with a deficit perspective of Hispanic student abilities. It also serves as a critique of the curricular and assessment policies in schools that not only reflect low expectations of Hispanic students, but also relegate Hispanic students to low-level basic
skills classes. Companion studies in the second section of the review offer an array of approaches and strategies in literacy education, with a special focus on the identification and description of language-arts-oriented instructional responses to the needs of “at-risk” Hispanic students.

These tiers in the literature review form a descriptive segue to the literacy study at Santa Cruz School I reconstruct in Chapter 4. In important ways, the tiers facilitate my discussion of a contested educational issue (Nieto, 1999). The tiers provide structures to integrate theory and empirical inquiry, to represent the complexity of the educational challenge in Hispanic communities, and to describe the effective, even transformational, practices that several school communities have developed in response to that challenge. In limited ways, the tiers contain the reasons why—for the past fifteen years—the search for how best to address the educational needs of “at-risk” Hispanic youth has clearly become a struggle about paradigms and visions of education.

The Hispanic Dropout Project

Overview

In 1995, the U. S. Department of Education initiated the Hispanic Dropout Project (HDP) and commissioned a panel of scholars to study and report on the salient facets of Hispanic student educational disaffection. The project panel, in response, organized a fragmented, regionalized, somewhat polarized subject of investigation and framed its poignancy as a matter of national importance and urgency (Riley, 1994). The Secretary of Education’s charge to the Hispanic Dropout Project proposed three broad goals:

(a) to increase public awareness about the issues of Hispanic dropout; (b) to develop a policy-relevant set of recommendations at local, state, and federal levels addressed to school personnel, families, community, business, and other stakeholder groups; and (c) to support the development of a network of
stakeholders interested in this issue to support actions taken after the project ended (Secada, Chávez-Chávez, García, Muñoz, Oakes, Santiago-Santiago, & Slavin, 1998, p. 9).

The HDP panel synthesized previous scholarship and established theoretical and conceptual positions from fieldwork, public fora in various parts of the country, and case studies in schools and alternative educational programs. What the commission concluded is that “dropping out” of school is not a random act reflective of individual and unrelated circumstances but rather, in most instances, “the logical outcome of the social forces that limit Hispanics’ roles in society”:

Many Hispanic students live in the nation’s most economically distressed areas. They attend overcrowded schools in physical disrepair and with limited educational materials. They see the devastating effects of their elders’ limited employment opportunities and job ceilings. [They] encounter stereotypes, personal prejudice, and social bias that is often part of larger anti-immigrant forces in this society. [For many,] the United States does not appear to be a society of opportunities. Not surprisingly...[they] figure: The American Dream is not for me. Why bother? (p. 7).

The HDP report proposes a wider social context in which to view the problem of school attrition, and Hispanic educational disaffection in general. In so doing, it contests the prevailing undercurrent that typified previous national studies—a cultural deprivation assumption (McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Chávez, 1997; Mehan, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Alva & Padilla, 1995; Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 1997; García, 1991, 2001; Trueba & Barolomé, 1997; Valenzuela, 1997; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). The HDP report focuses instead on the unifying, transformational benefits of cultural-attuned institutional response and the alternatively disastrous social fallout portended by institutional indifference (Secada et al, p. 62). The findings and the recommendations of the HDP present a strong challenge to school leaders and teachers in particular. It is a challenge couched in the spirit of meaningful reform (Nieto, 1999,
2000; Moll, 2001; Borman & Racuba, 2001; Halcón, 2001; Cotton, 1995; Rosado, 1996; Eisner, 1985, 2001) as well as in the belief that the nation’s public schools possess the institutional and the human resources to embrace responsive systemic change (p.60).

**Characteristics of Effective Schools**

In summation, the HDP commission identifies five salient school characteristics that make a difference in the educational experience of Hispanic students:

- **First**, these schools have very high academic and behavioral standards for their students.

- **Second**, they communicate those standards clearly, and they provide access to and support students in meeting those standards—that is, they provide students with many opportunities to succeed in meeting these high standards.

- **Third**, schools that make a difference connect their students in meaningful ways to adults. In spite of their size, [even large] schools can adopt strategies—such as a school within a school, a group of teachers accepting responsibility for the same students, everyone on staff agreeing to “adopt” some students, older students mentoring younger students—to increase the personalization that students need to experience.

- **Fourth**, these schools connect their students to possible futures in college and the workforce.

- **Fifth**, they provide families with useful information about how their children are doing and about their futures. Rather than accepting the myth that parents do not care, good schools adopt the position that parents need information in order to make informed decisions that affect their children. Aspirations are not enough. For schools to make a difference, they must provide ways for students and their families to achieve those aspirations (p. 33).

**Characteristics of Responsive Teachers**

Corollary to observations about effective schools, the HDP committee also gives strong recommendations to teachers. The recommendations image teachers, on the one hand, as agents of transformation, as mediators in the lives of students and, on the other,
as human beings reluctant, even resistant, to change. The recommendations for teachers, then, are clear in their exhortation as well as impatient in their rhetorical brevity (p. 59):

- Teachers should teach content so that it interests and challenges Hispanic students. They should help students to learn that content.
- They should communicate high expectations, respect, and interest in each of their students.
- They should understand the roles of language, race, culture, and gender in schooling.
- They should engage parents and the community in the education of their children.
- Teachers should become knowledgeable about and develop strategies to educate Hispanic students and to communicate with their parents.
- Teachers should receive the professional development needed to develop those attitudes, knowledge, and skills (p. 28).

_The Controversy of Bilingual Education_

One of the contested points of inquiry in the HDP centers on the role of native language (L1) and culture in the development of English language (L2) proficiency. McLeod (1996) presents a model for literacy instruction which endorses native language development as a key feature in gaining both linguistic competence in English and positive identification in the native cultural community. Her theoretical model parallels previous work in cultural literacy studies (e.g. Gonzales & Maez, 1995; Garcia, 1988, 1991) as well as in language-acquisition research (e.g. Krashen, 1991; Cummins, 1993; Collier, 1995) and shares a theoretical position with later scholarship in the field (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 1997). In the model, she advocates dissociation from a “one-which-is-best” approach in language and literacy teaching and identifies three equally strong components in the conceptual design:
commitment to a) heterogeneous, multi-language aptitude, b) collaborative activities requiring a high degree of student-to-student interaction, and c) the vision of teacher as a primary empowering agent for change in a linguistically diverse school. Within the context of other HDP studies, McLeod's (1996) literacy acquisition model resonates with the findings of two other research groups (Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, and Durán, 1997; Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth, 1995). Those inquiries focus, at least in part, on the value of using Spanish as an instructional partner of English—on the value of a development of language literacy in Spanish as a linguistic bridge to gaining competency in English, and the efficacy of collaborative learning structures in helping Hispanic students gain linguistic proficiency in both languages.

Palpable in each of the studies referenced above is the generally facilitating role that L1 plays in the acquisition of English literacy skills. The appraisals of a variety of programs (e.g. dual bilingual, sheltered immersion, English-as-a-second-language content instruction, pull-out ESL), however, note both merits and shortcomings in all existing programs. That is an assessment echoed in a subsequent research synthesis on bilingual education (August & Hakuta, 1997). In cited studies, support for a bilingual component in the formal literacy instruction of Hispanic students is principled but not perspicuous. Nonetheless, the studies intensified an already politicized discourse with English-Only proponents, an advocacy group which not only opposes bilingual instruction in schools but works actively to secure legislation supporting English as the national language (Auerbach, 1993; Macedo, 2000). The submission of Proposition 227 in California (1998), a referendum limiting the growth and implementation of bilingual programs, serves as one of the more notable battlegrounds for that discourse (Halcón, 2001). The
bill’s eventual passage attests both to the strength of opposition with which culturally-responsive initiatives contend and to the need for continued, substantive research to effectively counterpoise the political discourse on responsive education and the needs of Hispanic youth (August & Hakuta, 1997; Barrera & Jiménez, 2000).

**A Sociocultural Perspective of Learning**


Like McLaughlin and McLeod (1996), Chavez (1997) critiques the hegemonic bias of traditional schooling and advocates a transformative shift in the principles of education in a diverse society. The unqualified embrace of students’ cultural heritage is of paramount importance in the curriculum of equity which he outlines for schools and teachers. It is the foundation on which to build an inclusive pedagogical program for Hispanic learners. Central to that pedagogical program is the value of individual
student stories: “the Latina/o learner should be at the center of learning through a responsive pedagogy that promotes academic learning, social responsibility, and a proactive engagement by the politics of identity.” (p. 9) Singularly significant in the transformational shift at the core of each of the reports cited, and a subsection of major importance later in the review, is the incorporation of the “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1988) concept. Moll (2001) describes the concept as the “bedrock of literacies within Latino families, households, and neighborhoods which, when uncovered and mobilized, become a formidable social and intellectual resource for a school.” (NCREL, 1994, n. p.)

**Responsive Culture and Transformation in Public Middle Schools**

Site-specific inquiries that are contemporaneous with the HDP and those that subsequently build on the project’s empirical foundation identify and articulate the transformative value of cultural inclusion in curricular and pedagogical reform. These studies document responsive strategies in instruction and dynamic new concepts of “a place called school” (Goodlad, 1984) in their local settings and often during their implemental stages. A small cohort of studies focuses on middle-school settings sharing degrees of commonality with my urban research venue, Santa Cruz School. The same team of researchers conducted two of the projects, both closely related to the HDP report. The other studies in the cohort comprise a series of related case investigations comparable in scope but exogenous in time frame to the HDP. These site-specific studies establish the empirical foundation of my literature review and provide site-based reform contexts that facilitate cross-case comparisons. Prominent recurrent themes (e.g. shared vision, family, community, cultural inclusion, collaboration, partnerships with parents and community) form important connective threads among the studies.
Horace Mann Academic Middle School

The first of these studies, a case study conducted at Horace Mann Academic Middle School in San Francisco, presents a detailed account of the literacy initiatives which transform a school community culture within a predominately Latino immigrant neighborhood. The literacy initiatives are responses to the needs of a diverse student body of 650, among them many with Latino heritage (38%). The school’s educational program reflects a sociocultural focus and a multicultural orientation. The program at Horace Mann Academic Middle School:

a) accentuates integration of curricular disciplines (Banks, 1994; Beane, 1992);

b) makes school-wide commitment to the academic and social development of all students (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Jose-Kampfner & Aparicio, 1998; Garcia, 2001; Rosado, 1996);

c) relies on interactive and collaborative decision-making (Lantolf, 2000; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997);

d) includes contextualized, culturally-responsive learning projects (Chavez, 1997; Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, & Mehan, 1998; Scribner & Scribner, 2001; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; McLeod, 1995);

e) focuses on portfolio and performance assessments as preferred modes to measure students’ learning. Those assessment forms “test” students’ abilities to construct and apply—rather than simply reproduce—the knowledge they have gained (Berman et al., 1995; Valdez-Pierce & O’Malley, 1992; Meisels, Dorfman, & Steele, 1995; Farr & Trumbull, 1997; Baker & O’Neil, 1995; Navarrete & Gustke, 1996; Castellano, 1998; Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, & Mehan, 1998).
The Horace Mann School initiative is a response to San Francisco Project 2061, a community program to spur quality, goal-oriented instruction within middle schools and to create a reflective/reflexive assessment posture among faculty and students. Many aspects of the curriculum at the school reflect an embrace of the diversity represented in the student body, a cultural mix of Anglo, Cantonese, African-American, Filipino as well as Latino learners. Literacy learning, for instance, involves activities of inquiry and engagement “as students conduct research (Katz & Johnson-Kuby, 1996) based on written material, produce original written material, and present their work orally” (Berman et al, p. 166). Heterogeneous cooperative groups facilitate that engagement in the learning process, a pedagogical practice characteristic across disciplines in the school (Berman et al., 1995; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Slavin, 1995; Sullivan & King, 1999).

For LEP students, those who would be more closely analogous to the student population at Santa Cruz, the curricular framework has special significance. Students are grouped in one of six families, “two at each grade level, of approximately 100 students and four core teachers” (Berman, et al, 1995, p. 169). The family forms the social setting in which students experience the core disciplines of language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics as well as some elective classes within the curriculum of studies. Each family, ranging in student profile from gifted to developmentally challenged, is, in turn, divided into modules of twenty-five students to allow for more intimate collaboration between students and teachers. Within this family grouping, LEP students for whom Spanish is the native tongue are placed in bilingual modules to foster a sense of belonging and to facilitate engagement in curricular projects specifically designed to address their linguistic needs (Berman et al, 1995).
The family framework at Horace Mann School promotes biliteracy. It is a tool that staff members use to encourage Spanish literacy, a commitment enhanced by the presence of two Spanish-speaking aides, and to work diligently, at the same time, toward students’ English language proficiency (McLeod, 1996; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996; Fashola, Slavin, Calderón, & Durán, 1997; Collier, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2001; Cummins, 1989). To this end, “students receive half of their core instruction (science, social studies) in Spanish and half in English (language arts, mathematics)” (Berman et al, 1995, p. 170). For students with special linguistic needs in each family unit, elective classes in the curriculum of studies provide a period of time and a flexible structure to offer one-on-one assistance in the classroom as well as in an alternative pull-out or after-school “special needs” program (Berman et al., 1995; Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkart, 2000).

The framework of family is, as well, a visible entity among the teaching staff at Horace Mann. As students collaborate and learn through the dialogic process within the family (Lantolf, 2000; Freire, 1970, 1994; Garcia, 1990), core teachers engage in cooperative planning. Teachers work as teams in those planning sessions, seeking better integration of approaches, sharing personal insights that affected student placement and progress, and creating specialized cross-disciplinary activities to enhance learning (Berman et al., 1995; Lara, 1995). Twice a month, family cores meet in full-faculty gatherings to discuss issues of governance, a program feature that emphasizes corporate responsibility in the management structure of the school. The meetings foster a “shared vision” among teachers and administrators (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, Alberg, Mac Iver, Stringfield, & Ross,
2000). The meetings also promote a sense of ownership among faculty like that which animates family modules and leads to students becoming partners in the vision (Vars, 1997). Sustained invitation, responsive dialogue, and bilingual accommodation, over time, draw parents into the dynamic as valued members of the school community and contributors to the shared vision (Berman et al, 1995; Johnson, 1999; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Rosado, 1996, 1999).

**Harold Wiggs Middle School**

In a companion study, a program inquiry at Harold Wiggs Middle School in El Paso (TX), Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth (1995) describe similar saliencies in key curricular and pedagogical areas. A larger school than Horace Mann at a little more than a thousand students and one with a higher percentage of Hispanic pupils (89%), Harold Wiggs School has reflected, since its founding in 1987, the same sort of family framework in classroom compositions and instructional practices. Its eight families, two at each grade level and two for “newcomers” with severely limited English proficiency, are composed of between 125 and 150 students in regular family modules, between fifty and sixty students in newcomer groupings. Resembling “schools-within-a-school” or layered communities (Strahan, Smith, McElrath, & Toole, 2001), each family of learners works with a consistent team of faculty. As the processes do at Horace Mann School, the groupings foster a sense of belonging among students, ease the transition from elementary school, and facilitate development of strong relationships between students and teachers and, by association, between teachers and parents (Lee & Smith, 1997; Raywid, 2002; Felner & Jackson, 1997). As a matter of procedure, teachers assess student progress in collegial sessions (Choate, 1993) and teams of teachers
conduct parental conferences. The practice reflects a conscious programmatic effort to offer parents a fuller picture of their daughters and/or sons as situated learners and to invite the active participation of parents in the educative process (Berman et al., 1995; Baker, Herman, & Bain, 1997; Conchas, 2001; Cotton, 1995; Rosado, 1996).

Harold Wiggs School employs a traditional daily regimen (a seven-period class structure, a brief homeroom gathering, and an advisory period at the end of the day). Although the schedule varies greatly from the two-hour block schedule at Horace Mann, both schools emphasize shared planning periods as integral aspects of the family framework (Johnson, 1999). At Wiggs, for example, the preparation period provides teachers the opportunity to meet “on a daily basis to plan thematic units, work on common problems, discuss strategies for reaching individual students, and plan whole family instructional activities” (Berman et al, 1995, p. 187).

A pioneering concept in the El Paso School District and a state mentor school, Harold Wiggs Middle School serves as a teaching laboratory. On one level, the school functions as a study site for educational practice—literacy instruction in particular. On another level, the school is a testing ground for the middle school model, which, at the time, was not a prominent structural dimension of the Texas public educational system (Berman et al., 1995). This special status has motivated teachers as individuals and as teams to participate actively in staff development workshops at district and state levels and to establish relationships in the broader community to expand and/or complement the instructional program (Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Epstein, 1992). Innovative use of technology, as an example, has become an on-going, focused consideration across the curriculum through the networking commitment (Glennan & Melmed, 1996). Twelve
teachers, designated as “clinical technology teachers,” have developed creative uses of computer technology in classes and enjoyed a working/training relationship (Zientek, 1997) with The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in the development of other innovative uses of technology at the middle school level (Berman et al., p. 188).

Carefully chosen themes (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Mizell, 2002) are central to coherence in the program and to the sociocultural nature of the school’s approach to curriculum development. These themes are posed as organizational foci for individual family inquiries. “Thematic units are typically related to topics that are relevant to the students’ world and allows them to explore those topics in greater depth and from a variety of angles” (Berman et al., 1995, p. 188). Such units not only help students to establish personal connections between themes and traditional academic disciplines, but also provide interdisciplinary conduits to pursue questions for study (Beane, 1992; Mizell, 2002; Secada et al, 1998; Eisner, 1985; Banks, 1999).

This thematic approach to learning assists newcomers in substantial ways. For students in LAMP (Language Acquisition for Middle School Program), the specialized curriculum for two families of learners at Harold Wiggs School, for instance, the planning team:

developed an integrated unit on chiles….In social studies, students learned about the historic and continuing tensions between Mexico and New Mexico over the chile crop. In mathematics, students made graphs plotting the relative heat of the chiles, studied crop yields in different parts of the world, and computed yield of chiles by acre. Students developed salsa recipes using fractions, adjusting recipe proportions for smaller and larger batches of salsa. In Spanish class, students read literature about the chile god and composed their own stories extending the myth. In science, students studied chiles during the unit on green plants, dissected chiles, and learned about chile seed dispersal (Berman et al., 1995, p. 189).
The unit on chiles is exemplary of the thematic projects developed as preferred strategies for learning in all family modules. Integrated units of literate activity, they represent, for LAMP learners, primary instruments for the study of English.

Students at Harold Wiggs are assigned to LAMP families based upon age and English fluency. LAMP is a developmental feature within the literacy program and its focus on concept and skill development in all content areas serves as a mediative tool in preparing students for a mainstream instructional environment. In LAMP, an intensive English-as-a-second-language (ESL) class has replaced the normal language arts class and teachers trained in ESL techniques conduct other content classes—mathematics and science among them. English serves as the primary language of instruction, but students have the freedom to speak to teachers and to one another in either English or Spanish. This is a specific program initiative designed to model English and, at the same time, to support L1 when a student chooses to use it for communicative purposes (Berman et al., 1995; Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997).

Like the program at Horace Mann School, the family structure at Harold Wiggs facilitates productive working relationships with parents. All written correspondence with parents and all parental conferences are bilingual communications. This practice is an explicit expression of the school staff's desire to create and maintain a mutually beneficial bond between home and classroom and to communicate a profound respect for the cultural and linguistic heritage of the community it serves. Such commitment to its constituency, intimate the researchers, gives witness to the essentially transformative capacities of a culturally responsive educational vision, one in which the school becomes a place of learning and empowerment for all of its stakeholders (Berman et al., 1995;
Lennox Middle School

Paralleling the HDP field inquiries, a number of other independent research studies focus upon specific resiliency-building components of school reform initiatives. Topics of prominence in these studies include the significance of teaching philosophies and beliefs (e.g. Nieto, 1999, 2000; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999), the transformative power attendant to cooperative teaching and learning (e.g. Cotton, 1995; Aguirre, 1998; Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, Alberg, Mac Iver, Stringfield, & Ross, 2000), and the strategic role of students and communities in the construction of effective literacy learning environments (e.g. Skramstad, 1998; Lee & Smith, 1994; Calderwood, 1999; Cotton, 1995; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000). A study of the literacy program at Lennox Middle School, Lennox, California (Lockwood & Secada, 1999) touches on each of these concerns.

Lockwood and Secada (1999) identify particular ways that teachers and staff have assumed proactive postures in addressing the needs of their culturally diverse students (95% of the student polity). The Lennox community, they note, has wrestled for years with complex problems of student attrition and disaffection. In open dialogue and action, however, Lennox teachers and support staff have found ways to affirm, in explicit ways, an uncompromising commitment to educate all students. Their school manifesto reflects both a culturally sensitive and student-centered ethos: schools must succeed in bonding students to their programs and their goals; schools must respect Latino culture and be sensitive to issues related to second-language learning; schools must involve and then
capitalize on the “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 2001) readily available in their students, in their students’ families, and in the larger Latino community (Lockwood & Secada, 1999).

In concerted ways, the faculty and staff of Lennox have worked to bring these perspectives to life. They began the process by building a community of trust and caring (NMSA, 1995; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999) to boost student achievement and propel them beyond “the seductive dangers of dropping out, gang affiliation, and teen pregnancy” (Lockwood & Secada, 1999, p. 25). Teams of three teachers work with approximately ninety students in an interdisciplinary approach to instruction for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Flexible as learning and as teaching structures, the organizational clusters encourage many teachers to move with students as they matriculate to the next grade (NWREL, 2000). Another key program at Lennox addresses the allure of attrition by “pairing [students] with school staff to provide supportive relationships otherwise [absent] from students’ lives. The ‘Adopt-a-Student’ program enlists all school staff—including secretaries, aides, teachers, and custodians—to adopt one or two students” (Lockwood & Secada, 1999, p. 26). The program asks that mentors see students each school day, inquire about them should they be absent, and take special interest in and spend quality time with them outside the school day (Lockwood & Secada, 1999; NMSA, 1995).

Engaging students in a more lively and noisy collaboration than is often found in many school classrooms typifies the preferred learning environment at Lennox. “If I walk into a classroom and it is silent, I get nervous,” said Lennox assistant principal Meg Sanchez. “But if I go into a classroom and the teacher is on the sidelines, all the kids are in groups of four and are arguing about a novel, that is what we like to see” (Lockwood & Secada, p. 27). Bilingual education and a literature program peppered with the works
of Latino/a American writers (Carrasquillo, 1994) hold prominent positions in the school curriculum as well. For Sanchez, they are simply natural components of a well-grounded education: “We emphasize justice, peace, and tolerance. These are big issues here, just a part of the regular classroom discourse” (Lockwood & Secada, p. 27).

Much is expected of teachers at Lennox. It is not surprising, then, that the school has adopted strong hiring and retention policies. As credential criteria, even fluent bilingualism and specialized content knowledge in a teacher’s background pale in comparison to her/his strong commitment to students, collegiate spirit, and respect for cultural diversity. These are the qualities that enable teachers to assume the role of mediators between the pressures of poverty that cloud students’ daily lives and the opportunities of education that are but dreams and possibilities. Lennox assists teachers on the "skirmish lines" by enlisting the help of young people from the Latino college community in its El Espejo program, a mentoring project that pairs college and Lennox students in role model relationships (Timmermans, Hassler, & Booker, 1999)

Realizing the full potential of its Latino constituency, the final goal at Lennox, highlights the community orientation of the school’s mission. Computer and nutrition classes at the school are helping parents improve their skills and are addressing practical needs in the neighborhood. In addition, a program educating core groups of Lennox parents as peer motivators is stimulating parental involvement and opening avenues of participation in the educational life of the school (Lockwood & Secada, 1999). Such interaction has become a means to re-energize the school community by empowering a pivotal group of its stakeholders (Nieto, 1999; Alva & Padilla, 1995; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001; Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001).
Paradigmatic Contrast in Comprehensive School Reform

A Constructivist Perspective

The previous field studies have recounted instantiations of effective “in-house” approaches to school-wide change, those growing from decision-making and stakeholder investment within individual schools (Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkhart, 2000). Some schools and school districts, in contrast, have adopted a prescriptive reform approach, implementing one of many “evidence-based” school improvement models (Erickson & Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 23) from outside the localized setting. The political process through which schools, students, teachers, and other stakeholders engage in and evaluate the impact of systemic reform is a contested dimension of the standards-based movement (Stringfield, Millsap, & Herman, 1997; Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Often, that process becomes an ideological battleground where differing paradigmatic forces (e.g. behaviorist, post-positivist, constructivist, criticalist) form the skirmish lines (Rosado, 1996). At stake, of course, is control of the competitive rhetorical forum through which public sentiment on education galvanizes into public policy. With the intertwining of standards development and high-stakes testing the past few years, this rhetorical platform has assumed a notably prescriptive tenor (Jongsma & Jongsma, 2001). It appears as though standards advocates who form different sides of the political divide on most other social issues speak univocally in favor of test-based reformation of public education (Vinson, Gibson, & Ross, 2001; Houston, 2001; Sizer, 1999; Eisner, 1999). Such an assessment posture, advocates claim, is the most efficient and accountable way to guarantee high expectations and equality of instruction for all students (Ravitch, 1995; Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997).
As the introduction to this review implies, however, the paradigmatic locus of the research that informs my study shares more in common with opposing perspectives. Howard Gardner (2001), for instance, challenges both the philosophical and pragmatic supports of test-based reform initiatives. As to philosophy, he proposes that the central issue in standards reform should be to articulate a vision of what it means to be an educated person in a democratic society rather than to equate education and knowledge with test-taking. As to pragmatism, he says that high-stakes testing as an achievement measure is rather like taking the temperature of a sick person in order to improve his or her health. Elliot Eisner (2001) critiques the current standards movement as well. In Freirian-like rhetoric, he argues that “tests,” rather than learning, meaningful curriculum, and authentic assessment, have come “to define our [educational] priorities” (p. 368). These scholars and others (Kohn, 1999; Postman & Weingartner, 1969; Banks, 1999; Sizer, 1999; Dewey, 1966, 1971; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Mizell, 2002; Freire, 1994, 1997, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Garcia, 2001) have envisioned educational reform as a fluid, inquiry-oriented, collaborative quest to nurture in schools and classrooms a culture of critical thinking, tolerance, and resiliency. They have imaged assessment as a natural performance-based aspect of learning, as an authentic reflection of student-teacher negotiation, and as a means of fostering critical dispositions in students (Dewey, 1971; Banks, 1994; Freire, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The comprehensive school reform studies I have described thus far equate reform with school transformation. These studies document how meaningful school reform extends far beyond the measuring stick of standardized testing and the constricting curricular effects that such testing has occasioned in many of the nation’s classrooms.
The studies also challenge the wisdom of using a market-driven construct of efficiency and prescriptive accountability as the standard-bearer of an effective school reform movement (Eisner, 1985, 2001; Lachat, 1999; Vinson, Gibson, & Ross, 2001; Zygouris-Coe, 2001; Jongsma & Jongsma, 2001; Berman, Aburto, Nelson, Minicucci, & Burkhart, 2000). Grassroots initiatives like those at Horace Mann Academic, Harold Wiggs, and Lennox Middle School provide examples of comprehensive school reform that exemplify both a response to the specific needs of language-minority students and a commitment to the essentially transformative processes of meaningful school change (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2001; Rosado, 1996). A holistic view of education has spurred these reform efforts; school staffs have embraced cultural pluralism and valued the participation of all stakeholders in their school reform efforts (Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001).

Such reform initiatives stand in contrast to the top-down imposition of what some comprehensive school reform researchers have described as “replicable technologies driven by scientific knowledge…that are proven to be effective in improving student achievement across reasonably diverse contexts” (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2002, pp. 38-39). In the schools I have described and in other culturally responsive literacy initiatives like them, the question of effect has local roots (Sergiovanni, 2000). That effect encompasses the ecological dimensions of learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the fostering of a range of personal and social skills and attitudes to help students acquire life skills and prepare them for active participation in a democratic society (Borman & Rachuba, 2001; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Rosado, 1996).

Rossi and Stringfield (1995), in their study of whole-school reform and "at risk" students, have conceptualized such schools as “high reliability organizations.” (p. 64)
They note in their fieldwork the attributes of a school that have created a foundation for academic excellence through intensive efforts to build a community spirit among stakeholders. Their school program assessment identifies ten defining characteristics of the concept: “high reliability organizations” are animated by shared vision, shared sense of purpose, shared values, incorporation of diversity, collegiality, communication, personal participation, trust, caring, and respect/recognition (p. 61). The case study of an effective urban school initiative in Chicago (Johnson, 1999) has identified similar "high reliability" qualities:

A key to Ward’s success has been the development of a stable teaching staff that was well-trained in a variety of strategies and methods to address the needs of all children. The teaching staff…exhibited an openness to change and experimentation in classroom instruction. They [were] willing to take risks in their planning, delivery, and evaluation of instructional practices. Moreover, the teaching staff…learned to work well together in an environment of trust, respect, and mutual support around instruction. Their cohesiveness…made it easier for them to focus on common instructional goals and their experience as instructional leaders…made them confident in accepting new challenges.

Changes in instruction were approached thoughtfully, methodically, and in a manner that respected the need for teachers to understand...internalize proposed changes. To prepare his staff to receive new ways of teaching [the principal] devoted a significant amount of staff time to developing a mindset for change. A staff member recalled, “We spent a lot of time with a video; it was on changing paradigms. We spent several of our staff development days just talking about and doing trust-building activities that focused on changing paradigms” (p. 144).

Another “grassroots” educational initiative (Borman, Rachuba, Datnow, Alberg, MacIver, Stringfield, & Ross, 2000) reflects an image of school improvement as an intrinsic and extrinsic process. The intrinsic movement involves two components: a yearly needs assessment procedure to identify the exigencies of marginalized students and their families and a program for the professional growth of teachers as animators. The extrinsic movement has led to the establishment of cooperative relationships with community groups and outreach agencies. In that school, strong leadership, a shared
vision, and a collegial atmosphere have facilitated the development of a holistic learning approach. The curriculum features not only a bilingual literacy program but the kind of community-based sponsorship that creates social safety nets for students and families and additional human as well as financial resources for the school’s responsive programs.

For many Hispanic youth and their families, schools like these represent “places of hope within communities whose vitality is tested daily by violence, poor health of residents, lack of political clout, deteriorating and boarded-up housing, and substance abuse” (Nettles & Robinson, 1998, p. 1). In tangible ways, the institutional investment of schools in the reform process signals a deeper commitment to addressing the personal and social needs of their constituencies. Such commitments go far beyond narrow federal, state, or district mandates requiring higher academic standards in schools and improved statistical achievement levels for marginalized youth. A broader, personalized attention to demonstrable needs redefines the school context in which teaching and learning occur, in which teachers, students, and families share in the creation of a sustaining life-skills education. As some studies (Heath, 1994; McDermott, Hastings, Gariglietti, Callahan, Gingerich, & Diamond, 1997; Worrell & Hale, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001) and scholars (Conchas, 2001; Gándara, 1999; Nieto, 1999, 2000) contend, the establishment of caring, supportive school climates both fosters a healthy resiliency in disadvantaged youth and creates a safe, supportive environment in which these youth are able to grow as learners and as people. Unfortunately, as other researchers contend (e.g. Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Conchas, 2001), in many schools concerns about improving school climate and the quality of interpersonal relationships between students and teachers hold only low-priority status.
**Environmental Contexts and the Development of Student Resiliency**

The concept of student resilience has its origins in developmental psychology research (Rutter, 1987; Garmezy, 1983, 1991). The concept emerged in recursive data analyses of “at-risk” groups of Hawaiian children who were participants in longitudinal developmental studies (Werner & Smith, 1977, 1989, 1992). Researchers studied the coping mechanisms that differentiated the growth into adulthood of some children and the environmental supports that fostered such mechanisms. The research helped to frame a model—based upon strengths rather than upon deficits—to describe the varying educational experiences of disadvantaged youth. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory has provided support for the resiliency model in its premise that personal development occurs within a complex realm of relationships affected by environmental contexts on multiple levels. The resiliency framework proposes an alternative approach to the typically pathological lens used by clinicians studying “at-risk” minority youth. The resiliency framework focuses instead upon characteristics of successful students and the contexts contributing to students’ well being. It challenges the prevailing research paradigm of individual or cultural deficiency (Chavez, 1997; Mehan, 1997; Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, & Mehan, 1998). In doing so, resilience researchers are re-imaging disadvantaged youths as spiritual beings with untapped potential rather than as biological organisms for dissection (Trueba & Bartólome, 1997) and establishing the efficacy for field researchers of a more balanced, context-rich perspective (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2001).

For a small number of schools, and in some cases school districts, the concept of resiliency has occasioned a paradigm shift (Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Rosado,
1996, 1999) in their school improvement processes. Research corpora on student resilency development and on culturally responsive school environments has offered to them an alternative model for responsive structural planning. Resilience researchers seek to discover “why students succeed despite adversity” rather than to delineate the myriad reasons "why students fail.” This shift in focus asks further how schools and programs might play integral roles in promoting as well as sustaining such resiliency among all minority children (Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Conchas, 2001).

Borman and Rachuba (2001), for instance, investigate the interrelationship of resiliency development in disadvantaged elementary students and specific school characteristics. They conclude that of four prominently incorporated program models (the effective schools model; the peer-group composition model; the school resources model; and the supportive school community model), “the most powerful school characteristics for promoting resiliency [are] represented by the supportive school community model” (p. v). The model is a response-oriented reform construct that addresses psychosocial dimensions in learners: a) “the need for caring and supportive teachers” and for “a safe and orderly school environment”; b) the need for appreciation of student capital, for firm belief in learner abilities; c) the need for inclusion and meaningful involvement in school life; and d) the need for integrated connections between home and school (p. 3).

Sagor (1993) summarizes a decade of research on the relationship between everyday school experiences and students’ positive perceptions about their abilities and their futures. He posits that four key perceptions differentiate resilient learners from their less successful peers: a) belonging (having experiences in which students witness their value as members of a community); b) competence (having experiences that attest to academic
achievement in authentic ways; c) potency (experiencing empowerment in learning); and
d) usefulness (having personal experiences that create a sense of communal responsibility
and community service). According to Sagor (1993), teachers could effect resilient
dispositions in their students by establishing these four critical thematic domains as
explicit components of classroom life. Later, in *Local Control and Accountability: How
to Get It, Keep It, and Improve School Performance* (1996), Sagor describes the process
of vision-building through which these themes are made manifest as a middle school
transforms its mission and instructional program. Through the establishment of a
positive organizational culture and the process of creating a shared vision of a successful
graduate, teachers and other stakeholders at Almeria Middle School (Fontana, California)
developed, individually and corporately, responsive practices and programs to foster the
realization of the vision for all students (Inlay, 2003; Conchas, 2001).

Benard (1995) parallels Sagor’s resiliency research and shares much in common
with assessments in the research of Chavkin and Gonzalez (2000), Villanueva and
Hubbard (1994), and Valencia (1997). Benard (1995) groups "protective factors" or
"protective processes" into three major categories: a) caring and supportive relationships;
b) positive and high expectations; and c) opportunities for meaningful participation. She
articulates as well a descriptive portraiture of a resilient student as one who possesses: a)
social competence (a responsive disposition, flexibility, empathy, a sense of humor, and
effective communication skills); b) problem-solving skills (the ability to plan, to secure
the help of knowledgeable others, to think in creative and critical ways, to be reflective
and resourceful in creating personal strategies); c) a sense of autonomy (the ability to act
independently, to engage personal strengths in mediating the challenges of learning tasks,
to employ self-regulating techniques, to be resistant to and detached from negative messages about oneself); and d) a sense of purpose (an optimism about the future that reflects not only a goal-orientation but the motivation and persistence needed to reach one’s aspirations).

Some studies among disadvantaged youth have focused on particular features of the developmental dynamics of resilience building. In examining classroom presence, Bartley, Sutton, Swihart, & Thiery (1999), for example, have found that proxemics had a marked effect upon Hispanic students’ academic achievement. In month-long field work at an Indiana middle school, they note that when the classroom teacher was within arm’s length of students, those learners focused more intently on tasks, engaged tasks more expeditiously, finished work with more care, and completed more assignments. When those same students were seated with their Hispanic peers and used Spanish for some communicative purposes, learning tasks were completed more often (15%) and accuracy of responses also improved (10%).

Through interviews, focus groups, and personal observations, Alder (2002) documents various student attitudes about teachers in an urban middle school. For the students in that study, it is important that teachers express care on both a personal and a professional level. It is important that teachers know students well and give meaningful individual support or direction; it is also important that teachers share a love of learning and hold high expectations for student achievement and behavior. In Tarwater (1993), the personal, professional, and perseverant investment of a teacher facilitates the near total transformation of a troubled teenager’s life. Meaningful engagement and sustained relationships with caring adults, according to several studies (Timmermans, Hasseler, &
Booker, 1999; Reed, McMillan, & McBee, 1995; Berzins & López, 2001; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Bezrucko, 1999; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Thielemann, 2000; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Mercado, 2001; Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Jiménez, 2001), not only represent important protective factors in minority student development but serve as indicators of healthy social and self-directive behavior on the part of students (Moll, 2001; Rumberger, 2000; Conchas, 2001; Inlay, 2003).

Other investigations of student resiliency have examined the ecological dimensions of salutogenic dispositions (Antonovsky, 1987) through comparisons of Hispanic youths who share similar risk-factor contexts (e.g. low socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, single-parented households, limited parental education, low-performing schools, violent neighborhoods, gang-related pressures) but differ in their basic coping strategies and levels of achievement. Such risk factors have often proved predictive of lower academic achievement in middle school students (Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1999; Robertson, Harding, & Morrison, 1998). According to Gordon (1996) and Smokowski, Reynolds, and Bezrucko (1999), however, internal attributes like strong belief in cognitive or affective abilities, perseverance, determination, and self-awareness as personal characteristics distinguish academically successful students from their less successful peers. Catterall (1998), Solo (1997), and Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) contend that individual student strengths are complemented by external phenomena like family involvement, school responsiveness, high parental and teacher expectations, home-school partnership, participation in after-school activities, and assuming responsibilities both at home and in the larger community. In their research, these external relationships create a network of support in the development and strengthening of resilient dispositions (Inlay,
With an interest in identifying ways to foster positive coping strategies, resilience researchers help to describe nurturing contexts in which the innate talents and abilities of language-diverse students blossom. As a result, the concept of resilience has become an important tool in the assessment of whole-school and classroom-based reform models. The popularity in elementary educational reform (more than 750 schools in 36 states) of Success for All and its Spanish-language equivalent, Lee Conmigo (Slavin, 1996), for instance, might be attributable more to the resilience-building features that undergird the program and to an emphasis on Hispanic cultural themes than to an effectiveness in raising standardized achievement levels of participating students (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Based upon an evaluative study by Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, and Mehan (1998), a similar argument could be supported for the middle-school pilot program ALAS (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success). ALAS is a series of specific intervention strategies emanating from a resilience-based premise. The premise states that language-diverse student health and achievement are fostered best through initiatives that a) eschew a compensatory ideology of individual deficit in favor of one which identifies human assets and b) recognize the influence of multiple environmental contexts (school, family, and community) upon academic performance.

Resiliency research offers an inclusive framework in which to describe the multiple contexts attending Hispanic student academic growth and well-being (Gándara, Larson, Rumberger, & Mehan, 1998; Borman & Racuba, 2001). A resiliency viewpoint contrasts with reform ideologies attuned specifically to narrowing the achievement gap.
between Hispanic youth and their language-dominant peers—to raising standardized test scores (Houston, 2001; Eisner, 2001; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). The perspectives provided in resiliency research are field-based voices that call into question a monolithic construct of student achievement (one size fits all, one test measures all) and a reform ideology of cultural exclusion (create a level testing field by creating one-dimensional test-takers).

**Directions in Comprehensive Middle School Education**

*Responsive Approaches and Models in Middle School Reform*

National school reform approaches promoted by educational consortia like the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1999), New American Schools (Bodily, Keltner, Purnell, Reichardt, & Schuyler, 1998), and Accelerated Schools (Levin, 2001) share a commitment to building a psychosocial support environment as a context for academic learning. A similar commitment forms at least part of the design structure in most of the comprehensive middle school reform models developed during the past fifteen years. Several independent studies and reports (Trimble & Peterson, 2000; Trimble, 2002; Barley, Lauer, Arens, Aphthorp, Englert, Snow, & Akiba, 2002; Lewis, 1999; Nathan & Febey, 2001; Dryfoos, 2000; Thielemann, 2000) as well as government-conducted assessments (NCES, 2000) note the beneficial interdependencies between academic achievement and psychosocial well-being. As a group, these studies and reports identify the creation of a nurturing environment as a critical component in the development of programs and strategies to improve “at risk” student school performance and affiliation (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997; Valenzuela, 1997; Catterall, 1998; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001; Worrell & Hale, 2001; Adler, 2002; Gibson, 2003; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).
These school reform models couple the concepts of shared vision, collaboration, and empowerment with the values of responsibility, building on stakeholders’ strengths, reflective practice, and community spirit. The models rely on the philosophy of less prescriptive school-wide reform approaches (Levin, 2001; Sizer, 1999; Lezotte, 2001) through rigorous attention to implementing high academic standards at the local level and insuring quality instructional opportunities for all middle school students (New American Schools, 2002). For school staffs and school districts engaged in comprehensive renewal that is stakeholder-driven and intrinsically responsive, such principled concepts provide a framework to guide reform initiatives (Weiner, Leighton, & Funkhouser, 2000).

External-developed school designs seem to share these philosophical features in a more prescriptive organizational construct. Some prominent middle school models which evaluative researchers have studied are Talent Development Middle School (Madhere & Mac Iver, 1996), Middle Start (Mertens & Flowers, 2003), Turning Points (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997), and KIPP [Knowledge Is Power Program (Ashford, 2002; Carter, 2000). What each of these school reform models and competing designs (e.g. AIM at Middle Grades Results, Success for All Middle School Program, Different Ways of Knowing Program) share is an advocacy perspective supporting the improvement of diverse student achievement through holistic school-wide transformation (Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999).

As an example, the strength of commitment to that advocacy position appears in the eight essential program components of Talent Development Middle School:

1) a curriculum aimed at active learning. For all students, the core curriculum is demanding, focusing on higher order competencies, and utilizing technologies appropriate to these goals.
2) **an emphasis on cultural empowerment.** Instruction must be attentive to cultural patterns and norms, promote cultural literacy, and help students connect to and interpret their cultural traditions.

3) **a communal organization of school.** The school must be organized as a community to support stronger teacher-student bonds and address adolescents’ needs for affiliation.

4) **a total detracking of instruction.** Classroom organization replaces tracking with approaches that make student diversity in the classroom an asset rather than an impediment to learning and motivation.

5) **growth-oriented assessment.** The model for accountability and evaluation that the teachers use in the classroom combines ratings of both excellence and progress, so it can be successfully used with heterogeneous groups.

6) **a multi-layered pedagogy.** This includes flexible use of time and resources to prevent course failures and grade motivations and to nurture students’ talents.

7) **career exploration.** This calls for ongoing occupational exploration and goal-setting activities that use appropriate role models and future-oriented exercises; it also involves guidance experiences that encourage students’ college aspirations and provide them with information about the realistic steps toward different secondary and postsecondary options.

8) **family affirmation.** This goes beyond the traditionally loose connection between the home and the school to involve new forms of partnerships with parents and the community to coordinate learning activities and reinforcements in each setting (Madhere & Mac Iver, 1996, pp. 2-3)

Models like Talent Development Middle School provide insights into specific ways that middle school educators, program developers, foundations, and the research community are working collaboratively to create school design alternatives that are both culturally responsive and standards-based. The design alternatives represent models of educational reform that integrate recent research on effective middle school practices (Cotton, 1995; National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2002), especially among low-achieving Hispanic youth (Marzano, 2000; Waxman, Padrón, & Arnold (2001); Apthorp, Dean, Florian, Lauer, Reichardt, Sanders, & Snow-Renner (2001);
Barley, Lauer, Arens, Apthorp, Englert, Snow-Renner, & Akiba, 2002). In design structure, they reflect as well an embrace of “saner, smaller school” configurations (Nathan & Febey, 2001; Raywid, 1996, 1999; Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000; Lawrence, Bingler, Diamond, Hill, Hoffman, Howley, Mitchell, Rudolph, & Washor, 2002). By their multiplicity alone, however, these models intimate that the raising of academic achievement levels for “at-risk” students, especially low-achieving language-diverse learners, is neither a quick nor a simple uni-dimensional task. It is a task tied inextricably to the creation of responsive school cultures. Research (Cotton, 1995; Lewis, 1999; Mizell, 2002; NMSA, 2002) identifies some of these cultural components as:

a) shared sense of purpose among stakeholders;

b) collaborative decision-making process focused upon results,

c) commitment to continuous improvement through inquiry;

d) teaching construct emphasizing the need for internal professionalism;

e) commitment to interdisciplinary teamwork among teachers;

f) commitment to cultural inclusion and to cooperative learning for students

Interestingly, some of the structural descriptors of middle school education that are promoted in these designs, and in the rhetoric of current comprehensive school reform in general, appear in already-existing magnet middle school designs (public schools most often devoted to specialized curricula in math, science, the performing arts, career training, or multicultural studies tailored for gifted/talented students) (Pearson, Pilcher, & Weeks, 1996). The structural descriptors appear as well in the alternative school designs intended to meet the needs of “at-risk-of-dropping out” student constituencies (e.g. special education learners, teenage parents, emotionally-challenged learners, severely
limited English-proficient learners) (Koetke, 1999; Raywid, 1994). Key principles of purpose that distinguish magnet schools as public schools of choice, for example, are firm commitments a) to cultural diversity; b) to fostering the high academic achievement levels of all students c) to employing innovative instructional techniques; and d) to establishing strong cooperative relationships between home and school (Pearson, Pilcher, & Weeks, 1996; Nathan & Febey, 2001). Key principles of purpose that distinguish many alternative school models are a) a responsive instructional ethos; b) commitment to small classes; c) focus on student-centered instruction and assessment; and d) an effort to create learning communities built on personal caring, a non-competitive learning environment, and an active commitment to a shared vision of education (Raywid, 1994; Koetke, 1999).

What represents a fresh way of thinking about middle schools, however, is a belief in the potentially transformative value of integrating program strengths from these public “focus schools” (Raywid, 1994) within a new model of comprehensive middle school education. According to Raywid (1994), the new concept represents a hybrid construct reflecting “innovation; a small-scale, community ambiance; freedom from [paralyzing] bureaucratic rules and procedures.” (p. 26) It is a model based on strong, meaningful student-teacher relationships and on shared commitments to academic standards of professionalism (Wheelock, 1998). The new concept of middle school education fosters high expectations for all students, promotes the implementation of valid and equitable assessment measures, and stresses the creation of active partnerships among all school stakeholders (Lewis, 1999). In structural design, it proposes a presently uncommon kind of common school—what Wheelock (1998) has envisioned as a school with holding power.
The Charter School as Reform Model

In some respects, the desire to realize this uncommon kind of common school lies at the roots of the charter school movement. Public schools of choice that differ from traditional public or magnet schools particularly in aspects of governance, size, and accountability (Collins, 1999), charter schools have proliferated across the nation during the past ten years. Granted a much higher degree of autonomy than would be traditionally typical, charter schools barter for their funding and for their freedom from bureaucratic policy and procedures by promising to effect demonstrable improvements in student academic achievement and to increase stakeholder satisfaction through collaborative engagement (U. S. Charter Schools, 2000). The “charter” provisions serve as the binding agreement of service and accountability for both school and funding sponsor and as the primary evaluative criteria upon which continued funding depends (Hill, Lake, & Celio, 2001). Charter school enrollments, usually no more than two hundred students (Collins, 1999), tend to be smaller by intent than conventional public or magnet schools. Their size, according to Dannis, Colombo, and Sawilowsky (1996), permits the kinds of teaching innovation, flexible scheduling, and alternative student groupings suggested as effective tools in helping low-achieving urban youth raise achievement levels.

The uncommon qualities of charter schools are represented as well by their educational vision and appeal to particular stakeholder interests.

As opposed to those whose goals concern broad public policy achievements, the organizers of charter schools are motivated by the opportunity to realize an educational vision without the "red tape" involved in the traditional public school. They may want to use a particular approach to teaching and learning, perhaps multi-age education, work-oriented curriculum, or back to basics. They may also want to serve a population that is often not well served in the traditional school system—unwed parents, under achieving students, non-English speakers, or students with special talents. Often they want to change the way the school day
and/or calendar is organized, perhaps by having students meet for fewer days with longer hours, or by running school eleven months a year (Detrich, Phillips, & Durrett, 2002, n. p.).

Often, a charter school’s name points to the school’s particular vision and appeal to stakeholders. Quite commonly, charter school names include the title “academy” with additional descriptive signifiers like “Renaissance Academy,” “Academy of Advanced and Creative Studies,” “Community Leadership Academy,” “Academy of Business and Technology,” and “Academy of Art and Technology.” Some charter schools appeal to a particular constituency or market by choosing for their charter institutions the names of famous cultural and/or historical figures or of sponsoring entities— for instance, “Cesar Chavez Academy,” “Frederick Douglass Academy” or “Advantage Academy,” “West Michigan Academy of Environmental Science, and “KIPP Academy” (The Evaluation Center, 2000; Lubienski, 2003; Molnar, Morales, & Vander Wyst, 2000).

**Charter School Mission Statements**

Charter school mission statements, like all school mission statements, represent particular educational visions as well. To get a sense of how charter schools in one locale of the country approach their educational missions, I compared and synthesized forty-five online mission statements from a group of charter middle schools in Philadelphia (PA) (http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/charter_schools/mission.html). From that comparison and synthesis, I noted five recurring themes that served as principles in the semantic frames of individual school mission statements. These themes and some of their semantic codifiers, illustrated in Figure 1, provide a composite picture of a small, localized group of charter schools. The themes also suggest some of the primary educational aims and perspectives operating beneath the surface of the national charter school movement.
The rapid expansion of charter schools as alternative public schools of choice, numbering almost 3000 [2996] by recent government statistics, attests to the popular appeal they have gained since the first charter school provisions emerged in 1991 (U. S. Charter Schools, 2000; U. S. Department of Education, 1998; National Charter School Directory 2003, Center for Education Reform, 2003-4). Their effectiveness in addressing educational needs of “at-risk” students, especially disaffected Hispanic youth, however, remains a contested issue within reform rhetoric and a matter of continuing large scale empirical inquiry (Gill, Timpane, Ross, & Brewer, 2001; Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Independent, small-scale inquiries of specific charter middle-school models, on the other hand, have proposed more definitive research findings (e.g. Dryfoos, 2000; Gill, Timpane, Ross, & Brewer, 2001; Barley, Lauer, Arens, Apthorp, Englert, Snow, & Akiba, 2002). Of special interest in this review are three studies in large urban areas (Carter, 2000; Doran & Drury, 2002; TCER, 2003), each of which assesses the effects of

<table>
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<th>Themes in Charter School Mission Statements (n = 45)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Caring, Safe Environment (16) [e.g. holistic, sensitive, teaching as mentoring, respect, individual attention, empowerment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community-Orientation (14) [e.g. parent partnerships, small classes, small schools, stewardship, service]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Challenging Standards (12) [e.g. data-driven curriculum, longer school day, longer school year, high expectations]</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Democratic Ideals (12) [e.g. leadership skills, character education, social skills, shared responsibility, vision]</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Cultural Inclusion (12) [e.g. bilingual education, multiculturalism, every child gifted, cooperative learning]</td>
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Figure 1. Themes in Charter School Mission Statements
the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) model in fostering positive academic gains for “at-risk” Hispanic middle school students. Describing the KIPP model in operation, these studies profile a middle school initiative in the public sector that parallels, on some formative, organizational, and structural levels, the literacy mission I studied in the private sector at Santa Cruz School.

**The KIPP Middle School Charter Model**

The KIPP model is organized upon “Five Pillars,” a foundation of core principles emphasizing high expectations, choice and commitment, more time, power to lead, and a focus upon results (Feinberg, 2001, pp. 3-4). Starting with its Houston, Texas pilot in 1994, the KIPP model has applied a “no excuses,” “no shortcuts” approach to improving the middle school education of low-achieving, predominately Hispanic, urban youth (Feinberg, 2001). The simplified formula for achieving academic success has helped KIPP become a leading model in middle school educational reform (May, 2003) and a national model to spur greater widespread reform of charter school programs across the country (Wingert & Kantrowitz, 2003). According to a columnist in *The New York Times* (Herbert, 2002), the KIPP model represents “one of the most energetic and academically sound public school programs in the United States” (p. 27A). Ashford (2002), in a report on KIPP organizational features, synthesizes its formula for success: “If you train good teachers to run their own schools, give them complete authority to design curriculum and hire teachers passionate about learning, keep students in school until 5 p.m., and impose a structured discipline system, students will perform at higher levels.” (n.p.)

Carter (2000) profiles two KIPP schools in his study of high-performing, high-poverty educational programs. “Rigor and discipline” in the classroom and “quiet,
conversational tones” in the lunchroom (p. 86), the researcher notes, distinguish KIPP Academy, Bronx, New York, from the larger public school with which it shares building space. But higher test scores set it apart from all middle schools in the area. After two years in the KIPP approach, the average reading scores of students had risen to the 64th percentile. After a third year in the program, the average reading score had increased to the 78th percentile. The study includes no description of instructional strategies in the school’s literacy initiative, but Carter (2000) attributes the effectiveness of the school’s reading program to “dedicated teaching,” instructional innovation,” and a “no excuses” approach to learning (p. 86). The charter school arrangement with the local district provides only salaries for the teaching staff, so fund-raising is also a feature of the school’s culture. Through outside sources, the school generated $70,000 for instruments and incorporated a string orchestra within its curriculum.

Carter’s (2000) profile of KIPP Academy, Houston, Texas, begins with a succinct summary of the KIPP concept:

“There are no shortcuts.” This simple motto is the heart of the KIPP Academy in Houston. Nine-and-a-half hour days, class on Saturday, school during the summer, and more than two hours of homework each night are all non-negotiable. KIPP teaches that if you want to succeed in life, then you have to work hard in school. And KIPP delivers on its promise (p. 93).

“Time on task is sacred at KIPP” (p. 94). Students spend 67% more time in classrooms than the average student in the nation’s public middle schools. The increased time on task for students and teachers is reflected in substantial increases in student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. According to Carter (2000), students whose previous scores on the test had hovered at the passing rate of 50% raised their levels of performance to 90% during the first year at KIPP Academy.
“KIPP students, parents, and teachers all sign a commitment ‘to do whatever it takes to learn’” (p. 95). This commitment extends to teachers being “on call twenty-four hours a day to answer any concerns their students might have” (p. 95) and regular visits with students and parents in their respective homes. Personal values and personal accountability, rather than a prescriptive instructional approach (Inlay, 2003), fuel the teaching and learning dynamic at KIPP Academy, Houston. As the school’s founder states it, “We put no limits on what teachers can do here. But their signed commitment to excellence makes them morally and contractually obligated to see that their students succeed. They know they have to teach until the kids get it” (p. 95).

From Carter’s (2000) perspective, “KIPP demonstrate[s] what [is] possible” (p. 86) in the education of urban children “abandoned by the establishment” (p. 86). How the model might be replicated on a national scale, however, presents a more challenging project, one tied to making very high levels “of commitment the standard” (p. 86) rather than the exception (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Carnegie Task Force, 1989; Secada et al, 1998; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999).

Doran and Drury (2002) present findings from an evaluative study of three KIPP charter schools in their first year of operation. The aim of their study was to determine to what extent the new schools succeeded in replicating the high performance levels of the KIPP models in Houston and the Bronx (NY). The researchers conclude that “academic gains [in each school] exceed what could have occurred by chance” (p. 24) and that the gains exceed performance levels of other schools in their respective districts. They conclude as well that gains at KIPP DC/Key Academy, Washington, are “notably large and reveal that almost all students in the school had made normal educational growth and
had made statistically significant gains…[that are] larger than the gains reported for any other junior/middle school” within the city’s public school system (p. 24). “Of notable interest at KIPP,” the researchers add, are the “achievement gains attained for…students that ha[ve] traditionally been defined as under-performing. The demographic data suggest[s] that although most of the students in the schools [are] living in poverty, these same students [are] significantly increasing levels of achievement….as measured by academic test scores” (p. 25).

The third study of the KIPP model (TCER, 2003) focuses upon KIPP Academy, Houston. Unlike the previous two studies, TCER (2003) includes statistical descriptions of school characteristics: daily schedule, attendance and attrition rates, teacher profiles, and finances in addition to test score data. These descriptions provide a fuller picture of the KIPP model as a particular kind of charter middle school with a specific mission—“to prepare students with the academic skills, intellectual habits, and qualities of character necessary to succeed in high school, college, and the competitive world beyond” (p.14).

KIPP Academy, Houston, enrolls 338 students in grades 5-9 and its normal schedule involves an extended school day—from 7:25 a.m. to 5 p.m. The schedule also includes Saturday classes twice a month and a four-week summer session. Citing school statistics from AEIS (Texas Education Agency’s Academic Excellence Indicator System), the study identifies the minority student population as Hispanic (77%), African-American (19%), Other (2%). For school year 2001-2002, the school had an attendance rate of 99.1% and an attrition rate of 0% (p. 15).

The teaching staff at KIPP Academy, Houston, the majority (75.9%) with one to five years of school experience, includes both those credentialed by the state of Texas
and those with no college degree (11.7%). The statistical description also identifies a student-teacher ratio of 20.2 to 1. According to the 2001-2002 AEIS report, the average teaching salary at KIPP Academy is $37,054 and the average campus administrator salary is $54,757 (p. 15). Per pupil expenses in that same calendar year were $10,378.

Other than its more extensive statistical data, however, TCER (2003) describes KIPP Academy, Houston, in much the same way that the previous studies represent the KIPP model. Its effectiveness in raising student achievement levels is a combination of “more time in school” (p. 14), “an environment where [students feel] a structure and support” (p. 14), a process that “constant[ly] monitor[s] students for comprehension and understanding” (p. 15), and a commitment to approaching “instruction and instructional methods collaboratively” (p. 15). From the teachers’ perspective, a good portion of the KIPP success story also stems from student management strategies:

Students must “earn” everything at KIPP, from their seat on the first class day to the monthly and yearly field trips, to the right to wear a gold-colored shirt as an 8th grader. As one teacher says, time and energy spent on classroom discipline take time and energy away from classroom learning. Behavior infractions, ranging from acting up in class to failure to complete homework assignments accumulate as “strikes”; enough strikes and certain privileges are taken away. Students may also earn rewards for good behavior or for jobs (re-shelving library books, for example) performed around the school (p. 16).

“Bottom line,” the report concludes, “KIPP’s philosophy [is] simply stated if not simply accomplished: ‘just do whatever it takes for [students] to be successful’” (p. 16).

Catholic Schools and the Common Good

Catholic Schools as Communities

In her description of “focus” schools like public magnet and charter institutions, Raywid (1994) makes the case for including Catholic schools as responsive alternative
forms of education. Her rationale is based upon what she perceives as similarities between public choice and parochial (specifically Catholic) schools:

Inclusion of Catholic schools is a signal that "focus" is not synonymous with "theme," because parochial schools rarely if ever have themes of the sort that identify magnet schools. Nevertheless, unlike comprehensive high schools, they make no pretense of being omnibus institutions with something to satisfy all tastes. They are not neutral with respect to educational or personal direction. Instead, they reflect a specific commitment to a particular type of education (academic and college preparatory), and they project a clear character ideal for students. It is in this sense that they are focused, rather than in the more familiar sense where a school offers a specific disciplinary or occupational theme (p. 3).

Later in the report, she builds the case for inclusion relying, to a great extent, upon the comprehensive study *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). Although the research interest in that comprehensive study and indeed her report relate to secondary education, several findings in Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) are pertinent to a Catholic middle school context.

One of these findings relates specifically to the Catholic school ethos. Since the promulgations of Vatican II (1965), the authors contend, Catholic schools have embraced more definitively the social teachings of the Church (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). In this movement, issues of social justice— the dignity and rights of all people, world peace, and human solidarity— have become pervasive themes in Catholic schools (Paulli, 2002). Raywid (1994) associates this movement in Catholic schools with a de-emphasis upon religious education (p. 20), but I contend that rather than a de-emphasis, the movement toward greater social witness reflects a more fervent effort to apply in the real world the vision represented in religious education classes—the social imperatives of the gospel and the call to Christian commitment. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) develop this theme in their assessment of “the Catholic school effect” (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987) upon the
academic achievement levels of disadvantaged students (p. 58). They cite statistical data showing the relationship between Catholic school ethos and the improved academic performance of minority students. That positive relationship they attribute to the strong spirit of community within Catholic school settings, a distinguishing feature of school culture they describe as a "pervasive warmth and caring that characterize[s] the thousands of routine social interactions in each school day" (Bryk et al, 1993, p. 275).

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) use two terms—personalism and subsidiarity—to describe the strong spirit of community in Catholic schools. The former appears in “the extended role for teachers that encourage[s] [them] to care about both the kind of people students become as well as the facts, skills, and knowledge they acquire. [It represents] a communal norm for the school—the kind of behavior modeled by teachers and held out as an ideal for students” (p. 301). The latter is present in a decentralized organizational ethic “predicated on the view that personal dignity and human respect [are] advanced when work [is] organized in small communities where dialogue and collegiality may flourish. At [its] root [is] a belief that the full potential of human beings [is] realized in the social solidarity that can form around small group associations” (p. 302). The concepts of personalism and subsidiarity, the authors state, “affirm a public place for moral norms” (p. 302) and witness to an education of “the mind and the spirit” that counters, in practice, “a rhetoric of test scores, performance standards, and professional accountability” (p. 303).

Sergiovanni (1994) proposes that all schools should strive to become “purposeful communities” (p. xix). He situates his proposition within the contemporary climate of educational reform, critiquing the counter-productive nature of that which may be termed
a “standardization” of the standards movement (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 6). The image of
schools as purposeful communities emphasizes the human dimension of commitment and
collegiality. Sergiovanni’s (1994) framework contrasts with the more bureaucratic
concept of schools as formal organizations bound by contractual agreements, by the
transactional culture of “what gets rewarded gets done.” Instead, he offers the qualities of
commitment and collegiality as the shared covenants through which core values and
moral vision build a particular school “lifeworld” (Sergiovanni, 2000). The “lifeworld”
carries within it the seeds of transformation, for it is through the “lifeworld” that school
community members move toward a shared, responsive ethic of “what is rewarding gets
done” (pp. 41-45).

Certainly more than semantic word play, the epithets in Sergiovanni’s (2000)
framework that distinguish a transactional from a transformational school culture point to
the need for ideological clarity in educational reform. In The Principalship: A Reflective
Practice Perspective (2001), he represents that issue as a choice between two competing
paradigms of teaching and learning:

[Theories] create the realities that we have to deal with [in schools]. As theories
change, so do the realities. In the image of teaching based on the early effective
teaching research (e.g. direct instruction, technical view)…. [the] emphasis in
curriculum building is on explicitness and on the alignment of what will be
learned with preset objectives, with approaches to teaching, and with assessment
strategies. Supervision becomes a process of monitoring the various parts of
this alignment and making the needed corrections. Staff development becomes
training, and leadership becomes a process of planning, organizing, motivating,
and evaluating the work of others.

Within the constructivist cognitive view of teaching and learning, the
emphasis is on emergent curriculum, collegial supervision, teacher development
as inquiry and reflection, and leadership as community building. In both cases it is
the theory of teaching and learning that determines what good practice is. If we
want to change existing practice, we will first have to change what we believe true
about teaching and learning (p. 222).
Sergiovanni (2000) has identified Catholic schools as examples of purposeful communities. From his perspective, the religious tradition undergirding Catholic schools provides a meaningful cause to which individuals commit themselves in solidarity with others. The relative freedom of these schools from outside bureaucratic pressures fosters, as well, a sense of self-determinacy in purpose and in action. These are the features, he contends, that not only permit schools to develop their own distinctive characters but to build consensus for achieving their particular educational missions. In Sergiovanni’s (2000) perspective, these features represent the power of “local passions, local beliefs, local participation, and local support” (p. 12).

**Catholic Schools and Social Capital Theory**

Underlying the contentions of Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) and Sergiovanni (1994, 2000, 2001) is a belief that people working together to achieve a shared goal generate a special kind of social dynamic. The dynamic reflects more than the sum of its parts and accrues power to effect change far beyond the capacity of individual actions (Sergiovanni, 2000). Not only is the dynamic communal in the sense of a group engaging in a common project, it represents a philosophical and a practical embrace of the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990).

Coleman (1988) describes capital in three sociological forms: human, financial, and social. Differing from Becker, his University of Chicago colleague who develops a highly individualistic concept of human capital (Fine, 1999), Coleman (1988) seeks to identify how an individual’s realization of human capital (e.g. academic success, personal literacy, self-actualization) is interwoven in a larger social context. While Becker’s (1983) concept of human capital focuses upon how an individual's investment in personal
development increases one’s earning potential and value in the marketplace, Coleman’s (1988) social capital concept focuses on how the breadth, depth, and quality of human relationships within a family or a community influence personal growth. Social capital of the family Coleman (1988) describes as “the relation between children and parents (and, when families include other members, relationships with them as well).” (p. 384) Social capital outside the family he describes as “the functional community, the actual social relationships that exist among parents, in the closure exhibited by the structure of relations, and in the parent’s relations with the institutions of the community.” (p. 387)

Coleman’s concept of social capital differs as well from European sociologist Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory (1986). Bourdieu (1986) draws from a critical theory paradigm intent upon the exposure of hegemonic, unjust power distributions in society. His concept of cultural capital maintains that social advantage and disadvantage are produced and maintained in historically based practices. Social capital, for Bourdieu (1986), refers to social connections (e.g. clubs, fraternities, elite organizations) and their capacities to insulate and reproduce themselves as class-related power structures. It is his contention that elitism controls the social and economic tenor of contemporary life, fostering cultures of inequality in which “everything [is] not equally possible” (p. 241). Coleman’s theory (1988), on the other hand, conceives of social capital as a resource that supports and facilitates human potential, the growth of human capital. In this respect, Coleman (1988) contends, social capital is a personal asset and it serves a beneficial functional purpose.

Coleman’s (1988) description of schools as communities of social capital develops, to a large extent, from earlier research he and others (Coleman, Hoffer, &
Kilgore, 1982; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987) conducted in Catholic schools (Greeley, 1997). Their research probed the reasons that Catholic schools had greater success in educating urban “at-risk” students and exhibited lower dropout rates than their public school counterparts (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). They conclude, from their studies, that Catholic school structures create social support networks that connect home and school through interrelated layers of cooperation. These connections, in turn, bolster the social capital of parents and foster a stronger support system in the family for the development of the human and social capital of children (Greeley, 1997; Moll, 1988; Nieto, 1999).

Coleman (1990) expresses the collective nature of social capital as well, locating a sense of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity in the network of interpersonal connections as features that bind a particular Catholic school to its larger social context (e.g. local parish, neighborhood, diocese, the international Church). He explains the collective nature of the school’s social capital as a participatory phenomenon. Even though a student’s parents might not have actively participated in the school’s social network, for instance, he contends the student nonetheless benefits from the social capital generated by the participation of other parents and community members in building the school’s social network. Should that student move from the school, the supportive school network might continue to be a developmental support, but the network itself remains bound to its local roots (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, 1990).

Inner cities and inner-city schools are often described as having low social capital (Vartanian & Gleason, 1999). That perception serves as a contributing factor in the perpetuation of educational policies that portray urban minority youth as culturally deficient (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Garcia, 2001). Based on some studies
conducted in urban Catholic schools (e.g. Biddle, 1997; Nelson & Bauch, 1997; Polite, 1997; Sander, 2001; Hansen, 2002), however, social capital abounds in some of the most depressed neighborhoods in the nation. Hawkins (1992) and Cattaro (2002) attribute a part of this social phenomenon to the presence and the outreach of Catholic schools. The roots of urban Catholic schools, they argue, are traceable to waves of needy immigrants who once populated the tenement houses in central cities. Catholic schools responded at that time, helping the poor to gain a dignified place in American society. Although fewer in number and staffed by almost exclusively lay faculties, many of those schools today are serving once again the educational needs of marginalized urban youth and families (McDonald, 2004).

Biddle (1997), for example, describes the distinctive character and responsive ethos at Dayton (Ohio) Catholic Elementary (DCE). An inner-city school that has weathered decades of changing demographics and dwindling financial resources, DCE has refocused its traditional mission by responding to the non-Catholic community in its neighborhood. Biddle (1997) posits that African-American parents whose children attend DCE value the school’s particular character—small classes, teachers who are genuinely devoted to their students, high academic standards, and a strong sense of community. The consistency between school mission and everyday practice, she notes, convey a powerful witness to students, parents, and the larger community.

Nelson and Bauch (1997) present findings from a field study about student perceptions of caring teachers. Their study involves gathering data from four urban Catholic and four public magnet secondary schools and analyzing the data using the concept groups “expectations,” “encouragement,” and “responsiveness.” The researchers
conclude that Catholic school seniors, more than their public school peers, associate
caring teachers with individual help and personal involvement. This finding, according
to Nelson and Bauch (1997), suggests that Catholic students have had more personal
interaction with their teachers and expect and value such interaction as a form of caring.

Polite (1997) describes the historical and social environments of thirty-one
predominately African-American Catholic high schools. Known in the study as
“Cornerstones,” the majority of the schools (86%) are located in inner cities. The statistic
that is more revealing of them, however, is that 91% of their graduates matriculate to
college. One part of the study describes principals’ responses to the "African American
Catholic High School Survey," a survey instrument designed to provide specific
information on the school building, student population, principal, academic curriculum
and instruction, finances and development, Catholic identity, and African American
cultural identity. The second part of the study describes site visitations (22 schools).
Polite (1997) concludes that the schools share a common set of principles: open, mobile
academic tracking; pre-9th grade summer remediation classes; summer school for
students who failed; regard for individual students; emphasis on guidance/counseling; a
school climate centered on academics; and a safe, orderly learning environment.

In a similar study of an all-boys African-American Catholic high school, Hansen
(2002) contends that the moral environment of the school has a profound effect upon the
academic program and the response of students. In that high school, student-teacher
interactions in the classroom witness to the school’s mission of service, providing support
and encouragement to students. According to Hansen (2002), the everyday patterns of
classroom interaction shape the school’s responsive ethos (Inlay, 2003).
Sander (2001) describes the effects of Catholic schools on religiosity, education, and competition. He concludes that Catholic high schools have a significant and substantial positive effect on educational outcomes for African-American and Hispanic students. Sander (2001) states:

Although Catholic schools are probably not better than public schools on the average, some Catholic schools are probably superior to the public schools in a community. This is probably the case for blacks and Hispanics in big cities. Catholic schools in inner-city areas that disproportionately serve a low-income population are probably more efficient than public schools, at least at the high school level. It is less clear whether Catholic grade schools are superior to public school grade schools in big cities. The results... suggest that blacks and Hispanics in inner-city areas gain from Catholic schooling. They have substantially higher high school graduation rates and do more homework if they attend Catholic schools. In results not shown, I also found that test scores were higher for minority students in Catholic schools (pp. 22-23).

Sander (2001) articulates no causal criteria for his findings, citing instead the research work of others (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982) on the subject. He does, however, provide statistical data from the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Big Shoulders Foundation that illumines how community partnerships are integral features of the social capital in urban Catholic schools. Those data offer a portrait of Catholic schools in marked contrast to the “elitist” image represented in some academic rhetoric (e.g. Baker & Riordan, 1998):

Data for Chicago support the hypothesis that low-income minority students gain from Catholic schooling. Out of 168 Catholic schools in Chicago, 114 are classified as Big Shoulders schools—schools that mostly serve low-income minority students. More than 50 percent of the students in Big Shoulders schools are products of poor families and 80 percent are from minority groups. The dropout rate in Big Shoulders schools is less than 1 percent, and 97 percent of Big Shoulders students graduate from high school. This past year, 81 percent of high school graduates from Big Shoulders schools went on to college... For Chicago’s public schools, the annual high school dropout rate is about 15 percent and the high school graduation rate is about 62 percent [citation]. The evidence thus suggests that African Americans and Hispanics from poor backgrounds do better in Catholic schools in big cities like Chicago than in public schools (p. 23).
Other reflective reports and personal memoirs suggest that the social capital in Catholic schools has both spiritual and human dimensions. Jacobs (1997), for instance, speaks of “the grammar of Catholic schooling” as a pedagogy imbued with the gospel. McDermott (1997) discusses the dual nature of Catholic schools. In his view, Catholic schools are both academic communities and communities of believers; their primary role is to witness to the light and life of Christ in all school practices. Shimabukuro (1998a, 1998b) describes the challenges of teaching in a Catholic school. She identifies two of these challenges as a) the personal demands involved in witnessing to the gospel imperatives on a daily basis and b) the necessary commitments one must make to continuous professional development. Both of these challenges, she contends, are distinguishing features of a community-builder and a spiritually rooted person.

Thibau (1999), McCormack (1999), and Cronin (1999) contend that character education is a central feature of a Catholic school mission. Central themes in a school’s focus on character education involve developing a strong sense of self, including self-worth and self-esteem. McCormack (1999) says that the fostering of security, autonomy, initiative, and industry represent facilitating pedagogical values for Catholic educators. McGuire (2000) and Schaffer (2000) examine the theme of character formation as a form of civic education. Central themes in a school focus upon civic education, they posit, involve a) respect for life and the dignity of the human person; b) call to community and participation; c) individual rights and shared responsibilities; d) preferential option for the poor; e) the dignity of work; f) human solidarity; and g) care for God’s creation.

Perhaps more revealing of the depth of social capital in Catholic school initiatives is the faith with which small groups of people have embraced challenging tasks. Santa
Cruz School represents one of these faith-filled initiatives (School president, personal journal, 2002). Moorhead (1996), Brown (2001), and Schnaiberg (2001) describe another in their accounts of a small Catholic school “mobilizing” resources in a literal way to address the needs of migrant Hispanic children and families. Schnaiberg (2001) and Brown (2001) discuss the origins of the school’s mission, its importance to migrant families and children, and the obstacles that forced the school to cease operations after seven years. More than “farewell” accounts, however, their reports provide a glimpse of how a very small group of teachers made a great deal of difference through their shared witness. As Schnaiberg (2001) explains, from the very beginning these teachers and the school they created had a distinctive culture:

In August 1994, Sister Gaye Moorhead and a small cadre of dedicated teachers opened the doors to La Escuela de San Jose, the nation's first mobile school for the children of migrant farm workers. San Jose seemed a solution that was brilliant in its simplicity: Establish a school that would come along for the ride and, thus, remove the obstacles to learning inherent in a migratory lifestyle. The children’s teachers, classmates, curriculum—even their uniforms and school bus—would stay the same whether they were in Ohio or Florida (p. 17).

San Jose School (La Escuela de San Jose) drew upon the social capital of other Catholic schools in achieving its mission. When migrant families lived in northern Ohio during the harvesting season, for instance, San Jose teachers and students (K-3) used classrooms at Fremont (Ohio) St. Joseph School; when migrant families traveled back to Florida after the season, they used classroom space at Plant City (Florida) St. Clement School. During the 1,200-mile journey between Ohio and Florida, the San Jose school bus served as a temporary classroom (Brown, 2001). The school settings differed, but the nucleus of students, teachers, and families formed a solid school community within the broader network of Catholic school communities.
There are two important values in this faith-filled literacy initiative, according to the director of the Center for Migrant Education at the University of South Florida, Tampa (Schnaiberg, 2001). One of them resides in the lives of children as they move through the educational system. The director studied twenty San Jose School students in the 4th and 5th grades to observe their progress in area public schools. “Her research show[s] that [the] kids contradicted the conventional wisdom about migrant students: They had excellent attendance, achieved at or above grade level in most subjects, and were deemed socially well-adjusted by teachers” (p. 18). Unlike “more than a third of migrant students across the nation…at least one grade level behind academically” (p. 18), San Jose students met or exceeded grade level requirements in reading and numeracy at rates sixteen to twenty-five percentage points higher than migrant children educated exclusively in area public schools (Brown, 2001).

According to Schnaiberg (2001), the other important value the director of the Center for Migrant Education offered is the lesson in faith and in service that small literacy initiative provides:

[I]t's shown that given the right tools, migrant children and their families can tap into their own resilience to defy the statistics of failure..."I think the children themselves will be the legacy [of La Escuela de San Jose]. A lot of these children have gotten a foundation that will propel them onto a different path than they would have followed otherwise. Those families have been transformed in their values and beliefs about school and schooling. Those effects don't disappear— they continue in generations to come" (pp. 19-20).

A National Catholic School Profile

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) describe the typical elementary and secondary Catholic school as an institution in a diocesan or archdiocesan system. The majority of Catholic elementary schools are parish-affiliated K-8 institutions within the system or
consolidations of former parish-based schools. The majority of Catholic high schools are somewhat autonomous institutions but nonetheless tied to the system in terms of fiducial programs (e.g. comprehensive insurance coverage, benefit packages for faculty/staff, legal guidance), curriculum development, and religious education accreditation. National Catholic Education Association [NCEA] statistics (See Table 1) provide a description of American Catholic schools as somewhat urban and inner city (44.6%), clustered in the Mideast/Great Lakes regions (50.7%), and serving a growing population of minority (26.5%) and non-Catholic (13.5%) students (McDonald, 2004).

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<tr>
<th><strong>CATHOLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT STATISTICS [2003-2004]</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Schools</strong> 7,995</td>
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<td>Elementary/Middle</td>
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<td>Secondary</td>
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<td>School Locations</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<td>School Regions</td>
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<td>West/Far West</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Non-Catholic</td>
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<tr>
<th>Total Number of Schools</th>
<th>7,995</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>(1,228)</td>
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<td>School Locations</td>
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<td>2,614</td>
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<td>Rural</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mideast</td>
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<td>Great Lakes</td>
<td>1,940</td>
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<td>Southeast</td>
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<tr>
<td>West/Far West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total School Enrollment</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>(282,835)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Catholic</td>
<td>(335,445)</td>
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Table 1. National Catholic School Enrollment (2004)
The NCEA statistical report (McDonald, 2004) provides data in a comparative framework to describe changes in Catholic school demographics. Comparisons of data relevant to the profile show that over the last ten years nearly four hundred schools (390) have closed or consolidated, the number of schools in the Mideast/Great Lakes regions has declined by 2.3%, and the number of schools in the West/Far West region has risen by 2.3%. The report provides no specific data on changes in urban/inner-city schools, but refers to the steady increase, over a ten-year period, in numbers of suburban and rural Catholic schools. The levels of minority enrollment in Catholic schools are reported for a thirty-five year span. In 1970, minorities comprised 10.8% of the pupil polity in Catholic schools. That percentage rose to 19.4% (1980) and, as shown in Table 1, is 26.5% of the current total student enrollment. The report identifies Catholic schools, in general, as coeducational [elementary/middle (99%), secondary (65.7%)], staffed predominately by laity (non-ecclesiastics) [94.9%], and characterized by a low student-teacher ratio [15:1].

The statistical profile presents an important status report on Catholic schools in the United States. The comparative framework gives perspective to the statistical data. What the report does not include, however, is a picture of how individual schools are responding to the needs of students, families, and neighborhoods, how individual schools are distinguishing themselves in their ministry of educational service. Missing in the report too is a fuller description of the diversity among Catholic schools that gives each school its “special character,” even when schools are only a few blocks away from one another. I included the following studies and narratives to offer a glimpse of the richness in the Catholic educational system, a richness seldom suggested in statistical reports, public rhetoric about “Catholic” schools, or discourse on responsive educational practice.
Diversity in Catholic Educational Responses

One of the many impressions that I have formed in twenty-eight years of teaching in several Catholic high schools is that each school has its own particular character, its own way of making a “catholic” [generic and universal] school Catholic [specific and local]. Many of the nation’s Catholic secondary schools, for instance, proudly trace their founding roots to religious congregations of men and women (e.g. Jesuits, De La Salle Christian Brothers, Marianists, Dominicans, Franciscans, Sisters of Mercy, School Sisters of Notre Dame). These schools have traditions and educational missions that represent Catholic values through a distinctive charism (a particular educational vision and mission tied to spiritual roots). The Jesuits, for example, administer and staff, to varying degrees, forty-six secondary schools in the United States (www.companymagazine.org); the De La Salle Christian Brothers administer and staff forty-four secondary schools in the United States (www.cbconf.org). Both religious congregations have long-standing teaching traditions in the Catholic Church (Jesuits founded in 1540 by St. Ignatius Loyola; De La Salle Christian Brothers founded in 1680 by St. John Baptist de La Salle), and each congregation claims an international character that influences Catholic education on all continents. In practical "school" terms, however, Jesuit and Lasallian charisms and the missions they promote reflect rather different Catholic educational visions (New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia, n.d.). One might say, risking over-simplification, that, in their schools, the former traditionally work “from the top down” and the latter traditionally work “from the bottom up.” Their educational charisms differ in substantive ways.

It is neither my wish nor my purpose here to develop a comparison of Jesuit and Lasallian educational visions. But I think it important to broaden the concept of “Catholic
school” in some meaningful way. Just as the expressions magnet school or charter school point to differences in visions of public education, a reference to Jesuit and Lasallian schools points to some of the differentiating features within Catholic education. San Jose School, the mobile outreach for migrant families I discussed earlier, is a good example of a religious congregation’s charism serving as a stimulus for responsive, and certainly creative, educational initiative. The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas both staffed and funded the mobile school during its seven years of service (Brown, 2001). The Nativity Network of schools is another example of a religious congregation’s response to the educational needs of the economically disadvantaged (Watters, 1994). A more detailed explication of the Jesuit-inspired Nativity schools forms the concluding section of this part of my literature review. The concept of a “Catholic school,” then, is more complex and various than one might be led to believe through reading the popular press or any number of public pronouncements concerning the current voucher controversy (Youniss & McLellan, 1999).

Lefevere (2003) describes an all-girl Catholic middle school in Harlem, New York, that captures a sense of the variety within a Catholic school response to needs of urban minority children. Sr. Thea Bowman Middle School is part of a quartet of programs in the educational outreach of St. Aloysius School. Two of the programs minister to younger children in the neighborhood (pre-school and elementary-aged children, grades 1-5). Sr. Thea Bowman School is a component in the ministry to young adolescents and a companion to The Gonzaga Program, an initiative serving the middle-school aged boys in the neighborhood. According to Lefevere (2003), what distinguishes this Catholic middle school of fifty-five students is its focus on attitude as well as
adolescents. Adolescent girls from the neighborhood gain entry to the school by literally climbing a mountain—the 3,491-foot Mount Greylock, located in nearby Williamstown (Massachusetts). The weeklong school camp that entails the climbing of Mount Greylock represents both a personal and a communal experience that is reflected in the academic and social fabric of the school’s educational program. As Lefevere (2003) reports, for students it serves as an important time of self-discovery and a time of bonding with others in a shared challenge. In turn, a sense of personal potential and the recognition of personal belonging within a community spur higher academic goals and a capacity to dream about what is possible with determination and hard work. To focus on goals and dreams, the school’s curriculum emphasizes literature, speech, and writing, with oratory serving as a linchpin in both the girls’ and the boys’ academic studies (Lefevere, 2003).

Partnerships within the corporate community, especially with African-American businesses, and cooperative relationships with local foundations (e.g. Harlem Family Institute) and universities (e.g. Fordham University) extend the network of support for students and their families. What is even more important, however, is the investment of human capital in the students. Volunteers teach computer skills to students and work in small counseling groups to provide special services. These features of the school’s social capital provide depth to an outreach that not only defines school as “being involved in every aspect of a [student’s] life” but “as a family” (n.p.) involved with helping parents on a number of personal and social levels. As Lefevere (2003) intimates, Sr. Thea Bowman Middle School is aptly named. The school’s namesake, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration and an African-American convert to Catholicism, led a life of service and dedication that reflected the joys of her African-American heritage and of her
commitment to gospel values as a religious sister and a Catholic school teacher. Fostering a sense of joy, service, community and nurturing the goals of “aiming high” and working hard are the qualities of this small Harlem middle school which make a difference in the lives of students. (Lefevere, 2003).

The Nativity school, a Jesuit-sponsored, primarily middle school model of Catholic education in urban centers, is patterned on an original responsive initiative developed in 1971 in New York City (Watters, 1994). Since that time, the Nativity school model has inspired a network that now numbers more than forty schools across the country (Carter, 2001). The Jesuits administer some of the schools and Jesuit volunteers, primarily graduates of Jesuits universities or high schools, participate in providing many of the special services that characterize the Nativity schools (Carter, 2001). The majority of Nativity middle schools, however, are independently organized initiatives by local educators. What each of the schools share is a commitment to core principles: a holistic educational focus that offers academic, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual support for students and solidarity with low-income youth and families (Carter, 2001; Cooper, 2003; Ward, 2001).

The Nativity school model incorporates an extended school year (235 days) and an extended school day (typically 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) within a broad-based, holistic curriculum that includes Saturday field trips, summer camp experiences, and individual tutorial help in reading and numeracy (Carter, 2001; Cooper, 2003). Each Nativity school is small by design, usually serving between sixty and seventy-five students at the middle-school level (Carter, 2001). The Nativity school culture, according to Murray (2001), is a primary factor in the academic success of students who have attended the original school.
model, Nativity Mission Center on the lower east side of Manhattan. Since the school’s founding, its Hispanic graduates have defied the national averages in three important categories: high school graduation, college matriculation, and college graduation rates. Statistics in each of these categories, according to Murray (2001), show that 89% of the students from Nativity Mission Center have earned a high school diploma (63% national average), that 75% of the students from the Nativity school have matriculated to college (32% national average), and that 41% of those Nativity school students have earned a college degree in four years (10% national average).

An important and distinguishing quality of the Nativity school model is its focus upon “especially at-risk” youth (Portner, 2001). School staffs try to enroll students who score in the bottom half on state-sponsored achievement tests (Portner, 2001) and who exhibit the greatest need based upon prior school performance (Carter, 2001). Nativity schools work with area public school administrators and teachers to identify students seriously “at risk of dropping out of school” (Carter, 2001).

Like the initiative at Santa Cruz, the programs of the Nativity schools rely on volunteer teachers who willingly participate in a community lifestyle and accept minimal financial remuneration for their teaching services (Moran, 2002; Carter, 2001). Despite such contributed services, however, the per-pupil cost at Nativity schools ranges between $10,000 and $12,000 per year (Ward, 2001; Cooper, 2003), a financial challenge for schools typically charging only $480 to $500 in yearly tuition (Carter, 2001; Cooper, 2003). Partnerships with religious congregations, local parishes, dioceses, philanthropic foundations (e.g. Cassin Foundation), and civic organizations provide supplemental resources for operating expenses (Carter, 2001; Ward, 2001; Cooper, 2003).
The educational vision that typifies a Catholic school has its roots in the Christian scriptures and in the traditional social teachings of the Catholic Church (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). In that respect, one might say, all Catholic schools are plants rooted in the same soil and nurtured by the same moral principles. But as I have tried to show, the seeds sown within that common soil are variegated and, in their maturity, they render multivariate blossoms similar to, but distinguishable from, other plants in the soil. The variety of the seeds and the blossoms serves as a major source of the strength, part of the stores of social capital, which create the distinctive character of individual Catholic schools. Small witnesses these multivariate seeds and blossoms might be, but in their smallness and their responsiveness, they represent what Raywid (2001) has described as the research-tested formula for effective education—"small, personalized schools offering authentic learning and producing student engagement" (p. 583).

The “Funds of Knowledge” Perspective

The recognition and utilization of social capital concepts are important foci for researchers within the Latino community. Luis Moll’s (1988, 1990) development of a “funds of knowledge” framework is an example of this focus. The conceptual structure of Moll's "funds of knowledge" research reflects Rogoff's (1994) notion of a community of learners in which teachers, parents, and neighborhoods engage in transformative action that blurs traditional role boundaries. The concept also builds upon Cummins' (1989) contention that human interaction at all levels and across cultural boundaries creates a democratic forum in which critical thinking and problem solving become shared enterprises. Moll’s (1990) design accentuates the student learner's "latent" capital by stimulating its energy at the source—in the family and neighborhood. It does so by not
only encouraging but conscientiously incorporating that cultural largesse within school/classroom curricula, and by investing teachers with the responsibility of transforming instructional practices to better utilize the cultural strengths of their minority students (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997; Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Chavez, 1997).

The “funds of knowledge” concept is embedded in a sociocultural perspective influenced by the work of Vygotsky (1978) and it borrows liberally from theories in cultural anthropology. Each of these theoretical frameworks places "a strong emphasis on analyzing the powerful, mediating role of culture in human intellectual performance" (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993, p. 139). The strategic components of the "funds of knowledge" design flow from a commitment to the essentially distributive nature of thinking (Moll & Greenberg, 1992), from a belief that insights are gained from the study of "precisely how cognition [is] distributed within different kinds of activity, with their different forms of mediation, division of labor, [and] social rules" (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, p. 139). Characteristic of the research initiatives forming the "funds of knowledge" design is an ethnographic approach to the gathering, integration, and interpretation of data. Central to the ethnographic approach is the corporate nature of the investigative and evaluative processes. In practice, researchers, teachers, students, parents, and other community participants in a “funds of knowledge” construct mediate meaning within a mutually transforming social context; they create "culturally mediated systems of knowledge, systems of living knowledge" (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, p. 159).

Such a process counters the "culture-as-deficit" assumption that stigmatizes many language-minority learners in the traditional classroom (McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Moll & Greenberg, 1992). Instead, students' familial and ethnic capital appear not as
"intellectually barren, socially disorganized, or part of some sort of apathetic and passive, if not pathological," subculture (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993, p. 160) but rather as cognitively rich not only in resources but in the "capacities to develop, acquire, or use knowledge" (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, p.160). When teachers become aware of the largesse that their language-minority students possess and reconfigure classrooms and curricula to take "advantage of students' interests and knowledge to address [and even generate] academic goals” (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, p. 161), a meaningful, far-reaching and fundamentally transformative process begins (Connell, 1994; Moll, 1990, 2001).

What once appears as unmotivated and recalcitrant student behavior becomes personal commitment when teachers "fully exploit the existing resources of individuals, schools, and communities in mediating students' active engagement with classroom learning in ways that [make] contact with their experiences." (Rueda & Moll, 1994, p. 132)

Case study documentations of the "funds of knowledge" strategy provide both interesting and compelling evidence of its potential as a transformative tool. In 1990-91, researchers conducted two integrated studies in the Puerto Rican community of Spanish Harlem, New York City that used ethnographic methods of inquiry to describe teacher and student agency in home, school, and larger communal contexts:

In the first study, teachers visited local households as learners, seeking to understand and document the knowledge and experiences of families. The study was successful in helping teachers discover fundamentally new understandings of families by building explicitly on the funds of knowledge found in the households. The goal...was not necessarily to create new classroom practices but to accomplish something that may be more difficult: to challenge and alter long-held perceptions that families living in poverty somehow lack experiences that are worthwhile for schooling. By collecting first-hand data on these families, through interviews and field notes that they later analyzed as a group, teachers helped to form new representations of the community. Through the act of writing and reflection, they were able to redefine in new theoretical terms what they observed in the households....
Similarly, in the second study the students created new identities as learners primarily through the uses of writing. These uses of writing included fieldnotes, reflections, letters, reports, and presentations. Each of these writing activities became a different way of relating, interacting, and learning about the surrounding realities and about the students’ social world. For both the student-researchers and the teacher-researchers...thinking through writing became the central mechanism by which knowledge about students' homes and communities was constructed and through which all participants gained increased consciousness of the barriers that impede students’ progress and the resources available for overcoming these obstacles (Mercado & Moll, 2000, pp. 322-23).

We embarked on this research project to enable young adolescents to harness the power of literacy in order to take control of their own development and go beyond the limitations schooling may impose. That we succeeded on a short-term basis is supported by qualitative and quantitative evidence accumulated over several years.... We are convinced that our children have a kind of brilliance born out of struggle and adversity, but it is often dimmed by their schooling and the conditions of their lives....Drawing support from the symbolic community we created through research, [though], we share a bond which enables us to be hopeful about the future (Mercado & Moll, p. 322).

Addressing concerns from three junior high schools in San Diego, another study focused on the uses of writing in Latino home and community settings and on an exploration of ‘ways of using this information to improve the teaching of writing in classrooms.’ (Rueda & Moll, 1994, p. 124)

During the course of the research, teacher experimentation in writing strategies, particularly the use of community-generated topics and a focus on the use of writing as communication, produced remarkable motivational changes in students. Creating "links between the classroom activities and issues of life outside the classroom" (Rueda & Moll, 1994, p. 127) sparked engagement among students themselves and between teacher and students. The development of teachers as "mediators of learning" also fueled a new dynamic within the educational setting (Moll & Greenberg, 1992). Encouraging teachers to build into writing tasks components of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) helped them "not only to assist or stretch the students' performance, but to prepare students to eventually 'appropriate' or take over the activity in order to perform it completely and independent of assistance." (Rueda & Moll, p. 129)
Curricular Supports for a “Funds of Knowledge” Approach

There is supportive rationale for such an instructional approach in the literacy curricula of schools—although unconventional by traditional standards, in many middle school reform structures, and indeed within research on the teaching of reading and writing. Studies in grassroots innovations in young adult education (e.g. Kraft, Baca, Aragón, & de Onís, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999) suggest, for instance, that initiating reform from within a school’s culture through a process of reflection, goal setting, collaborative planning, mentoring, and engaged, recurring evaluation establishes a vitality for and an ownership of the change process. Vesting classroom teachers with the power to address a wide variance of student needs beyond academic preparation encourages them to work as a community of caregivers. Ostrowski (2000) describes how that process in two middle schools radically changed the learning environments, indeed the lives, of students, staff, and faculty. In a similar way, Manning (2000) describes how a class of sixth graders thrived in an atmosphere of cooperative learning where teacher and students worked together in establishing goals and shared in the construction of a community of practice. The teacher’s incorporation and tailoring of the Accelerated Reader program forms an important dimension in the community building process:

To insure that students read outside of class and that they read every day, [the teacher] instituted the "Accelerated Reader" program. First, students are tested by a computerized assessment program, STAR….It assesses a student's reading level via comprehension exercises...Based on their STAR test score, students are provided with a wide ranging list of novels at an appropriate level. The lists include novels such as Sounder, Tom Sawyer, and The Giver. Upon selecting and completing a book, students take a computerized test with multiple choice questions on the events, characters, and vocabulary in the book. A perfect score is 10, and students are required to earn at least 40 points during each nine-week marking period. As a result, students are responsible for reading at least four books every nine weeks, making [the teacher’s] class a very rigorous reading course.
However, simply reading and answering comprehension questions about their books is not enough. [The teacher] also puts a great deal of emphasis on helping students learn to respond personally to what they are reading. She encourages them to become conscious of how the reading relates to and affects them, to reflect on their personal reactions to what's happening in the story. She does this primarily through a strategy called reader response, which she learned about through the district language arts office. While students read their books, they must write reader responses.

[The teacher] gives students suggested prompts for these personal responses that encourage important reading skills: predicting, clarifying, questioning, relating, contesting, and thinking critically….Sometimes…students write reader response letters to other students. Paired with students at similar reading levels, "reading buddies" read a book together…Students also address some of their reader responses to [to the teacher] herself. [She] then writes responses back in what becomes a very meaningful literary exchange (pp. 9-11).

Jiménez and Gersten (1999) describe how two responsive Latino teachers embrace pedagogical reform. They argue that “as important as implementation of recommended instructional practices for teaching literacy is, developing rapport with students is also a key factor for providing language-minority students with conditions necessary for success” (p. 295). The teachers approach the establishment of that rapport in different but effective ways. One teacher uses instructional conversation and culturally relevant topics to create a more democratic classroom atmosphere (Tharp, 1997). The other teacher employs a more traditional, direct instructional approach, but, as Jiménez and Gersten (1999) observe, blends the use of cooperative learning with direct instruction “to provide students with a balanced and meaningful curriculum” (p. 293).

Research in other areas of middle school reform indicates, as well, a growing awareness, among many school faculties, of the benefits of incorporating “real-world,” community-based curricular components. Not only do such programs draw together individuals in the pursuit of common goals, they empower students to transfer learning (Moll, 1990), to engage in a variety of literate activities both personally and corporately
(Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Rueda & Moll, 1994). Scales, Blyth, Berkas, and Kielsmeier (2000), for instance, report that culturally diverse student populations in twenty-nine middle schools engaged in organized service learning made strategic gains in self-confidence and the ability to see themselves as caregivers. Such personal growth led to greater investment in school-related work, a deeper sense of belonging to both the school and wider communities, and a more reflective disposition. Toole (2000), studying two schools implementing service learning, describes how teachers as well as students are empowered through service learning and that more cooperative group work, more student assessment, more research-oriented projects, and greater use of technology (computer-related work) separate this sort of literate engagement from traditional methods.

Reyes, Scribner, and Scribner (1999), in their study of resilient Latino youth, propose that “perhaps [their] most powerful finding pertaining directly to classroom learning [is] the incorporation of students’ interest and experiences, the ‘funds of knowledge’ they [bring] with them into the learning situation, whether it [is] reading, writing, mathematics, or other subject areas.” (p. 14) These researchers find as well that cooperative learning serves as a primary instructional mode to involve students in classroom projects. The cooperative strategies that are particularly effective include shared reading exercises, shared writing lessons, in-classroom peer tutoring, and cross-age tutoring. Quintana (2001) stresses the importance of capitalizing on students’ interests and experiences in the creation of a reading preference inventory for immigrant Mexican students. Quintana (2001) worked with four hundred middle and high school students in developing the preference inventory. Noting a decline between 6th grade and 8th grade reading preferences and habits, Quintana (2001) argues that implemental use of
reading preference inventories for all students, but especially for language diverse Mexican students, develops cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988, 1990) and stimulates sustained growth in reading.

Investigations which probe the effects of peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, and student mentoring among Latino students (e.g. Cook & Urzua, 1993; Lockwood & Secada, 1999) as well as studies conducted utilizing a family literacy focus within Latino communities (e.g. Auerbach, 1992; Potts, 1994) underscore the benefits and the necessity of linking development of English language literacy skills to the cultural and linguistic environment of learners. In practical terms, each of these studies substantiates the holistic value of a “funds of knowledge” approach to curriculum development. Such an approach “roused minds to life” (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) in the classroom and celebrates the human and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) in students and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Rosado, 1996; Moll, 2001).

**Responsive English Language Arts Instruction for Hispanic youth**

Studies of language arts teaching focused specifically on “placed-at-risk” Latino youth, although not numerous, build as well upon a notion of cultural capital and student empowerment. Stressing the essential meaning-making nature of writing, Zamel (1983) proposes an emphasis upon creative exploration rather than rhetorical form, upon the development of expressive communication in text as a means to tap a student’s reservoir of knowledge and ability. Laliberty (2001) recounts, through self-study research, the evolution of a program in narrative discourse and peer interaction that “hooked” (p.150) students on writing. Uppermost in her planning and rationale is the belief “that the development of reading and writing skills can [occur only] in an instructional context
where students [are] actively engaged...in literacy activities [in which] both the process and the products...[are] affirming of their developing academic and personal identities (Cummins, 1989, p. 17). Samway (1992) assumes a similar path in challenging the tendency among many language arts teachers to underestimate the writing potential of their LEP students. Citing Graves (1983), Hudelston (1989), Edelsky (1986), and Urzua (1987), she describes a writers’ workshop design which “g[ives] students opportunities to write for authentic, meaning-making, message-sharing purposes” (p. 6), a strategy which appeals to students’ natural desires to communicate who they are as learners and as members of a broader network involving families, neighborhoods, and diverse cultural traditions (Moll, 1988, 1990, 2001).

Quiroz (1997) focuses specifically on ways that students’ autobiographical writing serves as an authentic, meaning-making tool for profound personal transparency. Using a critical framework [Farrell, 1994] theorized to study the developmental stages of student identity, Quiroz (1997) constructs a portraiture of inner-city Latino youth who are struggling to integrate a sense of self that has familial and personal presence with a sense of self that is bound to the future and to career pursuits. Farrell (cited in Quiroz, 1997) identifies students who are academically successful as exhibiting six selves: the family self, the student self, the peer self, the sexual self, the affiliating self, and the career self. School success, however, depends on an integration of only three of these selves—the family self, the student self, and the career self. According to Quiroz (1997), Farrell projects his interpretive posture further “by saying that for inner city students, only the student and career selves [are] critical in sustaining an educational identity” (p. 2). The crucial task for students involves forming and exhibiting the two selves.
The first part of the study entails analysis of an end-of-the-year autobiographical writing task given by English teachers to their forty-seven Puerto Rican and Mexican eighth graders. The prompts used in the assignment reflect an isomorphic alignment with “Farrell’s six selves, with… teachers providing the [following] outline for students: 1) Birth; 2) Family; 3) School Days; 4) Friends; 5) Future Plans; and 6) Life Ten Years from Now” (p. 3). The second phase of the study involves analyzing and then integrating with the prior dataset an autobiographical writing assignment given to twenty-seven of these students during their junior year in high school.

Through her analysis, Quiroz (1997) concludes that a serious disjunctive appears in students’ self-projections. This disjunctive, she contends, is a manifestation of the “social reproduction of inequality” (p. 9) that occurs unintentionally in school cultures. Her analysis of the autobiographies shows how students’ perceptions of social inequality contribute to that disjuncture:

1) As students progress through the educational process they continue to blame themselves for their poor educational experiences. However, as they mature, they also begin to find fault with the educational institution. Eighth grade evaluations of teacher “meanness” evolve into juniors’ evaluations of teachers as boring and apathetic.

2) The confusion of elementary school often evolves into resentment and sometimes hostility toward the schooling process and its agents. Despite comments about disliking a certain teacher, the tenor of eighth grade descriptions of schooling are more benign than high school descriptions.

3) Those students who retain their aspirations are better able to integrate the “critical” selves, in spite of, rather than because of assistance from staff.

4) Although the family self was salient for the Mexican students, it does not appear to provide the type of social capital that facilitates an educational identity for these Latino students (p. 9).
The findings compel Quiroz (1997) to add a seventh “self” to the identity framework. The addition she proposes is “the defeated self,” a projection that shows itself in students’ silent and gradual disengagement from school, their active resistance to many schooling practices, and/or their “quitting the game all together” by dropping out of school (p. 10). As she explains:

The dominant “self” of many Latino students is neither the student self, the career self, or an integrated version of the two. Rather, it is a “defeated” self, a self which no longer believes in its ability to acquire an opportunity to succeed. The defeated self is a self that does not recognize its cognitive competence, has little sense of self-efficacy, and does not experience the educational environment as supportive or open to his/her success. (p. 9)

Despite the unfavorable findings in the study, Quiroz (1997) demonstrates the value of Latino student autobiographies. The autobiographies provide “an opportunity to see how Latino students [construct] identity” (p. 2) and a compelling reason to ponder, from a distance, how school practices might be changed to transform the enervating educational experiences of far too many young Hispanics (Nieto, 1999; Garcia, 2001; Moll, 2001; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Rosado, 1996).

In other writing studies, Houtchens (2001) recounts, in a meta-narrative of classroom practice, the value of journaling and reading logs as mediative tools in the literacy practice of reluctant Hispanic LEP learners. Her study reflects a commitment to the principle that students’ prior experience is the timber for bridging the span between the new and the known (Moll, 2001; Nieto, 1999; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Garcia, 1991, 2001; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999). Articulating, sharing, and elaborating on personal histories and present experiences, she contends, place reading and writing in a mutually informative dialogue. For her students, each new literacy event adds another dimension to the dialogue, creating a dynamic scaffold
through which literacy activities and the world outside the classroom become contextual partners. Gómez, Parker, Lara-Alecio, and Gómez (1996), however, report in their study that only the product approach to writing facilitates a consistent pattern of growth for a cohort of 6th grade LEP students. Conducted during a summer enrichment camp, the study used a holistic scoring rubric to measure the growth in writing competency for two groups of students, one group instructed using a free-writing process, the other using a structured product approach. Gómez et al (1996) conclude, like Reyes (1992), that more critical attention should be given to evaluating how process approaches to writing instruction address the specific learning style needs of bilingual and LEP students.

Guetiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Alvarez (2001) describe a rather unique reading-writing experiment that uses e-mail communication from students to “El Maga” (p. 129), a mysterious, entertaining, and yet anonymous internet mentor, as a literate practice to collapse cultural barriers. It is an effort to create “hybridity” (p. 129) in the classroom as students engage in on-going dialogue with their cyber companion. In the process, not only are language diverse students growing in English literacy skills, they are being nudged ever so gently toward a broader perspective of the world. Bonissone, Rougle, & Langer (1998) describe the creation of a vision-building community (Langer, 1995) “in which thought-provoking oral and written literacy activities pervade the context” of the classroom and create a “social setting for literacy learning.” (p. 2) In that study, the literature created by students themselves becomes an instrumental means through which diverse language learners find “richness in their own tales, use them as a point of contact with others, and...learn to inspect and rework their own stories to make them more understandable to others.” (pp. 2-3)
Jiménez, Gersten, and Rivera (1996) describe a transitional classroom teacher’s efforts to mirror to students the value of their cultural backgrounds. The teacher uses culturally relevant literature as a supplement to the required text and encourages students to engage in collaborative projects, to speak of and to write about their lives and the lives of their families. The researchers contend that the classroom organization and proxemic arrangement aid the collaborative groupings. Students have freedom to use bilingualism in conversations, a practice that creates a familiar climate in which “collaborative efforts among students parallel those common in many Latino homes.” (p. 338)

Each of the aforementioned studies reinforces key motivational strategies that Guthrie, Alao, and Rinehart (1997) and Farnan (1996) identify as critical components in effective holistic literacy instruction for all middle school students. First, the emphasis on connecting reading and writing assignments to real-world experiences engages learners in authentic inquiry and reflection. Second, giving students freedom to choose from a variety of reading materials and to express themselves in a variety of forms witnesses to democratic principles of equity and individuality. Third, commitment to helping students become self-monitoring in their learning fosters a sense of self-efficacy and encourages social engagement in the classroom. The studies are also aligned with core principles in reader-response (Rosenblatt, 1978; Bleich, 1975) and sociocognitive theories (Gardner, 1991; Bruner, 1986). They focus on literate activity as a process of interpretation on the part of the learner and a negotiation of the multiple representations of these processes in the social contexts of literate activity. Lastly, the studies point to a constructivist model of education that uses the knowledge and the experiences of students as tools to encourage personal ownership of literacy growth (Au, 1998; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001).
For “at-risk” Hispanic students, such desire and personal ownership of the educational process are crucial qualities in the development of personal and academic resilience (Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). On one level, they represent keys to an empowered response, what Reyes and Halcón (2001) have called a transformational “crashing the gates of literacy” for “dismissed, undervalued, or ignored” Latino students (p. 4). Perhaps more importantly, however, they serve as the personal and collective engines that fuel young Latinos’ dreams about what could be and sustain the personal as well as collective energy necessary to nurture dreams into being (Freire, 1994).

Summary

Many of the reports, empirical studies, and personal narratives in this literature review illumine ways that schools, teachers, students, parents, and other concerned stakeholders are participants in transforming the educational experiences of young Latinos/as. The thematic threads that bind their efforts together are those which touch and emanate from the human spirit: motivation, belonging, care, community, hoping, dreaming. These are the concepts defining school and schooling as a human response to the educational needs of marginalized Hispanic youth. Neither the public schools nor the Catholic schools I described have exclusive ownership of the defining concepts. By their shared practices, however, these schools, teachers, and other concerned stakeholders give witness to a powerful transformational dynamic. With a united voice, they serve as a challenge to the prevailing ideology of reform with its roots in capitalism rather than in democracy; its principal objective in creating standards and accountabilities rather than in fostering the holistic development of some of our nation’s neediest youth (Sergiovanni, 2001; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Nieto, 1999).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

[Experience] is the primary agency of education, [but] experience is slippery; it is difficult to operationalize; it eludes factual descriptions of manifest behavior. Experience is what people undergo, the kinds of meanings they construe as they teach and learn, and the personal ways in which they interpret the worlds in which they live. Such aspects of life are difficult to [represent through] a technology of standardized observation schedules or behavioral measures, yet what people experience in schools is central to any effort to understand what schools mean to those who spend a major portion of their lives there. (Eisner, 1988, p. ix)

Overview

“What people experience in school” and “what school means to people” were principal concepts in the planning and conduct of my literacy study at Santa Cruz School. In my mind’s eye, I imaged my first foray into the field at Santa Cruz as an educational adventure. I was an inexperienced pilgrim on a cultural journey of learning about others; I was a novice apprentice using trial and error methods in his search to understand others; I was an experienced teacher interpreting a new role and responding to new challenges in an unfamiliar cultural and school setting. Each of these images moved from the freer realm of the imagination into the world of situations at some point during the preparation and/or conduct of my fieldwork. In my mind’s eye, they were images of a researcher’s identity in its formative stages.

I built upon the concept of identity formation in the methodical representation of my study (Figure 2). It served as an organizing metaphor to describe the dual formation
processes that were intertwined. The more visible formation accounted the ways I went about seeing, recording, and analyzing how Santa Cruz School members constructed a culture of empowerment for students. What lay behind that accounting, however, was equally formative. It was the process of how a field researcher went about developing a suitable lens and filter through which to assess, interpret, and write about an unfolding dynamic. I chose to represent the dual identity processes by tracing stages of preparation and stages of fieldwork as formative events. For the most part, I presented those events in brief explications and/or graphic illustrations to provide the reader with a sense of how I conducted my fieldwork. I framed the discussion of data analysis, however, in narrative format to give a fuller and more personal account not only of the primary twists and turns of my field experiences, but of the critical decisions I made in my responses in the field.

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**Figure 2. Conceptual Diagram of Research Methodology**
Preparation Stage in Methodology Formation

The interplay of four key factors contributed to the initial conceptual formation of my fieldwork. Those key factors were a) my personal interests, b) a review of literature related to my interests, c) a weeklong pilot study at Santa Cruz, and d) a formal proposal for extended fieldwork at Santa Cruz.

Personal Interests

My curiosity about Santa Cruz School and my identity as a Catholic high school English and religion teacher played important roles in deciding the what and the where questions of my formal field research. I first learned about Santa Cruz in conversations with friends. Their descriptions of “a new kind of Catholic school” and “a school that was making a difference in the lives of Hispanic children” stimulated my curiosity. Certain qualities of the field research I wanted to do had already formed in my mind. As an English teacher, I wanted to conduct a literacy study; as a religion teacher, I wanted to conduct a social justice study; as a Catholic high school teacher, I wanted to conduct a study in a Catholic school setting. Each of these personal interests converged the further I explored my “curiosity” about Santa Cruz through reading and focused conversation.

Initial Review of Literature

Doctoral course work (English Education specialization, Language, Literacy, and Culture program, School of Teaching and Learning) played an important role in helping to contour the what question of my field study. Course work was a guide in how I sought and used empirical resources to explore my “curiosity” about Santa Cruz. Core concepts in my course work—“sociocultural theory,” “social constructivism,” and “multicultural education,” for example—became thematic guides in my library and internet research to
build a theoretical and empirical base for my study. The simple Boolean searches I made using an internet browser (e.g. “sociocultural” + “literacy,” “hispanic” + “literacy,” “literacy” + “multicultural” + “constructivist”) and the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) website of the U. S. Department of Education provided a promising reference base for review. Initial reading broadened my understanding of core theorists (i.e. Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1997; Banks, 1995) and the core theoretical concepts (i.e. sociocultural theory, critical literacy, multicultural education theory) I encountered in coursework. My understanding also broadened as I encountered an array of field studies specifically attuned to the literacy education of Hispanic youth (e.g. Moll, 1988; Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Nieto, 1996; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Berman et al, 1995). What became clearer through my reading and integration of pertinent literature was the what (i.e. the social, cultural, and historical focus) of a potential study at Santa Cruz.

The initial literature review also helped me in determining the why question of a potential field study at Santa Cruz. Simply put, library searches and Boolean searches on the internet yielded few resources that merged the core concepts guiding my review and an American Catholic school setting. The empirical resources that I found reflected what I considered “marketplace values” (e.g. Kafer, 2003; Sander, 2001; Shokraii, Olson, & Youssef, 1997); they focused generally on the issue of vouchers and parental choice in education. With one very important exception [Raywid, 1994], the principal resources encompassing the core concepts in a Catholic school setting were journalistic feature articles (e.g. Ward, 2001; Schnaiberg, 2001; Moran, 2002) or reflective reports/essays in Momentum, a monthly publication for Catholic school educators (e.g. Moorhead, 1996; Shimabukuro, 1998; Thibau, 1999). It appeared to me, at least from an initial review of
the literature, that the research discourse concerned with Hispanic educational issues had focused largely on two broad, “public” themes: a) how the bureaucratic and “toxic” cultures (Deal & Peterson, 1999) of many public schools had constructed the “at-risk” status of Hispanic students and b) how some public school communities had transformed their cultures to more effectively serve their diverse student populations. In other words, the research discourse on Hispanic educational issues framed “the problems” and “the solutions” as though they somehow resided in one or another kind of “public school.” What was missing in the discourse was a discussion of "non-public" school educational experiences of Hispanic students, particularly those students “placed at risk” on multiple levels (e.g. socioeconomic, linguistic, familial, geographical). In an expanded forum, the role that Catholic schools assumed in responding to the specific needs of marginalized Hispanic students (e.g. the Jesuit Nativity School network, Cornerstone schools) entered the public discussion. My study of the literacy program at Santa Cruz was an effort to participate in a broader forum on the educational experiences of "placed-at-risk" youth.

**Pilot Study at Santa Cruz School**

In May 2000, I spent a week at Santa Cruz School in an effort to inform my conceptual planning through on-site observations. I lived in the school community house (one of the unique organizational features at Santa Cruz) during that week and devoted my brief time in the field to the gathering of impressions about the school and its culture. I perused the school handbooks. I visited classes, talked with teachers, staff, and students, and walked the neighborhood around Santa Cruz. The impressions I recorded in my notes became “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1969) that brought planning and context into a formative partnership. This partnership, in turn, helped to transform the what, the
where, and the why questions of a literacy and social justice study at Santa Cruz. These questions moved from the conceptual realm of potential (in which they had grown) to a realm of planning in which they became anchors in the formal proposal of a field project.

**Formation of the Research Proposal**

Miller and Crabtree (1992) conceptualize qualitative research methodology as a detailed roadmap that marks both a researcher’s itinerary in the field and the critical choices that a researcher makes during the course of that journey. Patton (1990) describes qualitative research methodology as situational responsiveness. What is required of the researcher is recursive reflection on the purpose of an inquiry, on the question/s being pursued in an inquiry, and on the resources available in the field. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) particularize that perspective on qualitative research. They describe methodology as an active process of "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others." (p. 145). Taken in aggregation, these perspectives point to the complex processes and cyclical phases involved in conducting qualitative inquiry. For the field researcher, carving a pathway through such complexity requires "intense personal involvement" in all facets of an inquiry as well as “an ability to learn from a long series of mistakes." (Agar, 1986, p. 12)

Marshall and Rossman (1999), citing a study by Benbow, suggest a way to conceive of methodology as a layered, funneling process that links researcher interests, purposes, and fieldwork to larger theoretical constructs or contemporary policy issues (p. 29). The funnel metaphor, which I illustrated in Figure 3, points graphically to the concept of methodology as a dynamic, recursive process of refinement. During my
research at Santa Cruz School, the funnel metaphor became an illustrative tool to represent the process I enacted in the preparation and the fieldwork phases of my study.

Figure 3. Preparation Phase: Integration and Synthesis Process

The Research Proposal

The research proposal I developed was a product of integration and synthesis. The funnel metaphor served as a visual representation of how my personal interests, initial literature review, and pilot study at Santa Cruz converged as conceptual resources in defining the framework of a proposed study. The value of the funnel metaphor lay in its capacity to represent simply what was indeed a complex process—creating a singular “output” from multiple sources of “input.” The synthetic movement which marked passage from input to output involved my recursive questioning of data characteristics as well as the use of a consistent pattern of reading and re-reading, considering and re-considering, in the search for points of convergence among the sets of resources.

Three organizing structures emerged through the process of integration and synthesis. They became the frames of the research proposal design: a) the guiding research question, b) the theoretical base in social constructivism, and c) the orientation
toward multicultural education. Beyond their organizational function, however, they also served as guides in the conceptual planning of procedures and processes I would use.

**Guiding Research Question**

In what ways did the literacy program at Santa Cruz School participate in the public arena of culturally responsive educational practice?

The guiding research question identified two key components from the integration and synthesis process (a literacy/social justice study in a Catholic school setting and its participation in the public discourse concerning Hispanic educational issues). From the guiding research question, I developed four tentative research questions for exploration in the field. (I iterated the tentative questions in the Data Analysis section of this chapter.)

**Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Base**

Social Constructivism emerged as a fitting theoretical foundation for my study when I integrated and synthesized the dominant impressions I recorded from the pilot study at Santa Cruz School (e.g. school as cultural response, as community of practice, as vision into witness) with key themes in the initial literature review I conducted. As these impressions converged, I began the first steps in moving from what Freire (1998) calls ingenious curiosity, a natural questioning born of common sense or experience, to epistemological curiosity, a more profound sense of meaning born of probing, reflective analysis. A social constructivist approach also offered grounding that linked my personal convictions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and learning to the process of field research. At the root of the paradigm is sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1995) and its tenet that all human action is mediated action (Wertsch, 1985; Wells, 1999). The paradigm emphasizes the intrinsic value of culture and context in understanding what occurs in a social setting. It proposes that reality is constructed through human activity,
through social invention. It posits that knowledge is a human product—a social and cultural construction of meaning created through human and environmental interactions and that learning is an intensely social process that entails active engagement in human activity (Wertsch, 1985; Wells, 1999). A social constructivist lens brought into focus the complex factors that were integral parts of my proposed study.

**Multicultural Theory as an Orientation**

What I termed in the Guiding Research Question “the public arena of culturally responsive educational practice” intimated the specifically multicultural dimension that surfaced in the integration and synthesis process. I chose this orientation to make more apparent the particular perspective guiding my study. Multicultural education theorists (e.g. Banks, 1995; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999) informed the social constructivist lens I appropriated for my study. The orientation emphasizes that a) reality is a human construct that embraces a range of diverse cultural perspectives; b) that knowledge claims are essentially positional and negotiable human products; and c) that learning is a holistic enterprise in which social justice, power sharing, and active participation are pivotal components. In addition, and of primary significance, implicit and explicit metaphors and concepts that appeared in my pilot study impressions and in the Santa Cruz School handbooks suggested a school community appropriation of a multicultural philosophy.

**Methodology in the Research Proposal**

The guiding research question (purpose), the social constructivist base, and the multicultural orientation (theoretical lens) that formed the organizational framework of my research proposal supported an ethnographic case study approach in the field. Patton (1990) describes ethnography as a focus on the culture of a group of people (p. 67).
What, for example, are the “public symbols” that dominate group discourse and shape the identity of the group? (Eisenhart, 2001) or what are the patterns of activity that mark the ways individuals and groups go about their daily practices? Geertz (1973) contends that ethnography is an endeavor to describe a culture in process. It is an attempt to explain the web of interdependence within group behaviors and interactions from the point of view of those within the group.

The research study I proposed focused on the culture of Santa Cruz. I wished to describe the “public symbols” woven within group discourse and how they shaped the cultural identity of the school. I proposed to study the culture of Santa Cruz as a process, identifying the themes that connected the school culture and the classroom cultures of two 8th grade language arts teachers. As an experienced Catholic school teacher and someone familiar with the specific educational tradition at the center of the Santa Cruz mission (Crossian [pseudonym]), I was already, in a generic way, a cultural "insider." To become an "indigenous insider" (Banks, 1998), to fully participate in, experience, and write about the culture "as an insider," however, I obtained permission from the group to live as a member in the school community house during my nine months of fieldwork.

The research I proposed was also a case study. According to Yin (1989) and Stake (1994), a case study is the preferred strategy for researchers dealing with how and why questions. The strategy is useful in venues where the investigator has no control over the phenomena of interest and focuses on contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. How and why questions were implicit concerns in the Guiding Research Question of my study. In addition, I wanted to study the culture at Santa Cruz in a naturalistic way, as a participant observer, not in an experimental way, as a clinician or
interventionist. The ethnographic case study I proposed relied on resources commonly associated with ethnography and case study research (Spradley, 1980; Yin, 1989)—participant observation, informal and semi-structured interviews, and document review (Yin, 1989). It was the approach with which I began fieldwork in August 2002.

Context of the Study

*The School and Community Setting*

Santa Cruz School occupies the fourth floor of a century-old building in one of the traditionally ethnic, working-class neighborhoods of a large mid-western city. The structure’s squareness, separation in space, and yellow brick façade with ornate granite appointments distinguished it from the intimately positioned, frame and shingled houses in the neighborhood. On its first two floors, the structure served as a parish church and, on its third floor, as an off-campus classroom satellite for elementary-aged children from an over-crowded nearby public school. High ceilings, vivid colors, and shiny hardwood floors marked the physical space of Santa Cruz School. The area held six classrooms of varying sizes—the smallest of which serves as a writing lab. Other rooms included a library, a main office, and a restroom. Cutting a wide swath down the center of the fourth floor was a long hallway decorated with an assortment of potted plants, bulletin boards, cushioned chairs, and work carrels. The main office was divided into two sections—one a reception area and workspace for the school secretary, the other a private workspace for the principal. An inner stairwell, highlighted by five landings, sixty-seven black metal steps, and a large wall mural of “La Virgen de Guadalupe,” the patroness of Mexico, connected the school to street level through a side church entrance. In a parish activity center, separated from the church/school building by a narrow parking area, students
from the third floor public school satellite and students from Santa Cruz shared the use of a cafeteria and gymnasium during staggered lunch periods. Figure 4 represents a diagram of the Santa Cruz School site plan.

**Figure 4. Santa Cruz Site Plan Diagram**

On the opposite side of the street, the largest lawn in the neighborhood provided complementary green space for two other parish buildings. One of the buildings served as a rectory for two resident priests, the other—a former convent—served as a community house for Santa Cruz School. The school community house functioned as a residence for teaching volunteers (e.g. primarily recent college graduates who affiliated with the
religious order sponsoring Santa Cruz School) as well as for members of the religious order (Crossians [pseudonym]) that sponsors the school. It was in this setting in 1995 that, seated around rectangular dining room tables, four teachers and eighteen students began the literacy mission of Santa Cruz (School Profile, 2002-2003).

During the nine months of my study, the community residence housed four unmarried teaching volunteers, one unmarried staff volunteer, a married couple—one of whom was a site coordinator and adult literacy instructor, two members of the sponsoring religious order, and this researcher (five females, five males). The residence was, as well, a hub for many school community activities. It served as a meeting place for school community members (e.g. teachers who did not live in the community house, students receiving special instructional attention, teachers from a newly established sister school in another location). It provided workspace for two staff members involved in Santa Cruz’s Outreach Program for graduates attending high school. It accommodated offices for six staff members (including the school founder/president) involved in the Santa Cruz Foundation and offered hospitality, even temporary lodging, for plunge groups (e.g. high school and college students performing direct service projects as part of their school or church programs) or for a host of interested visitors.

The community house membership represented what one resident called “the Santa Cruz hybrid” (Field notes, Nov. 21, 2002). On one level, people ranging in age from 72 to 22 shared willingly in common household duties like cooking, dishwashing, grocery shopping, and a host of other domesticities. On another level, residents witnessed to one another human and spiritual values through community prayer, a monthly Sunday-morning community colloquy, and a ritual of conversation and repast each weekday.
evening. The spirit of community in the house extended even to providing hot lunches Monday through Friday for all teachers, staff members, periodic volunteers, and school/community visitors and to hosting a normally well-attended Friday evening social. In essence, the community house at Santa Cruz served as a multi-level activity center.

*School and Neighborhood Demographics*

Santa Cruz had a student population of seventy-nine (8th grade [28], 7th grade [27], 6th grade [24], Male: n = 48, Female: n = 31). School statistics classified seventy-two students (91.1%) as Hispanic, five students (6.3%) as Black Non-Hispanic, and two students (2.5%) as White Non-Hispanic (*School Profile*, 2002-2003). In the 8th grade, twenty-five students (89.2%) were of Hispanic descent, two (7.1%) were of Black Non-Hispanic descent, and one (3.6%) was of White Non-Hispanic Descent. The majority of Santa Cruz students were classified as members of families with formal registry in the local parish (81.25%) or in a neighboring parish (9.38%). Two students (2.5%) were listed as Non-Christian (*School Profile*, 2002-2003). A school map of residence locations showed that 95% of the students lived within a five-block radius of Santa Cruz (Field notes, Sept. 5, 2002). Table 2 is a numerical summary of the Santa Cruz student polity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>African-Am</th>
<th>White Euro</th>
<th>Catholic/Non-Cath</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz School</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75/4</td>
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<td>8th Grade Class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th Grade Class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>6th Grade Class</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz School Student Portrait Data in Percentages</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>06.3</td>
<td>02.5</td>
<td>94.9/05.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Numerical Portrait of Santa Cruz Student Population

125
The ethnic composition of the full and part-time teaching and support staff in the school (n = 18) represented a blending of both Hispanic (44%) and White Non-Hispanic (55%) origins. Of full-time classroom teachers (n = 9), three (33.3%) were of Hispanic descent and of full-time school support staff, four (100%) were of Hispanic descent. Ten members (55.5%) of the teaching and support staff were female, four (44.4%) of them Hispanic by birth. Of the eight male teaching and support staff, four (50%) were of Hispanic descent (Field notes, Sept. 5, 2002). Two members of the staff, both of them Hispanic, were also current and/or former parents of Santa Cruz students.

The school principal, the Writing Lab instructor (Title I public school employee), two ITA (Initial Teaching Alphabet) tutors, the secretary, the librarian, and three part-time school counselors (non-school employees) were the only salaried members of the teaching and support staff. Other full and part-time faculty were teaching volunteers. Two full-time teachers were experienced educators; the other teachers were recent college graduates who entered into service contracts with the school. The contracts provided housing, health care, the use of community cars, and a monthly stipend based on years of service at Santa Cruz. The beginning teacher financial package was $15,000 (Field notes, May 3, 2003). Table 3 is a numerical summary of Santa Cruz faculty/staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty &amp; Staff</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White Euro</th>
<th>Salary/Stipend</th>
<th>Catholic/Non-Cath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stipend</td>
<td>8/1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Salary/Stipend</td>
<td>1/1</td>
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<td>Full-time Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>4/0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-time Staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>3/0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Portrait Data in Percentages</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>44.4/55.5</td>
<td>88.8/11.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Numerical Portrait of Santa Cruz Faculty and Staff
Similar to practices in other schools, formative training for Santa Cruz faculty and staff included professional in-service workshops each school trimester, weekly faculty-staff meetings, and two community-building retreats off campus. What distinguished the workshops, meetings, and retreats at Santa Cruz was their egalitarian structure (Rosado, 1996) and critical focus on local student needs (Nieto, 1999; Mizell, 2002). All staff members participated in such gatherings and shared in the deliberative processes that effected change in the school's culture of practice. Faculty and staff also participated in a yearly colloquium at which members of the consortium of Santa Cruz schools gather to discuss common interests, successes, and challenges. Both a communal celebration and a regional educational conference, the colloquium served as a stimulus for the development of new strategies that all Santa Cruz schools could use to better meet their shared mission of educational service to marginalized youth and families (Field notes, May 3, 2003).

Statistical descriptions of the Santa Cruz School neighborhood reified the litany of social concerns found in the literature on urban Hispanic youth and families. A school public relations brochure (2002-2003) summarized the key statistical descriptors of the Santa Cruz School neighborhood, using—at least in part—local police department (2000) and U.S. Census Bureau (2000) data. Those data indicated that in the neighborhood:

- 80.4% of adults over age 25 had no high school diploma or equivalency;
- Median household incomes were half the national average of $42,228;
- 33.8% of neighborhood children under 17 lived in poverty;
- 33.4% of the adult population lived in poverty [National avg.: 13.5%];
- 63.85% of people in the area lived at 200% below the poverty level;
- 43.9% of neighborhood youth aged 16 to 19 were high school dropouts;
• six active gangs vied in the neighborhood for extended territory, recruits, and control of drug and other criminal activity;

• 44.4% of gang members had less than a 9th grade education;

• 96% of Santa Cruz School students were members of low-income families

**Conversational Perceptions of School and Neighborhood**

The perspectives about school and neighborhood that Santa Cruz stakeholders shared with me were poignant and offered a contrasting parallel to the statistical and pictorial descriptions I presented. For these stakeholders, the school and neighborhood were vibrant places where life was seldom dull, where challenges were opportunities for growth and transformation, where hopes and dreams were always under construction.

From the beginning, as the school founder described, Santa Cruz represented an effort to make perceptions into reality, to bring visions, hopes, and dreams to fruition. The school founder spoke and wrote about these early perceptions, visions, hopes, and dreams as a series of grace-filled moments. They represented, for him, images of a stark neighborhood reality being transformed *through a school*. The triggering image in the neighborhood was “the sight of abandoned children with no hope.” The instrument of transformation was “the gift of a gospel charisma of service” and the enthusiasm of “a few restless hearts that God created” to generously respond to human needs. Bringing Santa Cruz School into being, he wrote, required a leap of faith with “the only clarity being the hunches that [were] in our hearts” (School founder, personal journal, 2002).

Nested within his reflections were foundational concepts, “the hunches,” from which the responsive literacy initiatives of Santa Cruz sprang. The first of the “hunches” was “that children from the inner city were disadvantaged only in circumstance and not
in potential.” The second of the “hunches” was “that empowering students, building self-esteem, and setting personal goals were keys to tapping potential.” The third and last of the “hunches” was “that sustaining a vision of ‘what should be’ for the youth of the neighborhood” would require “great energy, perseverance, trust, and patience.” (School founder, personal journal, 2002) What the neighborhood needed, as he suggested in his journal, was a school whose practices were culturally inclusive and responsive, whose purpose lay in a commitment to children and families in need, and whose ethic reflected a transformational vision of justice, hope, and solidarity (Freire, 1994).

The school principal, a member of the faculty for six years, used similar images to describe the “special neighborhood mission” of Santa Cruz School. In his words, the school “drew its strength from a commitment” to special needs. Part of that commitment was “a preferential option” of educational service to students “who were struggling in their present school locations.” The other part was the school’s strong “commitment to cooperation— not competition— with other schools.” (School principal, Interview, May 12, 2003) The mission was sustained by a “peaceful, loving, open-armed, caring, and nurturing” school climate (School principal, Interview, May 12, 2003). It was a climate built upon personal relationships between teachers and students and fortified by the witness of teachers who chose to live in the neighborhood. For the school principal, the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz represented a special form of solidarity that was both human (“we know all the students and they know us”) and spiritual (“students know that when they hear gunshots, we hear gunshots”).

How other members of the school community, students, teachers, staff, and graduates (n = 18), spoke about Santa Cruz had the variety of a quilt in the making. For
some (2), Santa Cruz was “just a place to go to school” (Field notes, Nov. 4, 2002) or “an old building that needed lots of repairs.” (Field notes, Nov. 19, 2002). For others (3), the school represented the “challenges of meeting the needs of all students,” (Field notes, Oct. 23, 2002), the “stresses of long hours, long work weeks,” (Field notes, Nov. 20, 2002), or the “uneasiness of having to teach outside one’s academic discipline.” (Field notes, Jan. 13, 2003)

Much more often, however, a positive, hope-filled tenor lilted the comments of community members. Many times, respondents (6) referred to Santa Cruz as “a special place” (Field notes, Sept. 3, 2002; Sept. 5, 2002; Sept. 20, 2002; Oct. 2, 2002; March 19, 2003; May 3, 2003). For two respondents, Santa Cruz represented a place where the “limited vocabulary” and “ugly English” of staff members (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002) did not diminish full participation in the mission. For others (2), it was the kind of school where the use of Spanish for communicative purposes seemed not only a “natural” (Field notes, Sept. 5, 2002) and an “encouraged” (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002) means of linking school to home but evidence of a concern in the literacy education of students (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002; Feb. 18, 2003). According to some of the respondents, Santa Cruz was also a place where “caring teachers” (Field notes, Oct. 7, 2002; Jan. 10, 2003; Mar. 19, 2003) and a sense of “belonging” (Field notes, Sept. 3, 2002; Sept. 5, 2002; Sept. 6, 2002; Oct. 7, 2002; Mar. 19, 2003) drew learners into a supportive environment.

Stakeholder reflections about the Santa Cruz School neighborhood almost always included some allusion to “gangbangers,” “gunshots,” and “fear.” One school community member referred to the area around the school as a “war zone without formal declaration” (Field notes, Feb. 28, 2003). Another school respondent described the neighborhood, on
weekends especially, as a unique audio-visual panoply of “mariachi music, quinceañaras [debutante celebrations], and gunshots.” (Field notes, Apr. 14, 2003) Most of the time, however, respondents expressed concerns about neighborhood violence and gang activity in measured tones. “Sure, there’s gangbanger pressure here,” one graduate shared, “but it is not something that overly influences your actions or decisions. It’s just part of the area where we live” (Field notes, Oct. 7, 2002). “Since I lived several blocks away,” said another graduate, “I tried to avoid any kind of gang by walking along ____ Street because it always had a lot of traffic. My mom wanted me to do that” (Field notes, Sept. 6, 2002).

One community member response in particular made a lasting impression on me. It served not only to put an unnerving event in perspective but to distill, in a few words, what most respondents had said through many other words. The unnerving event, six rapid-fire gunshots on a sidewalk outside the school community house, was—for many days in late March 2003—a recurring topic of conversation in the residence. I was just as unnerved by the gunfire as everyone else, but I was also interested in how community residents spoke about the event. What one resident shared with me extended the Santa Cruz School vision and perspective beyond the school walls. He referred simply to common neighborhood images. “You see kids riding their bikes around here, having a good time, and you see people laughing as they stroll down the sidewalks, and you see mothers with a trail of little ones at all hours of the day too. It’s not as though people are all boarded up in their bunkers. Our kids and families find ways to cope with the dangers around them. [They’re] more than survivors. They’re examples to the rest of us about what real living is all about— caring for one another and watching out for one another. That’s how they deal with the violence” (Field notes, Mar. 20, 2003).
The Participants in the Study

Two members of the language arts department and sixteen of the twenty-eight students in the 8th grade at Santa Cruz School participated in my study. One of the cooperating teachers, Bill Speer (pseudonym), worked with 6th, 7th, and 8th graders as a Title I writing lab instructor. A faculty member since 1997 with a degree in Theatre, he was initially a teacher volunteer and a community house resident. In his second year as a certified Title I instructor, Bill had the distinction of being the only public school district instructor at Santa Cruz. His five years of experience also made him the most seasoned teacher in the school’s language arts department. Through his friendly collaboration in the study, the explication of Santa Cruz’s English literacy initiatives gained important insider depth and perspective. The other cooperating teacher, Teresa Koss (pseudonym), taught five 8th grade language arts classes. A full-time language arts position at Santa Cruz entailed teaching daily periods devoted to literature (Literatura) and Writing (Escritura) and dual periods in Reading (Lectura). A third-year teacher volunteer with a degree in Life/Physical Sciences, Teresa was beginning her second year as an 8th grade language arts teacher. Her first year at Santa Cruz involved working with 7th graders. Through her patient collaboration in the study, the 8th grade classroom became a site for studying the creation of a responsive culture of literacy.

Among the sixteen student participants (Male: n = 12, Female: n = 4) in the study, fifteen (93.%) were Hispanic. As a group (PS = participating students), they represented a cross-section of the entire 8th grade class (AS = all 8th grade students) in grade-point average and in language arts achievement. Based upon Promotion Criteria indicated on an interim report card (Feb. 14, 2003), a relatively small variance of .5% separated the
two groups in grade-point average: 81.2% (PS), 80.7% (AS) and in cumulative language arts achievement: 84.5% (PS), 84.0% (AS). Variances in grade averages within the three language arts genres generally maintained a similar percentage distribution: Reading: 87.8% (PS), 87.2% (AS); Writing: 82.8% (PS), 82.5% (AS); Literature: 82.4% (PS), 81.9% (AS). No recent scores from the Terra Nova test (the standardized achievement test mandated by the local Catholic diocese) were available during the course of my study. Aggregated results on file for student participants in my study, however, showed significant rises in percentile ranks between the 6th and 7th grades in reading (6th Grade: 30.8, 7th Grade: 50.3) and in Language Arts (6th Grade: 37.2, 7th Grade: 49.4).

Data Collection Methods

I devoted most of my time in the field at Santa Cruz to minimally obtrusive and participatory observation (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Minimally obtrusive observation involved the collection and review of a range of school documents, including aggregated records of student achievement. As a participant observer, I spent most of my initial field time in the school building trying to get a sense of what was “normal” in the everyday practices of the school members. The initial field routine involved talking with teachers, staff, and students as part of my observational process. When I received all the mandated consent forms from participating teachers and students, I began a more focused routine of observations in two 8th grade language arts classrooms. Semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) with the school founder, with the school principal, and with the two participating teachers in the study were also important resources in my fieldwork (See Appendix A, pp. 346-7 for protocols). Semi-structured interview data were often used as leads for observations or as sources of corroboration. With the participating teachers,
semi-structured interview data served as a means of more fully understanding and appreciating classroom events recorded in my field notes. Informal interviews were resources that helped to fill gaps in my observation notes and add depth to observations through “insider” perspectives. Each of these multiple methods of data collection formed the information base of my ethnographic case study at Santa Cruz School and served as the primary resources for triangulating data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

During fieldwork, I observed cultural practices in the school library, in the school office, in the school cafeteria and gymnasium during lunch periods, in the main corridor, and in after-school faculty or departmental meetings. Other than classrooms, those were the “places” where school members constructed the culture of Santa Cruz through their activities and interactions. Informal conversations with school members illumined those observations. Classroom culture observations focused on organizational features, teacher-student and student-peer joint productive activity (Dalton, 1998; Tharp, 1997), and the ways in which teaching and learning were socially constructed within each classroom. I used cultural artifacts such as lesson plans, printed instructional materials, and samples of student writing as print sources to inform and direct my classroom fieldwork. I used interviews with participating teachers (informal and semi-structured) and with students (informal, resembling “desk-side chats”) as verbal sources to “enculturate” my classroom observations through the insights of cultural insiders. I collected and used a multitude of resources in my ethnographic study at Santa Cruz, but the primary data resource was the field notebook I constructed over a nine-month period. Nestled within its messy scribbles were cultural themes I found at Santa Cruz. Figure 5 details data sources and protections I used; Figure 6 details the numerical values of sources as I used them in the field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES IN THE INQUIRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOCUMENTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. School Handbooks (Faculty &amp; Parent)</td>
<td>School culture, public language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School Newsletters</td>
<td>School culture, public language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Public Relations Materials</td>
<td>School culture, public language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lesson Plans (photocopied)</td>
<td>Instructional planning, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Instructional Handouts (photocopied)</td>
<td>Learning materials &amp; tasks, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student Records (class aggregation)</td>
<td>Academic description of participating students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Student Writing (photocopied, disk)</td>
<td>Student engagement, culture, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBSERVATIONS (Field notes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. School Community (library, office, cafeteria, gym, hallway)</td>
<td>Description of context, stakeholder perceptions, school climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 8th Grade Classroom &amp; Writing Lab</td>
<td>Literacy Program values, practices, climate, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEWS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 8th Grade Teacher &amp; Writing Lab Instructor</td>
<td>Insider perspective, teaching goals &amp; values, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 8th Grade Students (desk-side chats)</td>
<td>Insider perspective, learner goals &amp; values, source of data triangulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Graduates (random)</td>
<td>Unique perspective, source of data triangulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 8th Grade Teacher &amp; Writing Lab Instructor</td>
<td>Insider perspective, extended conversation, debriefing of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School President &amp; School Principal</td>
<td>Administrative perspective, school ethos, school history, successes, challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Access Abbreviations: A (Administrative Consent), AC (Anonymous Brief Conversation) P (Public Domain), PC (Parental Consent), S (Student Assent), T (Teacher Consent), VA (Verbal Assent).*
## DATA USES IN THE INQUIRY

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Research Use</th>
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<td>DOCUMENTS</td>
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<td>School mission &amp; vision statements</td>
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<td>Community definition of purpose</td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<td>Communication of purpose to parents</td>
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<td>2. School Newsletters</td>
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<td>What was valued as “school news”</td>
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<td>3. Public Relations materials</td>
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<td>School statistics &amp; history</td>
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<td>Fund-raising brochures</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>School achievements &amp; needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance Report</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Reading &amp; Language Arts successes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper reprints</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>How print media viewed the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lesson Plans</td>
<td>20 (pages)</td>
<td>Instructional goals &amp; purposes</td>
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<td>5. Instructional Handouts</td>
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<td>6. Student Records</td>
<td>5 (aggregated sets)</td>
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<td>(2) (available)</td>
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<td>Composite independent reading scores</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interim Report Card</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Reading, Writing, Literature progress</td>
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<td>7. Student Writing</td>
<td>120 (samples)</td>
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<td>Journals</td>
<td>(14) (print)</td>
<td>Kinds of student daily responses</td>
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<td>Self-exploration</td>
<td>(60) (print/disk)</td>
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<td>Literature-based</td>
<td>(46) (print/disk)</td>
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<td>OBSERVATIONS</td>
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<td>(24)</td>
<td>What was “typical” cultural interaction</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>What was “typical” teacher interaction</td>
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<td>2. 8th Grade Classroom focus</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>How teaching &amp; learning were constructed</td>
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<td>Writing Class</td>
<td>(35)</td>
<td>Patterns of activity &amp; discourse</td>
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<td>3. 8th Grade Writing Lab focus</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>4. 7th Grade Classroom</td>
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<td>Language Arts curriculum component</td>
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<td>5. 6th Grade Classroom</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWS</td>
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<td>Cultural “insider” perspectives</td>
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<td>(70)</td>
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<td>Insights about school &amp; neighborhood</td>
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<td>Vision of teaching, goals, practices</td>
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<td>8th Grade Writing Lab instructor</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
<td>Insights about school mission &amp; culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz School founder</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Insights about school history &amp; values</td>
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</table>

Figure 6. Composite Description of Data Uses
Data Analysis

The analytical mode I used in the fieldwork phase of my research replicated the process I used in the Preparatory Phase. Figure 7 simulates the process that occurred in my study as methods of data collection (symbolizing the data themselves) and research concerns about organizational framing, data analysis and display, and fieldwork ethics (the funnel input) traveled the conduit of synthesis. Synthetic movements in the fieldwork phase, however, differed from the preparatory phase. Rather than recursive questioning, I sought to identify in data both explicit and implicit categories of meaning (Spradley, 1980). The modes of data analysis occurred in three stages. I presented each of those stages in a narrative format to make transparent the conceptual processes I used in the field. The narrative format in each stage followed a sequenced pattern that flowed from the guiding research question to a) propositions, b) units of analysis, c) processes in the field, and d) conceptual frameworks that emerged through the processes.

Fieldwork Phase

**INPUT**
- Data Collection Methods (Participant observation, semi-structured and informal interviews, school documents)
- Focal Research Questions
- Focused Literature Review
- Organizational Framework
- Data Analysis and Display
- Ethical Considerations

**OUTPUT**
- Ethnographic Case Study

**SYNTHETIC MOVEMENT**
- Fieldnotes became pivotal
- Coding emerged from local categories of meaning
- School and Classroom cultures as activity systems became an organizing concept
- Core principles of Activity Theory guided analysis and display decisions
- Protective measures had both a positive and a limiting effect

Figure 7. Fieldwork Phase: Integration and Synthesis Process
Initial Conceptualization Stage (May 2002-January 2003)

**Proposition:** Santa Cruz was a middle school culture that

a) shared common domains of meaning with other schools serving the needs of culturally diverse students

b) but was unique in character through the ways that its members envisioned those common domains of meaning in a framework of responsive practice.

**Unit of Analysis:** Santa Cruz school culture as part of yet distinct from theoretical and empirical conceptualizations of responsive school cultures

**Initial Process in the Field**

The empirical studies I encountered in my preparatory literature review of culturally responsive educational practice drew support from a social constructivist paradigm—the application of sociocultural theory in educational settings (Wells, 1999), and multicultural education theory (e.g. Banks, 1995, 1999; Gay, 1994; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999). I drew upon the same theoretical bases in designing the framework of my research proposal. After a few days in the field (Research log, Sept. 3, 2002), however, I was overwhelmed by the complexity of my early data and the proliferation of descriptors through which I tried to make sense of the complexity. A panic attack was perhaps too suggestive a phrase to describe my disposition at the time, but the research proposal commitment I made to generating “pure” local categories of meaning was indeed on shaky footing. I had theory and I had data, but I needed a natural way to merge the two without imposing the former upon the latter (Janesick, 1994, p. 215).

That was the first of many twists and turns in my field experience at Santa Cruz School, but the frustration of early challenges was a blessing in disguise as well. Had it not been for my early trials in the field, I would not have appealed to theory as a supportive base on which to gain some equilibrium. Spradley’s (1980) concepts of
“domain” and “cultural themes” served as stimuli in the appeal process. He describes
*domain* as “a category of cultural meaning that includes other smaller categories” (p. 88)
and *cultural themes* as “any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of
domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (p. 141).
To form the frame of domains, Spradley (1980) uses semantic analysis to develop a
typology consisting of nine descriptive relationships (See Figure 8). These descriptive
relationships, in turn, serve as signifiers of cultural themes, or cultural links, that point to
connections among seemingly discrete domains of meaning. Spradley’s (1980) concepts
offered me both a hierarchical construct for categorizing data and a window for seeing
theory as a tool for field discernments. The concept of domain provided a useful, natural,
and less manipulative way for me to merge theory with data.

![Table: Spradley’s (1980) Universal Semantic Relationships](image)

**Figure 8. Spradley’s (1980) Universal Semantic Relationships**

I used the input-synthesis-output process (funnel metaphor) to bring a robust and
focused perspective to data analysis. I formed mini typologies of the social constructivist
(e.g. Au, 1998; Rogoff, 1995; Tharp, 1997; Wells, 1999) and multicultural education (e.g.
Banks, 1995; Gay, 1994; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999) principles of practice described in
my literature review. Those two typologies served as guides in probing for comparable
semantic or connotative referents in the Santa Cruz Faculty/Staff and Parent handbooks.

What emerged in that process were three typologies (See Figure 9) from which I drew key semantic connections across domains (Spradley, 1980). Those connections, listed in Figure 9 as "Initial Categories of Meaning," served as guides in my initial field analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Constructivist Domains</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Role of home culture, language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Utilization of students' prior knowledge in instructional goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Developmentally appropriate instructional materials</td>
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<td>4. Fair and balanced classroom management strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Instructional methods respectful of varying learning styles and preferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Learning centered on joint productive activity among students and teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Student ownership of literacy in an empowering means and end</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Holistic assessment practices based upon performance growth</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multicultural Education Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commitment to ethnic and cultural literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commitment to basic literacy skills proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commitment to multicultural social competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Commitment to equity and high expectations for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Commitment to the personal development of all students</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Commitment to the values clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Commitment to the empowerment of all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Commitment to a transformative vision of education</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Santa Cruz School Domains</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Belief that literacy learning &quot;is developmental&quot; and should &quot;help students makes sense of themselves and their world&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Belief that literacy learning entails helping students &quot;achieve their potential in mastering the basic skills of listening, critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Belief that literacy learning should &quot;reflect the multicultural pluralism of the world and help students understand and succeed in it&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Belief that &quot;each student is gifted&quot; and that &quot;each student is capable of achieving excellence in academics and in life&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Belief that &quot;each student should be held to high expectations and must be actively involved in acquiring, applying skill knowledge and values&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Belief that learning should &quot;enhance the dignity, pride, self-image, and motivation of each student&quot; and lead them &quot;increasingly to assume control over their own learning&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Belief that &quot;the purpose of education is to create learning experiences that are liberating and empowering&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Belief that literacy learning should &quot;help students understand and counter the forces which are exploiting them and/or are hindering their development&quot;</td>
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**Figure 9. Initial Categories of Meaning**

*Coding of Data in the Categories of Meaning*

The identification of initial categories (domains) of meaning brought structure to bear on the seemingly chaotic mélange of descriptors in my early observations and encounters in the field. The categories of meaning introduced a necessary conceptual layer that was both data-driven and theory-filtered, a higher level of abstraction in which to situate and make sense of my data. The initial categories of meaning became thematic containers and facilitating constructs for an intra-domain mode of analysis. In that mode,
I adapted Spradley’s (1980) typology of semantic relationships to identify key segments of data from field observations and field conversations with school community members, school material artifacts, and informal as well as semi-structured interviews.

I developed descriptive codes as I reviewed the various data collected in the field. The examination and coding of data occurred usually, but not always, on the days that I made field visitations. The coding process entailed two analytical steps, one related to the theoretical base and the other to the philosophical orientation I appropriated for this study. The first step required that I identify the relationship of a data segment to its larger domain/s. In that way, I was able to use field data strategically to illumine the socially constructed nature of each domain or category of meaning and to draw potential linkages across domains (categories). The second step required that I identify the relationship (if any) of a data segment to the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. To assist in this step, I synthesized pertinent research (Banks, 1995, 1999; Gay, 1994, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Moll, 1988, 1992, 2001; Nieto, 1999, 2000) into the typology of culturally responsive educational practices described in Figure 9.

The following graphic (Figure 10) represents a reconstruction of the analytical mode I used in the initial stages of my fieldwork at Santa Cruz. The data segments used in the reconstruction appeared within a larger transcription, an 8th grade literature class observation (September 18, 2002). I displayed the categories of meaning and typology of culturally responsive educational practices (from Figure 9) and the typology of semantic relationships (facsimile) to give a holistic view of the analytical process. The arrow line in the display traces the analytical steps I employed from identification of data segments, through the dual considerations of relationship, to the generation of descriptive codes.
## Analytical Mode in Initial Conceptualization Stage

### Categories of Meaning

<table>
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<tr>
<td>T: Okay, 8th grade, we need to listen to one another. If you want to speak, please raise your hand.</td>
<td>[One student raised hand] [Called on]</td>
<td>S: I don’t get it. The story’s weird. Everybody knows you can’t live forever by just drinking water from a pond.</td>
<td>[Students and teacher laughed]</td>
<td>T: Maybe the play will become clear if we put things in sequence. I have a handout for you to help with that.</td>
<td>[Play version of Tuck Everlasting, Scholastic Scope, September 6, 2002]</td>
<td>T: I’d like you to work on this on your own. If you want to partner up, that’s okay too. Let’s take twenty minutes.</td>
<td>[14 students were seated in a U-shaped arrangement of tables and chairs.] Dyads/triads formed rather quickly.</td>
<td>Only one student worked alone. T said to me after class that sometimes it was just a good idea to let the students create their own cooperative groups “as long as they’re working on the task, that is”) … T: Since we’re going to be performing the play, maybe we should do a little brainstorming. Someone want to write the ideas on the board as they come up?</td>
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<tr>
<td>RR1, REL9, CR2, 9 RR2, GP8, BAS6</td>
<td>BAS9, EXP1 LIT1, MM3, EXP5</td>
<td>CR 9</td>
<td>LIT6, GP7, BAS8</td>
<td>CD7</td>
<td>LIT2, RR7, CR 15 REL2</td>
<td>V15, GP2, RR7, REL5, CR 3</td>
<td>EMP2, OWN1, REL1, CR 15</td>
<td>LIT1, OWN7, GP4, CR 4</td>
<td>RR7, CR 9</td>
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</table>

### Typology of Semantic Relationships

1. Strict Inclusion
2. Spatial
3. Cause-Effect
4. Rationale
5. Location for action
6. Function
7. Means-end
8. Sequence
9. Attribution

### Typology of Culturally Responsive Educational Practices (CR)

1. Root instruction in the real life experiences, needs, and cultures of students
2. Joint productive activity
3. Consider teaching and learning as conversations
4. Hands-on, role-playing tasks
5. Culturally relevant materials
6. Inquiry and questioning
7. Knowledge construction
8. High expectations
9. Building community
10. Foster student self-efficacy
11. Just, equitable policies
12. Create change-makers
13. Open, supportive culture
14. Tap into students’ talents
15. Share decision-making
16. Capitalize on differences
17. View literacy as talking back to the world
18. Joy, hope, commitment

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**Figure 10. Analytical Mode in Initial Conceptualization Stage**
As an inquiry audit resource (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I created a master list of initial categories of meaning and descriptive codes. That master list identified semantic values associated with each numerical referent in the data coding process and served as an initial thematic construct through which I evaluated and integrated new data from the field. My ongoing evaluation and integration of new data from the field contributed, in turn, to refinements of the initial thematic construct (See Appendix B, pp. 348-9).

**Assumptions in the Initial Conceptualization Stage**

The development of categories of meaning and the use of dual analytical steps in coding of data served practical purposes in my early fieldwork. They reflected my field of vision and provided organizational structures for collection and examination of data. In no way, however, did I consider them canonical constructs that were beyond review, modification, or radical transformation. Instead, I viewed the categories of meaning and the descriptive codes as invitations to deeper, more probative inquiry of the Santa Cruz School culture. The object of that inquiry was not to constrict a field of vision to *a priori* categories and relationships. On the contrary, I saw the initial categories of meaning and descriptive data codes as first-generation members of a larger, not-yet-fully-articulated, intergenerational family of concepts.

Genealogy is one of my personal interests, so the metaphoric image of initial categories and codes as first-generation members of a larger intergenerational family of concepts offered a way to envision my fieldwork as a familiar kind of inquiry. Through numerous queries into my family history, I learned three valuable research lessons. The first lesson was that initial discoveries, more often than not, created many more questions than answers. In other words, a larger venture toward illumination lay ahead for the
family researcher; initial discoveries were the first steps of a long and circuitous journey. The second lesson I learned was that initial discoveries were seedpods that needed to be opened, examined, crosschecked against what was already known, and held as useful possibilities. The movement of data from initial discovery to building block rested in a process of validation. The third lesson was that initial discoveries, properly examined, stimulated thinking about genealogical relationships in multiple spheres—historical, geographical, religious, civil, occupational, and linguistic. When I began to consider the cultural components inhering in genealogical data, I discovered the significance of culture as a pivotal relational matrix as well as context.

The conceptualization of the initial stages of my fieldwork, then, had a distinctly genealogical foundation. I assumed that identifying and describing some of the members of the family of concepts was the first step in uncovering relational strains that would lead to other members. I assumed also that identification and description of new family members, new categories of meaning, would require the review, potential reshaping, even subsumption of already established categories in the family of concepts. The goal I envisioned was a tentative conceptual map of the culturally responsive educational practices at Santa Cruz School. It formed in my mind as a working relational matrix of the culture of the school represented through its own categories of meaning. I began the construction of that matrix using an inductive process.

**Analytical Phases in Constructing a Cultural Matrix**

Three weeks in the field at Santa Cruz convinced me that a tentative matrix of school cultural practices was a useful and achievable first-trimester goal. A working matrix was a valuable way to draw categories of meaning into dialogic space. It was a
way to synthesize a large body of information into a single relational construct. The first trimester of the school year seemed to be a natural time frame during which to frame a working matrix. August to December provided enough time to collect and analyze a wide array of pertinent data. More importantly, a working matrix completed in the first trimester created a specialized construct through which to focus data collection and analysis in the second trimester of the school year. To construct the working matrix, however, I had to identify organizing structures in each category of meaning in my initial conceptual framework.

Spradley (1980) describes the naturalistic analysis of a cultural setting as a search for “the parts of a culture, the relationship among those parts, and the relationship of the parts to the whole” (p. 144). The discovery of themes or patterns within each part both illumines the part itself and provides a means to draw separate parts into dynamic relationship. The initial stages of conceptualizing and analyzing my fieldwork identified some of the parts in the culture at Santa Cruz School (categories of meaning) and key components within the parts (descriptive data codes). The search for themes or patterns within each category of meaning, then, was an analytical movement to distill an inhering structure or organization in a domain (category) of meaning.

Spradley (1980) refers to that process as a form of componential analysis, an intra-domain search for definitive themes or patterns. I began that search at midpoint of the trimester (Research Log, Oct. 10, 2002). At the time, I had collected and analyzed a variety of data from three primary sources: print artifacts, field observations, and notes from informal interviews. In addition to the school handbooks, I had examined and coded the school’s recently adopted student discipline manual (BIST), the two most
recent editions of the school newsletter, four local feature articles written about the school, and the manual describing the school’s high school outreach program. I had also logged twenty-four days of field observations, eighteen of which included extensive notes from classroom visitations. All of those sources significantly extended the database with which I was working. Informal conversations with many cultural insiders complemented the growing database as specialized resources for understanding how members viewed the school culture. By October 10th, I had examined and coded transcriptions of brief field conversations with six staff members, each 8th grade student participating in my study, three Santa Cruz graduates, and four other Santa Cruz community members.

The extension of the database had a natural effect upon all categories of meaning I had already identified (Spradley, 1980). In some instances, initial categories expanded at a steady pace (e.g. Empowerment and Relationships). In other cases, initial categories diminished in importance and disappeared (e.g. Cultural Diversity and “The Basics”), or were subsumed in a new, more relevant category of meaning (e.g. Literacy, Equity, Goals and Purposes). The conceptual framework itself began to evolve as categories of meaning changed with the ebb and flow of continuous data collection and analysis. In genealogical terms, the evolution resembled the changes induced in the hierarchy and branches of a family tree when a researcher finds new, significant kinds of relational data. The tree necessarily evolves; its relational branches grow in shape, in depth, in directive capacity. Often, the branches themselves become the roots of a connected family tree.

By the close of the first trimester, four over-arching categories of meaning (Empowerment, Identify Formation, Relationships, and Joint Activity) replaced the fifteen initial categories (See Figure 12). The unit of analysis (Santa Cruz school culture
as part of yet distinct from theoretical and empirical conceptualizations of responsive school cultures) assumed on a tripartite macro-micro structure. The organizational features of the Santa Cruz School culture formed the macro dimensions of the structure. The organizational features of two 8th grade language arts classroom cultures formed two micro dimensions of the structure. In the three structural parts, I defined organizational features in two interlocking ways— from the perspectives of school cultural vision and of school cultural practice. The tentative matrix I created used Sergiovanni’s (2000) terms for that organizational dichotomy— the “lifeworld” and the “systemsworld” of a culture.

On the macro level, the “lifeworld” organizational features consisted of themes drawn from the mission statement, vision statements about school, teacher, and graduate, and the statements about the school’s philosophy. The “systemsworld” features consisted of themes drawn from descriptions of roles and responsibilities, school communications, policies, and procedures, the school literacy curriculum, and the school climate. On the micro level, the “lifeworld” organizational features consisted of themes drawn from goal and purpose statements, expectations, personal philosophy, explicit commitments, and action plans. The “systemsworld” features consisted of themes drawn from descriptions of roles and duties, conceptions of ownership, lab and classroom activities, management practices, lab and classroom interactions, and technology use (See Figure 12).

The focus of the macro-level structure was the identification of cultural themes which nurtured the development of Santa Cruz School’s particular kind of culturally responsive literacy program. The focus of the micro-level structure was the identification of culturally responsive themes inering in the ways which two 8th grade language arts teachers and their students socially constructed the concepts of teaching and learning.
Figures 11 and 12 trace the movements I made in creating a tentative matrix of the Santa Cruz School culture. Figure 11 depicts the “taking stock” and “assessing” processes I used in componential analysis (Spradley, 1980) of one initial category of meaning (from Figure 9). Figure 12 shows the tentative matrix I developed through componential analysis of each category of meaning in the initial conceptual stage of my study.

**Initial Category of Meaning**

1. **Goals and Purposes**

   9-3 Principal: “to be a light to the neighborhood”
   9-5 Hallway poster: Reading Goal 15,000 pts
   
   BS: “formation of young teaching professionals”
   SS: “to be liaison with parents, use talents”
   LB: “get students excited about reading”
   9-9 OP: “help students get scholarships to h.s.”
   TK: U-shape for partnering, discussion
   Sofas/soft chairs—like home for reading
   9-10 BS: “connect literacy and technology, use cultural themes to get the kids interested”
   TK: “summarizing helps thinking”
   Get students to respect one another, to work together
   9-11 BS: integration, building skills, whole language brief instruction-computer-individual conference-computer-dyad-computer cycle keyboard, word processing, internet literacy...
   9-17 TK: students take roles in play—participation, volunteering, movement, making props, reading aloud
   Scholarship essays—fostering the future
   BS: 9-11 letters to firemen—social awareness, role-playing, research on 9-11
   Observed Think Sheet in library—BIST task

   9-18 TK: “we need to listen to one another, to speak, please raise your hand”
   “Maybe the play will become clear if we put things in sequence” (handout)
   14 students in a U-shaped arrangement
   Dyads/triads formed quickly—Collaboration
   Reading homework: 45 min each night/Record Discussion about how to perform the play for the 6th and 7th graders—who will do what....

2. **Concerns about Category**

   1. Many coded segments (47)
   2. Common expectations
   3. Why is natural question
   4. Often multiple
   5. Seems too broad
   6. Hard to organize codes
   7. Found goals in all school documents, lesson plans

3. **Importance of Category**

   1. Goals/Purposes are value markers in a culture
   2. Direction, intent
   3. Insight into thinking
   4. Way to see how one thing fits with another
   5. A question to ask everyone about lots of things

5. **Decision about Category**

   Goals and Purposes are key cultural concepts, but they are not categories. They may be cultural themes linking one domain to another and should be part of all domains.

---

**Figure 11. Evolution of a Category of Meaning**
Figure 12. Tentative Matrix of the Santa Cruz School Culture


Proposition: Santa Cruz was a middle school culture that

a) shared common domains of meaning with other schools serving the needs of culturally diverse students

b) but drew its unique character from the responsive qualities of its mediating organizational structures.

Unit of Analysis: Santa Cruz School culture as a system of responsive practices focused on identity formation and empowerment of students
Continuing Process in the Field

The working matrix was a principal organizing construct in guiding my data collection and analysis during the second trimester of fieldwork at Santa Cruz. It became a way to focus field observations, purposively collect and review documents, and direct the locus of interviews. The matrix helped to discipline my perspective, but the fluid nature of the matrix militated against a closed perspective.

One of the important outcomes of the second-trimester conceptualization process was the refinement of my initial research questions. I entered the field with questions delineated in my research proposal, but those questions were intuitive—based largely on informed judgment (initial literature review) and on limited field data (pilot study). The identification of specific research questions nested within the working matrix brought theory, data, and purpose into alignment. The lens and filter of my perspective became operative, then, through the questions I asked in collecting and analyzing additional information from the field. In this way, new data segments were used to both expand and challenge the composition of existing categories of meaning. Specific research questions particularized the Guiding Research Question of my study. They trained my attention on identifying and describing how culturally responsive practices were embedded in the organizational structures and the human activities at Santa Cruz School.

A second important outcome of the continuing conceptualization process was the movement from a limited working matrix to dual matrices set within the encompassing parameters of a macro matrix. Several factors in the field contributed to this movement. Two compelling factors were a) the expansion and challenge of categories of meanings that occurred through continuous data gathering and analysis and b) the periodic
componental analyses of individual categories of meaning. Each of those processes worked in tandem to help me manage and configure the complexity of an ever-growing database. They were not wholly unexpected conceptual changes, however. Constructing the tentative matrix showed me that transformation of categories of meaning occurred naturally during the course of data collection and analysis. A third compelling factor, an unexpected curricular change involving one of my participating teachers, had a more provocative impact on my decision to move toward a macro-micro conceptualization.

At the beginning of the second trimester of the school year, the writing lab instructor moved to part-time status so he could develop a similar lab program at a new Santa-Cruz-model middle school. On one level, his part-time status (three days each week) constrained the options available to me in scheduling classroom observations (both the 8th grade writing lab and the 8th grade writing class occurred in the same time period of the daily schedule). On another level, the change portended a probable imbalance in the collecting of focused data from both participating teachers. Such an imbalance affected the tentative conceptual matrix I created at the close of the previous trimester.

The change from full-time to part-time status for one of my two participating teachers had an immediate impact on my second-trimester fieldwork planning. I dealt with that most challenging twist in my fieldwork through a series of analytical steps. I continued to observe classes in the writing lab and to converse on a regular basis with the writing lab instructor. But I created a separate category of meaning in which to organize related data (Core Principles of Language Arts) to reflect the design reconfiguration I settled upon as a workable alternative to my original plan. In the reconfigured design, the new category served a dual purpose. On one hand, it became a resource for describing,
through insider perspective, the history and social construction of the Santa Cruz
language arts program. More importantly, however, the creation of the new category
helped me to address, in a more focused way, what I considered an under-developed
cultural feature (i.e. the historical and developmental characteristics of the language arts
program) in my original research design. To develop the micro, classroom matrix, I
shifted my focus to the 8th grade teacher and her three language arts classes. I chose to
develop that description of responsive classroom culture through a synthesis of the
practices across one teacher’s three language arts classes rather than a synthesis of two
teachers' writing classes.

The fourth outcome of the continuing conceptualization process was my pursuit
and use of additional theoretical and empirical resources in the development of a fuller,
more mature matrix. In Chapter 2, for example, my inclusion of concepts like student
resilience and social capital was directly related to the parallel reading in which I engaged
during the second trimester of the school year. The discussions of charter schools and the
KIPP middle school model were the products of this process as well. Possibly more
important, I revisited, with a more analytical eye, many of the studies and reports that
formed the backbone of my proposal research. I was interested not in re-analyzing
familiar data but in discovering for the first time the research methods those particular
scholars had used (e.g. Berman et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; McLaughlin &
McLeod, 1996). I envisioned a more mature matrix (See Figure 13, Appendix B, pp.
348-9) as a genealogical graphic of an extended family tree, as a detailed blueprint for
writing my ethnographic case study of Santa Cruz School. The research questions and the
mature matrix enabled the vision.
The Focused Research Questions

The four research questions that I developed were refinements of the questions I originally proposed for my study. They reflected both my intuitions about the culture of Santa Cruz and the import of data analysis from the initial and the continuing stages of conceptualization. The questions aided the construction of the macro-micro matrix and served as instrumental guides in the writing of the first draft of my study.

Proposed Questions

1. What were the principal qualities of the Santa Cruz School culture? (In what ways did this culture shape the literacy mission of the school? In what ways were liberation and empowerment reflected in school-wide practices?)

2. What were the patterns of classroom practice in one 8th grade teacher’s language arts classes? (In what ways were those patterns of practice related to the school culture and literacy mission?)

3. In what ways did the patterns of instruction in those classes reflect a culturally responsive pedagogical perspective? (In what ways were learning materials, tasks, and classroom dynamics affirmations of a culturally inclusive approach to literacy education?)

4. In what ways was a sense of empowerment reflected within the pattern of student engagement in those classes? (In what ways were reading, writing, speaking, and listening behaviors illustrative of students’ senses of belonging and their membership in a caring community of practice (Moll, 1993)? In what ways did students assume control over their own literate growth?)

Refined Questions

1. What were the principal qualities of the Santa Cruz School culture?

2. What were the patterns of classroom practice in one 8th grade teacher’s language arts classes?

3. In what ways did the patterns of instruction in those classes reflect a culturally responsive pedagogical perspective?

4. In what ways was a sense of empowerment reflected in the pattern of student engagement in those classes?
Limitations in the Initial Draft of the Study

I chose to nest my study of the school culture at Santa Cruz in a narrative text. Woven within the discourse was my interest in being transparent as a researcher. That interest prompted me to create a narrative that attempted to capture why and how the salient cultural themes at Santa Cruz surfaced through my field experience. What happened as a result, unfortunately, was a text so complex that “the forest (the embedded nature of culturally responsive practices at Santa Cruz) was hidden amid the density of all the trees” (the merging of cultural themes with modes of analysis). That realization became an impetus for revision that ultimately reshaped the contours and import of my research document.


Proposition: Santa Cruz was a middle school culture that

a) shared common domains of meaning with other schools serving the needs of culturally diverse students

b) but drew its unique character from the empowering, mediating dimensions of its organizational structures and the human activities that animated and sustained those structures.

Unit of Analysis: Santa Cruz School culture as a mediating activity system that drew its strength and direction from a culturally responsive educational vision

Illumination through Activity Theory

The first step I took to more clearly identify “the forest amid the trees” in my text involved a deeper contemplation of theory. I spent many hours reading and thinking in an effort to broaden my understanding of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Rogoff, 1994) and its application in school settings through a social constructivist paradigm (Wells, 1999; Au, 1998). The effort was an attempt to better form my identity
as a researcher, and, as I describe in fuller detail in succeeding paragraphs, it led me to
the discovery of a conceptual framework within which the density of my initial draft
distilled in a clear, sociocultural configuration. That conceptual framework was Activity

Its title somewhat misleading, Activity theory (AT) posits not a systematic,
explanatory or predictive epistemology, but rather a holistic model for analyzing the
complex relationships within a dynamic human organization or system. Nardi (1996)
describes the theory as a way to conceptualize how “the structuring of an activity is
determined by human intentionality before the unfolding [of the activity] in a particular
situation.” (p. 82) One of the tenets of Activity Theory is that human consciousness, or
intentionality, is manifested through everyday practices in a social setting (Nardi, 1996).
A study of cultural activity, then, is a search to identify and describe how the intentions
of social actors are instrumental in the construction of the activity in which they are
engaged. Kuutti (1996) further illumines this tenet of AT in positing that human
consciousness itself is formed in the social context of activity. He contends that both
consciousness and activity are influenced by prior cultural and historical events and that
the key to understanding the relationship between intentionality and activity in a setting
lies in uncovering their respective cultural and historical roots.

Activity theory originated in Bolshevik Russia through Vygotsky’s (1978)
research in developmental psychology and the contributions of his colleague Leont’ev
(1977, 1981). They propose an alternative psychological explanation for human
consciousness and its development as a means of challenging the canonical status of
behaviorism. They posit that human consciousness develops, as higher mental
functioning, in a sociocultural setting of mediated activity. Contrary to the traditional *stimulus-response* perspective of the behaviorist paradigm, they articulate a triangular conception of human development. Leont’ev (1977, 1981) expands the mediating construct further by conceptualizing Vygotsky’s (1978) S-R-X designations (Stimulus-Response-Mediating tool) as S-O-MA (Subject-Object-Mediating Artifact).

Leont’ev’s (1977, 1981) research seeks to identify how tools (culturally created material artifacts and language) mediate a subject’s pursuit of an object (goal). He adds three hierarchical levels to the triangular concept to differentiate the processes involved in higher forms of mental functioning. Those levels he calls *activity, actions,* and *operations.* They are distinguished from one another by the object toward which each is directed and the level of conscious thought involved in pursuit of each object (Wertsch, 1985). The sociocultural perspective of human development (Vygotsky, 1978) and its further theorization (Leon’ev, 1978, 1981), depicted in Figure 14, represent what Engeström (1999) refers to as the first two generations of the concept of mediated human development.

![Figure 14. First and Second Generation Activity Theory](Image)

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Third generation conceptions of Activity theory bear the influence of western scholars such as Wertsch (1985, 1995, 1998), Rogoff (1994, 1995), Wells (1999, 2000), and Engeström (1987, 1999). It was through drawing on their scholarship that I came to understand how AT informed my research work at Santa Cruz. From Wertsch (1998), I learned that a critical component in AT research is the articulation and utilization of a sociocultural unit of analysis, what he referred to as "agent-acting-with-mediational-means" or "mediated action." (1998, p. 24) From Rogoff (1994), I appropriated the sociocultural concept of a triadic lens—a way to foreground for analysis one of three potential perspectives (i.e. personal, interpersonal, communal) without diminishing the interrelatedness of all three perspectives in a cultural setting. From Wells (1999), I gained a clearer sense of a sociocultural conceptualization of knowledge: that it is a dynamic, linguistic construct that develops through interactions and relationships among people, contexts, and the tools (artifacts) that mediate such interactions and relationships.

"To understand the nature of knowledge" in a school setting, then, a researcher should attend to the "activit[ies] of knowing" through which school members—teachers, staff, and students, are drawn into a community of practice (Wells, 1999, p. 76).

Most important of all, from Engeström (1987) I learned about and, in gradual stages, appropriated an expanded AT framework. It was through that expanded model that I came to see the personal, social, and historical dimensions of the culture of practice at Santa Cruz as interrelating and mediating components of a dynamic activity system. These insights ultimately reshaped the structure and emphasis of my school literacy study. In Engeström’s (1987) model, I was able to see the “forest” of my study (cultural themes) by identifying the “coniferous trees” (mediating practices) that populated it.
Engeström’s (1987) model, illustrated in Figure 15, expands both the concept of mediating means and the concept of subject. He extends the first and second-generation interpretations of "mediating means" to include three others—Rules, Community, and Divisions of Labor. He expands the concept of subject from a focus almost exclusively on the individual (first and second-generation AT) to a multi-actor focus that captures the range of human participants (e.g. dyads, groups, a community) in an activity setting.

The expanded model serves as a flexible construct for social science researchers studying the layers of complexity in a social organization (Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996). Using as lenses the perspectives of various actors in the activity provides the researcher with an analytical framework to construct a social, cultural, and historical model of an activity. That construction takes the shape of a mediation zone of collective activity in pursuit of a shared object (Engeström, 1999). On one level, the expanded AT model is a construct to describe how complex factors in an activity foster, or make problematic, the achievement of shared objects. On a greater scale, it helps to identify how objects, once achieved, become outcomes through a cyclical pattern of activities (Engeström, 1999).

Figure 15. Engeström’s (1987) Theoretical Model of Human Activity
Engeström (1987) and others (e.g. Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996; Wertsch, 1998) describe the six components of the expanded model of AT as inextricably bound parts of a sociocultural activity setting:

- **Subject** (person or group whose perspective is the focus of analysis)
- **Object** (the specific goal or target to which the activity is directed)
- **Instruments** (the mediating artifacts, including the denotation and connotation of language, that helps to achieve the object)
- **Community** (those who share the object of the activity)
- **Rules** (the norms, policies, and procedures that regulate the activity)
- **Division of Labor** (the roles, distributions of tasks, and relationships of power that influence the activity)

**Matrix Reorientation Using Activity Theory**

A basic reorientation of my conceptual framework occurred when I appropriated an Activity theory perspective and supplemented the life-and-systemsworld framework (Sergiovanni, 2000) with Eisner's (1985) concepts of explicit and implicit curricula. Still remaining in the framework were the categories of meaning and organizational structures that were primary components in the macro-micro matrix. In an AT framework, however, (See Figure 16) they served new roles in a new configuration of meaning. I refined the research questions that I used to guide the prior conceptual matrix and the writing of the first draft of the research text to reflect the AT focus of mediated activity. The four initial research questions I honed and subsumed within two activity-based field questions:

1) How did the Santa Cruz School community construct a culture that mediated the empowerment of students?

2) How did an 8th grade language arts teacher and her students construct a mediating, culturally responsive community of practice in the classroom?
Activity Theory Models of Santa Cruz School Culture

Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the two interlocking conceptual frameworks of my literacy study at Santa Cruz. Figure 16 depicts key mediating themes that I found during analysis of the Santa Cruz culture of practice. Figure 17 depicts key mediating themes I found during analysis of the culture of practice in Teresa Koss' language arts classes.

Figure 16. Activity Theory Model of Santa Cruz School Culture
Figure 17. Activity Theory Model of 8th Grade Classroom

Research Trustworthiness

I established the “truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290) of my literacy study, its trustworthiness, through the research design I developed and the methodology I used in fieldwork (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The macro-micro design of my study (school culture of practice-8th grade classroom culture of practice),
for example, formed a bounded context that enabled prolonged engagement in the field (single locale) and facilitated the participatory observational method I chose to use in the conduct my field research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My extensive description earlier in this chapter of the systematic processes and procedures that were instrumental in the planning and the fieldwork phases of my study (i.e. multiple data sources, triangulation of sources, persistent, recursive analysis of data, development of interpretive constructs) suggested the importance I placed on methodological transparency and accountability (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The preliminary developmental information, samples of "raw data" and process thinking, and reconstruction/synthesis products that I included in my methodological discussion reflected both my attention to transparency and accountability and my desire to provide, on a small scale, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as "a confirmability audit." (pp. 320-1)

Constitutive features of the field research process contributed to its “truth value” as well. “Insider” perspectives from informal and semi-structured interviews provided depth, corroboration, and richness to observations in the field. My integration of direct quotations from teachers, staff, students, graduates, and community members at Santa Cruz (Patton, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) led to the creation of a text with “thick description” (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1994). This representational quality fostered internal cohesion in the study, pointed toward appropriateness of method, and served as a form of data triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, transparent accounting of data collection methods and the iterative analysis involving coding, synthesis and the creation of interpretive constructs focused attention on the verisimilitude, “the simulation of the real” (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 579), in the conduct of the research inquiry. The
audit trail of the processes I used witnessed to the emergent nature of the research project and to its intrinsic relationship with data from the field. Each of those process features contributed to the credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the inquiry by “showing the realities of the lived experiences of the observed setting” and by accounting for the rhetorical features through which I reconstructed those realities in a formal text (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997).

From the outset of this study, I was cognizant of the many roles I would assume as a participant observer in the field—unobtrusive inquirer, classroom visitor, colleague, interviewer, interpreter, confidant, conversationalist, writer, and community member among them. I was well aware too of the challenges involved in a sustained research endeavor and the potentially contentious scenarios that could arise in the field. By developing a fluid, transparent text, it was my hope to make explicit for readers how those varying roles emerged as players in the interactive conduct of the inquiry. Through such transparency, the limiting nature of predilections or biases assumed textual identity and prominence as a research feature rather than a shadowy anonymity beneath the discourse (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Richardson, 1994).

Limitations and Challenges

My study was a naturalistic inquiry, a field effort to gain insight and develop direction rather than obtain precise measures (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A social constructivist and multicultural orientation guided the processes I used in the field to collect and analyze data. I valued particular forms of data—primarily those of a phenomenological, localized, “insider” quality. Personal encounters with stakeholders at Santa Cruz, then, served as primary resources in gaining “insider” perspectives. I used
informal and semi-structured, open-ended interviews to foster discursive exchange and a more intimate relationship between interviewees and researcher (Kvale, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). On some occasions, however, I was unable to formulate questions enticing enough to encourage extended narrative responses from informants. I was generally reluctant to even “gently probe for elaboration” in an interview (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 110). I feared being manipulative or overbearing during interviews, and relied most often on conversational techniques like repeating words or expressions in a quizzical tone or sharing a response from my own experience to elicit a more detailed account from an informant. Those conversational techniques worked at times, but in semi-structured interviews on two occasions, they redirected the focus of the exchange in unproductive ways. In general, the information gaps and the inferior quality of the informant data in my study point to my own inadequacies as an interviewer.

More than a few times, my almost complete reliance upon cursive note-taking in fieldwork complicated the data-gathering process. Within the first few weeks of fieldwork, I realized, after conducting an experiment in the 8th grade classroom, that the configuration of the room (See Figure 35, p. 275) precluded the use of a tape recorder as an observation aid for whole-classroom observations. In the field experiment, I placed a tape recorder in several different locations, positioned myself in another part of the room, and spoke in a normal tone to test how well my voice registered on tape. I discovered that only when I was in close proximity to the tape recorder did my voice register clearly. Since I was committed to using a tape recorder only judiciously and unobtrusively in my fieldwork (Research proposal, May 2002), I decided that field notes themselves, rather than transcriptions of field tapes, would serve as the study’s observational database. The
decision added to the observational tasks of seeing and listening a more challenging task of trying to capture in accurate, legible script the multiple discursive interactions that occurred on a daily basis in the classroom.

**Ethical Considerations**

I secured written permission for my study from Santa Cruz’s school president during the proposal phase of the research process. But gaining entry into the private spaces of the school—its 8th grade classrooms, for example, and securing personal permissions from 8th grade teachers as well as parents and assents from students as study participants involved an ethical consideration, the creation of “a sacred, caring trust” (Wollman-Bonilla, 2002). I initiated the relationship through formal communications that explained the research purpose and sought stakeholder interest. I composed those communications in three formats—Letters of Consent for parents of 8th grade students, Letters of Consent for two language arts teachers at the 8th grade level, and Letters of Assent for 8th grade student participants (See Appendices C, D, E, pp. 350-355). The letters explained the parameters of my study and stated the protocols in which participants would be engaged during the field study (Reason, 1994; Lankshear & Knobel, 1997).

To protect confidentiality, I used pseudonyms to identify the school and the participants in this study. During the conduct of my study and the writing of this text, I secured, in a safe and private location, each of the following: field notebooks, research log, all written communications, including email correspondence, all student writing—both photocopied and computer-filed versions, all observational redactions, and all formal teacher interview reconstructions. After I composed this text, I destroyed specific
identifying student and teacher artifacts. Analytical memos and graphic constructs created in the course of the study, fieldwork notebooks, and the research log I retained to provide an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To further protect informants in this study, I excised or otherwise rendered illegible any actual names or initials in retained notes and constructs.

The role I assumed as participant observer drew me into the cultural practices at Santa Cruz School and nurtured close working relationships with teachers and staff members. I used member-checking (e.g. reiterating responses in an interview, submitting interview texts for informant critique [See Appendix F, pp. 356-7) and analysis of my own research protocols (e.g. how I engaged with informants, how I decided the inclusion or exclusion of data) to show a natural and professional respect for persons and context in my study. Bonds of relationship grew into a feeling of solidarity through my residency in the Santa Cruz School community house. I considered the feeling of solidarity both a gift and a challenge. I felt gifted for having had the opportunity to share in the experiences of a school, community, and neighborhood engaged in trying to make a difference in the world. I felt challenged by having to find ways to represent the “the magic” of Santa Cruz in a research construct bound to data and not to sentiment. The conceptual framework of Activity Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont’ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987) became an ethical construct through which to honor the gift and meet the challenge.

Summary

I used an ethnographic case study approach (Yin, 1984; Stake, 1994; Spradley, 1980) to frame my research in two domains— the Santa Cruz School culture and the 8th grade language arts classroom culture. In each domain, I sought to identify and describe
culturally responsive categories of meaning (Spradley, 1980) that mediated the teaching and learning activities at Santa Cruz. Participant observations, interviews and interactions with stakeholders, and extensive document review formed the primary database of the study. Through analysis and interpretation, I synthesized, integrated, and conceptualized key data in each domain. That process, informed by the principles of Activity Theory, facilitated the formation of two matrices representing analytical and interpretive data reconstructions. In my discussion of methodology, I valued transparency as a way to represent the complex processes I used in preparing and engaging fieldwork. The valuing of transparency also represented an ethical way to acknowledge, as components of the analytical process, the strong advocacies that I carried into the field at Santa Cruz.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

I. THE SANTA CRUZ SCHOOL CULTURE OF PRACTICE

Introduction

One theme permeates the theoretical and empirical literature in which I nested my literacy study at Santa Cruz. The theme has two interacting features. The first feature is that a school community’s explicit vision of education draws the political as well as pedagogical boundaries of its institutional mission. The second feature is that how a school community goes about realizing its vision, its culture of practice, represents the most powerful, mediating factor in helping to transform (or failing to transform) the life trajectories of “placed-at-risk” Hispanic youth (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993). What a school community envisions in words and how a school community enacts words in daily practice, then, are the salient features that distinguish a culturally responsive school. Envisioning and enacting are the operational agencies that appear most often in research discourse on culturally responsive educational practices (e.g. Gay, 1994; Berman, et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993; Banks, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Freire, 1994). In that discourse, they serve as points of political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001) that challenge a school reform climate shaped largely by the pursuit of prescriptive standards and accountability measures (Houston, 2001; Eisner, 2001; Halcón, 2001).
Rosado (1996) describes the envisioning and enacting process in schools as the transformative mechanism through which a school community embraces a multicultural ethic. For Rosado (1996), the transformation begins as the five “Ps” of school culture—perspectives, policies, programs, personnel, and practices—reflect four imperatives: a) the dynamic of affirmative action, b) the dynamic of valuing differences, c) the dynamic of managing diversity through inclusion, and d) the dynamic of empowerment for all school members. Rosado’s (1996) description synthesizes a Hispanic perspective (e.g. Moll, 1988, 1992; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Garcia, 1991; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997) that parallels Banks’ (1995) view of the five critical components of a multicultural education curriculum—content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and structure. What both Rosado (1996) and Banks (1995) envision is the power for meaningful change created when practices in a school reflect a culture of empowerment.

Sergiovanni (2000) refers to the dynamism of such an educational vision as the “lifeworld” of a school. It is the directional compass guiding a school’s journey, the values and beliefs expressed in the social interactions between students, teachers, and administrators, and the rootstock from which members of a school community draw their collective strength of purpose. He describes the organizational features of a school as its “systemsworld,” the framework of policies, programs, procedures, and schedules through which students and teachers construct the practices of teaching and learning. From his perspective, the effectiveness of a school in realizing its mission depends on the degree to which its collective “lifeworld” flows through and animates its “systemsworld.” “When social organizations function properly, the lifeworld occupies the center position.“(p. 6)
“When the systemsworld dominates, school goals, purposes, values, and ideals are imposed on parents, teachers, and students rather than created by them.” (pp. 7-8) In essence, how a school community embeds a shared vision in the sinews of its cultural practices represents the formative process in shaping an institutional identity that is deeply communal in its mission (Inlay, 2003).

Envisioning and enacting (Rosado, 1996), the interrelating of the “lifeworld” and the “systemsworld” of a school (Sergiovanni, 2000), were the processes through which Santa Cruz School members formed a culture of practice that made a positive difference in the lives of students. Those were the processes that bound the school culture at Santa Cruz to the broader arena of culturally responsive educational practice (e.g. Banks, 1995; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 1988, 2001; Gay, 1994, 1999). They were also the processes that illuminated the distinguishing features of a school culture built on a vision of education as transformative practice (Freire, 1994).

To represent the culture of practice at Santa Cruz, I described saliencies in the interplay of vision and action reflected in the layers of cultural life at the school and classroom levels. The starting point of the description was the school’s mission, vision, and belief statements, its explicit philosophy and purpose. Deal and Peterson (1999) refer to such features of an organization as its “bedrock of cultural vitality and stability” (p.29). I then used principles of Activity theory (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Wertsch, 1985; Rogoff, 1995) to identify and describe how cultural themes within the Santa Cruz vision and philosophy resonated in key organizational structures of the school and the language arts classes of an 8th grade teacher and her students. Those organizational structures included the school’s literacy curriculum, its rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, its public
communications, its daily norms and procedures, its community outreach programs, and its decision-making processes (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2000; Banks, 1995; Eisner, 1985).

Mission Statement of Santa Cruz School

In *We Make the Road by Walking* (Bell, Gaventa, & Peterson, 1990), Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, “two pioneers of education for social change” (p. iv), share visions of education as transformative intervention in the world. “Underlying [their] philosophy is the idea that knowledge grows from and is a reflection of social experience” (p. xvi) and that participation is both the essential instrument and the ultimate goal of education in a democratic society (p. xxx). Their visions of transformative education are rooted in a spirituality of service and commitment to human needs (p. xxiii).

The school community at Santa Cruz expressed a similar spirituality of service and commitment through the public language in its mission, vision, and belief statements. In those statements, the community at Santa Cruz laid claim to an educational mission that was both multicultural and transformative. The mission, vision, and belief statements were articulations that suggested, in explicit ways, the political dimension of the school’s philosophy and purpose (Rosado, 1996, Banks, 1995, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Halcón, 2001) and, in symbolic ways, “the intangible cultural values and beliefs” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 60) that lay beneath the semantic surface. In Figure 18, I condensed those statements and juxtaposed the three Santa Cruz vision statements. The separate visions of graduate, teacher, and school formed a holistic self-image of the Santa Cruz community. School community belief statements intimated the philosophical base of its responsive educational practice (*Faculty Handbook*, pp. 4-6).
### Santa Cruz School Mission Statement

A community of compassion, in the “Crossian” tradition of Catholic education, that seeks to liberate and empower neighborhood children and families spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and emotionally so that children may break out of the cycle of poverty, gangs, and violence.

### Santa Cruz Graduates
- A person who develops a sense of worth, belonging, and purpose.
- A person who is intellectually reflective.
- A person en route to a lifetime of meaningful work.
- A good citizen.
- A healthy person.
- A person who develops a gospel-centered value system that guides her/his decisions in a multicultural and pluralist society.

### Santa Cruz Teachers
- A minister who gives personal testimony in word & action.
- A mentor of students who feels privileged to be in a position to influence the lives of students.
- A caring professional who understands learning styles and uses varying teaching strategies.
- A counselor, confidant, and guide for students.
- A culturally sensitive mediator for students.

### Santa Cruz School
- A place filled with faith & zeal.
- A place where students & teachers spend their most productive moments.
- A place where human relationships have qualities of wonder, magic.
- A place where everyone seeks to be better.
- A place echoing with an “I Can” spirit.
- A place where all say, “We will not let each other fail.”

### Santa Cruz School Belief Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning is developmental;</th>
<th>Learning enhances student dignity, pride, self-image, and motivation;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning helps students make sense of themselves &amp; their world;</td>
<td>Literacy learning leads to self-direction;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is achieving potential;</td>
<td>Educational practice should reflect the multicultural pluralism of the world;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy teaching &amp; learning involve basic skills: listening, reading, writing, critical thinking, math;</td>
<td>Education is about creating empowering learning experiences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning involves active participation;</td>
<td>Learning should help students contend with forces that exploit/hinder their growth;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching involves high expectations;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Figure 18. Santa Cruz School Mission, Vision, and Belief Statements*
On a comparative plane, the Santa Cruz mission statement was an articulation of school purpose not unlike the purposes represented in mission statements of other middle schools serving Hispanic students. The community of Horace Mann Academic Middle School, for instance, seeks “to develop the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally, helping prepare him/her to succeed in the world.” (San Francisco United School District Draft, 2001-2002) The Lennox Middle School district expresses the mission of all its schools in a vision statement saying:

We, the Lennox School community of parents, staff, and students celebrate learning and the lifelong quest for knowledge. We value and nurture the talents and uniqueness of each individual. We are committed to creating a challenging educational experience that empowers all members to strive for excellence and to achieve their personal best as contributors to the future of the community, nation, and humanity. (http://www.lennox.k12.ca.us/default2.html)

Indeed, qualities like “community,” “empowerment,” and “family” are recurrent themes in the mission statements of forty-five Philadelphia charter schools I described earlier in this text (http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/charter_schools/mission.html). The evaluative study of a KIPP school in Houston (TCER, 2003) notes, as well, that the mission of the school is “to prepare students with the academic skills, intellectual habits, and qualities of character necessary to succeed in high school, college, and the competitive world beyond” (p.14). What distinguished the mission statement at Santa Cruz School, however, were its neighborhood character, its purposeful focus of intervention on behalf of children and families, and its commitment to changing the devastating cycle of poverty and violence in the neighborhood. Like the Nativity schools (e.g. Carter, 2001; Cooper, 2003; Ward, 2001), Santa Cruz professed an ethic of solidarity in forming “a community of compassion.” In Rosado’s (1996) concept of multicultural education, compassion—as opposed to human feelings like sympathy or
empathy—is the emotion that triggers active engagement among individuals and groups in the liberatory struggles of other people (Freire, 1994, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Halcón, 2001).

**Vision Statements of Santa Cruz School**

Deal and Peterson (1994) contend that school visions appeal to people’s hearts as well as their minds. Visions have an ephemeral quality that touches both the imagination and the reason, arousing passionate commitment to unrealized goals as well as communicating clear avenues through which to bring goals to fruition (p. 101). The vision statements about Santa Cruz graduates were images of unrealized goals; the vision statements about teachers and school were images of clear avenues of cultural practice. Concerns like “self-esteem,” “belonging,” “a sense of purpose,” “intellectual reflection,” “good citizenship,” “personal well-being,” and “respect for human diversity” serve as prominent concepts in the vision statements about students at Horace Mann Middle School (San Francisco United School District Draft, 2001-2002), Lennox Middle School (http://www.lennox.k12.ca.us/default2.html), and Harold Wiggs Middle School (Berman et al, 1995). Those concepts are present, to varying degrees, in the KIPP studies I cited (e.g. Carter, 2000; Doran & Drury, 2002; TCER, 2003), in the discussion of middle school reform models I described in Chapter 2 (e.g. Madhere & Mac Iver, 1996; Borman & Racuba, 2001), and in research syntheses on responsive school cultures (e.g. Cotton, 1995; Lewis, 1999; Mizell, 2002). The Santa Cruz vision of a graduate, however, had qualities that looked toward the future as a way of stimulating resolve and commitment in the present (Rosado, 1999). At Santa Cruz, a graduate was in the process of becoming, a process of explicit identity formation.
The visions of teacher and school suggested how individual school members and the institution itself (NNSA, 1995) played a formative role in each graduate’s process of becoming. For teachers, the Santa Cruz visions drew from Crossian tradition in Catholic education (e.g. caring professional, minister, personal witness, mentor, privileged partner, confidant) and its roots in the liberatory themes (Gutierrez, 1973; Boff & Boff, 1987) of the Christian scriptures (Faculty Handbook, p. 7). The visions of a Santa Cruz teacher reflected, in a prominent way, the twelve principal virtues of a Christian teacher—ethical cornerstones of the Crossian tradition, and the virtues associated with a liberatory ethic of education (Freire, 1994, 1997, 1998). The twelve Crossian virtues—earnestness, clarity, humility, foresight, wisdom, patience, commitment, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, faith, and generosity (Research log, Sept. 10, 2002) contained within them the sustaining liberatory virtues that Freire (1994) described: “generous loving heart, respect for others, tolerance, humility, a joyful disposition, love of life, openness to what is new, a disposition to welcome change, perseverance in the struggle, a refusal of determinism, a spirit of hope, and openness to justice.” (p.108) The vision statements about teachers in the schools I used previously for comparison (e.g. Horace Mann Academic Middle School, Lennox Middle School; KIPP, Houston) focus not on teaching as a vocation or a life calling, but on a functional image of teacher—one who is a dutiful, responsible professional committed to growth in teaching practice, to collegiality in the workplace, and to the mission of the academic improvement of students. The vision statements in those schools center primarily on students and on areas of concern in the curriculum. As an example, in the Horace Mann Middle School vision statement, the following passage illumines the school’s mission:
We recognize that students bring a rich diversity of cultures, experiences, languages, and learning styles that can be developed and shared in our school setting. Students should feel connected to the school and its objectives, value what they learn, and trust those who are teaching. A student-centered approach involves a flexible schedule (time blocks which more realistically accommodate units of study) and an integrated thematic approach to teaching which emphasizes cooperation. Students will learn holistically, examining topics from different perspectives.

Teachers/students [family units] will model valuable life skills such as cooperation, critical thinking, effective communication, and responsibility (my italics). Students will develop self-esteem and feel free to question and explore a larger world. They will discover and strengthen their talents, learn and practice social and leadership skills, and successfully meet high academic expectations. (San Francisco Unified School District Draft, 2001-2002)

The Santa Cruz vision of school, like the vision of teacher, flowed from Crossian tradition in Catholic education (Faculty Handbook, p. 8). A Crossian school was a home, a family, a community based on faith and sustained through zeal. It was a place devoted to realizing the social and ethical mission of Christian education for all students, but especially for those students and families on the periphery of the social and economic mainstream (Research log, Sept. 10, 2002). The images of “a place called school” (Goodlad, 1984) conveyed in the vision statements of Santa Cruz School differed substantively from visions of school at Horace Mann Middle School and Lennox Middle School. At Lennox Middle School, for instance, the vision of school is framed in terms of core educational commitments: a) prepare students for rewarding, successful personal lives and careers; b) cultivate in students self-respect and respect for others; c) empower students to participate, in an informed way, in local and extended communities; and d) encourage in students an appreciation of cultural diversity (www.lennox.k12.ca.us/lmstemp/lmssite/body.htm). At Horace Mann Middle School, the vision of school takes the form of a Consent Decree, graphically depicted in Figure 19, to which all members of the school faculty and staff formally ascribe:
The Santa Cruz vision statement about school focused on relationships, building a spirit of community, mutual support in the pursuit of goals, and passion for a common mission. In Sergiovanni’s (2000) framework, those areas of concern are manifestations in imagery of the school community “lifeworld.” They reflect an embrace of the notion that “community is at the center of learning.” (Nieto, 1999, p. 84) Noticeably absent in the Santa Cruz vision of school was reference to the specific academic commitments or concerns that appeared in the other school vision statements. Rather than in features of a vision of school, however, Santa Cruz School community members expressed academic commitments and concerns in the organizational structures and practices of the school’s “systemsworld” (Research log, Sept. 14, 2002).
Belief Statements of Santa Cruz School

The statements of belief articulated in the *Faculty Handbook* (2001-2002) were semantic expressions of the foundational values at Santa Cruz School. They provided a way for me to appreciate and understand more fully the educational philosophy from which the school’s mission and vision statements originated. The school community beliefs about learning, teaching, and the purposes of education intimated both the sociocultural and the multicultural nature of the school’s philosophy. Rosado (1999) describes belief statements in terms of paradigm, the conceptual model which defines and illumines perceptions of reality and serves as the basis of a worldview. Statements of belief represent expressions of a particular way of seeing and valuing, a particular way of constructing meaning and purpose in a school. For Rosado (1999), what is said and not said in belief statements indicates an orientation toward either a “traditional” way of “doing school” or a looking forward, an anticipation, of a new model of “being school.” Banks (1999) refers to school belief statements as powerful political pronouncements. They configure the social landscape in which a school pursues its mission and serve as expressions of commitment to specific educational principles. A school community that embraces a multicultural and transformative ethic, then, expresses qualities of that ethic within each of its statements of belief.

The Santa Cruz School belief statements were both future-oriented and politically definitive. Teaching was about creating “high expectations” and its primary goal was to help students appropriate basic skills that carried personal and social significance beyond their academic utility. Learning was about the mutual construction, in the present, of student qualities of character and habits of mind that would bolster confidence, resilience,
and critical awareness in the future (Dewey, 1966). The Santa Cruz belief statements framed the purpose of education as reflective activity set within a multicultural, pluralist world and the task of education at Santa Cruz as a commitment to creating empowering learning experiences for all students. Clear and succinct, the statement that learning was the personal and collective tool through which to confront exploitation and hindrances to growth punctuated the distinctive political dimensions of the school community beliefs.

The sociocultural qualities in the belief statements (e.g. learning is developmental, meaning is learner constructed, learning is a socially constructed activity) and, to varying degrees, the multicultural, transformational commitments within the belief statements drew Santa Cruz School into communion with a small circle of public schools. Those school communities (e.g. Horace Mann Middle School, Lennox Middle School, Harold Wiggs Middle School) differ from Santa Cruz in the language they use to express mission and vision, but they share with Santa Cruz a commitment to transforming the lives of “placed-at-risk” Hispanic youth through educational practice that is reflective, responsive, and culturally inclusive. As a unit, the visions expressed in the Santa Cruz School handbook suggested a “know-care-act” philosophy of transformative education (Banks, 1999, p. 33), an integration of local passions and values (Sergiovanni, 2000; Tharp, 1997), and an embrace of a community model (e.g. Borman & Racuba, 2001) committed to the development of student self-efficacy and resilience (Conchas, 2001).

Identity Curriculum of Santa Cruz School

How the faculty, staff, and students at Santa Cruz constructed a school curriculum resembled, in many respects, a community process of identity formation. Unlike the schools I have used for comparative purposes thus far (e.g. Horace Mann Middle School,
Lennox Middle School), Santa Cruz School began as an experiment, an effort to respond to particular needs of a specific group of people in a troubled inner-city neighborhood. Earlier in this text (Chapter 3), I shared a brief account of the school’s inception through the words of its founder. What he described as the convergence of need, vision, and response in the founding of Santa Cruz were strategic features of the process the school community enacted in creating a fluid and facilitating curriculum.

Eisner (1985) identifies three curricula that are present in every school and are reflected, in some way, in all school learning materials. He refers to the three as the explicit curriculum, the implicit (or hidden) curriculum, and the null curriculum. The explicit curriculum is the public, officially sanctioned course of studies represented in school documents and implemented in daily regimen. The implicit curriculum refers to the unarticulated but pervasive characteristics of a school’s educational program. The null curriculum refers to those characteristics that are marginalized or completely omitted in a school’s educational program. The curriculum of a school, in his view, is a complex sociocultural expression. It represents more a process of bringing into being than a documentation of static principles; it is more about “starting something” than about finishing something, about “uncovering” rather than covering (Eisner, 2002, p. 90). A school's curriculum represents the defining material artifact of its culture of practice.

In The Educational Imagination (1985), Eisner discusses the orientation of a school’s curriculum as a value-laden process and he identifies five primary orientations visible in the curricular structures of American schools. He identifies those orientations as academic rationalism (school curriculum involves imparting basic knowledge from traditional academic disciplines), b) cognitive processing (school curriculum involves
helping students learn how to learn through guided, focused inquiry), c) **personal relevance** (school curriculum involves using students’ interest and knowledge base to construct developmentally appropriate learning experiences), d) **social reconstruction** (school curriculum involves developing in students a critical consciousness about divisive social issues and encouraging in them a reflective praxis that is directed toward social action), and e) **technological** (school curriculum involves the detailed sequencing of learning activities and the specification as well as assessment of measurable learning objectives). Succinctly stated, those orientations (or ideologies) indicate, in respective order, a **focus on subject matter**, a **focus on process**, a **focus on personal development**, a **focus on social transformation**, and a **focus on means-end**. Each of the orientations plays some role in a school’s curriculum, but the clear prominence of one or two of the orientations is an indication of a school’s conscious effort to implement its beliefs and realize its mission and vision through particular cultural practices (Rosado, 1996).

Through the Activity theory model I constructed during fieldwork analysis, some features of the explicit and implicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz surfaced as primary mediating instruments (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1995; Engeström, 1987, 1999). Those features of the explicit curriculum I described as saliencies in the “articulated” (publicly stated and observed in the field) program of studies and cultural practices at Santa Cruz School. Saliencies in the explicit school curriculum were organizational descriptors of the “systemsworld” of Santa Cruz (Sergiovanni, 2000). They included the academic program in reading, the language arts literacy program, the catalytic qualities in the culture of practice that inspired participation and support, and the student management program. I then described salient features of the implicit (hidden) curriculum as descriptors of the
“intentional” (locally sanctioned and observed in the field) processes, procedures, rituals, ceremonies, and modes of interaction that distinguished the culture of practice at Santa Cruz School (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000; Sizer, 1999; Inlay, 2003).

The Explicit Culture of Practice at Santa Cruz School

The academic program at Santa Cruz was a hybrid construction that integrated traditional middle school academic disciplines (e.g. English language arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) with a conventional Catholic school commitment to religious education (e.g. Travis, 1997; Greeley, 1997) and character formation (e.g. McCormack, 1999; McQuire, 2000; Schaffer, 2000). Emphasized in the program of studies was the crucial middle school role of English literacy skills development (e.g. Manning, 2000; Alvermann, 2000; Wheelock, 1995; Carnegie Council, 1989) for students who were culturally and linguistically diverse (e.g. Secada et al, 1998; Berman et al, 1995; Moll, 1992; Nieto, 1999; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Mertens & Flowers, 2003; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996).

The staff at Santa Cruz apportioned the development of English literacy skills across the curriculum. That apportionment was most visible in the partition of English language arts into three separate curricular components: writing, literature, and reading. Four of seven daily class periods at Santa Cruz focused specifically on the three English language arts components. To facilitate classroom interactions, the staff divided 7th and 8th grade students into two (Group A, Group B) heterogeneous groups. (Space limitations at Santa Cruz prevented the same grouping for 6th grade students.) The groupings were small by design and, like the heterogeneous family units that teachers created for students at Horace Mann Middle School, Harold Wiggs Middle School (Berman et al, 1995), and
Lennox Middle School (Lockwood & Secada, 1999), they focused on active student participation. Each group moved through the daily schedule in a slightly varied pattern.

For writing class, however, the staff further subdivided student groupings. The staff first assessed each student’s writing needs and then assigned students to one of two activity settings to facilitate their growth toward writing proficiency—the grade-level classroom or the school’s writing lab (Field notes, Sept. 10, 2002). The normal daily schedule was one of the material artifacts in the culture of practice (See Figure 20) that depicted the school community’s organizational emphasis on English literacy skills development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SANTA CRUZ SCHOOL DAILY SCHEDULE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* 8TH GRADE “A” 8TH GRADE “B”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00  Homeroom  Homeroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:10  Religion  Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10  Literature  Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10 Reading  Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 Writing  Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 ** Science  ** Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 Lunch  Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45 Mathematics  Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 Reading  Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20 Homeroom  Homeroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 *** Advisory/ Renaissance/ Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 Dismissal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The 8th Grade Class (n = 28) was divided into two Learning Groups of fourteen students.
** Courses that alternated between the two learning groups.
*** Advisory referred to small group mentoring and sharing sessions. Renaissance referred to a program of after-school classes during a trimester. Fitness referred to physical and well-being education activities. They were curricular enrichments and supports that occurred each week but not daily.

Figure 20. Santa Cruz School Daily Schedule
The after-school component of the school’s academic program (e.g. Advisory, Renaissance) expanded the contexts of interaction among Santa Cruz students, faculty, and support staff. The Advisory, for instance, created a time and circumstance during the school week for staff members to engage the mentoring role to which they were called in the school vision statements. In some cases, staff members shared personal narratives and drew students into conversational dialogue. In other cases, staff members presented pertinent topics for discussion within the advisory group. The Advisory at Santa Cruz had the qualities of adult care noted in the program at Lennox Middle School (Lockwood & Secada, 1999) with an emphasis on helping small groups of students participate in less formal school cultural practices. The Renaissance program created a complementary course of studies for the school’s more conventional academic program. Each trimester of the year, students chose from a broad list of categories (e.g. hobbies, life-skill interests) one area to explore with a staff member and a small group of multi-aged peers. The baking class, for example, one of those areas of exploration that I observed in the community house almost weekly, was a lively mix of participation across age levels and genders that made the kitchen a point of attraction for everyone in the house (Research log, April 14, 2003). The Fitness class, the third after-school component, provided a more traditional physical education feature to the school’s academic program.

**Responsive Qualities in the Explicit Culture of Practice**

The daily academic schedule at Santa Cruz School, like the mission, vision, and belief statements I described, was an artifact with historical and communal roots. In my fieldwork, I identified three dimensions of those historical and communal roots that suggested a responsive, transformational ethic within the culture of practice at Santa Cruz
School. The first dimension involved the shared process, the reflective practice (Freire, 1994; Dewey, 1933), through which Santa Cruz community members went about the development and expansion of an effective, culturally relevant reading and language arts program for their students (Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 1994; Nieto, 1999). The second dimension involved the ways that the culture of practice served as a catalyst in building human, social, and financial capital for the Santa Cruz School mission (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Moll, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000; Rosado, 1999). The third dimension involved the ways that the Santa Cruz student management program integrated literacy concepts within a disciplinary framework guided by principles of social justice and shared accountability (Rosado, 1996; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Rumberger, 2000; Conchas, 2001).

**The Santa Cruz Reading Program**

Dual periods in the daily schedule suggested the importance of reading in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz. The commitment to reading as a critical instructional medium marked the literacy approach at Santa Cruz from its modest beginnings around dining room tables in the community house. The development of students’ reading skills became, essentially, the empowering facet of the academic program and served as the strategic core of the school’s literacy mission (*Faculty Handbook*, 2001-2002). The initial roots of that commitment appeared in the needs assessment processes school members engaged during the first three years of the school’s existence. At that time, the majority of 6th graders applying to Santa Cruz typically “were reading at a 2nd or 3rd grade level” and their “dislike for reading…because they weren’t good at it” complicated their academic progress in all school subjects (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002).
Santa Cruz teachers organized a focused inquiry of responsive programs in order to better address their students’ needs. The inquiry entailed critical reading, the collection and discussion of recommended models, attendance at national workshops, local school visitations, and consultation with professional reading specialists. What emerged from that reflective practice was a hybrid reading program at Santa Cruz School. The program integrated “features of Marie Carbo’s ‘Learning Styles,’ especially the books on tape for emergent readers, and the basic program package for Accelerated Reader (AR),” which was a set of children’s books (250) and a like number of computerized tests (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002). For the school’s first three years, a forty-five minute period in the daily schedule provided quality time for Santa Cruz students “to read silently.” Students also used the period to choose new books from the school library and “to take computerized tests on books that had been read” (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002).

Staff inquiry continued even after the development of the hybrid reading program and it was through that continued inquiry that teachers at Santa Cruz discovered that they were under-utilizing the AR system. (I included a detailed description of the AR system in the language arts classroom section of the text). The staff “discovered that, with proper guidance, goal-setting, diagnosis, and intervention,” students could improve in reading comprehension by “up to two full years per academic cycle.” (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002) A fuller implementation of the Accelerated Reader system resulted from the staff’s shared inquiry, and, as the school founder described it, everyone recognized almost immediately that students responded in special ways to the change:
We became believers as we would see kids literally walking down the stairs reading a book, bringing their reading books to gym/lunch period, and getting books from the school library to read over vacation time. Kids were being successful; they were more focused and getting better results in school. [It] was magical! The third year of the school, our students read an average of fifty-eight books, [the next year] that average jumped to seventy-one….Simply put, a culture of reading was created…[and] kids [began] to think it was cool to be reading a book…They discovered the great feeling of getting lost in a good book, and that feeling is a whole lot better than getting lost in a gang. (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002)

That shared process, that reflective practice, among Santa Cruz School members had the characteristics of a group’s conscious efforts to move from “ingenious curiosity to epistemological curiosity” (Freire, 1994), from a recognition of educational needs to a focused inquiry of responsive solutions (Dewey, 1933). But that shared process also pointed toward the deep level of commitment to a mission of service that a small group of educators shared (Sergiovanni, 2001; Schnaiberg, 2001). It represented a “know-care-act” ethic (Banks, 1999) that had students and their needs as inspirations for sustained reflective practice (Freire, 1994). Fall and winter trimester statistics (2002-2003) showed that Santa Cruz students read/tested on 5,263 books (67 books per student).

The 2002-2003 daily schedule at Santa Cruz School demonstrated how the culture of practice among staff influenced the growth of the reading curriculum. Rather than one, there were now two periods devoted to reading and the time allotment expanded from the original forty-five to seventy minutes each school day. Standard homework assignments included at least forty-five minutes of reading directly related to an AR book (Field notes, Oct. 18, 2002). In addition, all Santa Cruz teachers and staff now participated in the dual reading periods, witnessing to reading as a life skill and as an important adult pursuit (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1994; Rogoff, 1994, 1995; Tharp, 1997; Alvermann, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001).
Over the course of my fieldwork, I came to see the daily reading periods at Santa Cruz as explicit expressions of a communal culture of practice (Sergiovanni, 2000). They were a curious blend of silence and conversation, of sedentary concentration and frequent movement set apart from the other classes in the schedule. The loci of activity for students shifted from their work bound to classrooms to their individual pursuits as readers. The school library, rather than school classrooms, became the hub of activity as students chose books, returned books, and engaged with peers, teachers, and the school librarian in soft conversations. The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classrooms and the cushioned seats in the school hallway became spaces for students’ primarily private encounters with books. “It’s a morning and afternoon personal time,” one teacher said. “A time to break from the hubbub of activity we’re all engaged in.” (Field notes, Jan. 10, 2003) Another teacher said, “I don’t like to say it, but I often get involved in a book and then don’t really want to put it down. That’s a problem when you have a class to teach.” (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002). For the librarian, the reading periods were special too, not so much as a break from the hubbub of activity but as a time for special interactions. “I get a chance to see and work with all the students. It’s fun for me to see them interested in books and liking to read. It inspires me to read, to want to improve my English skills like they are. [To do that], I read many of the books they read.” (Field notes, Oct. 10, 2002).

Most of the school library holdings, nine thousand color-coded books, were fiction and nonfiction works indexed within the AR system (Field notes, Sept. 6, 2002). The books came from a variety of sources, some of them donated to Santa Cruz by local schools or individuals, others purchased through school fund-raising efforts (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002). But the books, and thirty-seven computers for student use, were explicit
testaments to at least part of the school’s identity. Santa Cruz School students, faculty, and staff were a community of readers in a culture of shared practice (Freire, 1994).

**The Santa Cruz Language Arts Program**

Reading as a core instructional medium appeared as well in the literature-based curriculum of the language arts program. According to Bill Speer (pseudonym), the writing lab teacher at Santa Cruz, the literature focus evolved from a collective and reflective process (analytical codes in boldface):

It’s a literature-based curriculum because stories ground what we do in language arts. We don’t use basal readers. We don’t use literature anthologies. [VIS9] We sat down last December and had a curriculum workshop for a week with a facilitator from ___ University…and a specialist from AR, somebody who knew a lot of book titles, authors, themes….We just brainstormed…about what our 6th, 7th, and 8th graders should be reading by trimesters…and we tried to include every possible idea from authors to genres to culture, reading ability, reading levels…to give us some parameters, some limitations [COM6, OWN1]

For a young school like [Santa Cruz]…with so many young teachers, freedom can be a curse. [Now], instead of having absolutely nothing…and just winging it, [a literature-based curriculum] makes it easier for us to go into the year with some [direction]. [Its] limitations are really liberating [EXP4, VIS9, LIT7] (Interview, May 12, 2003).

The thematic framework of the literature-based curriculum that evolved from that collective reflection focused on the concepts of Identity, Humanity, and Transformation (See Figures 21, 22, Appendix G [Scope and Sequence for Grades 6 & 7], pp. 358-9). As Bill Speer stated, however, the evolutionary process through which it was forged entailed a more complex dynamic than simply choosing books to fit into a schema:

Before we talked about books to read, we tried to break down the trimester by themes….and there are certain things that occur here in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, certain field trips, for example….in the 8th grade certain preparations for high school…[that we had to consider]. We talked about…developmentally….what are these kids dealing with in the 6th, 7th, [and 8th grades]. There’s a lot of fighting with each other—in the 8th grade, there’s a lot of cliques with the girls. We just tried to look at everything. We talked about neighborhood—what goes on in the
neighborhood, what goes on in families…what they might want….and from that perspective, we broke the trimester down by themes” [VIS1, COM9, CR1, 11, RR6] (Interview, May 12, 2003).

The shared process of reflection, discussion, and action yielded the 8th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence. That framework gave a brief yet comprehensive view of what the staff valued as literacy, as literate activity, and as literacy education at Santa Cruz School. Like many other middle schools, reading as conversation with the printed text was a strategic emphasis (Alvermann, 2000), particularly in the fiction, nonfiction, and poetry selections that formed the literature component of the framework. It was the approach the staff chose “to draw on what students already knew something about” (Moll, 1988, 1992; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Garcia, 1994) in an effort to value, expand, and challenge student knowledge bases (Field notes, Jan. 6, 2003). The text selections in the language arts program included a range of cultural topics (e.g. war, bigotry, justice) and cultural perspectives (e.g. Mexican, African, Jewish) in primarily young adult literature (Donelson & Nilsen, 1997).

The connections drawn between literature and social studies pointed toward an expanded view of reading literacy, one that utilized an interdisciplinary approach to study thematic issues rather than a recurring pattern of textual decoding exercises to measure comprehension (Rueda & Garcia, 1994). The interdisciplinary approach at Santa Cruz framed reading literacy as a personal and social exploration of “the word and the world” (Freire, 1998) through local, historical, and multicultural perspectives (Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999, 2000). I depicted the themes, literature, and social studies sections of the Santa Cruz 8th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence in the initial three columns of Figure 23, the graphic illustration of the language arts program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIMESTER/THEME</th>
<th>LITERATURE</th>
<th>SOCIAL STUDIES</th>
<th>WRITING ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>FIELD EXPERIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Trimester</td>
<td><strong>IDENTITY</strong></td>
<td>The Chocolate War&lt;br&gt;Go Ask Alice&lt;br&gt;I Wish I Were a Butterfly&lt;br&gt;Cool Salsa: Poems on Growing Up Chicano/a&lt;br&gt;Growing Up Chicano/a: Literature Anthology</td>
<td>City History&lt;br&gt;Hispanic-Am. Leaders&lt;br&gt;U. S. Civil War</td>
<td>Autobiography &amp; Family Tree Scholarship Essay&lt;br&gt;Interview&lt;br&gt;Student Mission Statement Composition Dev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Trimester</td>
<td><strong>HUMANITY</strong></td>
<td>The Giver&lt;br&gt;Night&lt;br&gt;I Never Saw Another Butterfly&lt;br&gt;Rose Blanche&lt;br&gt;Faithful Elephants&lt;br&gt;The Butterfly</td>
<td>Washington Federal Govt.&lt;br&gt;The Holocaust</td>
<td>Editorial cartoon&lt;br&gt;Feature article&lt;br&gt;Biography: Role Model/Pop figure&lt;br&gt;Research Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Trimester</td>
<td><strong>TRANSFORMATION</strong></td>
<td>J. Livingston Seagull House on Mango St.&lt;br&gt;No More Strangers Now: Young Voices from S. Africa&lt;br&gt;Biographies&lt;br&gt;On the Places You’ll Go</td>
<td>Land Mines Treaty&lt;br&gt;Israel/Palestine South Africa</td>
<td>Monologue&lt;br&gt;Appreciation essay&lt;br&gt;Essay Dev.&lt;br&gt;Advertisement&lt;br&gt;Research Project: Compelling Issue &amp; “How I will solve it” Future/Retro bio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 23. Santa Cruz 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence**

The writing component in the framework blended inquiry and explication as interrelated modes of an experience-oriented approach to composing. Progressions in the writing component (e.g. from writing an autobiography, developing a family tree, and preparing a scholarship essay to creating an editorial cartoon and feature story, writing a appreciative essay, and conducting a response-based research project) intertwined the personal and the social dimensions of the communicative process in a developmental sequence. Both self-exploration and a sharing of one’s response to “reading the world” (Freire, 1998) were integral features of the developmental process. Field excursions, involving visits to local venues (e.g. Health Care facility, Islamic mosque, Jewish
synagogue, Public Library) as well as long-distance travel (e.g. Class retreat outside the city, Washington, DC), provided “real-world” experiences. Those experiences, in turn, deepened students’ levels of understanding and appreciation (Eisner, 1985) of “the themes in their studies as themes with human faces,” contexts, and histories (Field notes, Feb. 18, 2003). The excursions in the scope and sequence suggested a philosophy of literacy teaching and learning that extended beyond the walls of the school and the classroom to the “real” world (Eisner, 1985; Freire, 1994; Dewey, 1966, 1971; Moll, 2001; Díaz & Flores, 2001) where people and places offered a varied experience of our nation’s rich cultural diversity (Research log, May 12, 2003).

The thematic orientation of the language arts framework pointed explicitly toward the pathways that the Santa Cruz School community chose in “walking the talk” (Freire, 1998) of the shared mission to empower students through literacy. I observed the second trimester implementation of the language arts scope and sequence; the implementation of the complete curriculum occurred in school year 2003-2004 (Field notes, May 12, 2003). The thematic values in the first trimester of the framework (e.g. Identity, autobiography, public speaking), however, were—to a great extent—already integrated dimensions of the 8th grade language arts classes at Santa Cruz (Field notes, Nov. 20, 2002).

During field analysis, I came to see the reflective process through which staff members generated and then guided the implementation of the scope and sequence as a transformative communal activity. The transformative dimensions of the activity were the processes that a) engaged a group in recurring reflection and discussion about a perceived “contradiction” in the organizational structure of the school (Engeström, 1987, 1999) and b) involved an object (motive) that had broad philosophical implications in the academic
curriculum of the school (Eisner, 1985; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001). The communal dimensions of the activity were the qualities in the processes that a) required group members to share a variety of roles and exercise decision-making power in reaching their goal (Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Halcön, 2001; Banks, 1999) and b) drew on the human capital within the group to create an “outcome” that fostered the generation of human and social capital for the school and its youngest community members (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2000; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001). The scope and sequence was much more than a conceptual map of the English language arts curriculum at Santa Cruz. It was a material, synthetic artifact (Engeström, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978) whose origins lay in patterns of mediated activity and whose significance lay in its capacity to serve as a mediating construct for transformative teaching and learning (Eisner, 1985; Rosado, 1996). In a metaphorical way, then, its “identity,” its stores of human and social capital, was shaped and reshaped, “invented and reinvented” (Freire, 1997, p. 53), through the everyday literacy activities of each teacher and each student at Santa Cruz School (Roth, Tobin, Emelsky, Carambo, McKnight, & Beers, 2002; Inlay, 2003).

Catalytic Qualities in the Explicit Culture of Practice

I represented, in the description of neighborhood and school in Chapter 3, many perceptions about the social capital within the Santa Cruz community. At the heart of what school members expressed was the image of Santa Cruz as “a special place.” For some in the community, the Santa Cruz school and community stood as witnesses to gospel imperatives; for others, the school and community were tangible forms of meaningful intervention in an unjust world. To those in the community who were
Latinos/as, the school and community were manifestations of cultural solidarity and respect. To those in the community who were growing in an awareness of their own potential, teachers and students alike, the school was a supportive family and the community a setting for collaborative learning. School community members perceived Santa Cruz as “a special place” because it was blessed with a group of caring people committed to intervening in the world, to helping to transform the lives of neighborhood children and families (Freire, 1997, 1994). The predominately volunteer teaching staff at Santa Cruz School served as one of the distinguishing features of that transformative witness and commitment (Inlay, 2003).

**Exemplar One**

How volunteer teachers spoke about the pathways they traveled to Santa Cruz was one of the ways I came to understand the human qualities of witness and commitment at the school. The volunteer teachers and support staff came to Santa Cruz from the east and west coasts of the United States, from the midwest region of the country, and, in one case, from as far away as South America. What the volunteer teachers and staff shared was a desire to participate in the Santa Cruz vision of responsive educational service for marginalized youth and families.

“I came to Santa Cruz because of [the school founder],” one volunteer teacher said. “He gave a talk about the work at [Santa Cruz] and I was so moved by it I decided to see for myself. The community housed me and I spent three wonderful days visiting the school. The kids, the people here, the work-- I just loved it.” (Field notes, Sept. 14, 2002) “It’s my second time here, you know,” another teacher volunteer shared. “I left [Santa Cruz] to teach English in [a foreign country], but when I returned to the states, I
couldn't get [Santa Cruz] out of my head. There's a whole lot here to hold you. That's why I came back” (Field notes, Oct. 20, 2002). “It's really a unique place,” a third volunteer shared. “There aren't any places I know of where you have this many people doing all the things we do seven days a week. When I talk to somebody who doesn't know anything about [Santa Cruz] and I tell them what I do and what the place is like, they always ask why….I guess why I don't do something else. I don't have any pat answers I give, but I always mention the kids. The kids are the reason I'm here at [Santa Cruz]” (Field notes, Jan. 9, 2003).

Most of the teaching volunteers at Santa Cruz had some prior affiliation with the Crossian educational system. Four volunteers were graduates of Crossian high schools and/or universities. Two had taught previously in Crossian schools. One of the volunteer teachers, both a graduate of a Crossian high school and a former teacher in that school, described his path to Santa Cruz as a search to satisfy personal need and provide special service at the same time. "I wanted to be in a [Crossian] school," he said. "I was a student and a teacher in a [Crossian school] in ___, so what I know and believe has roots in the [Crossian] tradition." He was "balancing the demands of university studies in education at ___ " with his work at Santa Cruz. The situation at Santa Cruz, however, enabled him to pursue those studies in a community setting and " be in a school that served the poor where [he] could use [his] own language and culture to help students, to give them instruction in Spanish as well as religion." (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002).

The volunteer teaching program at Santa Cruz had its roots in the core Crossian educational concept of shared mission. Whatever success a school realized in its mission depended, from a Crossian perspective, on the depth and quality of its communal effort.
Like the culture of practice at Lennox Middle (Lockwood & Secada, 1999) and at KIPP schools (e.g. Carter, 2000), the Santa Cruz School culture required much of its teachers and staff. What distinguished the program, however, was the level of commitment and sacrifice expected from teachers and staff. As one community house resident put it, “I know I’m giving up a lot of things by teaching here. I see that every time I get my bank statement. But there’s so much more to teaching and helping students than getting a nice paycheck. I feel like I’m receiving a whole lot more than I am giving, even if it’s not something I can spend at a store.” The monthly "paycheck" for that teaching volunteer amounted to roughly four hundred dollars (Field notes, Feb. 22, 2003).

Reliance on staff members’ personal commitment and sacrifice is a vital feature in the success the Nativity school programs have had in helping marginalized youth (e.g. Carter, 2001, Ward, 2001; Murray, 2001). There was a similar reliance at Santa Cruz School, where, from its founding days, the core of the teaching staff was composed of volunteers. “We [Santa Cruz School] would not be here without them,” said the school’s founder. “They're wonderful, gifted people who are transforming this neighborhood and the lives of these kids and families everyday” (Interview, Oct. 21, 2002). “Our teachers are first and foremost mission-driven,” added the school principal. “They learn how to teach by responding to the mission” (Interview, May 12, 2003). At Santa Cruz, what was most important in a teacher profile was not expertise in subject matter or pedagogy, as important as they might be. What was valued instead was the person, the recent college graduate or the more experienced individual, who had committed her/himself to pursue a mission of educational service for youth and families in the neighborhood. A teaching
volunteer with that depth of commitment to social justice was, from a Santa Cruz perspective, already engaged in the quest to develop meaningful subject matter and pedagogical expertise (Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Moll, 2001). Lockwood and Secada (1999) identify a similar program characteristic at Lennox Middle School where school officials consider the qualities of care and collegiality in teachers more important than professional teaching credentials, including fluent bilingualism. At Santa Cruz, reliance on a volunteer teaching staff, however, posed many challenges too. Foremost among them was staff stability. “We’ve been lucky to have a core group here at Santa Cruz for the last five years or so,” said one staff member. “But we’re going to be losing some people this year who will be very hard to replace” (Field notes, Feb. 18, 2003).

**Exemplar Two**

The qualities of personal commitment and witness in the volunteer teaching and support staff were stores of human capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986) in the explicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz School. Teaching volunteers formed the nucleus of the instructional staff and the teaching/support staff directed most of the after-school activities for Santa Cruz students. Those activities ranged from the Advisory and the Renaissance programs I described earlier to coaching school athletic teams. The personal investment of teaching volunteers, support staff, and students helped to create a school culture rich in social capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Two of the vital, defining, after-school activities at Santa Cruz went beyond the confines of middle school characteristics, extending the school's commitment to the empowerment of all its stakeholders. The Santa Cruz High School Outreach and the Adult Literacy programs drew on the school's stores of human and social capital in new and varied ways (Field notes, Oct. 2, 2002).
The High School Outreach Program (HSOP) began as a contact program for students once they moved from Santa Cruz. It served as an extensive academic, personal, and communal support network during students’ high school years. The program began in 2000 as an intervention to counter “the fade-out effect” (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990) which had interfered with some Santa Cruz graduates’ continued academic growth at the secondary level. In an explanatory guide (High School Outreach Program, 2002), the director of the high school outreach at Santa Cruz described the inception of the program in the following way (analytical codes in boldface):

Thus far, the fruit of the [Santa Cruz School] is the positive transformation of a neighborhood. [VIS1, CR12] Disenfranchised young people talk about being doctors, teachers, or lawyers when only a few years earlier they would never have imagined such a possibility for their lives.[CR10] The mission of [Santa Cruz] has empowered children to fashion hopes and dreams for their lives, and has given them the tools they need to realize them. It has been a pathway for some children to break out of the cycle of poverty, violence, and despair that has seriously limited their potential. [RR1, 9, CR10, 12, 13, VIS6, COM9]

The challenge of the Outreach Program is known as “fade-out effect.” The fade-out effect is “the dissipation or even complete disappearance of early learning gains because of insufficient follow through on the initial investment in later grades” [Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990, n.p.]. [Santa Cruz] initiated the High School Outreach Program and hired a director in 2000 in order to continue the mentoring and support of its graduates and other high school students. It is imperative that the support and mentoring of these students continues throughout their high school career. [COM1, OWN9, CR2, 9, 10, 12, 13] (p. 4)

The High School Outreach Program at Santa Cruz provided support to graduates, “through financial aid, mentoring, tutoring, retreats, and summer programs” (HSOP, p. 4). The outreach program commenced during the early autumn of students’ 8th grade year at Santa Cruz. At that time, outreach support staff “presented [students] with various options for high schools” (p. 5) and explained to students the mandatory application process for two locally sponsored scholarships. “All eighth graders [were]
required to apply for [those] four-year scholarships and the high school’s financial aid [if students planned to attend Catholic schools] in order to receive any form of financial assistance from the Santa Cruz High School Outreach Program” (p. 5). The staff then worked with the 8th grade language arts teachers in aiding students, and ultimately parents, in the high school application process.

Since students engaged in an interview protocol to secure one of the locally sponsored scholarships, the Outreach Program staff and the 8th grade teachers worked with local-based communications specialists “to train students on interviewing and public speaking practices.” (HSOP, p. 5) The culminating feature of the 8th grade preparation for high school involved participation in an end-of-the-year “Life-Saver” retreat which “addresses issues such as sexual abstinence [and] peer pressure” in addition to other concerns about moving from the familiar atmosphere of Santa Cruz to the much larger and more diverse contexts of area high schools (p. 5).

The program components included two-hour tutoring sessions for participants four nights a week during each trimester of the school year. Santa Cruz staff and neighborhood community members volunteered their evenings to provide those services for students. The outreach staff valued self-monitoring among students, but they nonetheless created guidelines in the program to foster a safe, work-oriented environment. All students completed sign-in and sign-out postcards each tutoring evening and staff members mailed progress reports to parents each week to document the levels of progress their daughters and sons made in tutoring sessions. “Freshmen [were] required to attend tutoring for a minimum of four hours each week until the time of their first quarter report card. The number of hours a student [was] required to attend [was]
determined by his or her previous quarter’s report card” (HSOP, p. 11), in particular the
quality of the grade distributions on the report (e.g. for any letter grade of a “C-“ or
below, a student had to attend sessions for two hours each week).

The mentoring and retreat components of the program focused on coping with
“the conflicting message proclaimed on the streets” (HSOP, p. 13). In the area around
Santa Cruz, gang violence was endemic and the recruitment of new “members” was an
ever-present gang activity. The mentoring program, like the El Espejo project at Lennox
Middle School (Lockwood & Secada, 1999), paired students with adults in the area (e.g.
Santa Cruz teachers, other school community members, college-aged volunteers, career
professionals) in an effort to provide good role models and supportive adult contact
outside a student’s family circle. The retreat component of the outreach program focused
on community. Students participated in a yearly weekend retreat outside the city during
which they were "challenged to wrestle with poignant issues for teenagers, like teen
pregnancy and STDs, peer pressure, goal setting, risk-taking, self-respect, recognition of
personal strengths and talents” (p. 14). The retreats were bonding experiences that
blended laughter and a sense of solidarity with open and frank discussions about the real
challenges students faced in their daily lives (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Conchas, 2001).

The High School Outreach Program at Santa Cruz had the qualities of an adult
mentoring program (Berman et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Secada et al, 1998;
Alder, 2002; Tarwater, 1993; NMSA, 1995) and the structure of a seamless but extended
program within the Santa Cruz School curriculum. Each of those characteristics bound
the success of the outreach program to the human (e.g. personal time, willingness to help,
concern for students after their graduation from Santa Cruz) and social capital (e.g.
teamwork, commitment to financial support, concern for the extended family of the school) of the Santa Cruz community. As the outreach program director explained, the challenges of fostering the holistic growth of Santa Cruz graduates required inquiry and reflection to make the program meaningful and effective, perseverance and strength of commitment to cope with program disappointments (analytical codes in boldface):

Sometimes I feel like a welfare agency. But I know that what we’re doing makes a big difference for the kids. [RR1, COM6] There are lots of disappointments, lots of challenges in the work, especially when kids drop out of school. That’s something I’ve really studied here. [OWN6, RR9] I started collecting homework from some of the 9th graders so I could show _____ and ____ the kinds of things the kids had to do in a writing class…[Through my work] I’ve learned to see a pattern in student behaviors, a kind of signal about dropping out. The problem for our kids is between the middle of the 9th grade and the middle of the 10th…That’s the critical time [COM1, RR6, CR2, 6, 10, 13] (Field notes, Oct. 2, 2002).

The contributions of volunteer teachers and support staff contoured the culture of practice at Santa Cruz. Those contributions were testaments to the inspirational appeal and the "holding power" of the school’s mission (Wheelock, 1998). Some teachers and support staff, for instance, continued their service to Santa Cruz students and families beyond the one-to-three year commitment that the Santa Cruz community commonly asked of volunteers. Bill Speer and the school’s principal were two examples. The human and social capital created through the witness of volunteers had dramatic effect on the broader school community as well (e.g. High School Outreach Program). That effect was measured on three scales that mattered at Santa Cruz. The following figures are graphic illustrations of those scales. Table 4 describes the first Santa Cruz scale, patterns of high school matriculation for Santa Cruz graduates. Table 5 depicts the second scale, participation levels of graduates and parents in the outreach program. Table 6 depicts the third scale, the sources/percentages of scholarship aid for 2002 Santa Cruz graduates.
Table 4. Santa Cruz Graduate Matriculation Patterns

FIRST TRIMESTER (2002) OUTREACH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

| Graduates Receiving Santa Cruz Financial Aid | 64 |
| Class of 1999 | (11) |
| Class of 2000 | (11) |
| Class of 2001 | (24) |
| Class of 2002 | (18) |

Number of Graduate Participants | 66

Participants Meeting Expectations | 77%  
Parent Meeting Attendance (avg.) | 75.5%  
Student Meeting Attendance (avg.) | 72.7%

Table 5. Graduate and Parent Participation in Outreach Program

The second outreach program at Santa Cruz offered literacy classes to parents and other adults in the neighborhood. Each Tuesday and Thursday evening during the normal trimester school calendar, a group of volunteers—some of them Santa Cruz community members or members of the sponsoring religious congregation at Santa Cruz—used small group settings in Santa Cruz classrooms to teach basic English language skills. Placement tests assessed entry-level proficiencies and the adult learners moved through a tracking sequence as their English language skills improved. The program focused on the practical needs of the learners (Berman et al, 1995). Basic literacy skills in reading and numeracy, for instance, were embedded in common literacy-rich activities that most Americans would take for granted. Some of those literacy-rich activities included how to create household budgets, how to open bank accounts, how to secure health insurance, and how to navigate the complex structures of local, state, and federal agencies (Field notes, Jan. 30, 2003). The adult literacy program at Santa Cruz, like the program at Lennox Middle School (Lockwood & Secada, 1999), focused on personal and collective empowerment.

The majority of adult learners (nearly 80%) who entered the program at Santa Cruz spoke little or no English. In addition, of that majority only some learners (65%) had six or more years of formal instruction in Spanish literacy. Each of those factors suggested the challenges learners and instructors faced in the program. First trimester statistics (School Report, Fall 2002) indicated that eighty-seven adults participated in the English language literacy program and that ten other adults were on a program waiting list (Field notes, Jan. 30, 2003).

The adult literacy program had a strong communal component that accentuated the interactive and social nature of literate activities (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Rosado,
Conversation was the primary form of participation in the program and it fostered an intimate instructional atmosphere in the classroom (Sergiovanni, 2000; Auerbach, 1992). Learners and instructors also celebrated the communal quality of the program through the potluck dinners that culminated each trimester session. One of the program's communal strengths—its reliance on teaching volunteers, however, was also one of its major structural challenges. First trimester statistics, as an example, indicated that five of the seven volunteer instructors were “new” to the adult outreach program at Santa Cruz (School Report, Fall 2002).

One of the experienced instructors in the program explained the phenomenon of "turnover" as "a fact of life" in volunteer organizations. "We're asking a lot from people, I think," he said. "We're asking them to invest four hours a week to some pretty difficult work on top of whatever they're already doing in their lives. Some just can't do it for very long." (Field notes, Nov. 22, 2002) The key to volunteer work, he said, and to helping adults acquire literacy skills lay in forming a comfort zone for teacher and for learners. “I mix Spanish and English together [in class]. It creates a comfort zone [because] most of the people speak Spanish all day long, even watch Spanish-language TV programs. Their kids are the language brokers in the home.” (Field notes, Nov. 22, 2003)

In the culture of practice at Santa Cruz, active participation was the yardstick used to measure success (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999). The greater depth of participation was on individual and communal levels, the greater the possibility was for the realization of goals and the success of a lesson, an activity, or a program. Active participation was a tangible sign of solidarity with people and with the mission of service (Freire, 1994, 1997). The graphic illustrations of the high school outreach program that I presented pointed toward the importance of active participation at Santa Cruz, including financial
solidarity with students and families. The reflective "know-care-act" (Banks, 1999) processes that I described in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz (e.g. the shared praxis that led to the formulation of the reading and language arts programs, the reflective journeys of several volunteer teachers, the development of supportive outreach programs for all stakeholders) were manifestations of active participation. The processes illuminated the symbiotic relationship between human capital (e.g. the commitment and witness of individual school community members, reflective praxis, volunteerism) and social capital (e.g. strong networks of support, shared vision and mission, transformative relationships) in the Santa Cruz community. Each "capital" contributed to and drew strength from the other (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000). Together, they formed the participatory nature of the school's culture of practice.

**Exemplar Three**

In the culture of practice at Santa Cruz, the school handbooks were more than compendia of school policies and procedures; they were material artifacts that fostered the growth of human and social capital. One section of the faculty handbook, drawing liberally from the Carnegie Task Force (1989) report on adolescent education, described many of the developmental needs, tendencies, and aspirations of young adults. Another section of the document depicted qualities of a Crossian school and educator. The largest section of the handbook, however, contained seven pages of personal and classroom-oriented suggestions, guidelines, encouragements, and caveats for young teachers. Those pages provided a different angle from which to view the responsive ethic in the culture of practice. They intimated an ethic with inward trajectory, an ethic focused on the identity
formation of teachers (Nieto, 1999; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001). Figure 24 represents a sampling of those personal and classroom-related images.

HELPFUL HINTS AND ATTITUDES

- The class period belongs to the children; they are your first responsibility.
- Treat each child as a unique and special individual.
- Seek each child's friendship and give yours in return.
- Be sure children participate in planning, understand what they are going to do, why they are doing it, and how to go about doing it.
- Radiate happiness and joy in your work. They are contagious.
- Be sensitive to the children's feelings and different abilities and family situations.
- Be encouraging. When children do poorly, help them to understand how the job can be done in a better way.
- Be patient. Not all children will grasp your words of wisdom the first time.
- Keep that sense of humor. It will save many a situation.
- Have confidence in each child's desire to do the right thing.

Figure 24. Santa Cruz Faculty Handbook "Helpful Hints"

Teaching volunteers at Santa Cruz were idealistic and enthusiastic "cultural workers" (Freire, 1998); what they lacked was practical teaching experience. One of the more seasoned members of the school community, in a jocular way, described them as people who were "filled with all the energies of youth, all the ideals of youth, and a few youthful vices for good measure" (Field notes, Jan. 7, 2003). The Faculty Handbook served as a harnessing tool, a soft bit and bridle, to form those youthful energies into a dynamic communal force. Freire (1994) calls such a process "an integral part of teacher preparation," a focused effort to distill "qualities that [were] indispensable" in responsive teaching practice (p. 108). It is a process of helping a teacher "full of life and hope for a better world" form a reflective disposition and consistency in living out "a committed
presence in the world." (p. 110) Nieto (1999) describes such a process as a political and transformational journey through which teachers, individually and collectively, "delve into their own identities" (p. 133) as cultural learners in order to establish stronger bonds with their culturally diverse students. For Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001), such a process emphasizes the ideological and political nature of education and invites teachers to critically examine their beliefs and assumptions about the world, about the purposes of education, and about their roles as cultural mediators for all students.

The responsive teaching identity advocated at Santa Cruz School involved the appropriation of a reflective praxis of inquiry, critique, and professional development and the embrace of a student-centered philosophy (e.g. Nieto, 1999; Freire, 1994; Secada et al, 1998; Moll, 2001). Each of those qualities appeared explicitly in Faculty Handbook statements related to professionalism and student assessment. The concept of teaching as a vocation (p. 8) and public expression of personal commitment (p. 10) required that teachers take "positions on issues so that the students...see how Christianity is lived and expressed" and devote time and energy to become "truly professional in [every area] of performance." (p. 9) Staff members for whom teaching was a vocation and expression of commitment "motivate[d], encourage[d] and inspire[d] student[s] to excel in [all their] endeavors,...set goals and expectations that challenge[d] students to meet their potential." (p. 18). Those for whom teaching was also a reflective and professional pursuit enhanced their expertise through "taking courses [and] attending seminars [and] workshops" related to specific academic areas or Catholic school education (p. 10) and scheduling "at least three days of professional growth" in their personal calendars each school year (p. 34).
References to student assessment at Santa Cruz, both those in the faculty and in the parent handbooks, pointed to the applicative meaning of responsive teaching. In the Faculty Handbook, for example, the following passage appeared under the document heading "Report Cards and Progress Reports" [analytical codes in boldface]:

Regular testing must be a part of every course at [Santa Cruz] School. [EXP1, RR9] Regular testing provides motivation and a sense of direction for the student in the course. [EXP4, LIT6] Tests should not be entirely objective in nature, but rather should vary in order to accurately test a variety of skills and content. [EXP7] It is imperative that grades are based on sufficient evidence of a student’s performance. [RR1, COM4, CR11] Clear goals are to be set at the beginning of each grading period, and revised as appropriate. [RR1, 7] No grade given by a teacher should come as a surprise to a student. [CR11, EQU1] There should be enough testing, feedback and intervention on the part of the teacher that a student always knows exactly where he/she stands in a class. [RR1, 6, CR3, EXP8] If this is not the case, it is the teacher’s fault, not the student’s. [OWN1, EQU6, EXP3] (p. 34)

Eisner (1985) contends that the most unexamined components of school curricula are the modalities through which school personnel assess student performance and achievement. The kinds of evaluative tools school staff members utilize in a culture of practice has substantive influence on the teaching approaches they use and, ultimately, on the ways that students experience the curriculum. How a school staff uses tests and testing, from Eisner's (1985) perspective, indicates a philosophical orientation. Tests were only one of several assessment practices at Santa Cruz School (Research log, Apr. 10, 2003), but the handbook statement concerning tests and testing suggested a clear rationale for their use as a teaching resource and an ethical posture for their use in student evaluation (Halcón, 2001).

References to student assessment, specifically the grading and homework policies at Santa Cruz, assumed a philosophical tenor in the Parent Handbook (2001-2002). The focus of grading policies was on evaluation as a form of encouragement and learning as a life-long endeavor:
The staff at [Santa Cruz School] recognizes the wide range of abilities, aptitudes, stages of cognitive development, and levels of maturity in middle school students. [CR11, VIS1, COM9] Therefore, we support an evaluation system which encourages the development of work habits, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for students to become life-long learners. [CR12, OWN7, COM9] Grading policies developed by individual teachers confirm this belief by promoting [assessment] practices that

- reflect student achievement of curricular goals in respect to their abilities [EQU6, CR10, RR1];

- reflect numerous and varied age-appropriate opportunities for students to succeed and demonstrate knowledge of subject matter [CR10, 11, 13, COM1, EQU6, VIS6];

- foster students' responsibility by considering work quality, effort, and task performance [EQU4, 9, CR10, 11, OWN6];

- effect good communication with students, parents, staff, and community. [COM6, CR9, RR1] (p. 7)

The focus of homework policies at Santa Cruz was on classroom learning reinforcement, the development of good study habits, and the fostering of a learning partnership between home and school:

Homework is an integral part of the school experience. [EXP1, VIS6] It also provides for a vital partnership between teacher and parent with the child as the beneficiary. [COM6, CR2, CR9] Actually, a child's success in school is often a reflection of the support and assistance that parents offer. [VIS3, EXP7] Through homework, the lifelong habit of study and responsibility can be established. [COM7] In addition to reinforcing classroom learning, homework assignments help students develop independent study habits and give them opportunities to use their preferred learning styles.[OWN6, RR9, CR10] Parents are asked to make sure that homework assignments are completed. [EXP6, RR1, CR2, 9, REL3] (p. 7)

Like the helpful hints for teachers in the Faculty Handbook, suggestions regarding school homework in the Parent Handbook were practical ways that parents could engage with their children in a supportive, school-related capacity. The suggestions (See Figure 25) intimated invitation to participation (parent-teacher) and exhortation to interaction (parent-children).
**SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTAL SUPERVISION OF HOMEWORK**

- See that books/materials come home regularly. Look at what your child is bringing home. Ask to see your child's homework assignment book. Don't accept the excuse that "I did it in school" or "There is no homework." There is not enough time to do homework properly or thoroughly in school. Remember...there will always be reading and math homework. Even if there is no written homework, there is always study homework.

- See that your child does homework in an appropriate atmosphere-- free of distractions, with proper light, etc.

- Develop regular routines for homework in the house, for example at the same time each day.

- Look at the written homework. Does it look as if thought and effort went into it? Is it neat and accurate? If you were the teacher, would you accept the paper? If not, it should be re-done.

- Ask your child to show you what he/she is learning in each class. Ask your child to explain the concepts or information to you. If your child can't explain it to your satisfaction, he/she needs to study again or perhaps ask a question in class the next day.

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**Figure 25. Suggestions for Parental Homework Supervision**

In addition to the functional purpose of communicating policies, procedures, and requirements, the Santa Cruz handbooks were open invitations to active participation in forming the cultural life of the school. The passages from those documents represented specific ways that responsive practices among teachers and parents incarnated (Freire, 1994) core dimensions of the Santa Cruz mission to empower neighborhood children.

**Exemplar Four**

The Santa Cruz School community shared its cultural values in several ways. The school handbooks I described were material artifacts that expressed the goals and the philosophy of the explicit curriculum and conveyed its structural features; individual program descriptions and trimester summaries were material artifacts that described the values inhering in the outreach components of the explicit curriculum. The Santa Cruz School newsletters, however, were material artifacts that communicated how explicit
school values played a significant role in the lives of Santa Cruz students, graduates, teachers, and benefactors (Secada et al., 1998; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Garcia, 2001). In Figure 26, I listed the titles of articles from four available Santa Cruz newsletters to provide a simple construct in which to represent the ways those explicit school values permeated public communication between school and community.

**SANTA CRUZ SCHOOL NEWS ARTICLE TITLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Community of Learners (pp. 1, 4)</td>
<td>Santa Cruz School News (Summer, 2000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jose Morales (pseudonym), a Santa Cruz Graduate; Testing Documents</td>
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<td>Impressive Gains (p. 2)</td>
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<td>Santa Cruz: A Model of Success [reprinted news article] (p. 3)</td>
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<td>The Dawn of Hope (p. 4)</td>
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<td>Technology and Multiculturalism at Heart of Curriculum (p. 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvest of Hope (p. 1)</td>
<td>Santa Cruz School News (Fall, 2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hope for a Promising Year; Santa Cruz’s Newest Faces (p. 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet the 6th Grade: Interviews with Santa Cruz’s Class of 2004 (p. 3)</td>
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<td>Words of Wisdom (graduate address); Hope for a New Generation (p. 4)</td>
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<td>From Bad Boys to Bat Boys; Congratulations Class of 2001! (p. 5)</td>
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<td>Santa Cruz Donors (p. 7)</td>
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<td>A Tale of Two Schools (p. 1)</td>
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<td>New Staff (p. 2)</td>
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<td>Maria Lopez (pseudonym) Recognized as Honors Reader; Featured Teacher: Mr. Joe Brooks (pseudonym) (p. 3)</td>
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<td>Our Connection with Santa Cruz: A Family’s Personal Story (p. 4)</td>
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<td>Mentoring: Strengthening Our Community Relationships; Honor Roll, Spring Trimester, 2002 (p. 5)</td>
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<td>Legacy Gift; Golf Story; ESL Classes Begin Second Year; Remembering September 11th (p. 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz Donors; How Can You Help? (p. 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Evidence is In (school’s initial class graduates from high school) (p. 1)</td>
<td>Santa Cruz School News (Summer, 2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Evidence is In: Part 2; Initial Teaching Alphabet (p. 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Featured Teacher: Ms. Ann Jones; Congratulations, 8th Grade Class! (p. 3)</td>
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<td>Baccalaureate: A Celebration of Success; Santa Cruz’s First Class—Their Next Steps (p. 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Matter of Ganas (Desire) (Santa Cruz graduate’s high school salutatorian address (p. 5)</td>
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<td>High School Outreach Achievement (p. 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz Donors; How Can You Help? (p. 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congratulations High School Class of 2002 (p. 8)</td>
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**Figure 26. Santa Cruz School News Article Titles**

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The article titles conveyed themes that resonated with the "know-care-act" philosophy (Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Freire, 1994) in Santa Cruz vision and belief statements. They suggested the communicative importance of personal stories by or about Santa Cruz graduates and teachers (e.g. "Jose Morales," "Words of Wisdom," Teacher feature on "Ann Jones") and the communal pride occasioned by the particular accomplishments of Santa Cruz students and graduates (e.g. "From Bad Boys to Bat Boys," "Maria Lopez," "A Matter of Ganas"). The article titles intimated who and what were valued in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz School: the lives, beliefs, and success stories of students, graduates, and teachers (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Moll, 2001; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Borman & Racuba, 2001; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Díaz & Flores, 2001). The titles also intimated the desire to communicate the political and transformative values (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1999; Freire, 1994, 1997) present in the Santa Cruz School experience-based curriculum (e.g. "A Lesson in Justice," "Seeing Fort Benning through New Eyes," "Technology and Multiculturalism at the Heart of the Curriculum") and the sense of welcome and invitation (e.g. "Hope for a Promising Year," Santa Cruz’s Newest Faces," "Meet the 6th Graders," "New Staff") at the core of the Santa Cruz school vision.

The Santa Cruz School newsletters were also mediating tools that connected the culture of practice with the school's wider support network. Santa Cruz, like the Jesuit-sponsored Nativity schools (e.g. Carter, 2001; Ward, 2001; Moran, 2002), did not rely on tuition ($40 monthly per student) as a primary fiscal resource. On the contrary, the school depended on personal, family, and foundation philanthropy to engage its literacy mission. The sharing of stories related to Santa Cruz School benefactors (e.g. "Our Connection with Santa Cruz"), then, as well as the financial reports, the listing of donors,
and the references to fund-raising efforts were newsletter features that celebrated the generosity of benefactors and communicated the continuing needs of the school (Carter, 2001, Ward, 2001; Moran, 2002). The financial support network of the school, illustrated in Table 7, showed the degree to which Santa Cruz School was a broad-based and community-dependent education initiative (Field notes, Jan. 30, 2003).

![Diagram of Santa Cruz School Funding Sources]

Table 7. Santa Cruz School Funding Sources

The language and the tenor of the articles reflected what Freire (1994) calls "the radical nature of hope" (p. 53), the participation and celebration with others in "making history out of possibility" (p. 54). I chose excerpts from three representative selections in the newsletters to depict the semantic qualities of articles in general and to represent the hopeful tenor suggested in those semantic qualities. Each of the excerpts illumined some feature of the transformative ethic at the root of the Santa Cruz culture of practice. Two of the school's benefactors, for example, spoke about their sponsorship of Santa Cruz as both a form of enrichment and an education in social justice:

Through our relationship with [Santa Cruz] our lives and those of our extended family have been broadened and enriched. We've met students whose desire to live a good life provides them the courage to be different from their
peers in an environment where being different can be dangerous. We’ve met
good people trying to make the best world they can for their children. We’ve met
the good people, who, in their roles as teachers, administrators, religious and
benefactors, have a profound influence for good in the lives of [Santa Cruz's]
students, their families and the community they live in. We’ve been educated to
the obstacles that poor people face. And we've come to know God's love....[It's]
difficult to overstate how much our family has benefited from participating in the
mission of [Santa Cruz] and we are grateful for the opportunity! [OWN1, 6, RR4,
CR7, 9, 18, COM4] (Santa Cruz School News, Fall 2002, p. 4)

In another article, a Santa Cruz graduate spoke about _ganas_, the Spanish word for
desire, in a text version of her high school salutatorian address. The address ended with
hope-filled words reminiscent of the Santa Cruz founding narrative and the school vision
of a graduate, both of which I shared earlier in this text: "Anything is possible if we only
have _ganas_; anything is possible if you have the desire to achieve it. We must never give
up on our hopes and dreams....never!" (Santa Cruz School News, Summer 2002, p. 5)

The school's founder provided a historical perspective in which to celebrate the
success stories represented in the high school graduation of Santa Cruz's initial group of
students. He noted important "numbers" about the group (e.g. 85% of the class were now
high school graduates, 15% of the class were continuing their high school educations,
three in the class were inductees into the National Honor Society) and then reflected on
those success stories as inspirations that strengthened the transformative process at the
heart of the Santa Cruz mission:

> It has not been an easy road. One graduate survived a bullet that he took
through his body; a second graduate also survived a bullet that he took in a drive-
by shooting; a third graduate lost a sister who took her own life; a fourth graduate
overcame the influence of a brother serving time for homicide; a fifth graduate,
despite not knowing English when he started at [Santa Cruz], is graduating with a
3.5 grade point average from ___ (a well-respected Catholic high school).

This group of graduates has inspired all of us at [Santa Cruz]. This group
of graduates has also inspired our neighborhood and an entire city. [VIS9, COM3]
This inspiration is rooted in deep courage, perseverance, and faith in themselves
and one another. They have validated our [Santa Cruz] philosophy that character, zeal, and opportunity, rather than social class or environment, are the determining factors in achieving one's goals in life....[VIS1, COM4, CR2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14]

Seven years ago we set out to help our students dream about possibilities for their lives; today, our students are helping us to dream about possibilities for our lives and the lives of others. It's all about transformation: first the physical transformation of a school, then the transformation of minds and hearts; later on, the transformation of a neighborhood. This is true strength: to change others by changing yourself. This is a celebration of the human spirit! The evidence is in. [VIS1, COM4, RR8, CR8, 9, 10] (Santa Cruz School News, Summer 2002, p. 1)

**Exemplar Five**

Emblematic of the communal, nurturing, and participatory nature of the explicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz was the school community's adoption of the Behavioral Intervention Support Team (BIST) concept in student management (Huitt, 1999). BIST represented an approach to discipline that valued “grace” and “accountability. “[G]race [meant] giving kids what they need[ed], not what they deserve[d]. [T]hat meant, in turn,] accepting ...the needs and pains [that students brought] into...[school] buildings...and supporting [students] in spite of the obstacles” (Huitt, p. 8). Providing balance in the approach, the concept of accountability referred to procedures that “help[ed] students look at the problem their behavior [created] for them. By patiently helping students to look reflectively at their behavior, [they grew to see teachers as partners in a process that] focused on helping] them change.” (p. 8)

BIST is a literacy-based management model that incorporates written and conversational features. *Think Sheets* and *safety seats*, for instance, form the initial movement in the intervention process. They afford “students the opportunity to examine their behavior and to develop a plan on how to [change] the behavior” (Huitt, p. 31) outside the classroom. Personal conversations between students and teachers focus on
students’ written reflections, sometimes leading to increased reflection time and more elaborate Think Sheet responses. The process stresses the value of students’ perceptions and the necessity of supporting students in their behavioral growth. The process stresses positive adult responses rather than the imposition of arbitrary or punitive measures in dealing with student misconduct. Accentuation of the positive strikes the balance between “grace” and “accountability” that lies at the program’s ethical base (p. 32). To assist students who have recurring behavioral problems, other stages in the intervention process involve contact with a wider support group of adults, temporary removal from a class to a “buddy seat” in another classroom, and/or an extended period outside the classroom to develop a more thorough plan for managing feelings (pp. 42-43).

One of the volunteer teachers at Santa Cruz described the BIST program as "a combination of care, correction, and responsibility." "It's easy sometimes to get angry with students, especially when they disrupt your class," she said. "It's also part of human nature to sometimes say things before you have a chance to think about them. That's where BIST makes a difference. There's a built-in cooling off period that helps you focus on how to help a student, how to be a caring influence rather than an authority figure." (Field notes, Sept. 17, 2002) A more experienced member of the faculty spoke about the procedural value of the BIST program. "Most of our kids are docile," he said. [I asked what 'docile' meant and he said 'open and cooperative.'] "I've always been able to convince them of the wisdom of my ways. But the BIST format helps certain kinds of kids and, I think, certain teachers too because it has stages and procedures that aren't confrontational. Just getting students to reflect on what happened and why it happened help them become responsible and self-directed." (Field notes, Nov. 20, 2002)
A third staff member, however, did not share the same optimism about the BIST program. She wondered if "the process really help[ed] kids change" their behaviors. "I don't really think that sending a student out of the classroom to 'think' on a sheet of paper resolves very much," she said. "Some of the same kids are always working on 'Think Sheets.' I suppose it's a step in the right direction, but we still need to be more consistent in what we expect of students—teacher to teacher." (Field notes, Oct. 2, 2002)

What motivated the school staff to adopt the BIST program was the desire to deal with "molehills when they [were] molehills" and stop "them from becoming mountains." (Principal's staff notes, Mar. 13, 2003) "It doesn't make much sense," an aforementioned staff member said, "to say we're trying to empower kids by making a whole list of dos and don'ts for them to follow. We're...I mean teachers and students are partners here and we should share the responsibility of making the program work for everybody." (Nov. 20, 2002) What those perceptions suggested was a student management program (i.e. BIST) guided by an ethic of social justice and shared responsibility rather than a philosophy of efficiency and expediency (Rumberger, 2000; Inlay, 2003; Díaz & Flores, 2001).

Mulhall (2000) contends that a school's consistent and positive discipline policies strengthen student self-efficacy, encourage active student participation in school life, and foster the growth of student academic motivation. Conchas (2001) refers to a school's student management program as "an institutional mechanism" with the potential to "mediate school engagement" optimistically or pessimistically (p. 480). He describes student discipline policies and practices as significant "cultural processes in schools" (p. 502) that create "opportunity structures" for mitigating student disaffection and marginalization in a formal academic setting (p. 480). Rumberger (2000) states that
disciplinary policies have the potential to invite meaningful teacher-student dialogue or to "push students out the door." Gutiérrez, Baquedano, López, and Alvarez (2001) contend that positive school practices related to student discipline form "a third space" which "honors alternate and competing discourses" with the potential "to transform conflict and difference into collaborative learning" for students and teachers (p. 127). The BIST program at Santa Cruz was both a commitment to dialogue and to collaboration.

The Implicit Culture of Practice at Santa Cruz School

The climate of academic focus and friendly interaction that I observed in daily tenor of life at Santa Cruz School suggested what the principal described as “a peaceful, loving, open-armed, caring, and nurturing” ethic of education (Interview, May 12, 2003). That ethic represented a primary feature of what Eisner (1985) would call the school's implicit (or hidden) curriculum. The implicit curriculum refers to qualities in the culture of practice that enable, or disable, the purposeful pursuit of the visions and goals in the explicit curriculum of a school (Goodlad, 1984). According to Deal and Peterson (1999), the difference between a positive and a "toxic" culture of practice lies in the responsive quality of a school's mission and vision and the degree to which its rules and rituals, processes and procedures, roles and relationships flow from and witness to its mission and vision. Inlay (2003) describes that kind of implicit curriculum as "the modeling of values" (p.69). Sergiovanni (2000) calls it a reflection of the "lifeworld" where the ethic of doing "what is rewarding" (p. 45) has transformative power in the curriculum and communal life of a school.

The implicit curriculum, from a social constructivist perspective, represents the mediating actions and operations (Wells, 1999; Leon'ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987) that
individuals and groups socially construct and enact in order to achieve explicit goals. The implicit curriculum is a reflection, in daily social practice, of the values, attitudes, and processes that really matter to school members (Sizer, 1999; Bogdan & Bilken, 1982; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Au, 1998). It provides the primary means to apprentice learners into the school culture, (Rogoff, 1995, 1998) into the school's ways of defining teaching, learning, and making sense of experience (Wells, 1999; Roth, Tobin, Emelsky, Carambo, McKnight, & Beers, 2002; Dewey, 1966). According to Eisner (1985), the implicit curriculum of a school is a salient and pervasive ideology manifested in organizational structures, various approaches to teaching, reward/assessment systems, even physical characteristics like office and classroom design, furniture appointments, and decorations. It is what a school teaches because of the kind of place a school is.

The implicit curriculum, from a multicultural orientation, consists of those qualities in a culture of practice that "communicate to students the school's attitudes toward a range of issues and problems, including how the school views them as human beings and its attitudes toward...students from various religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups." (Banks, 1993, p. 24) The implicit curriculum represents the often tacit but locally sanctioned "way of doing things" in a school or a classroom (Spradley, 1980; Moll, 2001). For Rosado (1996), the explicit curriculum of a school has only a cosmetic appeal; the value of the explicit curriculum lies in how it comes to life in the implicit curriculum—the daily cultural practices of teachers, support staff, and students (Nieto, 1999; Halcón, 2001; Freire, 1994). Daily cultural practices are political statements, he contends, expressions in thought, word, and act that define the spaces and the contours of teaching and learning in a school. Those practices that are imbued with a culturally
responsive ethic, however, define teaching and learning spaces and contours in new and transformative ways (Banks, 1995, 1999; Nieto, 1999). Such practices are responses that address the Spanish adage *Podemos destruir con nuestros pies lo que construimos con nuestras manos* [We can destroy with out feet what we build with our hands] with the ethical force of conviction in actions and commitment to cultural diversity through human solidarity (Rosaldo, 1996, 1999; Freire, 1994, 1997, 1998; Moll, 1990, 2001; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Banks, 1999; Gay, 1994).

**Responsive Qualities in the Implicit Culture of Practice**

In my discussion of the explicit curriculum at Santa Cruz, I identified salient cultural themes (Spradley, 1980) that emerged during the course of fieldwork analysis. The first of those themes was the shared process, the reflective practice (Freire, 1994; Dewey, 1933), through which the school community members developed an effective, culturally responsive reading and language arts program (Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 1994; Nieto, 1999). The second theme was the catalytic, or transforming, qualities in the explicit culture of practice that deepened and extended the school's human and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Moll, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000; Rosado, 1999). The third theme was the ways that the school's student discipline program entwined principles of social justice and shared accountability (Rosado, 1996; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Rumberger, 1997, 2000; Conchas, 2001) in a literacy-oriented framework. Those themes guided, as well, the sequencing and the focus of my discussion of the implicit curriculum. At Santa Cruz School, the implicit culture of practice was responsive and intentional, and it suggested what Rosado (1996) calls the transformative paradigm of "living diversity."
Writing Lab: A Narrative of Transformative Practice

Deal and Peterson (1999) remark that every school has important narratives that give historical depth and meaning to its culture. The school founder’s journal reflection about the beginning of Santa Cruz was one of those penetrating written narratives. But Deal and Peterson (1999) also note that every school has an “appointed” storyteller, a narrator who has the oral abilities to chronicle activities and cast them aglow in a local perspective. At Santa Cruz School, Bill Speer—theatre major, former actor, and most experienced member of the language arts faculty—was the school community raconteur, and his words and practices put the explicit scope and sequence I described earlier into a brief, tightly knit, personal context. Bill’s writing lab was a strategic mediating structure in the language arts curriculum. It was an intervention class for students who needed special attention or an alternative mode of instruction in their writing development. It was also a technology-oriented class where students learned keyboarding skills as they worked on individual writing projects at their computer stations. Most important of all, however, Bill’s writing lab was an exemplar of the principled nature of instruction in the culture of teaching practice at Santa Cruz (Research log, May 3, 2003).

In his writing lab instruction, Bill Speer focused on integration and process as tools to effect growth in student literacy (Field notes, Sept. 16, 2002). He “[did] not use a lot of direct instruction” in the lab. Instead, he tried “to draw out all the vocabulary, writing conventions, grammar, rhetorical devices, and so forth” that students would study from stories or accounts they had read or “were currently reading in [their other] classes.” Bill believed “that students learn[ed] best when they [were] in a learning context that was meaningfully connected” to their other classes (Field notes, Oct. 8, 2002). In a practice
exercise, for instance, he preferred to choose a sentence in context from a story students read in literature class (e.g. *The Giver*, *Night*, *The Chocolate War*) or a story related to their social studies class (e.g. American Revolution: “Phoebe the Spy,”“ Chapter VI of *Johnny Tremain*) and “ask about subject, predicate, direct object….things like that.” It was more an effort to get students to “look at” how words worked, “to touch on structural elements” in a text, (Field notes, Oct. 15, 2002) than “to attend to hollow, inane, de-contextualized sub-skills (Delpit, 1995, p. 45).

The writing process that Bill employed with his twelve 8th grade students (two classes) flowed from what he called the “virtue” of “asking something of the student” and of expecting “something that’s meaningful” in return (Interview, May 12, 2003). In his classes, those expressions were synonymous with a belief in each student’s abilities and an expectation of each student’s best effort on any written assignment (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Moll, 2001; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997). Bill stressed the process of revision in every composing task (Field notes, Oct. 8, 2002; Oct. 15, 2002; Oct. 22, 2002; Jan. 6, 2003; Jan. 30, 2003; Feb. 27, 2003) and used individual conferencing with students as a means to help them engage the writing process productively and strategically (Atwell, 1998; Berman et al, 1995; Laliberty, 2001; Haberman, 1991).

The culture of teaching practice in Bill’s writing lab had a rhythm that was both methodical and responsive. The following exemplars taken from my field observations reflected the synergism of those rhythmic qualities. The first exemplar reconstructed a “typical” class in the 8th grade writing lab (Lab diagram provided in Figure 27). My redaction, with analytical codes in boldface, suggested how Bill integrated both his concern about “looking at words in relation to one another” and his commitment to
“provide a practical, timely response” to student composing efforts (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002). The subject-matter context of the redaction was an extended historical fiction writing project (See Appendix H, pp. 360-1). The second exemplar represented stages in Bill’s process of transformational thinking and planning. Those stages commenced in the first trimester of the school year and continued into the third trimester. I reconstructed the process not as a redaction of a single episode, but as a series of brief self-disclosures in the language Bill used in sharing his reflective practice during fieldwork.

Exemplar One

8th Grade Writing Lab (6 students)
Friday, Oct. 4, 2002
9:10 a.m.

Figure 27. Santa Cruz Writing Lab Diagram

Students sat at two tables in the lab. Bill sat on a stool in front of them and the classroom whiteboard. He distributed a stapled packet of materials on blue paper. The title on the packet was “Writing: Historical Fiction—Phoebe the Spy.”

BS: You’ve all been studying about the American Revolution with Mr. ___ in social studies class. What we want to do is tie into what you’re reading and talking about to write a story….a story about the revolution. [MM6, LIT4]
S: You mean something we make up, Mr. ___? Not real history?
BS: Well, yes…but we’re going to use history, the stuff you’re learning about in social studies to help make up the stories. Let’s look at the packet. [CR14]
BS: If I need to stop, just raise your hand….it’s the same if I need to repeat something for you. Raise your hand. Okay? [EXP1]

Bill verbally highlighted each of the first six pages in the packet (ten pages total).
BS: The first thing we want to do is make a summary of “Phoebe” using the circle, triangle, and boxes on the first two pages. Take a few minutes, let’s say ten minutes, to do that. Then, we’ll work on one of the other lessons in the packet. [LIT7, 8, EXP4]

Bill called that introductory practice “preparing the battlefield.” (Field notes, Oct. 8, 2002) He sometimes illustrated concepts on the whiteboard in the lab, but most often used printed handouts, like the aforementioned packet of materials, to give students an idea of the whole lesson or project from the outset. “It’s important that they know what’s coming next,” he said. “It’s part of what I’m trying to teach them about writing. Thinking ahead, thinking and planning about what comes next.” (Field notes, Oct. 10, 2002) It was also important, as Bill stated, that students had activities that helped them “refresh their memories” about prior learning experiences. A few days before the field observation on which this exemplar was based, students in Bill’s writing lab had completed the reading of “Phoebe the Spy” and had written paragraph-length character descriptions.

BS: Okay, let’s look at the page “Dictation: Prepositions.” Let’s do the top part together. I’m going to read the paragraph slowly. I want you to follow along with me and ask yourself which of the prepositions I listed on the page fits in the blank spaces for each sentence. Fill in the spaces in each sentence with the preposition you think fits best. [LIT7, 8, RR6]

Bill and his students completed the exercise in two minutes. Students then took turns sharing their responses to the exercise. Students responded correctly in seven of nine examples. Bill put on the whiteboard the two problem sentences and asked for volunteers to explain why only one preposition made sense in each case. Two students provided correct responses. [LIT7, CR2, 6, EXP8]

For the next twenty minutes, students worked at computer stations on the related writing task in the exercise. The task involved the construction of a paragraph that a) was three sentences in length, b) included five of the listed prepositions, and c) made story-related references to three designated characters in “Phoebe the Spy.” As students worked on the writing task, Bill reviewed folders of student writing and met briefly with two students....[LIT4, RR6, CR7, 4]

BS: Let’s see, ___ (Student A). Good details here. (Student’s arms were folded on the table, head down on arms, eyes focused on the piece of writing to
which Bill referred.) Mechanics are better too. (Bill put an exclamation point and three checkmarks on the student’s paper.) Now we need to work on more details…here…and here. Think about what you know, ___. You know already some things about George Washington from social studies class. Just use things that you know to give more details in the character description. Okay? (Bill underlined and put asterisks on the student’s paper.) The student smiled and nodded his head. (In his grade book, Bill put a checkmark in one of the columns next to the student’s name.) [LIT7, RR5, CR10]

BS: You’re really good at getting your work done, ___ (Student B). I don’t have to remind you about it and I appreciate that. But I think sometimes that you rush too much, that you hurry too much when you’re writing. That’s not so good. Here’s an example of what I mean. (Bill pointed out a passage in the student’s paper and turned the paper toward the student. The student looked at the paper as Bill spoke.) Read that sentence for me, ___. (The student read the sentence aloud.) [LIT7, RR5, OWN1]

BS: How did the sentence sound to you, ___? Did it make sense?
S: Not really. I think it needs a verb or maybe two verbs.
BS: Uh huh. That’s right. Let’s look at the sentence again. Where do you think you need two verbs? (The student pointed to two places within one of the sentences in his paper.)
BS: There are a lot of words in that sentence, ___. Are you sure those are the right places for verbs? (The student looked at his paper and shook his head.)
S: Not really, Mr. ___. [LIT6, CR7, OWN6]
BS: Okay. Let’s do it this way. I’ll mark the sections of the sentence that need attention. What you can do is look at each section and decide how it needs to be changed so it makes sense. Will that work? (The student nodded and Bill underlined two sections in the sentence.) [CR2, 15, RR8]
BS: There’s something else I want you to look at, ___. It’s that “DEV” I wrote in a couple of place on your paper. Development is nothing new, ___. We’ve been working on it since last year. I want you to look at all the sentences and then ask a simple question: Would somebody who hadn’t read “Phoebe the Spy” understand what you said about her in your paragraph? Do that, ___. We’ll meet again tomorrow to talk some more about revisions. (The student nodded.) [LIT7, 8, CR7, 8, 10] (Field notes, Oct. 4, 2002).

Indeed, there was more than a small strain of the organizational taskmaster in Bill’s instructional approach. He didn’t believe “in coddling students” or “rewarding them for work that wasn’t their best effort.” (Field notes, Oct. 16, 2002). He wanted them to become better students, better writers, by being more methodical in the way they did their work (Laliberty, 2001; Reyes, 1992; Haberman, 1991). “It’s through the act of
writing,” he stated, “the process of writing [and rewriting], analyzing their own and each other’s writing, through attending to small things like grammar and bigger things like idea development, that [students] learn how to use language effectively.” (Interview, May 12, 2003) The typical composition that 8th graders wrote in Bill’s lab consisted of six or seven drafts (Field notes, Feb. 27, 2003).

There was also the tender-heart in Bill’s approach. He “cared deeply” about the Santa Cruz students and “wanted them to succeed” in school and in life. Bill’s care for students extended to Saturday mornings and special one-on-one sessions with those in his class who had the greatest difficulty (Field notes, Oct. 15, 2002). He wanted students in the writing lab to develop reflective habits of mind (Dewey, 1966, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1994, 1998) that they could carry with them and apply to circumstances outside his class (Field notes, Nov. 20, 2002).

Exemplar Two

Activity theory is a conceptual model used by many sociocultural researchers to identify and describe contradictions or problematic areas in the mediating structures of human organizations (Engeström, 1987; Wells, 2000). The illumination of contradictions or problems in those structures serve as pivotal moments or spaces for the emergence of transformational growth in individuals and groups. It is in the ways that individuals and groups of people go about resolving contradictions or problems that change, and possibly transformation, take root in an organization (Rogoff, 1995, 1998; Engeström, 1999). For many multicultural educators (e.g. Banks, 1995, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Gay, 1994; Moll, 1990, 2001), the process of resolving contradictions is the mechanism through which individuals and groups appropriate a multicultural ethic and perspective.
Bill Speer expressed the process of personal growth that he embraced as a trial and error movement toward meaningful responsive practice (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 1994, 1999; Inlay, 2003; Nieto, 1999, 2000). The movement involved a recurring pattern of inquiry, reflection, action, and evaluation (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1994). Its object (motive), as Bill stated it, was to develop a more relevant and effective teaching practice:

I constantly asked myself several questions. ‘Am I tapping into students’ prior knowledge? Where’s culture in the mix? Do students care about what we’re doing in the writing lab? What’s the role of content? What’s the role of student experience?’ I tried to strike a balance between two forces—my concern for the kids and the neighborhood culture, on the one hand, and my beliefs about writing and learning as methodical processes, on the other [CR1, 10, 14] (May 12, 2003).

Bill was not reluctant to share his thoughts about teaching and about appropriating a professional teaching identity. Indeed, almost all brief exchanges we had before and/or after one of my lab observations centered on some aspect of teaching. It was in analysis of those brief conversations that I identified stages in Bill’s movement toward a culturally responsive teaching identity. I framed the stages in sequence (dates), using Bill’s words as data resources (input) and my comments, in brackets and boldface type, as a description of the respective analytical codes I developed.

Sept. 10, 2002: I focus on integration, building a foundation of skills based on a whole language approach. Sometimes, I draw from suggestions in this binder on ESL (English as a second language) practices. [This intimated Bill’s concern with basic skills development that did not focus on decontextualized exercises (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1999) and his effort to incorporate strategies recommended in empirical research on second language instruction.]

Sept. 17, 2002: I wanted to merge a writing task with an important social event. That’s the rationale for the 9-11 letters the students are writing. It gives them a chance to learn more about what happened on 9-11 because we do some research on the internet and it gives them a chance to be creative in their writing. ____ is writing a letter to a firemen who was at ground zero. [This pointed to the ways that Bill tried to weave “a reading of the world” (Freire, 1994; 1998)
into a response-oriented writing task. It tied into the memorial liturgy on 9-11 as well. The task drew on students’ imaginations (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1994) and integrated multiple modes of literate activity (e.g. reading, internet, imaginative/critical thought, keyboarding, composing, editing) in a project (Gardner, 1983; Eisner, 1985).

Sept. 20, 2002: [Santa Cruz] is a special place with a lot of special kids. ___ for example, came here without any English language skills, he and his sister. They’ve really improved in a year, but they still have a long way to go. Look at ___’s folder. You can see some of the growth and some of the problems with language. [From Bill’s perspective, what staff members did at Santa Cruz made a great deal of difference in the lives of language diverse students. There was no “magic formula” to use in helping students gain English language proficiency (Nieto, 1999; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997). What worked were patience, hard work, and dedication.]

Oct. 8, 2002: I’m thinking about having students do a writing unit on General Santa Ana. I got the idea from a book. [Rivas, M. (Ed.), (2000). \textit{Latino Read-Aloud Stories: Best-Loved Selections from Latino Culture in Both English and Spanish}. I think it ties into accounts about Texas independence that students read with ___. I don’t speak Spanish, so we’ll have to use the English text. [Bill looked for ways to integrate writing tasks and social studies themes. The introduction of a Mexican biographical theme, however, showed his desire to have students explore and write about the life of a significant figure from a Mexican cultural/historical perspective (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001; Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996).]

Jan. 15, 2003: The new scope and sequence helps in planning writing units. Since the stories and novels are now integrated with themes and activities, I can use them better. Before, some kids had read things and others hadn’t. Now, except for the ITA kids (students working with individual tutors), they’ve all read the same story or book…. We’re working on \textit{The Giver} right now. And instead of writing a piece of science fiction, as I normally would ask them to do, I had students play a character in the book That’s what you saw ___ working on at the computer. So far, so good. [On one thing Bill never wavered. He had a commitment to connecting his students’ writing tasks in a meaningful way to a book, character, or theme in their other classes (Montgomery, 2001). Bill’s role-playing task drew on students’ aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1978) of \textit{The Giver}—their attention to feelings, images, emotions, and tensions in the text. Role playing was an effective strategy to encourage students to build bridges between their own lives and the subject matter and practices of their school (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).]
Jan. 30, 2003: I don’t think I told you about my grant. I received funding through Title I for a Chicano literature and writing unit. I’m waiting on the materials now, but the gist of the unit involves a reader-response journal, creative illustrations, a multi-media component, interviews, and publishing. The last thing relates to, you know, the literary magazine—The Voices of [Santa Cruz]. I’ll keep you posted. [This was a major step in Bill’s movement toward a more culturally responsive teaching practice. He conducted research to ground the proposal in a contemporary empirical context and actively sought support for the project through public funding channels. The unit he proposed had at its core culturally relevant literature (Nieto, 1999, Gay, 1994, Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Jiménez, Gersten, & Rivera, 1996) and an ethnographic focus (Moll, 1988, 2000, 2001; Mercado & Moll, 2000; Rueda & Moll, 1994).]

Feb. 27, 2003: The social dimension of writing is becoming more important to me. My kids spend too much time working in isolation, I think—too much time spinning wheels, if you know what I mean. ___ took the last three days to write a paragraph and its wasn’t anything difficult either. He wrote paragraphs like that in one class day before. I’m planning to develop a response activity so students are engaged with one another’s writing. Not sure how, but I think the social connection will to make a difference for some of them. [I noted early on in my observations that students chatted with one another as they worked at computer stations in Bill’s lab. It was part of the culture in the class. Bill’s concern had more to do with time well-spent and student motivation (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993; Haberman, 1991; Montgomery, 2001). Research (e.g. Cook & Urzua, 1993; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Laliberty, 2001) identified peer review, peer editing, and peer cooperation as effective strategies in helping language diverse students improve their written English literacy skills.]

May 6, 2003: We just finished Gary Soto’s “First Job.” [Part of the Chicano unit] It was a short narrative, so we didn’t have to spend lots of class time on it. You know me…This is a writing class and we shouldn’t be reading stories all day, every day….Anyway, I was interested to see how my students reacted to the Spanish language in the story. Every once in awhile, Gary Soto throws in a Spanish word. Funny thing, the kids really noticed those words. They even wanted to do the same thing in their own writing. Not sure I’d like that too much, having to look up all the words I didn’t know. (He laughed.) The whole thing reminded me of ___’s first year at [Santa Cruz] but in reverse. Then, I had to ask the kids what ___ meant when he used Spanish words or try to look the words up in a English-Spanish dictionary. Who knows, I may have stumbled onto something here.
[Bill the taskmaster was also Bill the open-minded inquirer, the energetic experimenter, the teacher searching for a better way (Freire, 1994, 1998; Dewey, 1933, 1966; Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Haberman, 1991). Fundamentally, Bill’s search followed a pathway that led to his students. It was a pathway marked by cultural turns, some related to English as an academic discipline and as a teaching subject, others related to student needs and development. What Bill found was that those cultural turns converged the longer he traveled the pathway.]

The exemplars of Bill’s practice showed how he tried to integrate personal and multicultural commitments in the development of a more relevant teaching practice. They suggested, also, the developmental stages of a transformative teaching ethic. Freire (1997) describes such an ethic as a process whereby “knowledge emerges....through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world.” (p. 53) For Dewey (1933), a transformative teaching ethic requires a disposition of dedication, open-mindedness, focus, and responsibility. Bill Speer’s quest to form a more relevant teaching identity reflected that disposition in an enthusiasm for subject matter and for teaching, a strong commitment to student learning, and a continuous praxis of inquiry-reflection-action-evaluation (Banks, 1995, 1999; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Freire, 1994, 1998; Rosado, 1996).

The exemplars of Bill’s teaching practice represented a reconstruction of what one Santa Cruz teacher did in responding to the educational needs of his diverse students. Who he was as a teacher responding to student needs had much more to do with personal traits and beliefs (Inlay, 2003), more to do with focused inquiry and reflection, than with appropriation of innovative strategies and techniques (Nieto, 1999). Bill was one of many on the staff at Santa Cruz whose human capital (Coleman, 1990) helped to create a school culture rich in social capital (Coleman, 1990, Moll, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000).
Transformative Qualities in the Implicit Culture of Practice

Attending to student needs and fostering the growth of student human and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Moll, 2001) were focal concerns in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz. The staff worked with students in and outside the classroom, often as friends and advocates as well as academic mentors (Bill Speer, Interview, May 12, 2003). That concern, as I described earlier, fueled the personal and communal form of reflective praxis that school members used to construct a responsive literacy program for Santa Cruz students. The depth of concern shared within the school community and the quality of its reflective praxis, however, extended beyond the tasks of forming and putting into practice explicit programs in English literacy development. The response to student needs and the continuous development of student human and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Moll, 2001) involved the integration of neighborhood values, specifically the cultural and linguistic heritage of Santa Cruz students and families, in the school's culture of practice (Moll, 1988, 2001; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Rosado, 1996; 1999; Halcón, 2001; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Tharp, 1997). Each of those concerns also promoted, within the Santa Cruz community, openness to the contributions of all staff members and of people in the wider local community. That openness was an invitational spirit that attracted and utilized human resources of care and generosity to realize the school's mission of transformative educational service (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1999; Borman et al, 2000; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Secada et al, 1998).

Exemplar One

The implicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz drew on the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1988, 1990, 2001) within its extended community in ways that were both similar
to and distinguishable from responsive middle school cultures of practice in the public sector (e.g. Horace Mann Academic Middle School, Harold Wiggs Middle School, Lennox Middle School). Integration of Mexican cultural values and Spanish language literacy in the program of studies, for instance, were commitments each of the schools shared. The staff members at Horace Mann Academic Middle School (Berman et al, 1995) developed bilingual modules to assist their language diverse students. The staff at Harold Wiggs Middle School (Berman et al, 1995) uses a sheltered English component, an intensive ESL (English as a second language) class, and a team approach to literacy instruction that incorporates local cultural values and knowledge bases as themes for interdisciplinary inquiry. The staff at Lennox Middle School (Lockwood & Secada, 1999) draws on the stores of social/cultural capital in its community through a bilingual instructional program and mentoring programs that involves not only all staff members but also Latino college-aged students from the neighborhood.

Similarly, the staff at Santa Cruz School integrated culturally responsive values in the language arts component of the explicit curriculum (e.g. focus on culturally relevant literature, cultural relevant themes, ethnographic inquiry of cultural and familial heritage) and drew on "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1988, 1990, 2001) represented in the "human capital" of people in the local community to provide mentoring and adult support for Santa Cruz students and graduates. A commitment to Spanish language literacy in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz School, however, did not appear in the form of bilingual instruction. Instead, the Santa Cruz staff valued the "home" language of students and families by developing and implementing a Spanish language and literacy component in the school's daily religious education classes. Rather than a sheltered English component
in the academic curriculum, an extensive tutoring program in literacy enlisted Santa Cruz staff members and local volunteers to provide one-on-one literacy assistance to students.

"From the beginning," said the school’s founder, "[the school staff] wrestled with how to include Spanish in the literacy program." (Interview, Oct. 21, 2002) Integrating the other cultural values of Santa Cruz families within the literacy program was "easy and natural." The dedication to Church and religious faith, for instance, "were values and commitments [that were shared by everyone]" so there was a communal consensus about their importance and relevance in the life of the school. The relative inexperience of teaching volunteers and their lack of language diversity and expertise, however, made the development of a Spanish language and literacy program problematic (School founder, interview, Oct. 21, 2002). The decision to emphasize reading and to tailor the daily schedule to build a culture of reading in the school created additional obstacles to the incorporation of a Spanish language component in the culture of practice (Eisner, 1985). The school community resolved those impasses by drawing on the human capital, the personal "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001) about Hispanic culture, Spanish language, religious instruction, and Crossian education, which a South American teaching volunteer brought to the Santa Cruz mission. He was a cultural mediator on multiple levels (Freire, 1994, 1998).

"Last year, during a faculty in-service day, we talked about a bilingual program for our students," he said. "At that time, we all agreed that it was not the right choice for the school here. [There were] too many built-in difficulties like staffing and money."

(Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002) But the Santa Cruz staff "felt it was important to have a Spanish language class" of some kind and "one thing led to another." "I was a catechist in
he added, "so I had training in religious education. I was also a native Spanish speaker with formal training in the Spanish language. It was like putting two and two together for all of us." (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002)

The decision to create a Spanish literacy component in the religion classes at Santa Cruz was more than a token gesture (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002). At the heart of the Santa Cruz mission of service was an abiding Catholic spirituality and commitment to the Christian social gospel (Gutierrez, 1973; Boff & Boff, 1987), and it was that spirituality and commitment that gave direction to the literacy initiatives of the school. The decision to integrate religious education and Spanish language literacy conveyed a message of human solidarity. It was a political statement that witnessed, in action as well as word, to an embrace and celebration of cultural pluralism and a philosophy of cultural inclusion (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999; Nieto, 1999, 2000). The religion/Spanish literacy classes involved all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at Santa Cruz. Spanish was the language of instruction at all levels and twice a week, in twenty-minute time frames, the religion teacher provided instruction in Spanish grammar and basic literacy skills. His bilingual skills enabled him to assist non-Spanish speaking students in their classroom studies (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002).

Several of the seventy-nine students at Santa Cruz were also minimally proficient in English language skills. Some of those students were recent immigrants from Mexico or learners who had literally "fallen through the cracks of the local public school system" (School founder, interview, Oct. 21, 2002). The program that the school staff developed to help those students was an intervention strategy that capitalized on personal attention though primarily one-on-one tutoring sessions in reading comprehension. One component
of the tutoring program was based on the ITA (Initial Teaching Alphabet) system. The ITA program was phonics-oriented, stressed vocabulary recognition and the development of word-study tools, and was tailored to each student’s English proficiency level (Field notes, Feb. 21, 2003). Two ITA tutors, full-time Hispanic staff members, worked with students from the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in study carrells located in the school’s main corridor. Santa Cruz students in the program participated in the normal daily schedule but were tutored during one of those class periods. For 8th grade students, the daily tutorial period occurred during the language arts literature class (Field notes, Feb. 27, 2003).

The other component in the tutorial program involved a cadre of volunteers from the neighborhood, from local universities, and from "plunge groups" [groups of parish, high school, and/or college students engaged in projects that involved direct service to the poor or to marginalized minority students]. During the nine months of my fieldwork at Santa Cruz, more than thirty people participated in the volunteer tutoring program, a good number of them on a weekly basis (Field notes, May 3, 2003). Like the ITA staff, tutors in the volunteer program used the hallway study carrells or the tables in the corridor to work with students on an individual basis. One of the volunteer tutors described his work at Santa Cruz "as a preparation for ministry." He and a colleague, both Asian seminarians in a local theologate, wished to provide some form of direct service to the poor (Field notes, Feb. 25, 2003). Another volunteer, a college senior, said that his desire to "be part of something that was making a difference" led him to volunteer at Santa Cruz. He worked with students who had difficulties in mathematics (May 2, 2003).

Second trimester statistics (three-month period) indicated that volunteers gave almost five hundred (459) hours of service to students at Santa Cruz (School Report, Winter 2003).
Exemplar Two

Rosado (1996) contends that the basic premise of a multicultural school ethic is "unity in diversity." He, like Banks (1993, 1995, 1999), suggests neither a school's culturally diverse student polity nor its culturally diverse faculty and staff composition makes a school multicultural. What makes a school multicultural is how the school community utilizes the diverse human assets, the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001), that each community member possesses. The distributions of roles and tasks in a school, then, reflect a school community's ethical perspective and the participation of all school members in decision-making processes intimates a school community's appropriation of an egalitarian organizational structure (Rosado, 1999). A school that embraces an ethic of "unity in diversity" becomes less monolithic and rigid in its policies, less hegemonic and ethnocentric in its visions of the world, the purposes of education, and the concepts of teaching and learning (Gay, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Banks, 1995, 1999; Díaz & Flores, 2001; Moll, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The implicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz School suggested a multicultural ethic, an intentional effort to create a literacy environment that empowered all school members (Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995, 1999; Gay, 1994; Secada et al, 1998). One of the pivotal ways a multicultural, rather than a more conventional, ethic informed the daily culture of practice at Santa Cruz was in the delegation and distribution of power. In a traditional school model, power is diffused in a hierarchical and vertical framework, most often a top-down structure with systemic and administrative features that have both intrinsic and extrinsic influence on a school's culture of practice (Rosado, 1996; Sizer, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Banks, 1994, 1999; Cotton, 1995). At Santa Cruz, power
diffused within a communal and horizontal framework. It was an organizational structure in which collegiality and collaboration were social tools for the construction and the continuous development of shared praxis (Sergiovanni, 2000; Secada et al, 1998).

Weekly faculty meetings, for example, were occasions for faculty-staff interaction and colloquy. Meetings took place in roundtable settings and always began with personal sharing, usually reflections from each school member about the successes or challenges of the week (Research log, Nov. 9, 2002). The school improvement process (which pre-dated and continued after my fieldwork) engaged all staff members at Santa Cruz and another Santa-Cruz-model school in small group discussions about school mission and vision (Field notes, Feb. 26, 2003). There was nothing tepid about collegiality at Santa Cruz (Sergiovanni, 2000). Each community member mattered. It was through the social tools of dialogue and collaboration that the mission became fully incarnate (Freire, 1994).

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993), in their study of Catholic school organization, subsume those social tools within the concepts of *personalism* (pervasive warmth and caring atmosphere) and *subsidiarity* (social solidarity nurtured by collegiality and shared purpose) (p. 302). Each of those concepts abounded in the responsive culture of practice at Santa Cruz, but they were most palpable in the roles and responsibilities that culturally diverse members assumed in helping to construct the daily culture of practice at Santa Cruz (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Halcón, 2001).

The religion/Spanish language literacy class and the ITA tutoring program at Santa Cruz exemplified two ways that culturally and linguistically diverse staff members actively participated in forming the school's daily culture of practice. The roles and responsibilities assumed by Hispanic staff members, however, penetrated all facets of
Santa Cruz school life (Rosado, 1996). The school librarian and the school secretary, for instance, were primary custodians of all school records, pivotal cultural and linguistic intermediaries between school and home, and transcribers for bilingual communications with parents (Faculty Handbook, pp. 15-8). They were facilitators who shared in the school mission and fully participated in the decision-making that influenced daily school life (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999). They were also the two Santa Cruz school members that teachers and students alike called affectionately by their first names. On a daily basis, all in the community—teachers, parents, students, and volunteers—depended on them (Research log, Mar. 21, 2003). Figure 28 illustrates the ways that Hispanic staff members at Santa Cruz helped to shape the school's culture of practice.

Figure 28. Roles and Responsibilities of Hispanic Staff Members

Symbols, Rituals, Ceremonies in the Implicit Culture of Practice

One of the prominent symbols at Santa Cruz was the enormous wall mural of "La Virgen de Guadalupe," the Catholic patroness of Mexico, in the main school stairwell.
The mural represented more than a Catholic religious icon of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. It was a symbol of cultural solidarity with the students and families in the Santa Cruz neighborhood. Indeed, the pseudonym that I chose for the school was a way for me to honor the Spanish name by which the school was actually known. That name, as is the case in many charter schools (e.g. Mizell, 1994; Lubienski, 2003; Molnar, Morales, & Vander Wyst, 2000), had symbolic significance, suggesting a particular vision and appealing to a specific constituency. At Santa Cruz, the vision was clearly Catholic and Crossian and the appeal unmistakably cultural and neighborhood-oriented. Other symbols, rituals, and ceremonies, however, suggested the empowering mission and the transformative purpose of Santa Cruz School (Rosado, 1996; Moll, 2001).

According to Deal and Peterson (1999), "symbols intimate intangible cultural values and beliefs" (p. 60) and are manifestations of a school's ethical and philosophical foundation. They are metaphoric expressions, represented often in communal language or in visual artifacts, which suggest a shared sense of purpose within a group, a shared identity (Sergiovanni, 2000). Empowerment, community, hope, transformation, and literacy, as I came to see in field analysis, were semantic symbols in the lexicon of Santa Cruz documents (Research log, May 3, 2003). Those words also surfaced as thematic symbols that conjoined the perspectives that Santa Cruz community members (e.g. staff members, teachers, students, graduates, administrators) shared in field conversations and interviews (Research log, May 3, 2003).

Noticeable by their materiality, displays and other wall decorations in the school corridor, classrooms, library, and office areas suggested visual reinforcement of those semantic symbols (Montgomery, 2001). From one end of the schools' main corridor to
the other, for example, the prominent cultural artifacts were photographs of Santa Cruz students and clusters of their written and artistic work. Updated each trimester (Field notes, Oct. 10, 2002) were display cases celebrating student reading accomplishments (e.g. certification growth in the AR program) and academic achievements (e.g. Honor roll, attendance). The most striking artifact in the main office was the quilt created by Santa Cruz School's first graduating class. Wall posters (e.g. "Spread Your Wings and Soar to Great Heights!" "Regardless of Your Past, Your Future is a Clean Slate," "Open Your Mind and Heart to Life, to Love, and to Wisdom," "The Road to Success is Always Under Construction") served ostensibly as visual reminders of the developmental and transformative ethic at the core of the Santa Cruz mission (Research log, Nov. 20, 2002).

A school's rituals and ceremonies represent symbolic activities in its culture of practice (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Rituals and ceremonies are key events in the cultural life of a school; they are local "procedures and routines...infused with deeper meaning" (p. 33), "culturally sanctioned ways that a school celebrates success, communicates its values, and recognizes special contributions of staff and students." (p. 35) Sergiovanni (1994) refers to them as features of a "community of mind" not based "on contracts but on understandings about what is shared and on the emerging web of obligations to embody that which is shared." (p. 7) The daily schedule and the trimester structure of the school year at Santa Cruz suggested explicit routines with symbolic significance. Like the daily and school year routines of the KIPP middle school model (Feinberg, 2001) and the Nativity schools (e.g. Carter, 2001; Ward, 2001; Cooper, 2003; Moran, 2002), the daily and trimester structures at Santa Cruz School suggested a valuing of time on task and a commitment to literacy as holistic development occurring on multiple levels and in a
variety of settings (Research log, Nov. 20, 2003). An extended school day and school year were manifestations of the "web of obligations" created through shared praxis within the school community (Research log, May 3, 2003).

**Exemplar One**

The morning "routine" was a ritual of meaning that personalized the "web of obligations" (Sergiovanni, 1994) at Santa Cruz. It had both the qualities of shared praxis and the human dimension of care that made the school "a special place." (e.g. Field notes, Sept. 3, 2002; Sept. 20, 2002; Mar. 19, 2003; May 3, 2003). Each school day began with "Good mornings," smiles, handshakes, and, in many cases, embraces among teachers, staff, and students. Staff members greeted one another in the school's main corridor (between 7:45 and 8:00) and then waited in the hallway for the arrival of students. As students reached the stairwell landing, they traveled a corridor of human support and encouragement. The school's founder described that morning ritual as a special form of solidarity. "It is a practice we started at the very beginning," he said. "It is a way to affirm each other, a way of recognizing presence and celebrating who we call ourselves to be. It has become a very important practice for everyone here" at Santa Cruz (School founder, personal communication, Oct. 14, 2002).

The perceptions of teachers, staff, and students suggested the importance of the ritual in daily school life. "Most of the time," said one teaching volunteer, "we're focused on helping students become better students. We're all working toward specific learning goals. Greeting one another and the students in the morning is a good reminder about the community and the whole reason that [Santa Cruz] exists. It's a way of saying 'We're in this together.'" (Field notes, Sept. 20, 2002). One of the support staff likened the morning
ritual to a family practice. "Some of us are parents," she said, "and these children from the neighborhood are our children. [Santa Cruz] is like the neighborhood. It is a big family with many children to care for." (Field notes, Oct. 14, 2002) For some students that I greeted in my morning fieldwork, the ritual represented a special form of respect and a form of belonging. One 8th grader said, "Every morning starts the same, but that's okay really. The teachers greet us and we greet them. It shows respect for them and us, I think." (Field notes, Oct. 3, 2002) Another student, a 6th grader, stated that the morning ritual made her feel important. "At ___ [former school], nobody really seemed to care that much. I didn't feel like I belonged or something. Here, it is like a family and I feel safe." (Field notes, Nov. 8, 2002). A group of 7th grade students that I spoke with during their lunch period (Field notes, Oct. 8, 2002), however, considered the morning ritual "just one of those things that happens," a "normal way to act as a student or teacher" at Santa Cruz.

Exemplar Two

A second ritual of meaning in the implicit culture of practice suggested how and to what degree parents participated in school life at Santa Cruz. The publication and yearly distribution of a bilingual parent's handbook, "Thursday Information packets," and bilingual home-school correspondence, for example, were three ways that the school staff created open avenues of communication with Santa Cruz parents. Those were practices rooted in a vision of education as partnership and reciprocal agreement between school and home (Parent Handbook, 2001-2002). Like the parent outreach programs at Horace Mann, Harold Wiggs (Berman et al, 1995), and Lennox Middle (Lockwood & Secada, 1999) schools, however, parent outreach at Santa Cruz extended beyond the printed
word. Santa Cruz school members believed that parents were "the primary educators of their children" and that the role of the school was to provide support and encouragement to parents in their educative efforts (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002, p. 4). As a result, the parent outreach program at Santa Cruz reflected a proactive stance in the solicitation and the expectation of high levels of parental involvement. Santa Cruz parents, for example, were called not only to active, daily engagement with their children's formal schooling in the home, but to a demonstrable spirit of cooperation with the teaching and support staff in the school. The school outreach program required parents to attend twelve scheduled meetings and conferences with teachers. The failure to attend those meetings and conferences resulted in an additional family tuition assessment ($25 on each occasion). Meetings involved parent groups and occurred at the start and midpoints of each school trimester. Parent conferences involved individual consultations with teachers at the midpoints of each six-week grading period (Faculty Handbook, p. 23). The assessment fee was more symbolic than punitive (Field notes, Nov. 7, 2002); its intention was to make a clear statement to parents about the critical role they played in their children's formal education (Faculty Handbook, pp. 23-4).

The expectation of parental cooperation at Santa Cruz extended to service as well. The school's Parents' Council was a representative committee that organized activities and projects to support the Santa Cruz School mission (Faculty Handbook, p. 24), but it was the participation of all parents in those activities and projects (e.g. 8th grade and high school graduation celebrations, decorating for and coordinating Santa Cruz family gatherings and pot-luck dinners, school maintenance and construction upgrades) that accentuated their communal purpose and ensured their success (Field notes, Jan. 30, 2003). A staff member (who was also a Santa Cruz parent) described the outreach to parents as an invitation to
community. "All of us share the same concern about children. We wish for them happiness and success. But we also wish for them to be part of a community. If we parents join together, then our children will join together too. That is what makes [Santa Cruz] such a good place. All of us are called to be part of the school." (Field notes, Jan. 10, 2003) The school principal reinforced that invitation to active participation in his correspondence with Santa Cruz parents and with staff members (analytical codes in boldface):

Many parents have asked to be more involved in the school. Heaven knows we need your help. In addition to our regular Parent Meetings, I want to invite parents to join together on a regular basis to plan the growth and improvement of The [Santa Cruz] School. What talents do you have that can help our school community? How can you help us improve? At tonight's meeting, we will listen to your advice. [VIS9, EQU6, CR9, 13, 15] (Principal's letter to parents, Jan. 8, 2003)

I have found that a one-minute phone call to a parent—either praising or correcting a child—is a magnificent tool to build trust with a parent and positively impact a student. A ten-minute visit to a home has the same effect magnified many times. [OWN6, RR5, COM9, CR7, 9, 11] (Principal's staff notes, Mar. 13, 2003)

Research in middle school education (e.g. Carnegie Task Force, 1989; NMSA, 1995; Mizell, 2000; Mertens & Flowers, 2003; Felner et al, 1997) and research with a specific focus on Hispanic educational issues (e.g. Secada et al, 1998; Berman et al, 1995; Moll, 1990, 2001; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Nieto, 2000; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999) emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in the schooling process. Such involvement is both a democratic practice (Banks, 1993, 1999; Gay, 1994; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Nieto, 1999) that fosters participation in the cultural life of schools and a sign of respect (Rosado, 1994; Moll, 1990, 2001; Mulhall, Flowers, & Mertens, 2002; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002) that conveys a shared sense of purpose among community stakeholders. At Santa Cruz, parents responded to expectations with generosity and, on one scale of significance at the school, a demonstrably cooperative spirit. Participatory statistics
indicated that, on average, about nine out of every ten Santa Cruz parents (91.1%) regularly attended scheduled meetings and conferences (*School Report*, Fall 2002; Winter 2003).

**Exemplar Three**

Ceremonies in the implicit curriculum of Santa Cruz were value-laden practices. In analysis, I identified their features in three general categories: celebrations of achievement, expressions of solidarity, and exhibitions of talent. Deal and Peterson (1999) describe ceremonies as community-building events that strengthen relationships among school stakeholders. They are convocations that symbolize the root values of a school as shared values in a wider, more inclusive, communal culture of practice (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000) and public rituals that suggest a school community's sense of identity (Deal & Peterson, 1999). For minority children and families in particular, school ceremonies that recognize individual and collective achievements are forms of empowerment (Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996). They bolster self-esteem and self-efficacy in students (Cotton, 1995; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), enfranchise students and families historically marginalized on the periphery of the educational establishment (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), and ritualize the realization of educational visions, aspirations, and expectations in a school community (Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Secada et al, 1998; Berman et al, 1995; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002; Deal & Peterson, 1999).

I represented the principal ceremonies of the culture of practice at Santa Cruz in Figure 29. I used three categories to distinguish kinds of ceremonies at the school and added dates and brief details about each of the ceremonies to provide a sense of their social context. Large gatherings (e.g. celebrations of achievement, liturgies, special convocations, meals) occurred in the parish church or parish center. The one exception was "Voices."
Figure 29. Celebrations in the Culture of Practice at Santa Cruz

Celebrations of achievement included 8th grade and high school baccalaureate ceremonies, but they were also formal recognitions of Santa Cruz students (trimester) and graduates (semester) who achieved honor roll status. [At Santa Cruz, "A Honor Roll" required a reading and mathematics average of 90% or higher with no other grades below 80%. "B Honor Roll" required a reading and mathematics average of 85% or higher with no grades below 75% (Principal, staff notes, Dec. 3, 2002).] In the two ceremonies that I observed, students were participants (i.e. servers, lectors, and prayer petitioners) as well as honorees, and the liturgies themselves accentuated key educational themes at Santa Cruz—dreams, effort, and goal attainment (Field notes, Jan. 12; May 4, 2003).

Ceremonies expressing solidarity had neighborhood and inter-school dimensions. In each of those dimensions, the prominent cultural theme was building community (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2000) through establishing spiritual and social bonds. Family gatherings accentuated the importance of social relationships in the school community, particularly doing things (e.g. shared meals, sporting events) as a school
group—children, parents, teachers, and staff together (Field notes, Feb. 27, 2003).

Liturgies with Santa Cruz benefactors as special guests helped to foster bonds that were as profoundly spiritual and social as they were monetary (Field notes, Feb. 27, 2003).

Expressions of solidarity in the culture of practice at Santa Cruz were also communal responses to tragic events. Each of the memorial services that I listed was very much a "reading of the word and the world" (Freire, 1998). The scripture readings and homily (sermon) in the first memorial service, for example, focused on global peace and all students and staff members were invited to share personal reflections about 9-11. The second memorial service, however, a funeral mass for a teenager who was murdered in the neighborhood, was cause for the entire Santa Cruz community to respond to a call for and engage in a process of discernment (Principal's letter to parents, Jan. 29, 2003).

The call for discernment was a poignant reminder of the ever-present dangers of gang-related violence in the Santa Cruz neighborhood and of the school community struggles to witness to basic Christian values and human solidarity amid those dangers (Rosado, 1996; Freire, 1994, 1998). I selected several passages from the principal's letter to Santa Cruz parents to provide a sense of that "real world" dilemma. The principal began by sharing details of the drive-by shooting, especially its gang-related features. He then presented the matter for discernment:

[His] death was particularly tragic because it was gang-related. [He] was a member of the [Streetboyz] gang. Their rivals, [The Blades], are suspected of killing him. This circumstance has led some people to question our attendance at his funeral. They raise the following points. Perhaps it won't be safe at the funeral, given the violence between these two gangs. Perhaps we are showing support for gangs by attending the funeral. Perhaps we shouldn't attend unless we personally knew [him] or his family. These are excellent points and deserve conversation, yet I am convinced that our support is important to [his] family... We are not attending the funeral because [he] was a gang member. We are not attending the funeral because many gang members will be there. We are
attending the funeral because [he] was a child of God....We are children of God
d and [he] is our brother....We do not support gangs. We do not support violence.
We support a family, and we mourn the tragic death of one of God's children...

[S]hould we attend the funeral if we do not know [him] or his family?...This is my
answer. The core purpose of [Santa Cruz] is to embrace God's call to transform
the world. How do we transform the world? We witness the gospels to God's
people. Where there is hatred in the world, sow peace....Violence occurs when
people fail to acknowledge or accept God's love....We must witness God's love to
others. Our light must shine bright enough that others may see.

These are difficult issues. The answers are not clear or simple. Talk about them
in your family. Pray on them. [VIS 1, OWN9, RR6, CR9, 11, 13, 15] (Principal's
letter to Santa Cruz parents, Jan. 29, 2003)

That all Santa Cruz students and staff attended the memorial liturgy and that many Santa
Cruz parents joined with them suggested not only the effects of the discernment process
but the strong commitment to participatory witness that guided so many practices at
Santa Cruz (Research log, Feb. 2, 2003).

Expressions of inter-school solidarity, the second category of ceremonies at Santa
Cruz, focused on "unity in diversity" (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1999) as a primary
theme. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was a historical series program sponsored by the
African-American community of Santa Cruz's sister school, a literacy initiative in its first
year of operation. The program was a celebration of multicultural education themes and
issues (i.e. social justice, community, solidarity, goals and aspirations) in a setting that
was culturally diverse (Field notes, Jan. 17, 2003). The "Feast Day" celebration engaged
students from the two schools in another way, one that focused on their shared Santa
Cruz roots. The program organization resembled a festival of games that combined
students and staff members from each school on "mixed" teams (Field notes, Feb. 7,
2003). Liturgies, shared meals, and the forming of relationships were spiritual and social
features in each day-long program. In a significant way, the celebrations manifested for

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students the kind of efforts toward "unity in diversity" (Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999) that teachers and staff members from each school built through their committee work on refining the Santa Cruz school model mission and vision (Field notes, Feb. 26, 2003).

The exhibitions of talent, the third category of ceremonies at Santa Cruz School, were celebrations of students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1990, 2001). The Fine Arts convocation consisted of a mid-morning session of instrumental, dramatic, and choral performances by student groups from several Crossian high schools and included, in the audience, not only Santa Cruz students but the public school elementary students who shared the parish school building. The afternoon session entailed "artist" workshops in which the Crossian high school students interacted with Santa Cruz students in small group discussions and/or demonstrations (Field notes, Nov. 22, 2002). The Fine Arts convocation "was a meaningful event for older and younger students, a valuable cultural encounter" (Field notes, Nov. 22, 2002) for urban and suburban Crossian youth.

"Voices of [Santa Cruz]" was "a literary and performing arts showcase" (Staff notes, Mar. 12, 2003) of Santa Cruz student talents. The two "voices" programs that I attended (Dec. 5, 2002; Mar. 27, 2003) were well-paced, lively events for performers, pride-filled, satisfying events for parents, families, and teachers in the audience. School staff members contributed to the showcase by transforming the largest classrooms into exhibition spaces for student work (e.g. art, creative writing, and science projects) and areas for student performances (Field notes, Dec. 5, 2002). However, as a program of showcase events illustrated (See Figure 30), it was Santa Cruz students who were clearly the cultural mediators center-stage (Research log, Dec. 15, 2003).
**Figure 30. "Voices of [Santa Cruz]" Program of Events**

"The Voices of [Santa Cruz]" were exhibitions and celebrations of literacy as social accomplishment (Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Au, 1998; Rogoff, 1998; Nieto, 1999). They represented visual, auditory, and kinesthetic artifacts of student participation and performance, benchmark accomplishments of student apprentices in the school's culture of practice (Rogoff, 1995, 1998). Like the trimester ceremonies and corridor displays honoring student academic achievement, the "voices" programs suggested that student motivation, student agency, and meaningful community recognition were interactive features of one transformational process, a process that fostered development of human capital in order to create stores of social capital for the broader civic community.
Summary

For the Santa Cruz school community, "walking the talk" (Freire, 1994, 1998) of responsive practice meant dedicating its stores of human, social, cultural, and financial capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000) to the realization of the mission. "Walking the talk" entailed wholehearted engagement in reflective praxis on personal and collective levels (Freire, 1994, 1998; Dewey, 1966; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001); it meant creating school structures and programs whose purpose lay in service and empowerment rather than in facility and efficiency (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995, 1999). "Walking the talk" at Santa Cruz required witness and commitment to the Christian and democratic principles of social justice (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999; Freire, 1994); it required a willingness, on the part of all staff members, to subordinate the personal to the shared in the joint construction of a community of practice (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000).

Most important of all, in the Santa Cruz school community "walking the talk" meant embracing the virtues of faith, hope, and zeal as permanent companions in forming a coherent vision of transformative education (Freire, 1994, 1997; Rosado, 1996; Banks, 1999). Those virtues represented the human and social themes, the values of the school community "lifeworld" (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000), which fostered harmony between the explicit and the implicit cultures of practice (Eisner, 1985; Rosado, 1996). They were the dynamic links between a Crossian and a liberatory educational ethic (Faculty Handbook, 2002-2003; Freire, 1994) and the rootstock from which the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz sprang (School founder, personal journal, 2002). They were powerful images from which the school principal drew in saying to Santa Cruz students: "All of you are the presence of God among us, a light for our neighborhood" (Field notes, Sept. 3, 2002).
II. THE 8th GRADE CLASSROOM CULTURE OF PRACTICE

Earlier in my discussion, I described the curriculum at Santa Cruz as a hybrid construction (i.e. a combination of traditional middle school academic disciplines and a Catholic school focus on religious and character education) and identified the pivotal role that reading played as a mediating practice in an experience-oriented literacy curriculum. I described also how the reflective praxis and engagement of staff members culminated in the creation of a culturally responsive and developmental framework for language arts teaching and learning. Those descriptions were products of the wide-angle lens I used to represent components, key macro-cultural artifacts (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1995), of the explicit school community culture. For classroom observations, however, I used a narrow-angle lens to focus my attention on specific features of the individual learning environment.

The literature, writing, and reading classes of Teresa Koss (pseudonym) and her students, in that narrow-angle lens, represented micro-cultural activity settings in the encompassing culture of practice at Santa Cruz. The classes were literacy laboratories where teacher, students, and macro-cultural artifacts (e.g. language arts curriculum, AR program, BIST student management program) interacted in a recurring pattern. Each of the classes had a distinguishing focus and organizational structure, a "lifeworld" and "a systemsworld" (Sergiovanni, 2000), and those distinguishing features formed descriptive profiles in my discussion of the explicit culture of practice in the 8th grade language arts classroom. The micro-cultural "lifeworld" (Sergiovanni, 2000) of that classroom practice, however, extended across the explicit, yet artificial, tripartite borders in the language arts curriculum. In field analysis, I identified two permeating themes that not only conjoined
each of the classes in an implicit culture of practice, but tethered the culture of practice in the 8th grade language arts classroom to the community of practice in the school. Those two themes were joint, goal-oriented activity and identity formation through resilience building and a "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001) instructional approach.

**The Explicit Culture of Practice in the 8th Grade Classroom**

The 8th grade literature, writing, and reading classes were organizational artifacts, mediating instruments (Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1999; Engeström, 1987), in the language arts literacy program at Santa Cruz. They served as cultural structures in which Teresa Koss worked to realize the explicit educational mission "to liberate students... spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and emotionally" through the creation of "learning activities that [were] empowering." (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002, p. 4) The foci and organizational features of each 8th grade language arts component suggested how Teresa appropriated the liberatory mission of the school and envisioned the concept of student empowerment through literacy (Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Banks, 1999).

**Cultural Practices in the 8th Grade Literature Classroom**

The focus of Teresa's 8th grade literature class intimated core principles in the thematic language arts scope and sequence. An early first-trimester drama unit (*Tuck Everlasting*), for example, had both an experience-based orientation and a community-building purpose. The unit incorporated "student energies and relationships" in a reading, role-playing, and play performance activity (Field notes, Sept. 20, 2002). To explore the first-trimester scope and sequence theme "Identity," Teresa capitalized on "what [her] students already knew something about" (Field notes, Jan. 6, 2003) by using culturally relevant, young adult literature (Nieto, 1999, 2000; Garcia, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995;
Almost a Woman (Santiago, 1999) and The House on Mango Street (Cisneros, 1984) were the two Hispanic centerpieces of that exploration (Research log, Nov. 3, 2002). Each of those literary works portrayed the identity formation of young Latinas and had "an urban neighborhood quality" with which "[Santa Cruz students] could easily identify" (Teresa Koss, interview, May 3, 2003).

To address the second trimester scope and sequence theme Humanity, Teresa broadened the concept of identity (Research log, Jan. 20, 2003). She focused on themes that traversed cultural boundaries (Field notes, Jan. 16, 2003), themes that helped the students in her class "gain insight into their own behavior" through experiencing a less familiar literary genre and viewing "the world from the perspective of different groups." (Banks, 1994, p. 21) She used "Harrison Bergeron" (Vonnegut, 1988) and The Giver (Lowry, 1994), science fiction/fantasy literature, to broach the topics of individuality, conformity, and community (Field notes, Jan. 16, 2003). She used Night (Wiesel, 1982), a personal narrative about the Holocaust, and the Spielberg film "Schindler's List" (1993), a film portraying the gradual transformation of conscience amid the genocidal horrors of the Holocaust, to broach the topics of inhumanity and ethnic bigotry, personal conviction and shared responsibility (Field notes, Mar. 21, 2003).

The organizational structure of the literature component had dual purposes in the triadic 8th grade language arts curriculum. On one level, it was a class aligned with the literature-based approach to instruction that the Santa Cruz teaching staff appropriated through reflective praxis (Bill Speer, interview, May 12, 2003). It was a class organized around daily, whole-class activities that created a context in which teacher and students together constructed the learning environment (Conchas, 2001; Moll, 2001; Nieto, 1999;
Mertens & Flowers, 2003; Choate, 1993; Wells, 1999). Whole-class oral reading, whole-group/dyadic discussion, and journal writing were primary cultural practices Teresa used (Field notes, Sept. 20; Oct. 18; Nov. 19, 2002; Jan. 8; Feb. 5; May 5, 2003) to construct "common experiences" and develop "a shared sense of purpose" in the classroom (Teresa Koss, interview, May 20, 2003). On another level, the structure of the literature class fostered personal reflection and interchange of responses among students. Both of those practices, in turn, assisted students in their formal composing tasks in the writing class (Field notes, Oct. 18, 2002; Feb. 11; Feb. 25; Mar. 21, 2003) and in their explorations of personally relevant themes in the Accelerated Reader program (Interview, May 3, 2003). On each of the levels, Teresa's organization of the 8th grade literature class suggested an approach to classroom reading/literacy instruction that emphasized content integration (Cotton, 1995; Carnegie Task Force, 1989; Berman et al, 1995; Rueda & Garcia, 1994), affirmed the educational significance of students' home culture (Banks, 1994, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Tharp, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Manning, 2000), and promoted teaching and learning as interactive social constructions (Au, 1998; Wells, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999).

**Exemplar**

The following redaction, an excerpt drawn from a semi-structured interview summary (May 20, 2003), suggested the explicit role that themes played in Teresa's responsive instructional planning. I asked Teresa to reflect on units, lessons, activities that she felt had special instructional value and/or served to stimulate student interest in special ways. I asked specifically how she planned units, lessons, activities and how she viewed the concept of "empowerment" for students [analytical codes in boldface]:

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[Teresa] noted...a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in the second trimester, attributing a good portion of those sentiments to discussions and then implementation of curricular themes to guide instruction. "The themes provide[d] focus, foundation, for my classes," she said. "We've moved to a literature-based curriculum and the thematic approach help[ed] in choosing materials, deciding how and what to do with those materials, and integrating reading, writing, and speaking within units of study."

She discussed the Holocaust unit in which students read Wiesel's Night and engaged in a variety of other reading, writing, and speaking activities related to that book, [and] shared concerns about students presently in the ITA program. Normally, [those] students, all of whom [were] LEP, would be working individually or in pairs, with tutors in the school corridor, each tutoring session not only attuned sequentially to their specific reading comprehension needs but approaching those needs with a completely different literature base. For the Holocaust unit, however, ITA students joined with their classmates in the literacy event and were able to share in the social dimensions of reading, writing, and discussing within the classroom. For [Teresa], the move to a literature-based curriculum [put] a premium on classroom interaction and underscore[d] the need for all students to share common reading experiences during each trimester....

"Since we now have themes, I try to think about the theme-- look at it from different angles. Then I look at the book in light of the theme and ask myself questions. What kinds of activities will get students' attention, hook them and keep them interested, for example." Getting used to a book, "especially its vocabulary," [was] an initial challenge, she said, and one of the ways [to meet] that challenge...involve[d] oral reading, a [typifying] feature of the 8th grade literature class. [Oral reading] was a shared endeavor between teacher and students. [It] "reinforce[d] reading and listening skills," on the one hand, and provide[d]... time and circumstance to accentuate "the interactive nature of reading," on the other. Questions involving text--its diction, structure, theme, etc. that surface[d] in the reading encounter, [had] a ready-made forum for discussion and reader responses [assumed] a timelier impact....

Using the unit on Lois Lowry's The Giver as an [example], [Teresa] discussed preparations and activities generated through a thematic approach. "Predicting what's going to happen next," she said, "[was] a way to get the students thinking, imagining. It slow[ed] the pace of reading" and integrate[d] the experience with other dimensions of learning-- envisioning, creating, reflecting, writing, sharing. "I like to connect reading and writing by using extension activities. For The Giver, we wrote different endings for the story and then extended the reading encounter by taking something from the book and doing research. References like "the Amish," "genetic engineering," "the Newberry Award" became subjects for investigation, students working in research pairs," she said. Two and a half classes were devoted to the research [part] of the project and students then created
posters for display and added other visual aids (power-point presentation, shadow box, props) to accompany their oral presentations of research findings. As an [assessment component], [Teresa] asked students "to articulate seven things which their classmates, as active listeners, ought to know from listening/participating in each partnered project. [VIS8, MM6, OWN5, CR2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14]

According to [Teresa], Night offered similar kinds of opportunities for extended interplay with reading. She provided students with a glossary of Jewish terms at the outset and used visuals during the course of reading the narrative to heighten student awareness, to make vivid through another medium the intensity of the account. For this, she used a website (www.ushmn.org) [and the film "Schindler's List"]. Discussions about death camps, concentration camps, the dehumanizing features of bigotry and hatred broadened and deepened student understanding. Attesting to the impact of the unit on students, [she] said that many students chose to read books associated with the Holocaust (Holocaust Heroes and Escaping Warsaw, for instance) as part of the Accelerated Reader program....[VIS8, MM6, OWN5, CR2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 17]

For [Teresa], empowerment mean[t] providing "voice" for students, "expecting and respecting individual perspectives" and "cultural values." [Empowerment meant] "giving students the tools they need[ed] to contend in society, to have power" and "to use [it] responsibly." It [was] learning "to read and write well" in conventional and transformational ways-- the former as a tool facilitating "social participation" and enhancing "educational opportunity," the latter as a springboard for "critical thinking," conscious reflection, and action in the world. [VIS 6, RR1, COM9, CR1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17] (Interview redaction, May 20, 2003)

**Composite of Cultural Practices in the Literature Classroom**

Explicit cultural practices in the 8th grade literature class (and in the writing and reading classes as well) were those purposes, tasks, and activities that Teresa expressed in written daily lesson plans, in informal and in semi-structured interviews and that I noted in classroom field observations. In Figure 31, I represent the explicit cultural practices in two categories: Discourse Modes and Integrated Practices. Discourse Modes referred to strategies that complemented the typifying shared oral reading practices in the class. Recurring discourse modes included I-R-E (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) sequences in which teacher and students shared initiating agency (Mehan, 1979; Tharp, 1997) and dyadic (or Think-Pair-Share) student interchanges (Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999;
Tharp, 1997; Manning, 2000). Integrated Practices referred to tasks and activities that extended the sociocultural context of the literature class (i.e. its relationship to other areas of study, relationship to "real life" issues and experiences, role as a metacognitive tool to facilitate learning) through an expanded view of reading literacy (i.e. personal, social, technological, visual, kinesthetic, cognitive, metacognitive) and through the integration of reader-response strategies such as prediction, clarification, association, contestation, and critical examination of themes and features in a printed text (Rosenblatt, 1978; Manning, 2000). Assessment practices (e.g. grade book checkmarks, half-sheet quizzes, use of a standard rubric and point-value for journal writing) suggested Teresa's emphasis on participation in classroom life and on student performance in relation to clearly established evaluative criteria (Lachat, 1999; Tharp, 1997; Chavkin & Gonzales, 2000; Secada et al, 1998; Berman et al, 1995).

**EXPLICIT CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Silent Reading</th>
<th>13%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCOURSE MODES**

Initiate-Respond-Evaluate; Open sharing: organizational ideas for play performance, students responding to one another during a lesson; small group work: creating props for play performance, rehearsal for play, Think-Pair-Share dyads in sequencing task on *Tuck Everlasting*, dyads for *Almost a Woman, The House on Mango Street, The Giver, Night, The Chocolate War* (third trimester); small group conferences; peer interviewing; dyads making power-point presentations

**INTEGRATED PRACTICES**

Vocabulary studied in context; journaling: "Things to do for Fun" and "Five Happy/Five Sad Memories; designing invitations for play performance; personal internet time: "Yahooligans, email"; creating props for play performance; Terra Nova test practice/preparation; summary/sequencing activities: oral, worksheet; Teresa's Auschwitz photos, internet research on Holocaust; Poster on home/community rules; "Mango Street" seminar; DYR [Did You Read] quizzes

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**Figure 31. Explicit Cultural Practices in the Literature Classroom**

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Silent Reading/Oral Reading percentages in Figure 31 were observation-based approximations, rather than exact measures, of time allocation in the literature class. The nine-month time frame of my study (Aug. 26, 2002-May 21, 2003) and the trimester schedule at Santa Cruz (Sept.-Dec., Jan.-Apr., May-Aug.) were factors that contributed to the similarity in number of field observations in first two trimesters and the disparity in the number of observations in the third trimester.

**Cultural Practices in the 8th Grade Writing Classroom**

The focus of Teresa's 8th grade writing class, like the literature class, suggested core principles in the thematic language arts scope and sequence. Teresa created strong connections between reading and writing literacy, cultural and historical contexts, and personal and communal identity through an extensive autobiographical unit, a series of scholarship-related compositions, and informal as well as formal responses to literature experiences. The focus of the writing class reflected what Teresa described as a desire "to increase...self-confidence," "to foster...academic initiative" (Field notes, Oct. 17, 2002), and "to provide voice" for her students (Interview, May 3, 2003). The focus also suggested what Rueda and Moll (1994) call "a link between classroom activities and issues of life outside the classroom" for culturally and linguistically diverse students (p. 127), a primary characteristic in a multicultural perspective of literacy teaching and learning (Chavez, 1997; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Garcia, 2001; Gay, 1994; Rosado, 1996).

The organizational structure of the 8th grade writing class, like the literature class, emphasized whole-class activity, dyadic interaction, and journaling. What distinguished Teresa's organization of the writing class, however, was the differing balance that she established among those practices in pursuing, with her students, the specific literacy
goals of the class. Whole-group activity, for example, occurred in shorter time frames and reflected a balance, on Teresa's part, between direct writing instruction (e.g. "how to do" demonstrations, explanations of new or problematic concepts) and what Berman et al (1995), Goodlad (1984), and others (e.g. Montgomery, 2001; Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998) call *instructional conversation* (e.g. informal, personal sharing and questioning related to the topic of study, invitations to dialogue that used student concerns or interests as the basis for interaction). According to Goodlad (1984), the former approach (i.e. direct instruction) without the latter (i.e. instructional conversation) represents teaching as a process of knowledge transmission (Freire, 1994, 1997) and learning as a process of passive acquisition:

A great deal of what goes on in the classroom is like painting-by numbers—filling in the colors called for by numbers on the page....[Teachers typically] ask specific questions calling essentially for students to fill in the blanks: 'What is the capital city of Canada?' 'What are the principal exports of Japan?' [or Who did what in a story? Where do commas belong in this sentence?] Students rarely turn things around by asking the questions. Nor do teachers often give students a chance to romp with an open-ended question such as "What are your views on the quality of television? [or How would you describe a committed person? a perfect family? a perfect community?]" (p. 108)

Teresa organized dyadic interactions and journaling activities as embedded parts of a process approach to writing (Interview, May 3, 2003). Think-pair-share (T-P-S) activities, for example, began as individual journal writing tasks (commonly centered on themes which germinated in literature class) and progressed naturally into communicative acts in which pairs of students read and responded to each other's writing (Field notes, Sept. 20; Sept. 24; Oct. 16, 2002; Jan. 9; Feb. 3; Feb. 11; Mar. 25; May 5, 2003). T-P-S activities were cultural practices bound, most often, to formal writing assignments (e.g. autobiographical unit, scholarship composition unit, reader-response essays).
writing units in the class were word-processing activities that engaged learners in critical thinking through a pattern of brainstorming, initial drafting, teacher-student conferencing, peer evaluation, revision, and final drafting. The process approach that Teresa utilized suggested an image of literacy learning as an interactional, multi-level accomplishment with personal, social, and technological dimensions (Moll, 2001; Berman et al, 1995; Tharp, 1997), a social constructivist perspective of writing instruction (Au, 1998; Wells, 1999; Rogoff, 1995, 1998). Teresa used assessment practices similar to those in the literature class, emphasizing the value of students' active participation in classroom life and focusing on performance-based evaluations of their writing using established rubrics and students' prior writing as evaluative guides (Interview, May 3, 2003).

Exemplar

How Teresa described the autobiographical unit she created in the first trimester of the year suggested a culturally responsive mode of teaching and a constructivist view of learning. Teresa described the autobiographical unit as an emergent progression with roots in a shared literature experience [analytical codes in boldface]:

[The autobiographical unit] was prior to our establishment of the theme approach and we were working on an identity unit using a story about a Puerto Rican family that left home to seek medical attention in the U.S. [Almost a Woman]. Since we were dealing with the topics of family, special events in a family’s history, accidents, and hospital visits, an awareness of who we are, where we came from, seemed to fit well. The original plan [I had], like the unit I used last year, asked students to interview family members [and write a biographical sketch]. This year, though, students wanted to write their own memoirs. I gave them choices and they chose the autobiographical assignment. [VIS4, 6, MM7, OWNS, CR1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15] (Interview excerpt, May 3, 2003)

Teresa organized the unit as a series of activities over an eight-day period. The memoirs to which Teresa alluded were formal writing tasks in the unit, but she provided a series of scaffolding activities to assist students in preparing those formal compositions.
The scaffolding activities, like the paragraph-length compositions themselves, drew on students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001) and created a cultural-historical context (Vygostsky, 1978) for the entire unit. Figure 32 lists those scaffolding activities as they appeared in Teresa's lesson plans:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES (2002)</th>
<th>LESSON PLANS (Group A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>Venn Diagram [illustration of artifact; use as reader response] Identity Conflict essay [reader response for Almost a Woman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>Timeline of Significant Events [completed/dyad for sharing] Identity Conflict essay [work at computers, peer review, final draft]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Memoir first drafts [Three paragraphs using events in Timeline] First memoir [Draft shared with a partner/feedback]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Continue memoir drafts [writing &amp; word processing of drafts] Conferencing about drafts [peer evaluation, teacher feedback] Prepare final drafts [save in portfolio file/print out copies]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 32. Scaffolding Activities of the Autobiographical Unit**

The pattern of activities and the incorporation of "tools" (e.g. peer feedback and teacher-student conferencing) and "artifacts" (e.g. Venn diagram, Timeline of Significant Events, word processing) within the pattern resembled what Wells (1999) describes as a sociocultural "spiral of knowing." A sociocultural "spiral of knowing" is a process that involves the construction of zones of proximal development (Vygostsky, 1978) in each stage of a learning activity and the strategic orchestration of each zone to support the object/goal of the learning unit. The reader response strategies that Teresa used to form the framework of the autobiographical unit intimated, in explicit ways, how she merged a culturally relevant literature experience with a multi-layer, self-exploratory writing unit.
Composite of Cultural Practices in the Writing Classroom

I represented saliencies of the explicit culture of practice in the writing class (See Figure 33) in the same format I used to illustrate cultural practices in the literature class. Formal Writing/Informal Writing percentages in Figure 33, like the Silent Reading/Oral Reading percentages in the earlier format, were observation-based approximations, rather than exact measures, of time allocation in the writing class. The number of observations (35), significantly larger than the number of observations I conducted in the literature class (15), reflected a) my first-trimester interest in balancing field observations of the two participating teachers in the study, one of whom was the writing lab instructor and b) my interest in observing the varying ways that Teresa used writing as a transformational teaching and learning tool (Moll, 2001; Moll & Greenberg, 1992; Atwell, 1998; Chavez, 1997; Quiroz, 1997).

### EXPLICIT CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSE MODES</th>
<th>INTEGRATED PRACTICES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Journaling:</strong> sensory observations, vivid words in sentence rewriting, &quot;Why laugh? People who are inconsiderate? or Favorite game?&quot; figures of speech in original sentences, character/situation response, Brainstorming, &quot;Belonging/ Leading in community, group, organization,&quot; &quot;The Perfect Community: Word Games, Disciplinary &quot;Think Sheet,&quot; Handouts: Grammar, Simile/Metaphor practice, Drawing: self-portrait, idiom through art, nouns in pictures; Terra Nova practice, Reader-response practices, self-exploration in writing, Internet research</td>
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<td><strong>Informal Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Drawing:</strong> self-portrait, idiom through art, nouns in pictures; Terra Nova practice, Reader-response practices, self-exploration in writing, Internet research</td>
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Observations: A = 35  
Sept-Dec 2002 (18), Jan-Apr 2003 (13), May 2003 (4)
Cultural Practices in the 8th Grade Reading Classroom

The focus and organization of the 8th grade reading class reflected the influence of the Accelerated Reader (AR) system. Individual student agency (i.e. student decision-making, student monitoring of progress, student ownership of the learning process) and one-on-one conferencing between student and teacher, for example, replaced the whole-class and dyadic practices that I found characteristic of the literature and writing classes. Common images that I observed in the 8th grade reading class included students reading silently in cushioned classroom or hallway chairs (Field notes, Sept. 20, 2002; Feb. 12, 2003), students engaged at computer stations reading and responding to pre and post-tests on AR books (Field notes, Sept. 23, 2002; May 19, 2003), and Teresa, her grade book in hand, conversing in soft tones with a student and recording data after the conversation (Field notes, Oct. 18, 2002; Feb. 18, 2003).

Accelerated Reader is a primary component in the School Renaissance School Improvement Process (Renaissance Learning, 2002). The seven principles on which the full program rests emphasize personalized instruction attuned to appropriate levels of student ability, immediate feedback and goal-setting, and the active use of technology as a learning and diagnostic instrument (Renaissance Learning, 2002). I noted in my earlier description of the Santa Cruz curriculum the integral role that AR played in the school’s literacy program, a role reflected in the daily schedule (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002) and in homework policies (Parent Handbook, 2001-2002) at Santa Cruz.

Accelerated Reader merges classroom instruction, library use, and technology in an important literacy partnership. Students take the Standardized Test of Assessment in Reading (S.T.A.R.) at the beginning of the school year to identify their placement within
the AR standards. Their respective teachers, then, assign each student a reading goal within the AR standards that represents a zone of proximal development toward which to work during the year (Field notes, Sept. 6, 2002). Zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) are learning spaces mediated by sociocultural "tools" (e.g. language, teachers, contexts) and "artifacts" (e.g. programs, strategies, technologies) in an activity setting (Moll, 2001; Wertsch, 1985; Wells, 1999; Engeström, 1987). Vygotsky (1978) describes learning spaces or "zpd's" as the "distance between the actual developmental level of the learner as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance [and with the aid of cultural artifacts] or in collaboration with more capable peers." (p. 86)

Berman, Aburto et al (2000) contend that technology, meaningfully integrated in the core curriculum and fully accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse youth, facilitates the teaching and learning of English language skills (p. 53). Padrón, Waxman, and Rivera (2002) support that contention, adding that technology-enriched instruction encourages Hispanic student motivation and frees teachers to engage more personally with individual students. Cotton (1995) describes features such as the self-pacing, instant feedback, and impartiality of computer-assisted instruction as effective strategies in helping diverse students gain English proficiency. Manning (2000) describes how the program values of the Accelerated Reader system and a complementary reader-response component facilitated growth in English language literacy for Hispanic youth in a Florida middle school.

A statistical view of composite reading records of 8th grade student participants in my study (n = 16) showed a similar program value. Statistics indicated that, in slightly
more than two trimesters (about seven months), students read 1542 books, with an AR reading level average of 5.3 (mid-fifth-grade), and tested on 1436 books, achieving an aggregate AR comprehension rate average of 84.7% [Mastery level at Santa Cruz was 85%.] (Composite Diagnostic Report, AR Program, 2002-2003). In addition, six of the sixteen participating students in my study achieved in approximately seven months the AR certification level that Teresa had set for the nine-month school year (Field notes, Sept. 2, 2002). The achievement was a significant, although not unusual, phenomenon for students at Santa Cruz (Field notes, Mar. 21, 2003). The daily focus on and allocation of time to reading were cultural, structural, and motivational supports for each student's individual efforts (Benard, 1995; Sagor, 1996; Au, 1998) to improve reading competence.

**Exemplar**

Students in Teresa's two reading classes perceived the AR program in a number of ways. Common expressions students used to describe their AR experiences, for instance, ranged on a continuum from the positive ("a good program," "the best"), to the middling ("all right," "okay"), to the critical ("pretty boring," "boring"). The practical meaning of those expressions to the individual students who shared them (n = 13), even through the brevity of "desk-side chats," suggested the social and cultural impact of the Accelerated Reader program in Teresa's reading classroom.

The protocols I used in student interviews (See Appendix A, pp. 346-7), what I called "desk-side chats" in the methodology chapter, precluded extended interactions in the classroom. The "desk-side" protocols were practices that Teresa and I negotiated early on in fieldwork to lessen my intrusion into daily classroom life (Field notes, Sept. 2, 2002). Even in their brevity, however, desk-side chats provided valuable connections
with students in the context of specific lessons and activities. They were particularly useful in Teresa's reading classes because students were, for the most part, individually engaged and seated less proximate to one another. In that setting, I was able to probe, albeit briefly, the meanings of expressions like "good program," "okay," and "boring."

Students who described the AR program as "good" or "best" (n = 5) spoke about the importance of "tracking how you read" (Field notes, May 19, 2003), of being able "to choose your own books" (Field notes, Sept. 23; Oct. 4, 2002), and of having "a point goal to motivate your reading" (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003). Each of the five students also suggested images of reading as social process and as social accomplishment (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993; Rueda & Garcia, 1994). One of the students regularly "read to [her] little brother at home" (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003); another "read to [her] nephew to teach him how to read." (Field notes, Feb. 13, 2003). Two of the students said that they talked about books "with friends during the lunch periods" (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003) and two others said that they asked for and often gave "book recommendations to [their] friends" (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003). The student who described AR as "the best reading program ever" stated that the AR program gave him "a lot of room to explore" his favorite subject, "NASA and space exploration." (Field notes, Feb. 13, 2003).

Students who described the AR program as "all right" or "okay" (n = 5) also spoke about the value of being able to "choose the books you want to read" (Field notes, Sept. 23; Jan. 28; Feb. 13, 2003). Their perspectives on point goals and the tracking of reading progress, however, differed from those of their aforementioned classmates. Two students spoke about the pressures they experienced in trying to achieve their assigned point totals in the AR system. One student stated that the point goal and the tracking
process were helpful to the teacher, but that they created "a lot of stress to reach your goal and a lot of worry that you [wouldn't] get it" (Field notes, Feb. 13, 2003). The other student said that "tests always [made] him nervous," so his test scores "[didn't] show what [he knew] about a book." (Field notes, May 19, 2003) Two students spoke specifically about the computerized tests in AR. One of them stated that he had trouble making "decisions on any kind of multiple-choice test" (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003); the other said that often a test was "hard because some of the questions [didn't] relate to the book." (Field notes, May 19, 2003) Despite mixed feelings about the reading program, students in the "middling" group maintained, according to trimester updates on AR certification levels, a steady pace toward point-total goals (Field notes, May 2, 2003).

Students who described the AR program as "pretty boring" or "boring" (n = 3) spoke about reading as a challenge "that [took] away too much free time at home" (Field notes, Sept. 23, 2002), that "was always the same thing everyday" (Field notes, May 19, 2003), and that had built-in frustrations such as "finding books you like, books that keep you interested." (Field notes, Feb. 13, 2003) For one of the students, the challenges of the AR program represented the challenges of finding a purpose in any kind of schooling. "Why should I bother with stuff like this [reading a book]?" he said. "It's just a waste of time. I don't want to go to high school. I need to get a job." (Field notes, Sept. 23, 2002) For the other two students in the group, the AR program posed challenges that were more motivational than social. "I wouldn't be doing so good without my parents," one of them said. "They make me do stuff I don't want to do by myself." (Field notes, Feb. 13, 2003) "I know reading is real important and I want to get good grades and go to a good high school," the other said. "But I'm lazy sometimes too. My mom, she knows how to get me
on track." (Field notes, Jan. 28, 2003) Like their "middling" classmates and despite their stronger mixed feelings about reading, the three students who described the AR program as "pretty boring" or "boring" maintained a stable, although modest, pace toward their assigned point goals in reader certification (Field notes, May 2, 2003).

The breadth of varying perspectives that Teresa's students shared about the 8th grade reading program suggested, on a cognitive level, the diversity of learning styles and preferences within a small group of students. The differing perspectives supported the contention that no educational program or strategy worked all the time for every student; there was no magic formula to universalize reading instruction (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Garcia, 2001; Borman & Rucuba, 2001; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). On social and cultural levels, however, what students said also suggested stages of membership in a specific culture of practice (Rogoff, 1995). Some students were more apprenticed than others, but all were part of a cultural cycle of development.

**Composite of Cultural Practices in the Reading Classroom**

With one notable exception, I represented features of the explicit culture of practice in the reading class (See Figure 34) in the format I used to depict practices in Teresa's other two language arts classes. Rather than Discourse Modes and Integrated Practices, however, I used "Teacher Practices" and "Student Practices" as categories to represent the substantive shift in focus and organization of the reading classroom. Silent Reading/Reading Assessment percentages were observation-based approximations, rather than exact measures, of time allocation in the classroom activity setting. The number of observations (8), significantly less in comparison to the number of observations I made in Teresa's other two classes, reflected my judgment about the normative nature of the class.
Explicit Cultural Practices in the Reading Classroom

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<tr>
<th>TEACHER PRACTICES</th>
<th>STUDENT PRACTICES</th>
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<td>Conferencing with individual students, reminding students about response logs and record-keeping, grade book notations, observing students taking AR computerized tests, suggesting books to read, silent reading, oral reading, encouraging individual students, updating student reading records, assessing student reading logs, responding to student questions about AR testing, &quot;coaching&quot; students about AR questions, assessing reading progress of each student (AR printout)</td>
<td>Journaling in reading logs, record-keeping, silent reading, frequent library trips, computer-assisted interactions: reading AR pre-questions, responding to questions, assessing responses, recording, taking AR tests on books, assessing responses, recording, giving account to teacher; asking for teacher assistance, asking for librarian assistance, sharing ideas with peers about reading experiences, self-directed movements, goal oriented activity, conference participation, checking computer records</td>
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Figure 34. Explicit Cultural Practices in the Reading Classroom

The Implicit Culture of Practice in the 8th Grade Classroom

In *A Place Called School*, Goodlad (1984) conjectures that "education" in most American schools and classrooms is "something more envisioned than practiced" (p. 361), that textbooks rather than teachers serve as pedagogical guides, that classroom life reflects mechanical rather than human qualities. For Sergiovanni (2000), mechanistic images of school and classroom are manifestations of a transactional (or contractual) view of teaching and learning and of the domination of a "systemsworld" approach to education. He contrasts such images with the concept of schools and classrooms as communities of practice, manifestations of a transformational view of teaching and learning and of the inspiration of a "lifeworld" approach to education. Nieto (1999), drawing on a multicultural and critical literacy perspective (Freire, 1994, 1997, 1998), describes educational envisioning and practice as "political acts" that require of teachers
"profound transformation of attitude, beliefs, and behaviors concerning the nature of learning and intelligence, the role of diversity in learning," and the "building of strong relationships" with students in the classroom (p. 131). She states:

Although teaching is often approached as a technical activity—writing lesson plans,...selecting appropriate texts, developing tests to assess student learning—anybody who has spent any time in a classroom knows that teaching and learning are primarily about relationships. What happens in classrooms is first and foremost about the personal and collective connections that exist among the individuals who inhabit those spaces. (p. 130)

The cultural themes (Spradley, 1980) that connected Teresa's three language arts classes had roots in the Santa Cruz macro-cultural ethic of responsive education and in what Nieto (1999) calls "a hopeful framework for thinking about learning" (p. 15), a sociocultural theory of possibilities (Reyes, 2001), and strong belief in students' talents and abilities (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Freire, 1994, 1997; Montgomery, 2001; Conchas, 2001; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). The cultural themes I identified in fieldwork analysis of Teresa's language arts classes were joint, goal-oriented activity and identity formation through resilience building and a "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1990, 2001) instructional approach.

**Responsive Qualities in Implicit Classroom Culture of Practice**

Joint, goal-oriented activity and identity formation through resilience building and a "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001) approach to teaching were focal and structural features that spanned the distance between envisioning and practice (Goodlad, 1984; Sergiovanni, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996), between the explicit and the implicit curricula (Eisner, 1985), in Teresa's literature, writing, and reading classes. They were also micro-cultural (classroom-specific) themes connected, in specific ways, to the macro-cultural (school-specific) mission, vision, and belief statements of the Santa Cruz
community and to the principles of culturally responsive practice that lay at the core of a multicultural ethic of education (Banks, 1999; Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Gay, 1994; Moll, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The exemplars that I chose to represent those two salient cultural themes in Teresa's classes were redactions of field observations. They illustrated how the themes were embedded in the typical social practices in which she and her students engaged in each of the three language arts program components.

**Joint, Goal-Oriented Activity**

Research in effective school practices (e.g. Cotton, 1995, 2000; August & Hakuta, 1997; Dalton, 1998; Berman et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) identifies joint productive (goal-oriented) activity (JPA) as a pivotal classroom practice to mediate the development of culturally and linguistically diverse students. JPA is the linchpin standard among five standards of effective school practices proposed by scholars at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE).

According to Dalton (1998), JPA is an educational standard that represents a consensus among researchers with two distinct yet related orientations—social constructivism and multicultural education. To describe JPA through a teacher-focused and classroom-based lens, Dalton (1998) proposes the following indicators of practice. The teacher:

- designs instructional activities requiring student collaboration to accomplish a joint project.
- matches the demands of the joint productive activity to the time available.
- arranges classroom seating to accommodate students’ individual and group needs to communicate and work jointly.
- participates with students in joint productive activity.
organizes students in a variety of groupings, such as by friendship, mixed academic ability, language, project, or interests, to promote interaction.

plans with students how to work in groups and move from one activity to another, such as from large group introduction to small group activity, for clean-up, dismissal, and the like.

manages student and teacher access to materials and technology to facilitate joint productive activity.

monitors and supports student collaboration in positive ways. (p. 11)

Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, and Woodworth (1995) identify JPA as a contributing factor in the effective school practices at Horace Mann Academic Middle School and Harold Wiggs Middle School. Lockwood and Secada (1999) also describe the importance of joint, goal-oriented practices in their study of Lennox Middle School. Indeed, research focused on student resilience (e.g. Benard, 1995; Sagor, 1993; Borman & Racuba, 2001) and student empowerment (e.g. Quiroz, 1997; Moll, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999) suggest the concept of meaningful joint activity as a potentially transformative practice in mitigating the low self-esteem, low academic achievement, and school disaffection that prevent so many culturally diverse youth from reaching their full human potential.

The concept of joint, goal-oriented activity has roots in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of socially mediated learning. Vygotsky (1978) contends that learning, or "cultural development," occurs "first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the [learner] (intrapsychological)." (p. 57) Learning is a process of collaboration and appropriation through continuous participation, with knowledgeable others, in culturally meaningful activities (Rogoff, 1995), what Tharp (1997) describes as an activity setting where "experts and novices
work together for [and converse about] a common product or goal." (p. 9) Joint, goal-oriented activities in which teachers fully participate with students create "a common context of experience" (p. 9) and foster a shared culture of practice in the classroom. Joint, goal-oriented practices, from an activity theory perspective, are mediating tools for the social construction of knowledge (Engeström, 1987, 1999). They represent enactments of participation and performance in a community of practice (Wells, 1999) that blurs the traditional roles of teacher as transmitter of knowledge and learners as passive recipients of transmission (Wells, 1999; Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996; Engestrom, 1987, 1999). Joint, goal-oriented activities have material and symbolic manifestations. For individual participants, they stimulate the formation of an altered "material" artifact (e.g. a fresh way of understanding a new idea or concept, an enhanced view of one's oral or written constructions, a setting for mutual growth and problem solving through personal sharing) and provide experiences involving the semiotic quality of learning (e.g. language as a negotiated tool of understanding, the social and relational dimensions of cultural practice, a setting for personal investment in the achievement of a shared goal (Wells, 1999; Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996; Engeström, 1987; Rogoff, 1995). If they are embedded in the social fabric of classroom culture and facilitated naturally in the physical arrangement of classroom settings (Dalton, 1998; Eisner, 1985), joint, goal-oriented practices are tools that foster the transformation of identities (Nieto, 1999; Engeström, 1999; Nardi, 1996; Wells, 1999; Lantolf, 2000; Moll, 2001).

**Exemplar One**

The culture of practice in Teresa's literature classes was a culture of joint activity. In addition to the shared whole-class oral reading activities that occurred on a daily basis,
Teresa and her students engaged in whole-class interchange. I reconstructed one of those whole-class exercises in the following redaction to exemplify how teacher and students engaged and negotiated a classroom cultural practice. The classroom diagram (See Figure 35) illustrated how Teresa arranged the learning space to facilitate modes of teacher and student interaction [analytical codes in boldface].

8th Grade Literature Class (14 students)  
Sept. 18, 2002  
9:25 a.m.

TK: Okay, 8th grade, we need to listen to one another. If you want to speak, please raise your hand. Let's summarize the play (Tuck Everlasting) so far. Will someone get us started? (One student raised her hand. Teresa called on her.) [RR1, REL9, CR2, 9, MM6]

S: I don't get it. The story's weird. Everybody knows you can't live forever by just drinking water from a pond.[Teresa and her students laughed, but one other student shook his head in agreement. The student who initially responded pushed back her chair. Teresa removed a set of papers from a manila folder on the edge of the table next to where she stood.) [LIT1, MM3, EXP5, RR6]

TK: Maybe the play will become clearer if we can put things in sequence. I have [a handout] to help us do that. (She distributed the handout.) [LIT6]

TK: I'd like you to work on this individually, but if you want to work with a partner, that's fine too. We'll take twenty minutes. If you have questions, please raise your hand. [LIT2, RR7, CR 15, REL2]

(Students began working on the sequencing task. Three dyads quickly formed. When I asked Teresa about dyads, she told me that sometimes it was just a good
idea to let students create their own cooperative groups, but she added "as long as they're working on the assignment." [OWN1, MM7, 9] At 9:48, Teresa asked students to make sure their names were on the handout and she collected them.)

TK: Since we're going to be performing the play, maybe we should do a little brainstorming. Let's use 'Man in the Yellow Suit' to help as an image. Someone want to write the ideas on the board as they come up? (One student volunteered.) [CR4, 9, RR7]

TK: Okay, let's think about props we would need for 'Man in the Yellow Suit.' Who can get us started? (One student spoke without raising his hand.)

S: Dress.

TK: That's fine, (___), but please raise your hand before you speak. (Three students raised their hands and Teresa called on each in succession.) [RR1, OWN9, EXP8]

S: A fountain.

S: A shovel.

S: A tree.

TK: Okay, fine, but there's an obvious one. What is it? (Several students said in unison "A yellow suit!" [LIT7, RR6, 8]

TK: Yeah, a yellow suit. What are some other props we need? (One student raised his hand and Teresa called on him.)

S: Signs for scenes like Scene 1, Scene 2.

TK: That's good, (___). I hadn't thought of signs for scenes. Any others that you can think of? Anyone? (Four students raised their hands and Teresa called on them in succession.) [MM1, RR9, CR10]

S: A hat for the sheriff.

S: A bottle of water.

S: A music box.

S: A curtain.

(With each response, Teresa nodded and watched as (___) listed the props on the board. She also moved within the u-shaped arrangement of tables to speak privately with three students who periodically interjected remarks but did not participate constructively in the classroom activity.) [RR9, COM5, VIS6]

TK: I asked you nicely to raise your hand if you want to talk...All of you know better than that. It's important for you...to be with the class and not chatting among yourselves. Think about that, will you? (The students nodded.) [VIS6, RR1, COM6, CR8, 9]

Joint, goal-oriented activity in Teresa's literature class had practical and social purposes. The practical dimensions, as one might infer from my redaction, involved the planning of a shared project through the contributions of individual students. I later
observed students making props for their performance of *Tuck Everlasting* (Field notes, Sept. 20; Sept. 23, 2002) and attended the play performance itself (Field notes, Oct. 17, 2002). The basic contributions of students that I noted in the redaction, then, were initial stages in a more complex social process that eventually involved a negotiation and distribution of roles and responsibilities in accomplishment of a shared learning project (Engeström, 1987; Nardi, 1996; Kuutti, 1996; Wells, 1999). Teresa and her students engaged in similar joint activities in the literature class to create common understandings, focus energies on common goals (Rosado, 1996, 1999), and lay the foundation of other multilayered learning projects (e.g. autobiographical unit *Almost a Woman*, *House on Mango Street* seminar, "perfect community" unit *The Giver*, reader-response and research unit on *Night* and the Holocaust) in the first two trimesters of the school year. The joint productive practices in the literature classroom were shared practical planning activities (Faculty Handbook, 2001-2002) and social interactions that were integral stages in the on-going construction of a classroom culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Rogoff, 1995, 1998; Moll, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000).

**Exemplar Two**

Joint productive activity in the 8th grade writing classroom suggested features of instructional conversation (Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998; Berman et al, 1995) and student-teacher-peer cooperation (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998). Teresa commonly used experiences from her cultural and familial background to initiate units of study (e.g. a birth narrative in the autobiographical unit, photographs and recollections from her visit to Auschwitz in the *Night* and Holocaust unit). Those self-disclosures, in turn, served as invitations for students to reflect on their cultural and familial experiences.
and to share them both in speech and in writing (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Chavez, 1997; Quiroz, 1997). Eisner (1998) describes that kind of classroom communicative practice as an "emotionalized" form of cognitive development:

The ability to 'make sense' out of forms of representation is not merely a way of securing meaning— as important as that may be— it is also a way of developing cognitive skills. The forms of thinking that students are able to use are profoundly influenced by the kind of experience they are able to have....All thinking, especially all productive thinking, is infused with feeling. Feeling permeates the forms of thinking we employ and provides us with the information we need to make judgments about the quality of our work. Mind is not separated from affect; affect is part and parcel of mind. Thus, for refinement of cognitive skills to be fully developed, it must in some way be emotionalized. (pp. 7-8)

Joint productive activities involving teacher-student and student-peer interactions also suggested a conscious integration of cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. I reconstructed one of those joint productive writing class activities in the following redaction to show how a typical partnering exercise, a peer dyad, was a mediating tool for meaningful personal disclosures, for cognitive and affective growth. The redaction was an excerpt from a classroom observation related to the autobiographical unit Teresa organized in the first trimester [analytical codes in boldface] (Field notes, Oct. 16, 2002).

Writing Class (8 students)
Wed., Oct. 16, 2002
2:16 p.m.

I was standing by a computer station five feet or so behind two students (Student A and Student B) and not within their sightlines. Like some of their classmates, they had finished a webbing task, a pre-writing exercise in an autobiographical unit that the class had recently begun, and they were readying themselves for a partnering activity. Student A moved his chair and illustration next to Student B.

They smiled at one another and then turned toward the webbing tasks on the table. [VIS5, REL9, RR8]

After a few seconds, pencil in hand, Student A pointed to a particular place in the illustration of the other, saying with a broad smile, “You make me laugh, ___. Look here, I’m (inaudible)…” [REL5, 9, RR8]
Student B nodded and smiled back, responding, “(two inaudible words) couldn’t talk about it without including you.” They both smiled. [REL5, 9, MM6]

“Ms. K wants us (inaudible) something about the web,” she continued, “like the most important thing or something. (inaudible) is trust, can count on my friends for me. You, and ___, and ___.” [REL5, 9, RR6, MM6]

“Yeah,” laughed Student A, pointing to his webbing illustration. “Like brother and sister—crazy sister. Look here, ___. ‘Sister, hyper’ I said.” [REL5, 6, 9]

They smiled at each other once again.

Student B then added something in pen to one of the components in her web. It looked like a slash mark followed by a single word. Student A watched her writing and then turned the illustration to get a better view.

“Yeah,” he said. “Funny—that’s me for sure.” [REL5, 6, 9] (Field notes redaction excerpt, Oct. 16, 2002)

Nieto (1999), Moll (2001), and other scholars who describe effective practices in the education of young Latinos/as (e.g. Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Conchas, 2001; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002; Garcia, 2001) identify cooperative learning as an effective strategy in tapping students' cultural "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001). As the interchange between Students A and B suggested, cooperative learning in Teresa's classroom had unscripted personal, relational dimensions. Those dimensions reflected ways that students appropriated a learning strategy and shaped it to satisfy social as well as academic purposes (Rogoff, 1995; Rosado, 1996). In field analysis, I came to see the dyadic peer engagements among Teresa's students “as forms of classroom conversation reflecting a sense of belonging, of being valued, and of being part of a less-structured learning dynamic” (Research Log, Feb. 11, 2003).

In other peer exchanges I observed, students appropriated varying cognitive and affective roles, ranging from teaching problematic concepts to unsure learning partners to expressing personal care for and solidarity with a distraught classmate. One student, for
instance, composed a series of small sentences on a piece of paper and with the words—“Now let’s put the commas where they belong”—sought to help her partner with a punctuation problem (Field notes, Oct. 9, 2002). In another dyadic conversation, after students had read each other’s creative endings for The Giver, one partner pointed to a place in the text of the other, saying, “This is good, ___. Maybe better than what’s really in the book” (Feb. 11, 2003). In a third dyad, I watched one student console his partner with an arm around her shoulder. “It’s okay, ___.,” he said. “We care about you, all of us” (Field notes, Feb. 3, 2003).

**Exemplar Three**

In Teresa’s reading classes, joint productive activity was integral to the systematic process of the AR program. I observed Teresa’s reading classes only eight times during my fieldwork, but each visitation—from the initial one (Field notes, Sept. 23, 2002) to the final one (Field notes, May 19, 2003), provided a sense of both a slightly different instructional focus on Teresa’s part and a more independent work ethic among her students. I considered the following classroom redaction an archetypal representation of joint activity in the 8th grade reading class [analytical codes in boldface]:

Reading Class (14 students)
Fri., Oct. 18, 2002
10:10 a.m.

TK: Ladies and gentlemen, I’ll give you one minute to fill in the form in your folders...starting now.” [RR7, OWN8]

(I used the brief pause in classroom activity to pose a question. I asked Teresa about the kinds of things students typically included in their reading folders.)

TK: Basically, they’re reader-response journals, but the students also keep reading records in them…what books they’re reading, how many pages they’re covering each day in class and at home, how they’re performing on tests, and the like.” [LIT5, 7, OWN9, CR10, 11]
(Within two minutes [10.12], students were reading silently. Teresa took her grade book and began to work individually with students.) [RR1] One student (___) was taking an AR test at a computer (Brian’s Winter pre-test). He was considering the response choices for one of the AR test questions when I stopped to observe. "Just trying to figure out the best answer,” he said to my question “Is the reading question a difficult one?” [RR1, LIT8]

Teresa worked with a student (___) who asked questions about her book. Their conversation was not audible from the other side of the room. Another student was checking and writing in his reading folder. 10:22 (Teresa put a CD into a stereo player [Mozart]). [RR6, VIS9, CR10]

TK: Just a reminder for you…Today is the last day of the marking period. (She wrote on the board.) “Two journals due today.” [LIT9, RR8, OWN6]

Teresa continued working individually with students. She checked journal entries for five students, marking in her grade book as she dealt with each student. (I sat on a soft chair by the windows observing the classroom behaviors.) 10:33

Teresa spoke with a student (___) who then added material in his reading folder. (“I am writing one of the journal entries for today….on sports figures… Michael Jordan,” he responded when I asked what he was writing.) Teresa then consulted with a student who had just completed an AR test at the computer. She patted him on the back and then recorded something in her grade book. [RR1, REL5, VIS8, CR9, 10, 13]

(I moved from my seat to check a poster [See Figure 36] on the bulletin board. Then, I asked Teresa what the poster meant.)

![Figure 36. "Pages Read at Home" Classroom Poster](image)

TK: Well, I like to keep track of reading the students are doing at home. It’s a weekly record of pages read that I update weekly as well. [VIS6, RR7] (I said that it seemed like a good incentive, especially including students’ names and regularly updating their progress in reading.)
TK: I think so too. It creates incentive for the students to do more at home with their reading…and, you know, anything that encourages them to read is worth doing. 10:40 [VIS1, OWN6, LIT9, CR10]

(I continued looking and observing. Teresa consulted with the student who had been taking the AR pre-test on *Brian’s Winter.*)

TK: Let’s see…(she scrolled down the test page as she spoke). Okay…Number 3…Why do you think ‘a’ is a better response than ‘c’? Maybe the computer made a mistake. (She smiled at the student.) [RR1, REL5, VIS6, CR2, 10, 13]

The student’s response was not audible to me, but Teresa explained something to the student (again inaudible) and the student closed the computerized test page. Teresa finished individual consultations with four students. All of them were writing in journals at their seats. As before, she checked entries with a quick read and then marked in her grade book. With one student (___), Teresa spent a little more time and paged through the student's folder. “I see,” Teresa said…to a student comment I could not hear. 10:45 [RR1, LIT6, VIS9, CR10] (Field notes redaction, Oct. 18, 2002).

Joint productive activity in the Teresa's reading classroom had a cognitive and primarily individual focus that differentiated it from shared activities in the literature and writing classes. That differing focus, however, complemented the communal-oriented foci and organization of her other two language arts classes. It created an activity setting in which individual students "became instruments of their own learning" (Nieto, 1999, p. 120) through "choosing their own books" (Atwell, 1998, p. 34) and monitoring their own growth as readers and as learners (Houtchens, 2001; Lachat, 1999).

**Identity Formation through Resilience and Cultural Capital**

Nieto (1999) states that "learning begins when students begin to see themselves as competent, capable, and worthy of learning." (p. 123) One critical way to promote that vision in diverse students, she contends, is through recognition and incorporation of students' cultural capital in the curriculum of a classroom. Teachers who recognize the "funds of knowledge" in their students and consciously use that resource in their lessons
and activities send a clear "message to students that the classroom belongs to them" (Nieto, p. 120), that their "lives, realities, and dreams" (p. 131) are the centerpieces of a responsive educational philosophy. Secada et al (1998), in summarizing the findings of the Hispanic Dropout Project, use the word "advocacy" to describe such a philosophy:

Hispanic youth need to be coached, not rescued. They should be able to take credit for what they achieve. They need encouragement and opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and later lives, to set long-range, real-life goals, and to take the steps needed to achieve those goals. Adults who advocate for students, who encourage students to dream about their future, who mentor students on how to achieve those dreams, and who hold students accountable for their actions can provide needed support for students to make their dreams come true (p. 17)

Moll (2001) describes pedagogies that capitalize on students' cultural knowledge as "alternative 'systems of signification'" that "privilege what children and families possess and that treat their knowledge with respect and care," (p. 25) as mediating tools that help students "construct their futures." (p. 16) Literacy learning, from Moll's perspective, entails sharing meaningful narratives and using voice to position oneself as a knowing subject and a cultural agent. Personal narratives are central to the responsive pedagogical program that Chavez (1997) proposes for Hispanic youth and, as Quiroz (1997) contends, Hispanic students' autobiographical writing is a window through which one can view the multiple and often conflicting contexts of their identity formation.

Personal stories were mediating artifacts that students in Teresa's language arts classes used to chronicle and share their "lives, realities, and dreams" (Nieto, 1999, p. 131) in the developmental process of literacy growth. On one level, those stories served as forms of student participation in a classroom activity system (Engeström, 1987; Wells, 1999) that emphasized the integration of the personal and social dimensions of learning. On another level, they represented, as Quiroz (1997) notes, students' personal accounts of
the "real" world they inhabited, their efforts to develop positive academic self-concepts, and their struggles to integrate the often-conflicting images they held of themselves as members of different communities of practice.

I chose both written and oral exemplars to represent the range of student stories in Teresa's three language arts classes and to suggest the developmental role they played in the classroom culture of practice. The exemplars from the 8th grade literature and writing classrooms were excerpts from students' response journals and formal compositions. The exemplar from the reading classroom was an integration of field notes from "desk-side chats" I had with one student reader at three different times during my study.

**Exemplar One**

In the 8th grade literature classroom, journaling was a reader-response activity. Typically, Teresa's students wrote paragraph-length personal responses to literature-based prompts and then shared their responses with a partner. The prompts that Teresa gave her students varied according to the literature, but one expectation remained constant: Teresa wanted her students to probe classroom reading experiences by relating story concepts, situations, or characters to their own lives (Interview, May 3, 2003). Student responses to prompts on culturally thematic literature (i.e. *Almost a Woman*, *The House on Mango Street*, and *Night*) were illustrative of the ways that her students appropriated the journal writing strategy in self-disclosing ways. In Figures 37, 38, and 39, I displayed examples of Teresa's writing prompts for the three literary narratives and two samples (or excerpts) of student writing as representative (e.g. gender, length, style) responses. I suggested, at the bottom of each display, the cultural and developmental roles of each writing prompt.
**ALMOST A WOMAN**

**PROMPT:** Identity Conflict [Write about a time you have felt a conflict within yourself about your identity. Did you have to act certain ways with some people and not others? Did others see you the way you would like to be seen?]

**Student A:** There was a time when I acted different it was when I was between the 1st and 5th grade...I used to be this shy, quiet, scared little boy....Now that I am in the 8th grade I am a little shy not quiet anymore I expressing my ideas, I am more fun now and mature I think. Is like people say the quiet shy ones are always the wild and fun ones. (Student Writing 3d, Oct. 16, 2002)

**Student B:** Sometimes I do act in different ways. I act different at home and at school.... What I change is the language I talk and probably what I eat. In school I talk english and eat what they give us in lunch, pizza, hot dogs, corndogs, lasagna, etc. When I get home I speak Spanish (except with my brothers most of the time) and I eat different things, enchiladas, mole, menudo, arros, frijoles, etc. I guess that’s how it is with most of us, since our families are Mexicans and speak Spanish. (Student Writing 3g, Oct. 16, 2002)

**Cultural focus:** connection between school knowledge and life knowledge; taking "stock" of cultural self; recognition of/focus on students' "funds of knowledge"

**Developmental:** reflective activity in self-exploration unit; identity formation as a social process; academic self interrelated with social self; writing as a form of self-disclosure

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**THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET**

**PROMPT:** Character or Situation Response [Write about a person you know who is like one of the characters or a situation in the book that speaks to you through your own experience.]

**Student A:** What made me pick this vignette was that Darius was comparing God with the clouds because it is really wise to think about God in a way that no one would....The events that speak to me are that God can be anything or anyone. Also what speaks to me is that is nice to talk about God. What’s going on in my picture is Darius pointing to the sky telling Esperanza and Rachel that the big cloud next to the popcorn looking cloud that that is God. (Student Writing 7b, Dec. 3, 2002)

**Student B:** I remember when my house got burned. That build me up. Before this happened I used to see houses and buildings burning and I would think “Oh, It not a big deal,” and I would change the channel. But now that my house got burned I see it in a whole different point of view. I experienced how difficult it is to start over again….Now that I see stuff like that on T.V. I say “Poor people. Now they have to start ALL OVER.” (Student Writing 7f, Dec. 2, 2002)

**Cultural focus:** connection between school knowledge and life knowledge; culture as a bridge between "reading the word" and "reading the world"; neighborhood identity

**Developmental:** meaning-making as an interpretive process; writing as a meaning-making activity

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**Figure 37. "Identity Conflict" Prompt and Student Reader Responses**

**Figure 38. "Character or Situation" Prompt and Student Reader Responses**
"NIGHT"

PROMPT: Quotation Response on Violence [Write about what quotations like "Peace is hard, violence is easy" or "Small fights grow into big fights, which grow into war" mean by using your own experience.]

Student A: In our neighborhood...the situation is very awful. There are many people that get upset or mad with almost anything and they kill people. Of course, you know that I am talking about gangbangers. We all pretty much have an idea of what one gangbanger looks like: gang colors, probably hooded sweaters or jackets, and many have guns or knives.

This...affects us a lot. All of the younger kids are growing up around all sorts of violence and there is always the chance that they might choose that kind of life just because it is so common. That is not what we want to do. We want to shape the future so that these kids might be able to have a good life without worries. We will probably never get rid of every gang member, but we at least can be able to reduce it enough so that it won’t affect us as much. (Student Writing 14a, Feb. 20, 2003)

Student B: Violence is easy because you can just go up to someone and punch them cause they are stupid but it is hard to go back and apologize that’s why I think “Peace is hard and violence is hard.”

When I get into an argument or a fight it is easy for you to get pissed off and start sticking them even though the fight started because of you. Then when you know it is time to apologize it is twice as hard to apologize and say that you are sorry or wrong. Well that’s what happens to me. (Student Writing 14f, Feb. 21, 2003)

Cultural focus: connection between school knowledge and life knowledge; culture as an evolving human construct; exploration of unfamiliar cultures; peace/violence as universal cultural themes; connection of classroom discussion to personal reflection

Developmental: longer, more complex reader responses; critical reflection about a neighborhood problem; self-exploration as a worthy yet "dangerous discourse" (Nieto, 1999)

Figure 39. "Violence Quotation" Prompt and Student Reader Responses

The displays of Teresa's prompts and her students' responses were illustrations of ways that teacher and students shared in the construction of a culture of practice in the literature classroom. It was a culture in which the personal perspectives of students were integral features of classroom academic tasks (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Rosado, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Garcia, 2001). The displays suggested images of student authors in the process of “making sense,” “making meaning,” shaping identities by connecting “real” life experiences to shared reading and discursive experiences in the classroom (Wells, 1999; Engeström, 1987; Freire, 1994; Secada et al, 1998; Dalton, 1998).
Exemplar Two

In a similar way, Teresa and her students co-constructed the culture of practice in the 8th grade writing classroom. Major units involved a process approach to writing that integrated a critical examination of important cultural themes with an extension of reader-response perspectives. For example, personal memoirs (autobiographical unit drawing on the reading of *Almost a Woman* and *The House on Mango Street*) and critical (thematic compositions related to *Night*) as well as research-related responses (compositions using internet-based inquiry about the Holocaust) were extended writing tasks that bridged literature and writing classroom activities. The writing tasks students engaged as part of the Santa Cruz scholarship application process, however, were self-actualizing literacy activities that drew solely on students' personal and cultural "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001). In Figures 40, 41, and 42, I displayed examples of three scholarship prompts and two samples (or excerpts) of representative student responses. I suggested, at the bottom of each display, the themes that recurred in sets of student responses to each prompt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOLARSHIP PROMPT: Describe what education means to you and explain why you are an ideal candidate for the ___scholarship.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student A:</strong> I appreciate education. It is one of the most important things in my life because I would like to be someone in the world and have a good job. I am a mature person. Everyone can trust me. I give good advice to my friends, and I am a friendly person. I am a peaceful person. I would really appreciate the scholarship. It would help me by reaching my goal of being a doctor or a lawyer...I need to reach my goals to... be a pediatrician to save little kids’ lives or a lawyer to defend the people’s rights. This would make my family proud of me, and I would be proud of myself. (Student Writing 9c, Oct. 29, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student B:</strong> I think I am the ideal candidate because I am a very dedicated student... A lot of people I know say that school is a waste a time, and ask why we even have to come. However, from my point of view school is very important. Education will help me have a future and a good life... In the future... I would love to be a nurse or a doctor...Helping others is very important. (Student Writing, 9g, Oct. 29, 2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recurring themes:** education as a steppingstone to dreams, as a test of perseverance and dedication; ideal candidate as goal-oriented, cooperative, caring about others, responsible

**Figure 40. "Meaning of Education" Prompt and Student Personal Responses**
**SCHOLARSHIP PROMPT:** Describe goals you have set for yourself over the next five years.

**Student A:** Three goals I have set for myself over the next five years are to graduate 8th grade, go to and be a graduate from ___ [Catholic] high school, and finally to go to Arizona State and study computer software for N.A.S.A.... I plan to meet all the expectations by staying on task and being focused...It has always been my dream to work [at NASA]. (Student Writing 11b, Jan. 27, 2003)

**Student B:** [My] goal is to finish High School and continue to get good grades and do my best and get a scholarship to go to college. I would also like to get a job and work after school. I want to get a job to help my mother and grandmother with the bills and buy them a house. I want to learn how to be responsible for myself not to depend on others, to be an independent, hard working woman. To...work and see how hard it is to work... (Student Writing 11d, Jan. 24, 2003)

**Recurring themes:** goals related to 8th grade graduation, high school graduation, attending college; goals related to providing financial help to parents/families; goals related to careers and meaningful work; goals related to sports: being on a team, being a better athlete, being a professional; goals related to meeting new people and new challenges

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**Figure 41. "Five-Year Goals" Prompt and Student Personal Responses**

**SCHOLARSHIP PROMPT:** Describe the most difficult situation you have faced in your life.

**Student A:** Last summer a friend by my neighborhood had made friends with boys who were into gangbanging and using drugs. One day my friend and I were hanging around his house…[and he] said, “Come and smoke with me,” and he took out a joint out of his pocket. When I saw the pot I didn't know what to do or say. I remembered all the things my parents, brothers, and teachers….had told me about drugs and where I would end up if ever messed with them. I was scared… The best thing I did was leave [and then talk about] what happened…with my older brother….He was proud of me for doing the right thing (Student Writing 10c, Oct. 10, 2002).

**Student B:** One of my difficult situations was to do a presentation in English in front of everybody in my class. Because I didn’t know as much English as I know right now in eighth grade, it was very hard for me. Giving presentations is still hard but now it is a little bit easier.

   When I was in sixth grade the teacher let us be with a partner and then he told us that we had to do a presentation. By then I felt nervous because I was going to have to present in front of the class and because that was my first presentation I was about to do.

   At first when I did the research and I was nervous but my partner helped me with the pronunciations. Next, we planned which parts my partner and I would read and at the end we did the presentation. At the end I felt good for finishing the presentation. (Student Writing 10e, Oct. 29, 2002)

**Recurring themes:** Difficult situations related to the death of loved ones; difficult situations related to gangbanger violence in the neighborhood; difficult situations related to literacy skills; difficult situations related to family problems: finances, fire, illness, divorce

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**Figure 42. "Most Difficult Situation" Prompt and Student Personal Responses**

I chose the above samples of students' scholarship-prompt responses to suggest the kinds of open self-disclosure that I came to appreciate in the formal writing tasks they
completed in Teresa's class. The scholarship application requisites were part of the Santa Cruz high school outreach, but Teresa (as coach and facilitator) and her students (as agents and instruments in helping to construct their futures) made them integral parts of the self-exploratory focus of the writing classroom. The samples conveyed the broader contexts in which Teresa’s eighth graders lived and described many of the challenges they faced in forming a healthy personal, social, and academic identity (Quiroz, 1997). More importantly, they suggested the utility of the responsive instructional approach that facilitated their creation and to the resilient resolve of the students who authored them. They suggested a classroom culture of practice that was a "collaborative construction of opportunities" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17), a culture of practice in which students' "real life" experiences were pivotal components of the literacy learning process (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Rosado, 1996; Garcia, 2001).

**Exemplar Three**

According to Engeström (1987), an activity theory model enables a researcher to study any social setting as an interactive process of formation and transformation. From an activity theory perspective, the power to act is a fundamental human characteristic, and through their power to act, individuals become agents in changing themselves and in effecting change in their social settings (Engeström, 1987; Wells, 1999). Identity, then, is a social, cultural, and historical conception shaped and reshaped through an individual's active participation in various activity systems or communities of practice (Wells, 1999). Identity is produced and reproduced at every stage of practical activity (Roth et al, 2002).

Teresa's literature and writing classrooms were communities of practice focused on identity formation as a shared process of participation and appropriation. In those
classes, whole-class as well as dyadic conversation and a pattern of reflective writing were principal mediating activities. The community of practice in Teresa's reading class, however, focused on identity formation as a primarily individual and technology-assisted process. To represent a research view of the process, I reconstructed three "desk-side chats" from reading class observations in small vignettes of one student's "power to act" as a change agent and instrument of his own learning (Nieto, 1999).

**Vignette One**  
Reading Class (14 students)  
Sept. 26, 2002  
2:45 p.m.

One student (Student C) was seated at a computer station taking an AR test [*The Hobbit*]. I positioned myself patiently by his computer station and waited for a noninvasive moment to speak to him. After he had made notations about his testing in a notebook, he turned his attention toward me. His disconsolate look provided an answer even before I posed the question, but I nonetheless asked:

Researcher: How did you do on the test, ____?
Student: Not good, not good at all. I got only 60%.

Researcher: I noticed that you spent several minutes on one or two questions. Were some of the test questions difficult to understand?
Student: Yes. And they made me feel like I didn’t really know anything. Like the book was too hard for me.

Researcher: It’s the second time you’ve taken the test. Is that right, ____?
Student: Yes, the second time. Both times 60%. I think maybe I need to get an easier book

(I discovered later, in talking with the school librarian, that Student C and four of his classmates chose *The Hobbit* for silent reading class. Only one student tested successively (90%); the other three students scored at 70%.)

**Vignette Two**  
Reading Class (13 students)  
Oct. 4, 2002  
2:45 p.m.

I entered Teresa’s reading class several minutes into the period. All students were quietly engaged with tasks, but Student C and a classmate were busily working at computer stations. As I had in the earlier desk-side chat, I waited for an opportune
moment to speak with him and positioned myself on a soft chair next to his station. His facial expression once again communicated in an unspoken code.

Researcher: It must be a difficult one, __. What book did you read?
Student: Yes, it was hard. But it’s only a practice test. It’s on the book *Dawn*.
Student: Yeah, that’s it. I liked the story and I know the story. But some of the questions they ask confuse me.
Researcher: Can you show me what you mean, __?
Student: Like here [Question 2]. (He pointed to the monitor screen.) It says ‘c’ is right, but I don’t remember that in the book. I think ‘a’ is the correct answer.
Researcher: Maybe you should talk to [Ms. K] about it, __. There might be a problem with the test question. How did you do on the practice test, __?
Student: Only ten out of twenty. (He shrugged his shoulders.) I think I will talk to [Ms. K] about it.

**Vignette Three**
Reading Class (14 students)
Feb. 18, 2003
2:45 p.m.

When next I saw Student C at the computer in reading class, the second trimester was well underway and, in the interim, he had read and earned AR points on thirty-seven other books. Those works [rated in the AR system between 5.0 and 6.3] did not pose the reading level difficulty of *The Hobbit* (7.2) or *Dawn* (7.4) (Student Record Report, Accelerated Reader, Feb. 18, 2003). In sheer number, however, they were testaments to the perseverance of the reader. Student C had just completed a computerized test on *Iron John*.

As I approached his computer station, I could see clearly the smile on his face.

Researcher: It looks like you had a good day, __. You’re all smiles.
Student: Yes, 100% smile today. (He smiled broadly.) I got ‘em all correct and I can tell you things they didn’t even ask too.
Researcher: I don’t think I can write fast enough to get everything down. (I smiled.) But I’m happy for you, __.
Student: You know. (He grinned.) This is the fourth test in a row that I got a 100\% score. I must be getting better.
(I smiled and patted him on the back.)

The brief vignettes illumined an important identity-forming dimension of the Santa Cruz and the 8th grade reading program. The freedom to choose texts occasioned
both the exhilaration and encouragement that came with AR testing successes and the
challenge of disappointment and frustration that came with failing to achieve an AR and a
Santa Cruz standard. On one hand, the freedom to choose permitted students to direct
their own learning through an experientially based process and placed responsibility for
the quality of learning in their hands (Atwell, 1998). The freedom to choose also, on the
other hand, required students to persevere in their efforts and to use the support system of
a responsive classroom culture as a mediating tool in their efforts (Moll, 2001; Wells,
1999; Engeström, 1987). As I intimated through the brief vignettes about Student C, the
freedom to choose, the power to act, fostered in him an attitudinal resolve, an inner
resiliency (Benard, 1995; Sagor, 1993). It nurtured growth in "reading the word" and in
"reading the world" (Freire, 1998), in forming and reforming his identity as a reader and
a learner through active participation in a cultural practice.

Summary

The explicit and implicit cultures of practice in Teresa's 8th grade language arts
classes resembled daily construction zones for English literacy learning. What Teresa
said about responsive instructional practice and how she went about the implementation
of a vision of empowerment for her students suggested the depth of her commitment to
Santa Cruz beliefs about teaching as a ministry of caring service and about learning as a
participatory, developmental process (Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1994; Nieto,
1999; Moll, 2001). At the center of her practice and vision was a validation of students' cultural capital, their "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001), and an effort to mobilize that capital as a meaningful tool for learning. How Teresa responded to students and how they responded to her created the daily dynamic of a classroom-based community of practice.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

One of the first kinds of knowledge indispensable to [those who hope to make a difference in the lives of marginalized people] in a ghetto or in a place marked by the betrayal of our right "to be" is the kind of knowledge that becomes solidarity, becomes a "being with." In that context, the future is seen not as inexorable but as something that is constructed by people engaged together in life, in history. It's the knowledge that sees history as possibility and not as already determined. The world is not finished. It is always in the process of becoming. (Freire, 1994, p. 72)

Overview

Solidarity, possibility, and becoming—core concepts in Freire's (1994) pedagogy of hope and transformation, are the connective, organizational metaphors that I valued in the preparatory, fieldwork, and representational phases of my study at Santa Cruz School. They are core principles in both the social constructivist and the multicultural orientations I appropriated for my research. They serve as conceptual moorings for the empirical literature base in which I nest my study and pivotal themes suggested in school and classroom studies of responsive, empowering educational practice. What I carried into the field, in essence, were cognitions of solidarity, possibility, and becoming as explicit (research-based and supported) concepts of a transformative school culture. What I found in the field, in the school and classroom cultures of practice at Santa Cruz, were implicit (praxis-based and instrumental) manifestations of those concepts, images of their spiritual and affective power to transform the lives of "placed-at-risk" youth.
In Chapter 1, I used the climate of school reform in which Santa Cruz School emerged as a literacy initiative to establish the parameters of my research frame. It was a climate of reform whose contours reflected two contrastive visions of education (Eisner, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000). One of those visions, as I suggested, was represented in the national movement toward comprehensive standards-based policies, assessments, and accountabilities for schools, teachers, and students. Standardized tests, in that vision, formed the centerpieces of an educational philosophy that espoused equity and excellence through efficiency, measurement, and the mores of the marketplace (Sergiovanni, 2000; Eisner, 2001; Houston, 2001). The other vision was represented in grassroots, holistic-based responses to local community educational needs (e.g. Borman & Racuba, 2001; Moll, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001). In the second vision, standards arose from community collaboration and were expressed, in meaningful ways, through cultures of practice in schools and classrooms (Nieto, 1999). It was within the scope of the second educational vision and drawing on its local and communal roots that the Santa Cruz community enacted its literacy mission.

In Chapter 2, I described the primary theoretical and empirical resources that I used to provide critical perspective in the analytical and representational phases of my study. The first of those resources, the Hispanic Dropout Project (Secada et al, 1998), provided a sociocultural research perspective on critical themes of importance in the education of "placed-at-risk" Latino youth. The second of the resources, a corpus of studies on effective middle school educational practices, provided perspectives that drew on an age and grade-level context comparable to that of Santa Cruz School. The third resource, a small collection of studies and reports on the responsive qualities of Catholic
school cultures of practice, provided a perspective with roots in the religious tradition at
the core of the Santa Cruz educational mission. Moll's (2001) "funds of knowledge"
approach to literacy instruction and key standards derived from field research in effective
schooling practices for diverse students (Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998) provided a culturally
responsive perspective for the classroom-focused features of my fieldwork.

In Chapter 3, I outlined the conceptual and analytical phases of my study and
described the activity theory model (Engeström, 1987; Wells, 1999) in which emergent
characteristics of the Santa Cruz culture of practice (school and 8th grade language arts
classroom) formed the mediating means of an educational ethic of empowerment and
transformation. In Chapter 4, I described salient themes (Spradley, 1980) that emerged
through analysis of data responsive to two activity-centered research questions. I directed
the first question to the identification and description of empowering school community
practices; the other I directed to the identification and description of culturally responsive
practices in one teacher's 8th grade language arts classes.

Briefly stated, I studied and described how the school and classroom cultural
practices at a small Catholic school in a Latino neighborhood resonated with responsive,
inclusive educational practices identified in effective public schools research. I used an
ethnographic case study approach (Spradley, 1980; Hammersley, 1990; Yin, 1984; Stake,
1994) and appropriated a social constructivist lens, multicultural orientation, and activity
theory framework as interpretive guides in fieldwork analysis. I represented my study
through two interrelated discourses. The first discourse formed a macro-cultural frame,
and through it I described explicit and implicit ways that the social practices of the Santa
Cruz school community fostered a responsive, inclusive, neighborhood literacy outreach
for Latino youth and families. The second discourse formed a micro-cultural frame, and through it I described how the explicit purposes and the implicit patterns of activity in one 8th grade teacher's literature, writing, and reading classes instantiated core Santa Cruz school community beliefs and fostered the daily construction of a culturally responsive community of practice in the classroom. To guide the collection of data, I pursued the following two research questions in the field:

1) How did the Santa Cruz School community construct a culture that mediated the empowerment of students?

2) How did an 8th grade language arts teacher and her students construct a mediating, culturally responsive community of practice in the classroom?

Core Principles in the Santa Cruz School Culture of Practice

Eisner (1994) describes ethos as a concept that refers to the underlying deep structure of a culture, the values that animate it, the values that collectively constitute its way of life (p. 2). At Santa Cruz, the underlying deep structure of the culture of practice is an abiding communal commitment "to walking the talk," to making a difference in the lives of marginalized children and families (Freire, 1994). The values that collectively constitute its way of life (e.g. a shared vision of teaching as ministry, collaboration as powerful witness, human solidarity as a universal ethic) reflect both the liberatory themes of the Christian scriptures (Gutierrez, 1973; Boff & Boff, 1987) and an educational ethic rooted in social justice (Freire, 1994, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995). The communal ethos at the core of the Santa Cruz culture of practice guides and sustains the school's mission of empowerment through literacy and the manifestations of
that communal ethos in daily cultural practices, in the explicit and implicit curricula (Eisner, 1985), give the school and the school community their distinctive character.

**Core Principles in the Explicit Culture of Practice at Santa Cruz**

The public language through which the community expresses its purpose, its mission, and its vision of empowering education is a clear and unequivocal embrace of a multicultural philosophy of pluralism and inclusion (Banks, 1995; Rosado, 1996, 1999). At Santa Cruz, education is a transformational process that invites all school community members—teachers, school support staff, students, parents, and benefactors, to engage in reflective praxis about the world and its exigencies (Freire, 1994) and to use that praxis and devote stores of personal capital (Coleman, 1988), individual "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2001), to the realization of an educational ideal of empowerment. At the root of that ideal are the social imperatives of the Christian scriptures (i.e. respect, generosity, compassion, service, solidarity), the educational charism from which school community members draw inspiration (i.e. Crossian tradition of service to marginalized youth and families), and a belief in the democratic principles of unity, equality, and justice. Explicit language in Santa Cruz School handbooks (both faculty/staff and parents), newsletters, program manuals (i.e. High School Outreach Program, student management [BIST] program), and home-school communication materials suggests strong commitments to shared educational vision, public witness, holistic educational service, and solidarity with "placed-at-risk" neighborhood children and families as constitutive features of the Santa Cruz School identity.

*Motivation, belonging, care, hoping, and dreaming* are concepts conjoining the personal responses that Santa Cruz community members shared with me during my time
in the field. For students, graduates, and Hispanic staff members at Santa Cruz, those concepts represent a resiliency of disposition that confounds, often quite starkly, the more common images of exclusion, resignation, and despair depicted in descriptive profiles of Hispanic people living and working in inner cities (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). The school principal and the school founder articulate those concepts as integral components of a culturally responsive school vision, a vision dedicated to the preferential option of service to the poor (School principal, interview, May 12, 2003) and focused on the realization of hopes and dreams (School founder, personal journal, 2002). Volunteer teachers speak of motivation, belonging, and care as essential features of their educational ministry and communal witness at Santa Cruz. School support staff members speak of belonging, care, hoping, and dreaming as expressions of solidarity and cultural affirmation. Santa Cruz graduates and current students express those concepts in their perceptions of the school as an extended family to which they belong and in which they are valued members. The words and the reflective perceptions that community members share are human sentiments that support and particularize the transformative vision of education inscribed through the public language of Santa Cruz documents.

The organizational structures in the explicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz (i.e. the daily schedule, the reading program, the thematic-oriented language arts program, the student management program [BIST], the High School and the Adult Outreach programs) serve as mediating means in the vision of transformative education espoused in the public language of school documents and in the school community's daily efforts to realize the mission of empowerment through literacy. They represent the fruits of shared praxis in the Santa Cruz community (Freire, 1994, 1997) and are illustrative of the egalitarian and
collegial decision-making processes that distinguish the "systemsworld" (Sergiovanni, 2000) at Santa Cruz and the broad distribution of roles and responsibilities in the school's infrastructure (Rosado, 1996).

In curricular orientation (Eisner, 1985), the explicit organizational structures suggest a focus on cognitive processing (helping students learn through guided inquiry), personal relevance (using students' interests and knowledge bases to construct learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate), and social reconstruction (fostering in students a critical consciousness about divisive social issues and encouraging in them a reflective praxis directed toward social action) (Eisner, 1985). That tripartite curricular focus suggests the influence of both social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985; Au, 1998; Wells, 1999) and multicultural (Banks, 1995; Rosado, 1996, Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001) perspectives in the school staff's recognition of a) students as knowing agents and their personal as well as cultural "funds of knowledge" as important teaching and learning resources (Moll, 1988, 2001); b) effective teaching as a commitment to the holistic development of all students and to the ongoing development of caring, mentoring relationships with students (Nieto, 1999; Rueda & Garcia, 1994; Conchas, 2001); and c) joint productive activity as an essential means of communal growth (Sergiovanni, 2000) and a key strategy in facilitating personal and communal empowerment (Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998; Moll & Greenberg, 1992).

*Core Principles in the Implicit Culture of Practice at Santa Cruz*

The daily patterns of patient, responsive interaction and the profound levels of human commitment to service in the implicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz represent manifestations of the school’s communal ethos and vision of transformative education.
That is to say, the difference between "talking the talk" of student empowerment (Santa Cruz explicit culture of practice) and "walking the talk" of student empowerment (Santa Cruz implicit culture of practice) reflects a semantic, rather than substantive, distinction. The largely volunteer teaching staff, for example, and the cadre of volunteers who serve Santa Cruz students as academic tutors attest to the inspirational appeal, the drawing and holding power (Wheelock, 1998), of the school's literacy mission and to the school's reliance on human generosity as a means of fulfilling the mission of service to Hispanic youth and families. Equally important in the implicit culture of practice at Santa Cruz is the inclusion of all Hispanic staff members in decision-making processes (Rosado, 1996) and the strategic incorporation of their cultural and linguistic capital in service of the mission. Those school practices, the school's mission of empowerment for marginalized youth, and the school's almost complete reliance on the financial support of individual and corporate benefactors from the larger civic community create a setting in which Rosado's (1996) concept of "living diversity" unfolds on a daily basis.

As many Latino scholars contend, (e.g. Nieto, 1999, 2000; Moll, 2001; Trueba & Bartolomé, 1997; Reyes & Halcón, 2001), there is no magic formula for solving the educational challenges faced by many inner-city Hispanic youth. The shared vision and the collective witness of the entire Santa Cruz school community, however, provide an image of how such challenges can be addressed. A part of that image is reflected in the strong personal bonds that characterize the relationships between teachers and students and among the teachers themselves (Nieto, 1999; Rueda & Garcia, 1994). Small classes, individualized attention for students, and a friendly, collegial working relationship are characteristics of that image (Carnegie Task Force, 1989; Raywid, 1994; Cotton, 1995;
Secada et al, 1998; Lockwood & Secada, 1999). Caring interpersonal connections draw students, teachers, and staff members into learning partnerships that extend beyond the confines of classrooms (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001). Those personal bonds find expression in the total immersion of adult community members in the lives of students during their middle-school years at Santa Cruz and, afterwards, as students pursue their educational goals in high school and in college.

Another part of that image is reflected in the approach to literacy education that the school community ethos fosters at Santa Cruz. Values-based and focused on reading as a core instructional and learning medium, the educational program at Santa Cruz embraces an expanded view of literacy. That embrace involves a focused “reading of the word” through a literature-based and experience-oriented language arts curriculum as well as an independent reading program in which students become the primary agents of their own learning. That embrace also involves a focused “reading of the world” (Freire, 1998) through the conscious incorporation of the cultural capital of students (Coleman, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986) and the inclusion of culturally relevant learning materials and tasks in the curriculum (Nieto, 1999; Gay, 2000; Reyes & Halcón, 2001). The social dimensions of learning are fostered by cooperative strategies in the classroom and by the integration of shared field experiences outside the classroom. The focus on a “reading of the word” and a “reading of the world” suggests the liberating and empowering qualities of the literacy program. Combined with a culturally sensitive curriculum and an embrace of the cultural “funds of knowledge” which students possess (Moll, 1988, 2001), those qualities represent a responsive educational ethic for transformative change.
What is valued at Santa Cruz, what forms the animating, collective purpose of its mission and sustains its responsive culture of practice is a communal ethos of solidarity. That communal ethos is evident in the celebration of student achievements and in the recognition of student talents. It is evident in the dedication of human and financial resources to the realization of students’ hopes and dreams. It is evident in public language of school documents and in daily practices of teachers, support staff, and students at Santa Cruz. The spiritual and temporal dimensions of that communal ethos are reflected in the social capital that creates a broad network of support for all members of the Santa Cruz family (Sergiovanni, 1994, 2000; Coleman, 1990). In fundamental ways, then, the community ethos of solidarity shapes the social fabric of life at Santa Cruz and serves as the symbol of unity and belonging that makes Santa Cruz School the "special place" its stakeholders value.

Core Principles in the 8th Grade Classroom Culture of Practice

The explicit and implicit cultures of practice in Teresa Koss' literature, writing, and reading classes suggest construction zone images. Teresa resembles the project engineer who draws up conceptual plans, makes models, organizes and then proposes construction projects. Her students are the technicians who interpret those conceptual plans and models, converse about their utility, and negotiate their meaning in order to engage purposively in each proposed construction project. The concepts of planning, modeling, organizing, interpreting, conversing, negotiating, and engaging purposively appear as recurring modalities in the pattern of activities in each of Teresa's classes. They represent the key developmental processes inhering in joint productive activity (Tharp, 1997; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Dalton, 1998; Moll, 1988, 2001) and identity formation.
(Quiroz, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Wells, 1999; Moll, 2001), the two core principles of practice in the 8th grade language arts classroom and the cultural themes (Spradley, 1980) that connect the 8th grade classroom (micro) culture of practice to the encompassing school culture of practice (macro) at Santa Cruz.

**Core Principles in the Explicit Classroom Culture of Practice**

In the organizational structure of the language arts program, Teresa's literature, writing, and reading classes represent activity settings (Tharp, 1997) in which the mission of empowerment through literacy assumes a daily developmental character. The cyclical activity patterns (Wells, 1999) that Teresa builds into lesson plans, for instance, suggest the influence of a constructivist perspective. The patterns include multi-modal strategies, reflect a concern for students' varying learning styles, and integrate, as learning scaffolds, the skills and concepts from one unit of study in a succeeding unit of study. The patterns also suggest Teresa's appropriation of the transformative ethic at the core of the Santa Cruz mission. The attention she gives to the study of culturally relevant literature (Nieto, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Garcia, 1994; Montgomery, 2001), to the use of dyads and cooperative groupings (Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), and to the incorporation of autobiographical writing (Quiroz, 1997; Chavez, 1997; Laliberty, 2001) is evidence of that appropriation. In classroom conversation and in semi-structured interview settings, how Teresa speaks about her teaching (e.g. "giving students the tools they need to contend in society, to have power," "creating common experiences and a shared sense of purpose in the classroom," "increasing self-confidence, fostering students' academic initiative, giving 'voice' to students") suggests the depth of her constructivist perspective and commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy.
The organizational structures and patterns of activity in each of Teresa's classes reflect the influence of her constructivist perspective and commitment to culturally responsive principles. In Teresa's literature and writing classes, that influence is most palpable in recurring instructional activities (e.g. dyads, whole-class/small-group discussion, instructional conversation, individual conferencing), in whole-class reading (e.g. *Almost a Woman, The House on Mango Street, Night*) and reader-response tasks (e.g. autobiographical memoirs, responses to a culturally-relevant character or situation, thematic reflections in response to reading), and in writing tasks that students engage as part of the Santa Cruz scholarship program. In Teresa's reading classes, that influence is most apparent in the seamless way in which Teresa and her students negotiate the shifting roles and responsibilities of the Accelerated Reader program.

**Core Principles in the Implicit Classroom Culture of Practice**

In Teresa’s language arts classes, patience, persistence, and caring attention, key principles in the culture of practice for teachers at Santa Cruz, influence not only the classroom management strategies in her classes but the invitational and conversational style she adopts in classroom instruction. The themes of self-disclosure, self-expression, and self-exploration wend through that instructional style (Davis & Adams, 2000) and serve as a presentational mode as well as a scaffold for approaching communal learning tasks. On one level, Teresa's focus on self-disclosure, self-expression, self-exploration suggests a hybrid form of instructional conversation (Tharp, 1997; Dalton, 1998), a classroom strategy to encourage more frequent and more extensive student participation and verbal interaction. On another level, however, that focus serves as a stimulus for narrative writing and for the probing of students' real-life experiences (Quiroz, 1997). It
is through students' real-life reflections and narrations that their personal and collective struggles and their resilience as people and as learners are made manifest (Chavez, 1997; Quiroz, 1997; Davis & Adams, 2000).

Students in Teresa’s literature, writing, and reading classes exhibit a sense of belonging and community membership. Their involvement in daily lessons—from oral reading and dyadic or small group conversations to self-disclosing tasks and assuming responsibility as independent readers—points toward a collective ethic of participation. Community membership in Teresa’s classes entails more than being attentive in class and completing assignments on time, more than following rules and procedures to maintain an orderly environment. Community membership asks students to invest their personal energies in the creation of a shared culture of learning (Rosado, 1996). Joint productive activity and a thematic as well as instrumental focus on identity formation through resilience building and cultural affirmation serve as invitations and daily opportunities for students to make such personal investment (Nieto, 1999; Reyes & Halcón, 2001).

Student agency is the empowering quality of the shared culture of learning in Teresa’s classes. Sullivan (2002) speaks about agency as an empowerment, an active engagement in the construction of a learning environment. She describes the concept as a dynamic in which students exercise power-to as primary agents in the learning process, power-over as formateurs of avenues in the learning process, and power-with as creators of a shared learning culture in the classroom. In each of Teresa’s language arts classes, student agency is an integral characteristic of classroom practice and a key component of classroom ethos that helps to shape a culture of cooperation and learning. Her students' power-to is reflected in the life goals that they establish, reflect upon, and publicly share
in oral and written discourse. Their *power-over* is reflected in daily classroom instances of negotiated interaction (e.g. BIST [student management] "Think Sheets," responses to personal questions, decision-making processes related to personal engagement). Their *power-with* is reflected in positive classroom relationships they cultivate and rely on as classroom learners and members of a community culture of practice (Sergiovanni, 2000).

*Power-with* is the form of student agency that naturally extends beyond the cognitive domain and, as I witnessed in the behaviors of many of Teresa's students, it assumes the mediating form of caring words, gestures, and/or instrumental actions. Those expressions are manifestations of personal and communal solidarity among students at Santa Cruz, and they represent, in a micro-cultural way (classroom-based), the human and communal solidarity at the center of the Santa Cruz School mission of empowerment and its ethic of transformative education (Rosado, 1996, 1999; Banks, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Moll, 2001; Freire, 1994, 1997).

**Research Implications**

My descriptive study of the literacy program at Santa Cruz School illumines ways that a small Catholic school in an inner-city Latino neighborhood is making a difference in the lives of children and families “who have fallen through the cracks in the system.” The literacy program bears resemblance to other more polished programs in larger public middle schools (e.g. Horace Mann Academic Middle School, Harold Wiggs Middle School, Lennox Middle School) and it shares many of the organizational features that researchers (e.g. Carter, 2000; Madhere & Mac Iver, 1996; Doran & Drury, 2002) identify in successful middle school models (e.g. KIPP, Talent Development Middle School). Indeed, there is nothing extraordinary about the instructional methods in
classrooms at Santa Cruz. Those methods, as others (e.g. Nieto, 1999; Coleman, 1988; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993) have noted about Catholic school instruction in general, seem rather traditional. What gives Santa Cruz its special character is its communal ethos, and it is that distinguishing feature that fosters a unique culturally responsive school practice dedicated to "transforming the world one child at a time."

**Implications for the Santa Cruz School Community**

For the school community members, my study offers a perspective of Santa Cruz that is research-oriented and data-driven. Although the perspective I present reflects concepts and images quite familiar to community members, the three research contexts in which I situate the school’s literacy initiatives (Hispanic Dropout Project, middle school model, and Catholic school responses to culturally diverse student politics) establish different angles from which to view the culture of practice at Santa Cruz. In the school community’s ongoing reflections as part of a school improvement process, these differing angles may provide avenues for self-study. The differing angles of perspective may also generate fresh ideas or raise important questions about responsive literacy education in the refinement of the Santa Cruz model and in the colloquy that is currently taking place in the small consortium of schools implementing the Santa Cruz model.

For teachers and students, my study provides a small mirror reflecting images and actions at Santa Cruz School through the filter of observation and interpretation. The various ways the school as a community “walks the talk” of its mission and philosophy statements are ingrained in interpersonal connections where “walking and talking” are features of a shared vision of education. Teachers and students act together in pursuit of communal goals. The clearest images in the mirror are in joint productive school and
classroom practices where personal reflection becomes shared praxis, where learning is a mutual endeavor, where teachers and students share actively in the creation of a learning environment. The communal commitment to reading at Santa Cruz represents one of these clear images. Less distinct images, however, appear in the mirror as well. How, for instance, might the intrinsic relationship between reading and writing become a clearer shared value within the literacy program? How might the sociocultural dimension of reading, the interpretation of the word *and the world* (Freire, 1998), be better integrated within the program, become a more forceful directive principle in the literate practices of the classroom? The images reflected in the small mirror may serve as points of inquiry for teachers and for students to extend the descriptive boundaries of my study.

*Implications for Research in Culturally Responsive School Practice*

The literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz School represent a Catholic response to the educational needs of Hispanic youth and families in an inner-city setting. The initiatives, however, are public in their espousal of democratic ideals (Rosado, 1996; Nieto, 1999; Banks, 1995) and their emphasis on the common good (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993), and they represent an appropriation of a common set of responsive educational principles (e.g. cultural affirmation, solidarity with children and families, shared vision, literacy as holistic development) through which many public middle schools are transforming their literacy programs (Berman et al, 1995; Rossi & Stringfield, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; Sagor, 1996). My study describes how and to what extent a small Catholic school participates in the public arena of such culturally responsive educational practice. It broaches, in a small way, Nieto’s (1999) contention that “important lessons…can be learned about why Catholic schools have proven to be beneficial for students who might
be considered uneducable by the public schools” (p. 17). Santa Cruz School serves as an example of Raywid’s (1994) image of an effective school in its intentional smallness, its intimacy. Santa Cruz School serves as an example of Sergiovanni’s (1994, 2000) concept of a community school. In each of these respects, the literacy initiatives at Santa Cruz represent a research invitation to examine and describe the ways that other Catholic schools are responding to the educational needs of minority children and families. This invitation goes beyond the politically charged discourse of vouchers and school choice. It is a research invitation that emanates from a shared concern about addressing more effectively the needs of our nation’s most disadvantaged youth.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of my literacy study at Santa Cruz School I discussed in Chapter 3, primarily methodological challenges which emerged during the course of the research process. Substantive limitations in addition to those already noted, however, warrant at least a brief discussion.

Part of my study’s strength lies in its macro-micro organization, its focus on the Santa Cruz School culture of practice and on the classroom culture of practice of one 8th grade language arts teacher. Absent in the study, however, are portraits of the 6th and 7th grade teachers and students. Like Teresa and her 8th grade language arts students, the teachers and students in the other grades at Santa Cruz participate in forming the culture of practice at the school. Absent to a great degree in the study are descriptions of literacy practices and values outside the classroom. I describe only briefly the Santa Cruz community commitment to an after-school Renaissance and advisory program to involve teachers and students in less structured learning contexts. I do not describe in detail the
school retreat programs, the ongoing Santa Cruz school model improvement process, or the regional convocation of teachers and staff members from Santa Cruz model schools. Each of these cultural practices in the Santa Cruz School community extend beyond the parameters I established for my study as part of the proposal and university review process (i.e. IRB [Human Subjects] review). My representation of the culture of practice at Santa Cruz School, then, is a partial representation, one that focuses, by design and methodology, on the local and mediating characteristics of its cultural practices and on the relationship of those cultural practices to principles of culturally responsive pedagogy identified in effective schools research (e.g. Berman et al, 1995; Lockwood & Secada, 1999; August & Hakuta, 1997; Borman & Racuba, 2001).

A second limitation involves the breadth of participant response in my study. I did not invite parents (other than staff members who are also parents of Santa Cruz students/graduates) as active participants in the study. Only five Santa Cruz graduates are included as informants in my study and twelve of the twenty-eight students in the 8th grade class chose not to become participating members of the study. The first of these limitations has its origins primarily in language barriers (I have only rudimentary knowledge of Spanish) and reliance on staff members (current/former Santa Cruz parents) to provide a parental perspective. The latter of these limitations reflects the challenges related to making contact with graduates to ask for and then schedule amenable times for brief interviews as well as the inherent potential for disappointment represented in students’ choosing not to participate in a research study. Each of these limitations diminishes, in some way, the representative quality of my literacy study.
The most important limitation in the study is related to research protection policy. In some instances, what I am unable to share in my discourse creates an unavoidable gap in the explication of member meanings. To maintain an ethical posture of anonymity for all participants in the study, including the school itself, I disguise certain features of the school community ethos and discuss the animating roots of that ethos in more generic language than is actually present in the public language of Santa Cruz and the personal conversations of community members. This is a limitation whose ramifications are internal rather than external, researcher focused rather than research focused. But it plays a role in the reconstruction of my research experience at Santa Cruz that affects the depth and intrinsic value of many data representations in the discourse.

Avenues for Further Research

At Santa Cruz, a concurrent study of the classroom practices in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades would provide a comprehensive portrait of the school’s culture of literacy. How the recently adopted thematic language arts framework influences the culture of literacy might serve as a guide in such a study. A study focused on writing across the curriculum would identify ways that reading and writing are integrated within the course of studies at Santa Cruz and generate impetus for strengthening and extending that relationship at each grade level. A cross-context study of schools that have adopted the Santa Cruz model would provide insights and a broader perspective related to the effectiveness of the model as it is implemented and contoured in other educational venues. Such studies have potential as action research projects conducted by teachers and students or by third-party observers with an interest in culturally responsive educational practice. For “effective schools” research (August & Hakuta, 1997; Barrera & Jiménez, 2000), a commitment to
studying how Catholic schools are responding to the needs of disadvantaged youth would broaden the evaluative base in which researchers identify effective practices. As Nieto (1999) has said, most of the beneficial practices in Catholic schools are replicable in public school settings. What is needed is a more concerted effort to document those beneficial Catholic school practices on a large scale.

A Personal Reflection

In her poetry collection Borderlands/La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes a borderland as more than a geographical concept, more than a line of demarcation between states and nations. She perceives it as a unique contact zone where "two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different cultures occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.…. Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, [she adds] is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element” (Anzaldua, 1987, pp. 19-20). In personally meaningful ways, as I reflect upon it now, my work at Santa Cruz resembles what Anzaldúa might call a borderlands’ experience.

On a simply physical plane, I was a welcome guest in the Santa Cruz community during my study, a full participant in community life, and a familiar “presence” in the normal daily activities of the school. I regularly walked through the neighborhood and, on a few occasions, encountered and chatted with Santa Cruz students that I knew. I enjoyed the hospitality of backyard barbecues and home-cooked meals. I helped teachers and staff members in whatever way I could, within the restrictions of my study, and tried to engage with Santa Cruz community members on personal and professional levels. But
the realization of my own transience at Santa Cruz loomed large in my inner sensibilities, even in the midst of a neighborhood stroll or a backyard celebration, in the midst of a meaningful conversation on a variety of topics or during any number of shared meals with staff members at small corner restaurants in the neighborhood. Without a doubt, I had both feet firmly planted on Santa Cruz soil, but I was also challenged by the research project I had undertaken and by the long road that lay ahead of me in representing that project in a faithful, ethical way. I was living in a borderland of my own creation, and I was a solitary traveler finding his way.

On a professional plane, I was a teacher once again in the familiar confines of a school setting. I was living with others who shared my passion for teaching and helping young people. I was indeed part of a community effort to make a difference in the lives of young adolescents and their families. My participation was a catalyst that drew me to the work and to the students, teachers, and staff members at Santa Cruz despite the cult of violence in the neighborhood around the school. Rather than a colleague, a mentor, or a teacher committed to the mission of service at Santa Cruz, however, in my encounters with community members I was much too often a researcher with a single-minded purpose. Throughout my nine-month stay in the school community, I struggled mightily to live and relate to others from a self divided, a borderland territory that was open and inviting for the teacher in me but a restricted contact zone for the researcher I chose to become.

Most important of all, at Santa Cruz I lived and worked in “a special place” where religious faith and a commitment to the social ethic of the gospel formed a multicultural community. It was an experience of multiculturalism and commitment that challenged the
more accommodating sense of Catholicism with which I traveled to Santa Cruz, indeed from which I had drawn a sense of purpose in my own teaching ministry. More than a researcher, at Santa Cruz I was a student (Spradley, 1980). At times, I was a cultural bestrider whose poor knowledge of Spanish and only passing familiarity with Mexican traditions distanced me from the larger school community, but whose Catholicism created an important communal bridge to span that distance. At times, I was the quintessential suburban Catholic high school teacher immersed in an enlightening, often discomforting, experience of the more compelling witness represented in an inner-city ministry. In a succinct way, I was a teacher-researcher-student who experienced, in a number of lasting ways, the collective strength of the human spirit when it is organized and mobilized in the service of others (Freire, 1994). How Santa Cruz is making a difference, the myriad ways that Santa Cruz is transforming lives, are testaments to that collective power.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL GUIDELINES
Initial Conceptualization Stage (First Trimester)

**School Community (very brief [3-5 minute] conversations with non-participating teachers and school staff members, students, graduates)**
1. How would you describe Santa Cruz to someone outside the neighborhood? *
2. What is a “normal” school day like for you? What are some of the things you do? *
3. What are some of the special practices at Santa Cruz? special events and celebrations? *
4. What are some of the special experiences you have had at Santa Cruz? *
5. What meaning does (a certain cultural practice) have for you? **

**Participating Teachers (brief before-during-after class conversations)**
1. What are you planning for today's class? **
2. Is there something in this lesson you would like me to pay special attention to? **
3. What are some encouraging things that you see happening for students in this class? **
4. What are some of the daily challenges that you have in this class? *
5. What are some of the ways you are trying to meet those daily challenges? *

**Participating Students (brief [2-3 minute] desk-side chats during classroom tasks)**
1. What are you working on now? How do you feel about the task? **
2. What meaning does (a certain cultural practice) have for you? **
3. What are some of the special experiences you have had at Santa Cruz? *
4. What activities in class do you enjoy? find challenging? *

**School founder (semi-structured interview)**
1. Can you share with me some of the history of Santa Cruz? *
2. What are some of the special qualities of Santa Cruz? *
3. What encourages you in your efforts at Santa Cruz? *
4. What are some of the challenges here at Santa Cruz? *

Second/Third Conceptualization Stages (Second/Third Trimester)

**School Community (very brief [3-5 minute] conversations with non-participating teachers and school staff members, students, graduates)**
1. What meaning does (a certain cultural practice) have for you? *
2. What do think about (a certain event in the school, classroom, or neighborhood)? *

**Participating Teachers (semi-structured interviews)**
1. How would you describe your approach to teaching? to teaching English language arts? *
2. What has been encouraging/challenging about your teaching at Santa Cruz? *
3. What are some of the activities in your classes that have special importance to you? *
4. How do you plan activities or lessons? What are the most important guidelines for you? *
5. These are some images of your classes that I have developed during my time here. Do they share anything in common with the images you have? Are they representative? *

**Participating Students (brief [2-3 minute] desk-side chats during classroom tasks)**
1. What are you working on now? How do you feel about the task? **
2. What meaning does (a certain cultural practice) have for you? **
3. What are your plans (hopes and dreams) for next year? *

**School Principal (semi-structured interview)**
1. What are the defining characteristics of Santa Cruz? *
2. What do you think are its strengths? its greatest challenges? *
3. What is the role of the principal at Santa Cruz? *
4. How does Santa Cruz make a difference in the neighborhood? *

* Probing/Clarifying questions related to informant responses
** Recurring questions of interest
APPENDIX B

REFINED (SECOND STAGE) MATRIX OF SANTA CRUZ SCHOOL CULTURE
Figure 13. Refined Matrix of Santa Cruz School Culture

The refined matrix of the Santa Cruz School culture of practice is a model of the second conceptualization stage in my fieldwork analysis. It displays, in a holistic way, how the input-synthesis-output processes I used continuously in analyzing and coding data from the field led to a gradual evolution in the categories of meaning I identified in the initial stages of my research.
APPENDIX C

PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION
Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you may have heard within the community, in mid-August a research study of the 8th grade language arts program will begin. This study, which will serve as the information base of my doctoral dissertation in English Education, has as its focus the ways that literacy environments are created and develop through planning, teacher and student conversation, and partnership in the learning process. Student participation in this study is very important. For that reason, this letter seeks to inform you about the research and invite parental/guardian consent for the participation of your 8th grade daughter/son.

The design of this study values classroom observation and close attention to the ways that teacher talk and student talk merge in normal daily events, creating an environment for learning. How students engage verbally in classroom learning activities, then, becomes an important area for study. Participation in this research will involve observation and audio taping of those verbal encounters. In some instances, students might be asked questions about what they have said in order to gain a fuller understanding of meaning.

In the same way, writing tasks which students complete form another important area for study. Participation in this research will involve the review of student written work and the creation of student portfolios. As with verbal contributions, students might be asked questions about what they have written in order to better understand its value and importance to them as a learning activity. These verbal and written student resources will form a significant part of the classroom research study. Through them, a class portrait of teachers and students as learning partners can be developed and documented from mid-August to mid-May, the time frame of this inquiry. All focused encounters with students will occur within the classroom setting and will be quite limited in duration, normally no more than 5 minutes, and spaced over the course of the research study.

To honor privacy and protect participants in this study, identities of all students and teachers will be masked by the use of pseudonyms, and all research materials attributable to participants will be stored in a secure location. In the research process, the coding of those materials will use pseudonyms and other notations known only to the researcher. Once the dissertation draft has been written, all research materials involving participants will be destroyed—audio tapes of classroom discourse will be transcribed into text as quickly as possible and then erased and all print materials shredded after they have become features of the final draft.

Participation in this study is voluntary and anyone may choose to withdraw from participation at any point during the study. The choice to participate or not to participate, as well as any decision to withdraw from participation during the course of the study, will in no way alter a student’s academic standing in the class or reputation in the school community. According to established guidelines, no student may participate in this research study without formal parental/guardian consent. Should you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me in person or by telephone at the

If you have concerns about this research which should be addressed through university channels, feel free to contact Professor Anna Soter, the principal researcher in this study and my Dissertation Committee Chairperson. She may be reached at the following address: 222A Ramseyer Hall, 29 W. Woodruff Ave., Columbus, OH 43210. Telephone: 614-292-8049.

Sincerely,
APPENDIX D

LETTER REQUESTING TEACHER PARTICIPATION
Dear Teacher:

As you may know, [redacted] has granted me permission to engage in a research project. Commencing in mid-August, this study, which will serve as the information base of my doctoral dissertation in English Education, has as its focus the ways that 8th grade literacy environments are created and develop through planning, teacher and student conversation, and partnership in the learning process. This letter seeks to explain pertinent aspects of the research to assist you in making a decision about your own participation.

The design of this study values classroom observation and close attention to the ways that teacher talk and student talk merge in normal daily events, creating an environment for learning. How you craft classroom learning activities, then, becomes an important area for study. Participation in this research will involve observation and audio taping of those verbal, instructional events as they emerge within the classroom culture. To better understand your crafting, we would engage in brief pre-class/post-class conversations to develop a fuller picture of the particular lesson. These conversations, focused on specific aspects of the lesson, would occur at your convenience.

During the initial phase of this study—within the first two weeks, your participation would involve an informal interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. In that meeting, we would discuss your experiences, your teaching philosophy, and your thoughts about how we might work together in the research process. For the first two weeks, I would be observing your class each day. As the study progresses, my observations would occur twice weekly and be guided by your partnership in the research enterprise. At the midpoint of the study and near its conclusion, your participation would also involve an open-ended interview to discuss our work as co-researchers, to assess the focal concerns of the study, and to review interpretive aspects of the observational process. By design, this study covers a 9-month period, commencing in mid-August 2002 and ending in mid-May 2003.

To honor your privacy and protect you in this study, your identity will be masked by the use of a pseudonym, and all research materials attributable to you will be stored in a secure location. In the research process, the coding of those materials will use that pseudonym and other notations known only to this researcher. Once the dissertation draft has been written, all research materials involving you will be destroyed—audio tapes of classroom discourse will be transcribed into text as quickly as possible and then erased and all print materials shredded after they have become features of the final draft.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from participation at any point during the study. The choice to participate or not to participate, as well as any decision to withdraw from participation during the course of the study, will in no way alter your teaching status at [redacted] or your standing in community. It goes without saying, though, that I hope you share my interest in this study. It will begin the worthwhile process of documenting the life of [redacted] from those who know it best.

If you have concerns about this study which need to be addressed through university channels, feel free to contact Professor Anna Soler, the principal researcher in this study and my Dissertation committee chairperson. She may be reached at the following address: 222A Ramseyer Hall, 29 W. Woodruff Ave., Columbus, OH 43210. Telephone: 614-292-8049.

Sincerely,
APPENDIX E

LETTER REQUESTING STUDENT ASSENT
Dear Student:

As you may have heard around school, in mid-August a research study of the 8th grade language arts program will begin. This study, which will serve as the information base of my doctoral dissertation in English Education, has as its focus the ways that literacy environments are created and develop through planning, teacher and student conversation, and partnership in the learning process. Student participation in this study is very important. Indeed, without your involvement the study could never be conducted. For that reason, this letter seeks to inform you about the study and encourage your participation in it.

The design of this study values classroom observation and close attention to the ways that teacher talk and student talk merge in normal daily events, creating an environment for learning. How students engage verbally in classroom learning activities, then, becomes an important area for study. Your normal classroom activities -- the ways that you engage in conversation, go about working together as a class, respond to your teacher, and choose to perform a classroom task -- are a few of these areas of interest. In some cases, you might be asked questions about what you have said in class so I can gain a fuller understanding of what you meant.

In the same way, the writing tasks that you complete form another important area for study. Your participation in this research will involve sharing examples of your written work with me. In some cases, you might be asked questions about what you have written so I can better understand its value and importance to you as a learning activity. Your classroom involvement and your written work are two valuable sources of information. Through them, I will be able to create a written class portrait of you and your teachers as learning partners. From mid-August to mid-May, the time frame of this study, I will be visiting your classroom and the writing lab often, but my encounters with you individually may occur only a few times. For the most part, these encounters would happen inside the classroom and would be limited to chatting with you for a few minutes at your desk or somewhere else in the room.

To honor your privacy and protect you in this study, your identity will be masked by the use of a fictional name, and all research materials that you contribute to the study will be stored in a secure location. Since I will be audio taping verbal classroom activities, I will make sure that your fictional name always identifies your words. In addition, any written work you share with me will be photocopied and identified with that fictional name as well.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from participation at any point during the study. The choice to participate or not to participate, as well as any decision to withdraw from participation during the course of the study, will in no way affect your academic standing in the class or reputation in the school community. It goes without saying, though, that I hope you share my interest in this study. It will begin the worthwhile process of documenting the life of [redacted] from your viewpoint and from that of your teachers. I hope you are as excited about the study as I am.

Looking forward to meeting you in person,
APPENDIX F

MEMBER CHECK OF TEACHER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION
Interview with Classroom Teacher
May 2003

These are gleanings from my notes, L*** (no name for protection), so feel free to add or edit as the spirit moves you. It's important that the document capture your thoughts and sentiments as accurately as possible, that the diction and emphasis which appear within this transcription reflect appropriately the content and tenor of your words. To help in the process, I have included the general categories which guided our conversation.

1. Descriptive phrases/ reflections on the first two trimesters— highlights, challenges;

2. Specific references to units, lessons, activities which were particularly noteworthy in their instructional value and/or served to stimulate student interest in special ways; specific references to planning and preparation of units, lessons, activities— the approaches and concerns which guide your thinking; reflections on the meaning of “empowerment” through literacy learning;

3. Hopes, expectations, concerns for the third trimester.

L*** began by recounting her experience with Accelerated Writer during the first trimester. Though it was "an experiment," a learning process for all of us, it was also played in the organizational structure and became more of a burden. She noted its potential—primarily its emphasis upon learning and then reinforcing through practice the qualities of good writing—but lamented the experimental nature of the program. In her writing classes, students were able to work through three of the ten traits of good writing enumerated in the AW construct.

She noted as well a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in the second trimester, attributing a good portion of those sentiments to discussions and their implementation of curricular themes to guide instruction. "The themes provide focus, foundation, for my classes," she said. "We've moved to a literature-based curriculum and the thematic approach helps in choosing materials, deciding how and what to do with those materials, and integrating reading, writing, and speaking within units of study." In discussing the Holocaust unit, in which students read Elie Wiesel's Night and engaged in a variety of other reading, writing, and speaking activities related to that book, L*** shared concerns about students presently in the ITA program. Normally, these students, all of whom are LEP, would be working individually or in pairs, with tutors in the school corridor. Each tutoring session not only attuned sequentially to their specific reading comprehension needs but approaching those needs with a completely different literature base. For the Holocaust unit, however, ITA students joined with their classmates in the literacy event and were able to share in the social dimensions of reading, writing, and discussing within the classroom. For L***, the move to a literature-based curriculum puts a premium on classroom interaction and underscores the need for all students to share common reading experiences within each trimester.

In general, she feels that experience, more than anything else, has contributed to her sense of accomplishment in the classroom. In her third year of teaching but her second year working with 6th graders, she has now had an opportunity to refine and hone lessons, something she was not able to do after her initial teaching experience with the 7th grade.
APPENDIX G

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR 6TH & 7TH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS
### 6th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trimester Theme</th>
<th>LITERATURE</th>
<th>SOCIAL STUDIES</th>
<th>WRITING ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>WRITING SKILLS</th>
<th>FIELD EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Community</td>
<td>America Street</td>
<td>First Americans</td>
<td>Travel brochure</td>
<td>Types of sent.</td>
<td>[xxx] College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local News</td>
<td>Spanish empire</td>
<td>Community newspaper</td>
<td>Combining sentences</td>
<td>[xxx] College Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Hundred Dresses</td>
<td>[Local History]</td>
<td>Community letter</td>
<td>Topic sent., structure, complete</td>
<td>Mexican Fine Arts [xxx]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Christmas Pageant Ever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank You Mr. Faulkner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairy Tales</td>
<td>Airplanes/Flight Mexican Independence</td>
<td>Fairy Tale Mail</td>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td>[xxx] University</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Future biography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fly Away Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Courage</td>
<td>A Wrinkle in Time</td>
<td>Civil Disobedience</td>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>Paragraph development</td>
<td>Zoo trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother Jones: The March of the</td>
<td>Child Labor</td>
<td>(paraphrasing, bibliography,</td>
<td>(main ideas with supporting</td>
<td>Environmental trip</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Middle Children Voices from the</td>
<td>The Mexican Revolution</td>
<td>thesis statement, etc.)</td>
<td>details)</td>
<td>Art Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field Old Turtle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 21. Santa Cruz 6th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence**

### 7th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trimester Themes</th>
<th>LITERATURE</th>
<th>SOCIAL STUDIES</th>
<th>WRITING ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>WRITING SKILLS</th>
<th>FIELD EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Changes</td>
<td>Journey to America</td>
<td>World War I</td>
<td>Eulogy/ Tribute</td>
<td>Paragraph development</td>
<td>[xxx] Center</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lupita Mañana</td>
<td>Mexican immigration</td>
<td>Interview biography</td>
<td></td>
<td>[xxx] Museum Retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sadako and a Thousand Paper Cranes</td>
<td>Working Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Gift of Changing Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Relationship</td>
<td>The Outsiders</td>
<td>Street Gangs</td>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>Composition development</td>
<td>[Local] county jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bridge to Tarabithia</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
<td>Personal, fan, business letters</td>
<td>(Introduction Body Conclusion)</td>
<td>Retirement home</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A Long Way from Chicago</td>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>Script writing Story, poetry,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pink and Say</td>
<td></td>
<td>song writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Opportunity</td>
<td>Trino's Choice</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>Persuasive speech on a</td>
<td>Research on a profession</td>
<td>Business field day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Miracle Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td>contemporary issue</td>
<td>Composition development</td>
<td>[xxx] Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biography</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memos Resumés</td>
<td></td>
<td>[xxx] Arboretum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 22. Santa Cruz 7th Grade Language Arts Scope and Sequence**
APPENDIX H

HISTORICAL FICTION WRITING PROJECT ("PHOEBE THE SPY")
Assignment One

Dictation: Prepositions

“George Washington is in ___ dread, dread danger. It is he who is keeping the colonies together. But there are those who'd like ___ see the colonies separated and so ruled more easily ___ the king. And if something were ___ happen ___ to the general, it would be a hard, hard job ___ to find another such as he, ___ pull the colonies together and throw ___ the king. Indeed, such a man might not be found ___ all, and the king would rule one.”

Write a three-sentence paragraph using **five** of the following prepositions:

about behind beneath between beyond concerning except from into near outside over regarding since through throughout without

You must use these three characters: Phoebe Fraunces, George Washington, Thomas Hickey

Assignment Two

Tell a story with you as a main character during the American Revolution. Use descriptive language. Use dialogue. Include the basic elements of fiction. Use the thesaurus to replace two verbs and two adjectives. Revise and add more supporting details. Use correct pronoun-antecedent agreement.

**Situation**

1. You are a soldier fighting for the colonists and you realize in a battle, as you are fighting hand-to-hand with a British soldier, that this soldier is your brother.
2. You are a Mexican business person traveling in the colonies and George Washington asks if you could lead one of his regiments against the British.
3. Choice: Something to do with the American Revolution

Think about what you have learned about the American Revolution in social studies class. What was it like back in Phoebe's time? What did people do back then? What were their problems?

Include all of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? Who are the minor characters?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Where does the story take place? In what specific places does it take place? Does it take place outside? Inside? Is it in the North or the South? Is it in a poor area or a wealthy area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/Plot</td>
<td>(3 major events/3 minor events) What happens in the story? What are the small events? What are the large events?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>(1 major conflict/3 minor conflicts) What is the great problem the protagonist must overcome?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>