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MULTICULTURALISM AS SOCIAL JUSTICE: EMBRACING THE DIFFERENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

The Ohio State University
2000

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ABSTRACT

Literature is one way for a culture to represent and to come to terms with itself and its history, and the selection and use of that literature is one way in which classroom teachers can help their students to understand who and what they are and how they have come to be. As such it is important for children to see themselves as well as others in the books that they are reading.

This study has attempted to look at what was spoken, as well as the silences in what was spoken, as a teacher and a researcher spent a year collaboratively developing, implementing and analyzing a multicultural literature program in the teacher's urban fourth grade classroom. The study was predicated on the belief that while much had been written about the theoretical value of using multicultural literature in the classroom, there were not studies which looked at the attitudes and perspectives of the teachers who were being asked to use the literature. As a result, over the period of an academic year we engaged in a dialogic cyclical process of introducing a piece of multicultural literature into the classroom, reflecting on its classroom use and then beginning again. It is this reflection and critique which forms the basis of this study.

The study suggests that the classroom use of multicultural literature asks that as educators we become self-reflective and willing to consider, explore and present complex emotionally charged issues, and become advocates for social justice and for change. As such it is as much a philosophy as it is a practice, requiring us to examine our academic
and social goals for teaching, and to explore methods and procedures for implementing
the literature into the curriculum. It is not, therefore, something which can just be
considered theoretically. It takes time and a willingness to implement a program
knowing that at the outset there will be more questions than answers, and that while some
knowledge and understanding will come through practice, that in reality the practice itself
is about questions, particularly those of purpose and place.
To Anita and Anand
with thanks for their implicit faith and love
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is impossible for anyone to complete such a seemingly mammoth project as this on her own. I am no exception. Without the support, guidance, friendship and encouragement of many people this project would not have come to fruition. To merely say thank you seems somehow inadequate.

I begin with my collaborator in this endeavor, because without her there would be no dissertation. I would like to thank Martha Klingshirn for inviting me into her classroom and sharing not only her students, but more preciously her time and her insights. I am a better person for having worked with her.

I am indebted to the friendship and support of Laurie Stowell, Susi Long and Kaye Martin who have been with me over the many years I have spent on this project. Our discussions and debates have fueled my thinking and inspired my work. I am particularly indebted to my friends Mari McLean and Kathleen Whalin. Their support, respect and friendship have added immeasurably to my life.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee Dr. Karin Dahl, Dr. Janet Hickman, Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, and my adviser Dr. Robert J. Tierney. I would also like to thank Dr. Theresa Rogers. Their support, guidance and wisdom have enriched my understandings and my work.
I would particularly like to thank Rob Tierney. He has not only been my adviser and my mentor, but also my friend. Were it not for him I would not be writing this today. Our initial discussions about portfolios and computers in his corner office inspired me at the outset of my work, and his insightful and challenging questions fueled my thinking and guided the writing of this dissertation. I will forever be indebted for his time and for his encouragement. I could not have asked for a more supportive adviser.

And finally, I would like to thank my husband and my daughter. I have been blessed with a husband who not only understands what it means to be an academic, but who also wholeheartedly supports me in my work, and with a daughter who is sensitive and kind and wise beyond her years. This dissertation would not have happened without their support and love.
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CHAPTER I

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PRESENCE IN THE ABSENCE:
THE VOICE OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

In her powerful book entitled The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust, Ernestine Schlant (1999) reminds readers that what is not written and what is not spoken often speaks as loudly as the words we can read and the words we do hear. What she notes is important is that we make present what is absent, that we make the absence visible. She argues that language is not neutral, what is written and what is published is political, and represents "levels of conscience and consciousness that are part of a culture's unstated assumptions". She says,

Literature lays bare a people's dreams and nightmares, its hopes and apprehensions, its moral positions and its failures. It reveals even where it is silent; its blind spots and absences speak a language stripped of conscious agendas. (p. 3)

Hers is a study of one people's attempt to examine or as she says to avoid examining their past. She studies how non-Jewish German authors have over the past 40 years attempted to deal with their own involvement or that of their parents and grandparents in the Holocaust, and she notes that for the most part they have been unable to work through and to mourn the crimes which were perpetrated, and have, therefore, been unable to gain the insight which is necessary to prompt action and to make change.
Literature is one way for a culture to represent and to come to terms with itself and its history. The selection and use of that literature is one way in which teachers in classrooms can help their students to understand who and what they are and how they have come to be. As such it is important for children to see themselves as well as others in the books that they are reading, and it is important for them to be able to place themselves within an ongoing story which highlights and honestly explores the intricacies of the shared experience. However, that honest exploration is often missing in our society and therefore in our classrooms, because a shared experience has been denied.

Etienne Wenger (1998) in his book *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* has developed a theory of learning which suggests that the primary way we learn and become who we are is through involvement in social practice. By becoming active participants in the practices of social communities we construct our identities in relation to those communities. As such Wenger has identified four interconnected components that characterize social participation, meaning, practice, community and identity. Each of these components involves a way of talking about a shared learning experience. Learning, therefore, requires involvement and is part of an on-going process. It does, however, require an opportunity to become a part of the community and to see oneself as an active member.

In Nazi Germany Jews were not allowed to be members of the mainstream community of practice, just as African Americans have been denied that right in our own country since their arrival here as slaves. During World War II Japanese Americans were forcibly removed and relocated in hopes that their absence would render them invisible, just as those involved in the western expansion forced the "savage" native peoples onto
reservations. However, absence whether through genocide, torture, humiliation and or removal has not eliminated presence, it has merely eliminated learning, because it has denied membership in the shared community of practice. As Schlant (1999) had indicated absence does not mean that presence is not felt. The very existence of a community of practice makes the absence visible.

While our history is full of stories of brave and heroic men and women who were willing to challenge enormous obstacles to reach great heights, it is also replete with stories of hatred, arrogance, intolerance and a fear of those who were not part of the mainstream. It is a history which we need to celebrate but also which we also need to mourn. It is a history filled with a fear of difference, with a belief that we all must look and think alike, and that a primary goal of our schooling must be to create a melting pot where we all think in one way. As a result it is a history of absence and a "language of silence".

During this past autumn I taught a multicultural literature for children course to practicing teachers. An important assignment for that course asked the teachers to learn about the Civil Rights Movement through the exploration of non-fiction books written for children and young adults about that period of history, and then to reflect on the need for social justice. Several members of that class found the books to be enlightening and thought provoking and to provide information which they had not encountered elsewhere. Given that most were too young to remember the period first hand, the students were moved to call home and to discuss with their parents the role they had played during that period of our history, and all the European Americans who did so found that their families were often unaware, and if aware on any level, were uninvolved
in the process. In retrospect this seems as hard to believe as the fact that my students did not already know about the stories which they were reading. However, it points to the language of silence which has pervaded our society about a group of people who have been ostracized, and to our own inability, as a society, to acknowledge our involvement, to mourn and, therefore, to gain insight and make change. It, also, points to the power of literature to open up the silence and to make a difference in the lives of the people it touches.

It is my belief in this power of literature to make change, and my participation as a child in a Jewish community of practice within a country which I believe, despite claims to the contrary, is for all intents and purposes Christian, which has provided the impetus for this dissertation study. It is also my belief that as human beings we need to learn to understand and to deal with difference. When we fear difference we try to silence and in so doing we create absences, but such absence is not real and it is not silent, but it is deadly, and it does lead to loss of self respect, to violence and to a society which is damaged from within. It leads to a young Jewish girl believing that she does not count, and that she does not matter because her way of life is not reflected in the stories which she hears, and to a belief that she is not a valued member of this society, and this community of practice.

1.1 Background

This study has attempted to look at what was spoken, as well as the silences in what was spoken, as a teacher and a researcher spent a year collaboratively developing a multicultural literature program in the teacher's urban fourth grade classroom. The study was predicated on the belief that while much had been written about the theoretical value
of using multicultural literature in the classroom, there were not studies which looked at the attitudes and perspectives of the teachers who were being asked to use the literature. Beginning in the late 1960's articles (Banks, 1979, 1985, 1991; Cai, 1992; Erlich, 1990; Grant & Sleeter, 1985; Sims, 1982) had begun to look at and consider the terms being used in the discussion. Studies (Gezi & Johnson, 1970; Koeller, 1977; Lichter & Johnson, 1969; Roth, 1969) looked at children of color's attitudes and perspectives about themselves and considered the impact which the use of multicultural literature might have on their sense of self-esteem. Other studies (Aoki, 1981; Chan, 1984; Harris, 1991; Jenkins, 1973; Norton, 1985, 1990; Roney, 1986; Sims Bishop, 1987) suggested ways of implementing that literature in the classroom, and a few (Smith, 1993; Spears-Bunton, 1990; Steffensen, Joag-Dev & Anderson, 1979) began to look at how children responded to reading the literature. However the work has been largely silent in terms of considering the person who had the responsibility of discovering and then introducing and sharing the literature with the children in the classroom. This study was an attempt to collaboratively, develop, implement and analyze a multicultural literature classroom program from the perspectives of the teacher and the researcher. It was based on the belief that if programs which included multicultural literature were to be successful, it was important to understand the attitudes and perspectives of those using the literature, and to consider the issues which emerged as a result of its classroom use. As such the study was an attempt to determine a sense of purpose and place for the classroom use of multicultural literature.

The study was also predicated on a belief that it was necessary for this to occur within an on-going community of practice (Wenger, 1998), because this was a social
practice and one which needed to be explored and developed within a community where we could co-construct our learning and our identities. As a result over the period of an academic year we engaged in a cyclical process of introducing a piece of multicultural literature into the classroom, reflecting on the process of its use in the classroom and then beginning again. Given that we did not have an a-priori concept of what this would look like, we anticipated that development and implementation would change across the academic year as we engaged in reflection and critique. It is this reflection and critique which forms the basis of this study, as we struggled with what we were doing, and how it was affecting and influencing both of us as well as the children in the classroom.

This manuscript is an analysis and critique of this process and an exploration of what was learned. It reflects a dynamic process where learning continues throughout the data collection, analysis and writing, as is embedded within the entire community. It hopes to make visible issues which are all too often invisible in our day to day living (Erikson & Christman, 1996) and to explore areas of silence. because in so doing it is hoped that we can gain the insight which Schlant (1999) suggests is necessary to prompt action and to make change.

1.2 Overview

We began the study with a shared view in the value of the classroom use of multicultural literature, and a belief that the literature can positively affect the lives of the children it touches. It does so because the literature allows the silence to be heard. It allows differences to be explored and celebrated, and to be appreciated rather than feared. However, that can only happen within a community of practice which allows for all its
members to learn, and that can only occur when those that lead are reflective practitioners themselves.

The classroom use of multicultural literature reflects a philosophy as well as a practice. It involves a willingness to incorporate the literature within an already existing curriculum, a willingness to deal with emotionally charged issues, and a commitment to social justice and to change. It demands self-reflection on the part of those who are committed to its use, and an acknowledgement that silences fail to allow us to mourn and therefore to make change.

The dissertation itself is about change and about removing silences as each chapter explores those silences from a different perspective. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the study itself as well as a description of its methodological approach. It suggests that the collaborative dialogic cyclical process which framed this study can help to make visible the issues related to multiculturalism and to the use of multicultural literature, and that the diversity of voices engaged in the ensuing dialogue will allow for change. Chapter 3 provides the reader with an overview of events which occurred across the academic year and explores them in terms of issues of power. It suggests that power is an insidious part of the process, but that through discourse we have the opportunity to change the construction, alter the meaning and change the power relationships (Fairclough, 1992). Such an analysis is particularly compelling within a discussion of multiculturalism, because it serves to acknowledge areas of silence, to open those areas to discussion and to then deal directly with them. Chapter 4 examines the nature of the collaborative process, suggesting that it is embedded within a social paradigm (Capra, 1996) or culture which is fluid and constantly changing. It argues that our conscious
insertion of multicultural literature allowed for change within the classroom, and that while working within a complex cultural system, we collaborated to change the power structure as we considered the silences which pervaded our work. Chapter 5 explores the complex process of including multicultural literature in the elementary classroom. It suggests that understanding the role which the literature will take in a classroom, and the development of a philosophy that will guide that practice, takes time, and a willingness to develop that understanding throughout the process. It suggests that it was through our discussions that we were able to make sense of ourselves and to transform sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995). Chapter 6 provides a conclusion to the work and attempts to provide a purpose and a place for the classroom use of multicultural literature. In so doing it asks the academic community to consider a new term in relation to the value and use of multicultural literature.
CHAPTER 2

THE COMPLEXITY OF RESEARCH DESIGN:
A COLLABORATIVE DIALOGIC-CYCLICAL PROCESS

This study was developed as a result of my strong belief in the power of multicultural literature to touch lives and to make a difference in the lives of the children exposed to it in the elementary classroom. It was based on the belief of the power of stories to open worlds and to allow us to see how and where we fit in varying social and political contexts. It was, also, based on the belief that our classrooms reflect our worlds, and that the choice of literature in the classroom should reflect the diversity not just of the classroom, or of the community surrounding the classroom, but of the world through which we all share a common humanity.

This study was designed and implemented based on my belief that classroom research is not something done to, but rather a process done with an active co-investigator or collaborator. It was predicated on the notion that research or science involves the search for ways to represent, know and understand, and as such it is part of a complex fluid process which is continuously changing.

Finally, this study was based on the belief that the topic, the design and the implementation was a political act based on the agendas of the participants, and the
agendas of those who influenced us, as well as on the power relationships existing in society, and the political arguments surrounding the issues of multiculturalism.

2.1 Background

Advocates for the inclusion of multicultural literature for children within the school curriculum argue that it is important because not only do children feel better about themselves when they see themselves reflected in the books they read, but that children are more tolerant of those different from themselves when they see other ethnic groups also reflected in the books. It is a simple but powerful and quite political statement. The use of multicultural literature in the elementary classroom is as much a philosophy as it is a practice. It involves not only a knowledge and understanding of the social goals involved in schooling, but also a knowledge of curriculum, and a willingness to incorporate the use of the literature into the curriculum. It asks that we deal with emotionally charged issues not only for ourselves but for the children in the classrooms. Finally it ask for a commitment to social justice and to change. It suggests that the use of multicultural literature can change the lives of the children it touches. This dissertation suggests that it also must first change the lives of the teachers who use it, as they come to terms not only with the literature itself but with the issues surrounding its use. While there has been an underlying sense of the importance of the inclusion of multicultural literature in classroom instruction, there has been little research focusing on how it is to be included based on the role of the teacher's attitudes and perspectives. This study was an attempt to collaboratively develop, implement and analyze a multicultural literature classroom program from the perspectives of the teacher and the researcher. It asked the following questions:
When a teacher and researcher collaborate to develop a multicultural literature program how will that program be developed and refined over the course of an academic year?

What impact will involvement in a collaborative study focusing on the implementation of a multicultural literature program have on a teacher and a researcher's grounded theoretical and practical understanding of the need for multicultural literature?

How will a teacher's classroom practice change over the course of an academic year when there is a focus on the implementation of a multicultural literature program?

What impact will the students' responses to the literature have on the teacher's and researcher's perspectives?

2.2 Participants

The teacher in this study, Martha, was a fourth year urban fourth grade teacher in a large mid-western public school district. She and I had worked together during the 1993-94 academic year in an Urban Literacy Study group based at The Ohio State University. Her interests paralleled mine in terms of her belief in the power of multicultural children's literature to affect the lives of the children it touched, and her project in that group had focused on the use of multicultural literature in her classroom. She had graduated from Ohio State in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science in education and had returned to the University to begin work on her Master's Degree. She was extremely active in her school serving on the Inservice Committee, the Instructional Support Team, and the Journal Club. She had served on the Multicultural Committee during her first
year, and was involved in the writing of her school’s Venture Capital Grant as well as a school-wide project involving the integrating of reading across the curriculum. She was an on-going active participant in her school’s involvement as a part of the Urban Professional Partnership Schools.

The school was an old brick building with high ceilings and big windows. Martha’s classroom was filled with tables. There was a carpeted area with a couch which was filled with books and stuffed animals. Bookcases as well as tubs filled with books surrounded the room. Not only was Martha’s classroom a veritable library but literature was a part of instruction across the content areas.

Ninety two percent of the school’s students were on free or reduced lunch. As an English as a Second Language Program, the school serviced students from 22 different countries. Many of the neighborhood children attending were from the Appalachian regions of Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky. A large proportion of the African American students were bused from a neighboring housing project. The result was a rich and diverse group of students.

Martha was a perpetual student. She was always eager to learn and to implement new ideas. Her willingness to learn, to question and to challenge old beliefs as well as new ideas made her an ideal collaborator for this project. Martha noted in a research memo written prior to the beginning of the project, "Have you figured out that I like to argue? I feel that I learn a lot by arguing. It is not stressful for me."

2.3 Methodological Approach

At the outset of this project a research design was developed which would allow for the cyclical nature of an on-going process. While the dissertation process demanded
that the design of the study be my own, it's development and implementation occurred in a collaborative fashion. Through "kid-watching" (Goodman, 1985), readings, and numerous conversations Martha and I together designed and implemented the integration of multicultural literature into her classroom program. As we did not have an a-priori concept of what this would look like in her classroom, we anticipated that the development and implementation would change across the academic year as we discussed, examined, and critiqued what we saw occurring in the classroom. This was not to be a descriptive study, nor was it designed to assess the effectiveness of an existing program. Rather, this was a case study of a teacher and researcher partnership, and of the attitudes and perspectives developed as a result of engaging in the conscious and purposeful inclusion of multicultural literature into a fourth grade urban classroom program. Therefore, the process of data collection and analysis was developed in such a manner as to highlight and to capture the complexity of the process. Although each of us is an individual we were also a part of a social heteroglossia which reflected the social and political forces inherent in the human experience (Bhaktin, 1981; Gutierrez, 1995; Fairclough, 1992; Mailloux, 1989; Scholes, 1989). As a result, we needed a research design which would allow this complexity to emerge and would add to that complexity rather than arbitrarily simplify the process. Data collection was therefore designed to be a cyclical process as reflected in Figure 2.1. Analysis of the on-going project became a part of the process as well as a significant part of this final product. It was believed that the data needed to be analyzed in a manner that supported the cyclical and dialogic nature of the process. As a result, the conversations that supported the design and
implementation became a part of the inquiry and analysis process. As such the dialogue became the inquiry (Johnston, 1999). As Johnston found in her work, dialogue can be

![Diagram: Data collection process]

**Figure 2.1. Data collection process**

... Used to extract theory from practice and then to reconstitute that practice as a result of the theorizing. While all conversation is not dialogue, all dialogue is conversation. The key is to be able to recognize the dialogue within the conversation and then to analyze it. This process of analysis and reconstruction occurred not only within the process of data collection, but also within the process of the writing of this document. In my effort to communicate to others my analysis of the data I have of necessity read and re-read the data, but have also had to go beyond the data to read other theory which might help me to make sense of my emerging understandings, and to place those understandings within an on-going dialogue within the research community.

We were learning as we talked, we were figuring out what to say and communicate to others through the dialogue. To do this we sorted through our different perceptions and beliefs and constructed interpretations of the changes in our attitudes and understandings. The dialogue was our inquiry process. What we learned came out of struggling with issues and ideas together through dialogue. (Johnston, 1999, p. 4)
As such, while in my original proposal I had suggested that this methodology was unique, as a result of the dialogic cyclical process, I would now like to call the process in which Martha and I engaged feminist critical-emancipatory collaborative-inquiry action research based on an ethic of caring.

2.4 Complexity and Research Design

As I have discussed above at the outset of our work together I had developed a research design that allowed for the cyclical nature of our on-going process. Incorporated within that design were audiotapes of conversations at each stage of the data collection, teacher and researcher journals, participant-observation of lessons, field notes, videotapes of selected lessons, and interviews with focal students. As a result, inherent within the design was a complex collection of data designed to provide enough information to maintain the momentum throughout the research process. It is, however, important to note that the data were there to be analyzed, discussed and to provide direction. They were not seen as an end in itself. Therefore, the process was as open to analysis as were the data themselves. As the data emerged so too did the process. It is, therefore, only after completion of the project that it is possible to identify and attempt to define and perhaps label the process itself. As a result, the explanation for the label itself emerges in a step by step process.

While Martha and I worked together to develop a culturally diverse literature program for her classroom, at the outset we did not know the form or the function this literature program would take in her classroom. We shared a belief in the value of multicultural literature and we also shared a common desire to explore its potential in the classroom. As a result, we agreed to use a multicultural text as part of the curriculum, to
asses the on-going process, to critically analyze at the end of the text, and to use our thinking to select another text and then to begin the process again. This cyclical process happened for six large units across the academic year. While this process does not exactly fit with Lewin's work on action research in the mid-1940's, it does contain the action cycles and analysis basic to Lewin's model. It, also, fits closely enough with McKernan's (1988) basic definition below, to be defined as a piece of action research.

Action research is the scientific process whereby in a given problem area where one wishes to improve practice or personal understanding, inquiry is carried out by the practitioner - first, to clearly define the problem; second to specify a plan of action, including testing hypotheses by applying action to the problem. Evaluation is then undertaken to monitor and establish the effectiveness of the action taken. Finally, participants reflect, explain developments, and communicate these results to the community of action researchers. Action research is systematic inquiry by practitioners to improve curriculum. (p. 174)

However, McKernan suggests that over time, action research has become more tied to the curriculum in the classrooms and has grown, changed, and developed and has become more critical. His synopsis and definition of the term critical-emancipatory action research ties even more closely to the political and social justice issues that have emerged from Martha's and my work. He says.

Critical-emancipatory action research perceives of curriculum problems as value-laden, moral concerns rather than purely technical, and the problems combine what Habermas refers to as two knowledge-constitutive interests: practical and emancipatory. Science then becomes hermeneutical, or critical, based as it is on a series of self-reflective spirals of human action, playing off past retrospection against possible future action. (p. 184)

The use of multicultural literature in the classroom is not neutral, it is value laden, it is emotionally charged, and it is tied to the notion that its use can change the lives of the children it touches. This study chose to look at the impact such work had on the teacher and researcher involved in the process. The cyclical process was self-reflective, it played
off our past ideas, our present conceptions and allowed us to implement our developing philosophies in a variety of settings and situations. It, in fact, allowed for the 16 concepts which McKernan (1988), as a result of his review of the traditional, collaborative and the emancipatory-critical conceptions of curriculum based action research, has defined as providing the countenance of this kind of work. The concepts include an increased understanding, a concern to improve the quality of human action and practice, a focus on problems of immediate concern to practitioners, a collaborative or a "interactive self-critical community of investigators." a study conducted in situ, a participatory character or an "activist, social reformist perspective," a focus on the single unit or case, no attempt to control setting variables, research problems and goals that may shift as inquiry proceeds, evaluative attempts to explain the amount of a participants growth, a methodologically eclectic and innovative approach, a study with scientific and shareability-utility. a study that is critical and emancipatory and a study that is diaological and discursive where "the goal of understanding can be achieved only through unconstrained dialogue with participants involved in the project" (p. 191) Martha's and my work together was indeed dialogic, as has been noted. Our dialogue became our inquiry and it fueled our process. However, such dialogue is of necessity a personal process involving not only discussions across areas of expertise, but also sensitive areas of personal concerns. If such conversation is to become dialogue it must occur within an environment which is safe and which allows for risk taking and for growth with-in the boundaries of the conversation. As such, Martha's and my conversations not only involved our work but over time also involved ourselves and our families and the impact that each had on the other. Our conversations were based on an
"ethic of caring" (Noddings, 1986). As Noddings has indicated, research must allow "for fidelity to persons, maintenance of community, growth of individuals and enhancement of subjective areas of our relationships" (p. 510). Given the sensitive issues inherent in the use of multicultural literature our work could not have progressed was there not an atmosphere incorporating an ethic of caring.

It is perhaps redundant to add to the descriptive label of a critical-emancipatory action research project that it involved collaborative inquiry. Collaboration is already inherent as a component within in the model of action research. However given the truly collaborative manner in which this study was developed, the fact that at different times we each took the lead, and that the study itself would have been vastly different had either one of us not participated, it is important that the collaborative aspect is highlighted. It is equally important to highlight the fact that while on the surface we were two individuals, in reality we were embedded in a process shared by an entire community. We were a part of the communities and the cultures which framed us, the school and the university, the society in which we lived and the attitudes and perceptions which framed those communities and those societies. Oakes, Hare and Siromik (1986) argue that collaboration needs to be moved to what they call collaborative-inquiry. An important component within their model is what they have coined as "process (means) vs. product (ends)". They state,

In the collaborative-inquiry model, the process is an acknowledged and fundamental part of the product. Although the model is not devoid of initial expectations, what goes on during the course of the project is expected to be most important in shaping, modifying, and substantially changing expectations and perhaps even redirecting the project generally. (p. 576)
As I have noted, as a result of the collaborative dialogic-discursive nature of our research process and the cyclical nature of data collection, the data became important not only to this product but to our collaborative process. Our conversations within our collaboration were used as dialogue or as inquiry. As Hunsaker and Johnston (1992) have noted, "what researchers or teachers understand initially may be partial and will change in the process of conversations that question their different experiences and interpretations" (p. 364). As such it is important to highlight the collaborative-inquiry component of the process because it is a viable part not only of the data collection process itself but also of the communication of the process as part of an on-going dialogue within the research community.

Finally, it is important to add the term "feminist" to the descriptive label because as Cynthia Dickens (1994) states,

To fail to discuss women's experiences as teachers and thinkers, their relationships to students and to their colleagues, and their own role in the restructuring of schools is to disregard one of the most defining and persistent characteristics of America's public schools, the teaching profession, and the society in which they are located. Similarly, to analyze collaborative behavior, particularly in the context of school-university partnerships, without looking critically at the growing body of research on women is to disregard the significant ways in which feminist theory can inform our knowledge of education (p. 16)

As Olesen (1994) notes, postmodern feminists view the world as a series of stories or texts with a focus that is narrative. As such, we are again brought to the issues of dialogue and inquiry and the understandings that emerge from such an analysis. Not unlike what feminist researchers have done, this study used our conversations to understand, to question, and to challenge the perceived status quo. While not directly engaged in a project focusing on women, this study, conducted by women, allowed the
voices of both women to emerge and to be the "knowers" (Code, 1991). Our voices and our stories allowed us to share in the development of the design, the direction, and the analysis of emerging understandings. This study allowed us to claim authority.

2.5 Conclusion

As Erikson and Christman (1996) suggest the issues that are a part of life often become invisible as a result of day to day living, and if we are to understand and to observe what is occurring, we must continually "take stock" through our on-going conversations. It was through the conversations which they had with the various schools involved in their research project that they were able to link assessment and reflection with change. It was through the collaborative dialogic-cyclical process that Martha and I were able to plan, analyze and reconstruct our work within the complexity that defined the research process. As Erikson and Christman (1996) noted, professional development and personal growth can only occur through systematic inquiry which involves open communication, mutuality and which acknowledges and deals with the issues of power.

Through our conversations, Martha and I were able to grow and to develop a culturally diverse literature program within her classroom. We each brought different strengths to the table which enhanced our collaboration. We were less as individuals than as the sum of our parts. The following chapters document the growth of our collaboration over time. Our conversations and dialogue enabled a level of trust to be established which allowed for understanding and change to occur. Analysis occurred not only retrospectively but also on an on-going basis in a manner that respected the integrity, knowledge and understanding of those involved in the conversation.
Figure 2.2. Model of Feminist critical-emancipatory action research based on an ethic of caring
Reflected in Figure 2 is a model of the research. It presents, in chart format, the collaborative dialogic-discursive nature of the research process as well as the cyclical nature of data collection. Also evident from the model is the complexity involved in the process and the influences and issues of power which impacted the work. As noted Martha and I were not working in isolation but were embedded in a process shared by the entire community, and as such decisions made were a product of varying influences.

The inherent nature of this study required a design which respected and allowed for difference. It was predicated on the belief that multicultural literature can make a difference in the lives of the children it touches. Within the body of the work was an assumption that difference was to be embraced rather than feared and that understanding was developed through dialogue and mutual respect. It asked that we make visible important issues which unfortunately all too often become invisible in our day to day living (Erikson and Christman, 1996). In attempting to be as inclusive as possible it attempted to highlight rather than simplify the complexity inherent in the process.

What follows is my analysis and reconstruction of the data based on current understandings. It is my hope to place these understandings within an on-going dialogue within the research community and to continue the collaborative dialogic-cyclical process. It is also my hope that in so doing, the model used in this study can help to make visible the issues related to multiculturalism and the use of multicultural literature, and that the diversity of the voices engaged in the ensuing dialogue will allow for change.
CHAPTER 3

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE AND ISSUES OF POWER

LD: Then for Mildred Taylor I think about the skits they did at the end with their books.

MK: Okay, I think about the continuity of them

LD: I think about them starting to make the connections between the books and realizing that they all were reading about one family.

MK: I think from these books as far as multicultural literature goes what we learned was the need for background - not only background but foreground. I don’t know if that would be what it would be called. Going beyond that period of time.

LD: And for me, we also started thinking about, or I started thinking about, the concept of the socially responsible citizen kind of thing, and are we just teaching them about what happened or are we teaching them how to make a difference.

MK: And that’s why I think that came out. That’s where that came from. Finding out about that, if we want to do it. If the socially responsible citizen is what we’re trying to do then all that other stuff has to be built up.

Final Structured Interview, June 1995

The transcript above was taken from the final structured interview between Martha and myself at the end of our year together. It is a small portion of our thoughts as we reflected upon the various activities and books we had used over the course of the academic year. We were discussing the events of the year which held the greatest significance for each of us, but as is apparent in the transcript even that became a collaborative negotiated understanding. Reflecting upon the students’ readings of several Mildred Taylor texts, I
originally commented upon a rather traditional extension of children's literature, skits which are designed to reflect the student's idea of the most significant event of the story. In this transaction it was Martha who introduced and extended our conversation to include the multicultural issue brought about by the use of these texts and the one with which we struggled and continued to struggle over time. Not apparent from this transcript was our realization that while the students realized that African Americans faced great racial hatred during the period reflected in Mildred Taylor's texts, the 1920's - 40's, they seemed to believe that such issues were not relevant today or to their lives. For the students the world was indeed a "fair" place, or at least they did not think to question the status quo. Our comments above are a reflection of numerous conversations which we had regarding the students readiness to learn more about society and the world and our obligation or responsibility in preparing "socially responsible" citizens. It, also, reflects Martha's firm conviction that if that is indeed our goal, we must begin by providing the appropriate background, before we can take the next step. These issues speak directly to the notion of power (Fairclough, 1992); the power of texts, the power of multicultural literature, the power of teachers, the power of research, the power of ideas, and certainly the power of society.

I introduce this transcript because it allows me to talk about the issues of power which I believe to be central to the analysis of the data in this chapter and to the notion of multicultural literature itself, but also because it exemplifies the three texts which I believe comprise this data and the rhetorical and nihilistic hermeneutics (Mailloux, 1989; Scholes, 1989) which define the reading of the data. I explore the issues of power which existed in this dissertation process over the course of the academic year, but in so doing I read the data which is my life and inevitably rewrite myself.

Robert Scholes' (1989) semiotic assumption is that all the world is a text and that reading is an intertextual process governed by an active reader. He believes that while a
reader is always outside the text “to read rightly we must learn to write ourselves”. As Scholes says as readers we can not enter a text but we can bring the book into our lives and thoughts by looking closely at the text, situating the text, learning about it, and seeing it among others of its kind.

The transcripts which form an important facet of this work are indeed texts. They are conversation and dialogue between two educators. However, they are perhaps more the text of my life than Scholes (1989) would have intended, because mine is one of the two voices heard throughout the conversations. In fact it is my life which I am reading, but I am as a reader outside the text, and as such I am re-writing myself. I am situating myself and learning about myself as participant, and am attempting to see how my situation might have been played out or conceptualized differently by others. “What we are and what we may become are already shaped by powerful cultural texts”. As we read the texts that are our lives we are reading culture. Given Scholes’ assumption that all life is a text, and that we each are a product of a culture which frames us, then it is easy to understand how reading a text involves reading a culture.

I read the text that is my life in the same way that I read a written text. Within my text I am given choices which are dictated by my culture and it is up to me to read them as completely as is possible. In essence I need to read myself and to write myself as I look at the three texts which comprise this data, the individual, the conversations and dialogue, and the transcript.

I am the first text which is a part of this work. As a cultural being I need to read and write myself as an unique essential component of the other two texts.

The second text, the conversations and dialogue, stems from what Martha and I created, observed and discussed as we “read” our implementation of cross cultural literature in the classroom. Mailloux’s (1989) anti-theory theory, rhetorical hermeneutics, suggests that while interpretive communities neither discover nor create meaningful texts, they do
provide the surroundings for conversations and acts of persuasion to take place.

Conversations are the sites where meaning is determined through our attempts to convince and persuade others of our interpretations and explanations of events. However, these sites are not free from history which according to Mailloux is interpretive, institutional and cultural, and a reflection of social and political forces. Indeed throughout these conversations Martha and I find and make meaning with each other. We read the text which is our agenda in the classroom and we struggle to understand for ourselves and for the students what it means to be involved in this political act of including multicultural literature into the curriculum in this fourth grade urban classroom.

Returning to the third text, the written transcript of the conversations, where I am engaged in a search for meaning, I must as Bakhtin (1981) reminds place primary emphasis on understanding the text within its specific and varied social context. While I see the transcript as distinct from the conversation and dialogue because of its static unyielding quality, I do not see it as apart from the whole. The conversations and dialogue were continually emerging and being created through the interaction of two cultural beings; they were always in the process of becoming. The transcript serves as a cultural artifact of these conversations, and it is through my reading of this artifact that I can search for "truths". However, as Scholes’ (1989) nihilistic hermeneutics suggests, truth can never be attained and there can never be an ideal reading, but I can attempt to reconstruct on the basis of historical meanings (Bakhtin, 1981) and move the language forward and backward in time.

In Bakhtin’s theory there are no isolated individuals, for the continual constitution and reconstitution of any worldview (in utterance) is inextricably bound up with its relationship to other world views (in a system of intertextuality) all language is social. Each word, Bakhtin says, tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived and its socially charged life.

In my discussion of the transcript detailed at the beginning of this chapter, it is readily apparent that power relationships exist from both within and without. However, power is not always obvious and is often insidious. As teachers Martha and I both had
obvious power over the students and over the content of their curriculum. It is we who
determined what they would read, how they would read it and what issues would be
stressed. What is not as clear is the power relationships which defined our collaborative
interactions. Perhaps the best definition is that given by Noddings (1986) for collaboration
when she suggests its "power over/power with" nature. What is also not as apparent but I
believe to be of equal importance is the power the institutions to which we each belonged
had over us. As a doctoral candidate tied to a research university and as a teacher employed
by the public school system, we each came to this project encumbered or embraced by
strongly political institutions. Over arching all of this is the role and the power which
society plays in the lives of individuals and of its institutions. As noted by Gutierrez, et al.
(1995), "power is not unidirectional; it is complex and surfaces in multiple ways. Power
relations are learned and become part of a person's identity as one participates in the
practices of particular communities." Although on the surface it appeared that our dialogue
and conversations existed between two distinct individuals, the reality is the intertextual
nature of human interaction made this not a conversation between individuals but a social
heteroglossia, which reflects the complex relationships inherent in the human experience

In Discourse and Social Change, Fairclough (1992) notes that "discourse as an
ideological practice constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the
world from diverse positions in power relationships". I would argue, however, that these
are not static relationships. As our discourse represents the world, signifies it and
constitutes and constructs it in meaning (Fairclough, 1992) it is simultaneously changing
that construction, and altering the meaning. This one reading of the artifact that is the
transcripts of this dissertation attempts to look at the change in the power relationships or
the social heteroglossia over its year long period. As the Chart 3.1 indicates, across time
the collaborative experience for Martha and me changed in a direct relationship to power relationships. We did not continue to look at ourselves, the students, the institutions to

<table>
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Table 3.1. Power, Discourse and Social Change

which we each belonged or the project in the same way over time.

The notions of multiculturalism are fraught with contention. American society is struggling to define itself. There are those who would have us believe that we are a nation of immigrants who have come to this country and formed a single unitary American identity, and there are others who reject this homogeneous concept and who revel and celebrate the richness and diversity which frames us. Given that on this issue rests the very heart and soul of our country, there is great emotion, commitment and passion tied to those on either side of the argument. There is also great concern over the perspectives being taught in the American public school. There are those who believe that if we teach our children to value diversity and to respect the various cultures which comprise our country that we are risking anarchy and will lose our sense of identity. While others believe that if we don’t acknowledge the richness and the differences as well as the similarities between us all that we will also lose ourselves, through racism, anti-Semitism and the anger of those who view themselves as invisible to the majority. There is growing concern and fear among many that America is already changing, that by the year 2000 there will not be a clear European American majority and that the face of American will have become inextricably different. There is anger toward those who are rewriting the history books to include the faces and lives of African Americans, Native Americans, women and many
others who have been rendered invisible and silent. They believe that those who are writing the new books are the ones altering history, not the ones who perpetrated the absences and silences in the old histories.

The institutions to which we each belonged also had political agendas and we each interpreted those according to the text which defined our own culture as we together implemented what we believed to be an essential component for the American public school, the integration of multicultural literature throughout the curriculum. Built on that was the awareness that we each had of the power relationships existing in society and the political arguments surrounding the issues of multiculturalism.

3.1 Initial Structured Interview

Martha and I began our work together over the summer of 1994 with several informal conversations. These conversations served as a chance to reconnect with each other and to begin to focus on our year long project. We were already fairly well acquainted. I had taught Martha’s science methods course during her undergraduate work. We shared a bond as the only two members of the class to strongly object to the sending of American troops to Iraq. It was, we were told by the other members of the class, because we were of a different generation. Several years later I served as a research assistant to an urban teacher’s reading/study group of which Martha was a member. Martha’s involvement reflected her intense desire to further her knowledge and maintain a strong relationship with the university. It was during several of those sessions that I had the opportunity of discussing my work with multicultural literature for children, and of soliciting volunteers to work with me on a dissertation project. At this early stage, with no firm plan in mind, Martha showed a strong interest and agreed to become involved. The birth of my daughter postponed our work, but by the summer of 1994, we were prepared to begin, sharing yet another bond as older mothers to only younger children.
We began our initial structured interview at the beginning of the school year at the outset of our work together. Martha was aware of the initial format of the project through her reading and our discussions of my dissertation proposal. We had selected a text and had begun to work with the students. After meeting with and at the request of my dissertation committee, I had developed a set of questions for a formal structured interview to be answered at the beginning and end of the research process (Appendix ??). Given that this was to be a collaborative study it was determined that Martha and I would both respond to the questions as well as develop and share a portfolio designed to represent ourselves and our backgrounds. Procedural issues for this interview were also discussed by my committee, and it was requested that I have Martha respond to the questions before I gave my responses, based on their belief that I might in some way influence her reactions.

As a doctoral candidate at a research institution who was well aware of procedures and protocol I not only accepted but appreciated the input I received from my dissertation committee regarding the structure and format of my research project. However, as a researcher about to begin a “collaborative” project I was uncomfortable. While I understood the role of the dissertation committee in my research, and recognized that meeting with this committee was not a responsibility which Martha would or should have to accept, I missed her voice in the “heteroglossia” of the conversation. I did not agree with the committee’s concerns about Martha’s objectivity or my influence over it. I did not conceive of research as a process free of bias. I did not want to begin a collaborative process as an authoritarian figure. The power relationships existing here were indeed complex. Our first structured interview would begin as two individuals, but the format of that conversation already reflected the complex relationships inherent in this process. The power and the politics would, however, even at this early stage reach far beyond this initial complexity.
Martha was aware of the requirements of my committee as we began the interview. Believing that sharing some background was important, we began with Martha sharing her portfolio. As part of her portfolio Martha chose several texts; “I’ve picked out some books for several reasons to show where I am with multicultural literature”. What also became apparent as we discussed her selections was our level of comfort in relation to our perceived expertise on the topic. I came to the dissertation project, having participated through various roles in three multicultural literature for children courses, and having written what I believed to be a comprehensive review of the literature for a general exam question. Martha through her own reading and thinking and her involvement in the urban teacher study group had also had the opportunity to consider many of the issues surrounding the use of multicultural literature for children. However our expertise came from outside of ourselves. We looked to experts, who we perceived as holding the power, to substantiate what we believed and to support our conclusions. For example, after discussing some issues involving the Newbery Award winning book Maniac McGee, our discussion about the responsibility of authors who are writing outside their own culture moved in this direction:

LD: By the way I mentioned to Rudine your question and she says that she didn’t say that people out of a culture couldn’t write about the culture. But what she says is that you have to have really done your homework. I think the question then is what’s enough to have done.

MK: And that’s writing one book about one culture. Teachers have to teach about several cultures.

LD: But you’re right. Teachers have to teach

MK: And she’s not the only one who says that either. A lot of the journal articles say similar things about - I think the Dan Madigan one was the one who talked about that. I know at least one of those that we had in that class talked about that.

Our conversation was at the outset becoming more and more complex. As Bakhtin (1981) has indicated our view of the world was certainly tied to the view of others and to our experiences at that moment. Adding to this complexity was our intellectual
understanding of many of the issues tied to the use of culturally diverse literature for children. We were beginning to delve into an area that was emotionally and politically charged and which contained issues which dealt not only with pedagogy but also with assumptions of right and wrong and the notion of "truth". Many of these issues we added to our initial conversation; such as the need for and value of multicultural literature, issues of authenticity and stereotypes, issues of availability, and publisher’s, reviewer’s and personal responsibility in the evaluation and selection of culturally diverse literature. We were well aware that all these issues were being discussed by not only those in education but also by ethicists, politicians, and the general public and we therefore incorporated them into our thinking and discussions.

However, we looked not to ourselves but to those outside to help find answers. When it came to our discussion related to the issue of the selection of quality multicultural literature, I definitely knew the questions and issues related to the discussion, but would not venture answers.

MK: This is something that I’ve been thinking about lately, too. It seems to me, and it all goes back to how are we supposed to know all this. Sometimes I feel like I’m trying to get out of work, trying to get out of my responsibility of knowing this stuff, and sometimes, more often, I feel that you know it’s just too big a job. There is too much for teachers to know. And it seems like there could be a Native American seal of approval, or Correta Scott King award for good literature that comes from different cultures. It just seems like that would be so much easier. Or to have a tag. See, that would go back to the politics of it, too.

LD: There’s a lot of argument about this. If you look at the Horn Book or things like that, they usually talk about the quality of the book in terms of writing and style, but there isn’t a section where they talk about authenticity.

MK: Right. And that’s what I think there needs to be.

LD: And there’s the argument that journals who are reviewing children’s book have an obligation to find someone from the culture to review the book.

MK: Yes, right. And that would make so much more sense than every teacher out there who wants to buy multicultural literature and have it available in the classroom and teach through it having to go through the number of books. That’s just incredible.
Martha’s voice here, represents not only her own feeling about the issue, but also resonates with real concern for real teachers, “there’s just too much for teachers to know”. As such other voices are being added to our conversation. As has been discussed I brought with me the voices of the academy, and with Martha’s voice comes the concerns of practitioners who everyday deal with the complexity that is the urban classroom.

MK: I think especially in the urban setting you have to want - you have to see those kids beyond what they come from, their family, their experiences. You have to stop looking at them as well they’re urban kids they’re coming from poverty; they’re on free and reduced lunch; their mother beats them; they see shooting every day. But you have to stop saying that’s all there is to these kids, because there’s a lot more to the kid. I think a good teacher sees those things and that’s why they want to be there, because they’re real neat, exciting, creative kids that come in.

Her voice also serves as a reminder of the lack of power experienced by children of poverty. Their issues are heard through Martha’s and my conversation as we consider our perceptions of the socio-economic background of the students and their educational needs. Here, too, our understandings are being negotiated with each other but also with guidance from an outside “expert”. In essence we are working through issues in the company of the academy, the school district, and society and are sharing if not deferring the power to others rather than finding it in ourselves.

LD: Are these differences - maybe Lisa Delpit is right and black kids need more direct instruction, but could the issue be socio-economic and not race? I’d argue that socio-economic background is also a part of multicultural education, sort of an awareness of the uniqueness and the differences that all kids bring to the classroom, and dealing with that as part of it.

MK: Okay

LD: And sometimes, maybe, what we attribute to race is more attributable to economic background.

MK: Right. Well, I think a lot of it is because I think that I can see more similarities in my kids, the Anglo and African-American than I see differences. I think they bring - I just think they’re very similar - their situations, their learning attitudes, the amount of involvement the parents have.

Even as Martha struggles to define multicultural literature for herself, the voice of others can be heard.
MK: I think its literature that shows - it's hard to put into words. Literature that represents a non-mainstream culture, marginalized, I guess that's what Rudine calls it - a marginalized culture as the main emphasis of the book or the main characters in an appropriate and authentic way.

Although there were only two actual individuals responding to the questions in this initial structured interview, in reality many others were present throughout the process. As suggested by Mailloux (1989), our conversations were not free of history or of institutional, cultural, social and political forces. As we struggled to make meaning and to understand, the power of those outside ourselves became a part of our conversation and intruded into our voices, and became a central focus of our understandings. Struggling as an outsider to “read” this text, I find not only Martha and myself, but also extremely complex relationships which form and structure the nature of human interaction. At the outset of this research project, I find power, but not power residing in the individuals but in the collective. I find that I, too, am being given power and at least at the outset the role of expert.

LD: What role would you like me to play in your classroom?

MK: I think as much as you want to and as much as you can coming in and out. I know that it’s difficult to play a role other than observer. So, that’s basically up to you, and I think outside as far as planning units and like bringing in stuff, magazines and articles, ideas for books and for what to do. I think more of what I see is for the classroom, planning reading units, planning everything that goes along with the reading.

LD: What role do you think I will play in your classroom? Is there something that I’m doing that you wish I wasn’t doing or that you’d like me to do that isn’t happening?

MK: No, because I don’t have a real pre-conceived notion. I have ideas but I don’t think I care - I don’t think it matters that much. I mean it matters but I think it’s more that I’m flexible enough that it’s more of what you need for yourself for what you’re doing.

3.2 Children’s Literature Conference

In November Martha and I were asked to present our research at Children’s Literature 95, the annual Children’s Literature Conference sponsored by The Ohio State
University and held at the end of January. This proved to be an excellent opportunity for us to review our work together, reflect on our progress and growth, and to make meaning for ourselves. It is through such conversations that we in essence read ourselves (Scholes, 1989) and in so doing persuade, interpret and explain events (Mailloux, 1989).

By November, when we began preparation for the conference, we had presented three different units to the students; Felita by Nicholosa Mohr, Cinderella variants from around the world and Ohio History focusing on Tecumseh. The first two were part of the language arts block and the later a required component for the fourth grade social studies curriculum. We had spent a great deal of time on each and while we had debriefed after each unit, we had not looked at each in connection with each other, and had not considered how we had grown and changed as a result of our experiences.

As I read the transcript of these conversations and attempt to develop an understanding within the social context which was framing our work together (Bakhtin, 1981), it becomes apparent that by this point our collaboration was much more reflective of Noddings (1986) “power over/power with” nature. I was asking Martha to present our work at a conference, an experience with which she was not familiar, and as such I was the one to provide information on format, style of presentation, and the mechanics of such a presentation. However, the content of the presentation was being carefully negotiated between the two of us. In fact after a cursory overview of the process, it was Martha who determined the direction of our conversation and ultimately the tone of the presentation, a great switch from her, “I don’t have a real pre-conceived notion” perspective. While Martha would have never altered an opinion just because it differed from my own, she was a consummate learner and at the outset of our work deferred to some of my “university-based” knowledge of multicultural literature and the reading process. However, it was during this conversation that she strongly expressed an interest in school university collaboration, and an insistence that our work together go beyond her classroom. The
collaborative component of the dissertation process had for her become an important focus. An equally important component for her was the change which she believed had occurred in my understanding of the nature of the classroom and the nature of the power structure existing in the public schools. It was in the classroom that she held the expertise and I was the novice who needed to learn more of the realities of the situation.

MK: Now, I’ll tell you some of the things that I was thinking about - the importance of it more to me than how I’ve grown. The things that have been important from this are what I feel the university can get out of this type of relationship, and you are the university in this case. See, I’m thinking about how you’ve changed and grown from it.

LD: Oh, interesting!

MK: I was thinking of this the other day. I think that you have more of a sense, a wider view of what goes on in the school. I may be totally wrong with this. I thought that coming into this that you thought it would be easy to put multicultural literature into the program and it would fit in easily.

LD: I don’t know that I thought that we could manipulate it as much, but that...

MK: See, like the multicultural literature would be the central thing and then manipulate these things around it. As opposed to the opposite, manipulating feeding the multicultural in.

LD: Is that what you think we’re doing, feeding the multicultural literature into what’s already existing?

MK: Right

LD: If the literature isn’t the central thing what is the central thing in your mind? You said that we’re feeding the multicultural literature in. What are we feeding it into?

MK: I think probably the curriculum. See, I take the course of study and right or wrong that’s where these kids are expected to be next year. If I had them all along I’d have more power over what I’m doing. And the testing. I think testing right or wrong is a big focus, because the kids are going to be judged on that. I have the power not to judge them this year, but not the next year, or the next year or the next year. Maybe I’m putting too much emphasis on what the tests can do to them but from what I’ve seen in the paper, I think the tests are pretty powerful. I see the course of study as the map of where to begin and where to end. This is the year for Ohio history, and then I feed multicultural literature into that.

Not wishing to offend me, Martha very carefully expressed her view of my initial naïveté when it came to an understanding of the operating of an urban classroom. In
essence Martha was clearly articulating the power structure in the public school classroom, and noting that at the outset I failed to acknowledge that structure, believing as many university people do that our agenda can become the primary focus. She details what must be for her the focus of the classroom - the course of study and the proficiency tests, and acknowledges that these might not be her choices but that over time she lacks the power to change them. While she might ignore the course of study or tests results in her own classroom, she believes that that would be unfair to her students who are going to be judged not by herself, but by those outside of her classroom.

It, also, was important to Martha that this understanding go beyond our work together.

MK: What I've been thinking about is the university person coming into the school and making the teacher a part of the study. I think it's important for the university person to also learn. Not just to come out with the research but for the school to benefit from the interaction because the university has learned from the school. And that happens down the line, through pre-service teachers. That if you have a better idea of how to teach multicultural literature and realize that you can't go into the school and start reading books. Unless you want that to be a subject of its own.

LD: Just reading the books?

MK: Just reading the books. That's part of it, exposing them to the different literature. But there's that part and then the part where it fits in.

LD: To the curriculum?

MK: Yeah, to the curriculum. When you're looking at the curriculum, you're thinking about multicultural literature. See, that's where I think I'm changing. I'm looking at the curriculum now with multicultural literature always there in the background, thinking how can I fit multicultural literature into this.

Martha and I continued and extended this conversation to the power structure within the university as we further discussed the nature of collaboration and of participant observation.

LD: I think I'm the one who learns from that process if I go in and watch. I don't think you'd learn a whole lot from me just going in and watching. I think as a researcher I could benefit.

MK: And I think the benefit has to go beyond me and you if it's going to be worthwhile.
LD: But that comes from what we figure out and I think we’re doing that collaboratively too.

MK: But that’s where I think this stuff comes in - what the university can learn and what pre-service teachers can learn from it.

LD: You think of it in terms of pre-service teachers. I also think of it in terms of the type of articles that I write and the type of journals, because to me. Maybe that’s my bias as a university person, I have to publish. I’m going to get a lot more credit out of having a couple of articles in journals than I am for teaching pre-service teachers. Did you know that about the university?

MK: I know it’s the old publish or perish

LD: And it’s really true. I could be a wonderful pre-service teacher, but if I don’t publish anything I won’t get tenure. So, partly I think about what we do here when we get it out to the rest of the people when we publish it.

While many might disagree with my understanding of the rules of the academy, I believed that I had been given the sense during my graduate work that the main requirement of academics in a research institution was to publish their work in peer reviewed journals. It was then that the work could be placed in relation to others of its kind and critiqued by the “scholars” in the field. While work with pre-service teachers was important and necessary it was not sufficient for gaining tenure. As I listened to Martha’s insistence that our work go beyond her classroom, I was reminded of that unwritten rule, which had been passed down however indirectly to us as doctoral candidates. It was for us as strong an understanding as Martha’s that she must teach from the course of study and must emphasize for her students the importance of the proficiency tests. Martha and I were each conveying to each other the “realities” that existed in our own institutions. We were explaining where we perceived the power to be residing, and what must be done for us to succeed.

As a result of our collaboration and this conversation we had negotiated a new understanding and a new meaning for our work. We had managed to do together something which could not have been accomplished on our own. We had placed our work together within the power structure that is the urban public school and the research
university and had situated it in terms of its importance to each of us and in terms of our understandings of what each of us was required to do. By collaborating in this process we were able to cross a bridge that often separates the school and the university, and in so doing were perhaps able to achieve more than can often be accomplished in the research process. We had certainly opened the channels of understanding and broadened our knowledge of the other and had enabled ourselves to more effectively collaborate on the research project.

3.3 Conversations Regarding Mildred D. Taylor

At the end of February, Martha and I began a unit using a series of books written by Mildred D. Taylor about the Logan family. The Logan’s are an African American family growing up in the southern United States during the 1930’s and 40’s. The books deal with the issues faced by African American farmers and share croppers as they struggled to make a living and with their children as they grew up and struggled to be educated in the racially divided rural south. They speak to the poverty, the hatred, and the segregation faced by southern blacks as well as the indomitable spirit of the Logan family as they teach their children how to exist and thrive in such an antagonistic and racist world. They are powerful books; ones which we believed would help our students understand an important part of American history. Given the varying complexities of the texts the books also allowed students across a range of reading abilities to find stories with which they could experience success.

While the students learned a great deal from reading these books, they allowed us to learn even more about ourselves and brought to the surface issues related to the use of multicultural literature that were essential for us to consider. In essence this analysis focuses on two texts, the stories written by Mildred D. Taylor and the conversations which we had related to the use of these stories in the classroom. It was from the reading of the Taylor texts and the students responses to them that Martha and I could read a text that
helped us to understand important issues related to the political act of incorporating such literature into the classroom.

Critics of the classroom use of culturally diverse literature often express the concern that the use of such literature will be divisive rather than fostering a sense of community and a sense that we all share in a common American culture. They believe that we risk anarchy because we will not all be talking with one voice. They fear a loss of democratization. They fear the unknown. Martha and I, too, began to realize that we faced the unknown, because by using this literature we were raising questions for which we had no answers. Pedagogically we were struggling because these texts raised questions for our students about racism and about the politics of difference which we had not considered and which we struggled to answer both for them and for ourselves. Our confusion excited us because we faced issues which pushed the margin and which questioned the status quo, and which are essential for teachers to consider if they are to use such literature in their classroom. However, questions of power can be deceptively simple to ask, but alarmingly difficult to answer responsibly, especially when we believed that we had a moral imperative to carefully consider the questions as we struggled for answers.

As we debriefed and asked ourselves what we believed the children had learned from this unit, we realized that they certainly had an understanding of the racism which had existed prior to the civil rights movement, but that the understanding did not extend to the racism of today. Although we both believed that we wanted to prepare socially responsible citizens, we also struggled with exactly what we believed fourth graders were ready to hear and understand, and what should be held for a later day. Power is insidious whether used for what we perceive to be a worthy or important cause or when used to impose something we abhor. While we acknowledged that we did indeed often impose our power on the students, we needed time to consider these issues carefully.

LD: What do you think the children learned from these books?
MK: I think they learned that at that time in history African Americans were treated differently and unfairly. Maybe they learned a little bit about prejudice, what it is and what it entails. Maybe, not thinking that it happens now, but what it is.

LD: I don’t think they believe it exists today. But I think they learned it’s a terrible thing to believe. I think they learned that we’re really all alike. I think that they’ve got that concept - that people are alike regardless of their cultural background. I don’t think that they’ve got the concept that they’re also different.

MK: But I think it’s because they don’t want it to be. They want it to be that they’re all alike. African Americans shouldn’t be treated any differently because we’re all alike. So they can’t separate the shouldn’t be treated differently from being different.

LD: Okay, that makes sense.

MK: And I think that’s why they don’t - because they kind of don’t want to see that - they don’t want to admit differences because they think if they’re admitting differences that’s treating people differently and they’re not separating those two things.

Understanding why we believed the children had a difficulty with issues of difference, did not help us to know what to do about the issues.

LD: After finishing these books, what are your opinions about the value of multicultural literature for use in the classroom?

MK: Teaching prejudice and racism. I think the main thing is to value differences. I think that that is more important than thinking that people are alike.

LD: To value differences, but all we’re teaching is that people are alike.

MK: I know that’s where we need to make the distinction that the kids aren’t making and we’re not either - that being treated differently and being different are two separate things.

LD: I can do a little bit of talking about that with The Carp in the Bathtub. I can talk about how people treated me because I was Jewish. As much as I’ve talked about being Jewish, and liking Elijah’s Angels, I’ve never talked about any other stuff. I’ve never talked about anti-Semitism.

MK: And I don’t think they have any idea that that exists.

LD: That goes back to your concern about whether we’re introducing something that they don’t even know about by talking about it.

MK: Are you saying that’s wrong?

LD: That was your concern.

MK: I don’t know - stated that way it doesn’t sound like...
LD: What I heard you say was that it's O.K. for fourth graders right now to feel that we're all alike.

MK: I'm struggling real hard with this whole thing.

LD: I am, too.

MK: Every time a different situation comes up I change my mind.

LD: But let's just think about it.

MK: But then when you said what I said before it doesn't jibe. A lot of things I think we should do and teach don't jibe with what I think is happening.

LD: I think that maybe we're not as clear on what to do with the multicultural literature because we haven't decided for ourselves what's appropriate to do yet. You can't talk about Mildred Taylor books without talking about differences between the African American and white people. You just can't. But we're not sure how far to push it. Although I think your question about "niggers" really pushed.....

Throughout her texts Mildred D. Taylor uses the word "nigger", a term often used during that time by European Americans as they spoke about or to African Americans. Martha noticed that many of the students in the classroom seemed uncomfortable when they heard that term read aloud. She felt that the feeling "needed to be aired" and that the students needed to "look at where the feeling was coming from". She also wanted the opportunity to explain that although the author might write words that were offensive, it was not her saying the words but the characters whom she had created in that particular setting. This was an issue Martha felt comfortable attacking head on and one which she responded to immediately upon recognizing the children's discomfort by asking them to respond in their reading journal to the question, "What would be your reaction if someone called you a nigger?" It was not an easy question to ask nor one easy for the students to answer. However by asking it Martha placed an important issue in front of the students and allowed them on whatever level the opportunity to respond. This issue of power was one the students were able to explore, and although they were not asked to place it into an immediate or current context, they were asked to consider the implications of language and
power and the impact which words can have when used by those in power against those whom they wish to subjugate.

As the children shared and discussed their responses they became part of the interpretive community which was Martha's classroom. Their responses also allowed us to consider the impact we had when we used our power to force consideration of an uncomfortable complex issue and to note the sensitivity with which the children could respond. It did not, however, help us to answer how far we should push our power and how much of their naiveté we should challenge, question and shatter.

African American Girl: I really don’t like the word nigger because when the Simms be calling the Logan family niggers and stuff it makes me feel awful and it makes me feel like I'm a nigger when the white people be calling the black people niggers.

European American Girl: It probably feels as they’re calling them a bad word or a wimp. When black people get called a nigger they probably feel that they don’t have no pride.

European American Boy: If someone called me a nigger I would not show them that they hurt my feelings because if they knew that they hurt my feelings then they would keep calling me that. Instead I would just walk away so they would not get any satisfaction out of it.

African American Boy: I feel like I’m being talked about. I feel like they’re putting down my color and it really hurts me feelings. And when someone calls me a black [nigger is written and erased] I would say and I’m proud to be black. And I am very proud that I am a black man.

Asian Girl: It hurts my feelings and it hurt your feelings, too if someone called you that. If I was a black African American and they called me names I would just call them back just like Hammer did.

3.4 Classroom Activities

We have begun one exciting thing. In thinking about the article that we want to write I began to consider that we only had impressions of what the students liked and didn’t like. Many of those impressions are influenced by Brandon and Saron who are the two who really respond to the texts. I thought that we should make a list of the books we had read and ask the students to indicate their five favorites. I thought that would give us another piece to the puzzle (maybe that’s a good idea for a title). Martha also got excited by the idea and changed and elaborated on the format. Her ideas have really made the project come together. She believed that the students wouldn’t be able to do the ranking unless they could see the books. So we spread as many of the books that we had read this year as we could find onto a table and had the students select their five favorites. Originally we thought that if
we knew what the students liked before we sat down that it might influence our opinions. How positivist of me and how wrong. Our opinions were already influenced by what we perceived to be the students favorites and if this exercise has influenced us at least it is with more accurate information. We also decided to ask the students for any books that they really didn’t like and books that they didn’t remember. We won’t know why they don’t remember them because we have no way of knowing whether they were absent when the book was read or whether it just isn’t memorable. What will be of interest is whether a particular book has been forgotten by a large number of the students. So what has happened is that either Martha and I are sitting down with the students one on one and are recording their responses.

Researcher’s Journal, June 2, 1995

The project to which this journal entry refers occurred at the end of the academic year. To this date Martha and I had carefully avoided talking to the students directly about the multicultural aspects of our work with them. While they knew that I was there to work with their teacher in the language arts portion of their curriculum and to learn from her, we had not used the word multicultural with them and had not directly talked about our specific use of multicultural literature. This was based on a conscious, but with hindsight perhaps faulty decision, that we would gain more insights into the literature’s impact if we did not specifically draw their attention to its focus. Again we had used our power and had made a decision regarding what the students had a right to know, and at this point were beginning to strongly feel that the absence of their voices was a significant loss. We had made a pedagogical decision which had perhaps weakened the influence of our work with the children by denying them access to significant information. If as Mailloux (1989) has suggested conversations are the sites where meaning is determined, our failure to include all information into the conversation had at the least moved it toward one direction, and certainly had weakened or changed the nature of its content. Decisions surrounding the nature of the inclusion of multicultural literature into the classroom curriculum were never neutral, easy or without consequence.

The students’ voices were certainly part of our own thinking and learning. They framed not only the activities we presented, but also our responses to those activities and
most certainly our plans for the future. They influenced the books we selected as well as the way we presented the books and the way we extended them. The journal entry discussed above centering around the word *nigger* is a reflection of how powerfully the students influenced the direction of instruction. However by denying them the complete knowledge of our work together we not only limited their understandings but also our own. By allowing that silence we perpetuated silence, and as I read the text that is the transcript of our work together, I find that that silence, the absence of complete knowledge on the part of the students, has changed the conversation and has changed the social context in which it has occurred. The “truths” for which I search in reading the transcript of Martha’s and my work together are always limited, but the absence of the students complete knowledge of our work renders those truths to be more suspect.

Perhaps Martha and I needed to reach a greater level of comfort ourselves before we could extend our work more completely with the students. Perhaps we just did not realize or reflect upon the nature of the silence we had allowed to emerge. However, at the end of the year as we reviewed our work, we came to the realization that we needed more, we needed the voices of the students and wanted to know what, if any, kind of sense they had made from our work with them. Therefore, with merely a week remaining in the school year we devised activities which asked them to reflect upon the books we had read and to directly introduce some issues related to multiculturalism.

As a result the data used for analysis of this section is taken not from Martha’s and my individual conversations, but from my researchers journal and from a videotaped activity designed to elicit the students voices. Just as Martha and I broadened the focus of our concerns about the study, the analysis must also enlarge itself to include data which encompassed the voices of the children. By giving students more information and allowing them power and voice, we changed the dynamics of “our” study and reached new and certainly somewhat thought provoking insights.
The text for this section has expanded the data of the written transcript of our conversations to include the written transcript of a conversation with the students. As I read these transcripts and attempt to understand them within their social context, I am reminded that context varies, and that the context of the situation in which they occurred is different from the one in which they are being read. Analysis, therefore, becomes multilayered and multifaceted and as Bakhtin (1981) would note, words are part of the context in which they have lived and must move backward and forward in time.

On the last day of school Martha and I had planned a discussion of all the books we had read over the course of the academic year and had arranged the room with a central table covered with approximately 80 books. The conversation floundered and in an attempt to rekindle interest I explained that I would be taking home the books and was wondering if the students could help me develop a system to shelve the books which was not based on title or author. A spirited and for us an extremely thought provoking conversation ensued:

ST: The way people like them

ST: Multicultural by colors (Note: This was a focal student who I had recently debriefed and with whom I had discussed the term multicultural.)

ST: Colors of people's skin

MK: Define multicultural

ST: History - different cultures

Realizing that there was some confusion Martha asked the students to discuss among themselves and to develop a definition for the term multicultural. However, given the confusion engendered by this task we suggested that arranging the books in some fashion might prove to be helpful. The students worked as a group and over the course of five minutes developed eight stacks of books which they labeled African American, Jewish, Cambodian, Puerto Rican, Japanese, Animals, Native Americans and White. As a result of our concern over the placement of several books, we distributed each stack to a
student and asked him or her to hold up the books in the stack to make sure there was agreement among all the students.

Arbitrarily Martha began with the stack of books the students had labeled Jewish. The size of the stack was in direct proportion to my interest in being sure that such literature was present in the classroom. Having been raised as a Jewish American, I believe that my culture was almost completely absent from my schooling except for somewhat obligatory references to Chanukah during the Christmas season. It was that personal experience as well as others which led to both the personal and political decision of my dissertation topic, and to the numerous inclusion within the study of books related to Jewish history and culture. It was not, however, until I saw the size of the stack that I realized just how visible we had allowed them to become.

However, as the discussion developed it quickly became apparent that the students had little understanding of the concept of religion, an inability to identify their own religion, and virtually no idea of what it meant to be Jewish. This was after a year spent discussing Chanukah and Passover and after reading Make a Wish, Molly, The Carp in the Bathroom, Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins, and Elijah’s Angels, and others which comprised the twelve books in the “Jewish” stack. Not only did these misconceptions emerge, but it also became apparent that the definition of an American also held great confusion. To be fair the issue of nationality has eluded many with far more years of schooling, but nevertheless Martha and I felt that we had collided with a brick wall. How could we have failed so completely? What social context had we created with our silence?

As we began to review the “Jewish” stack, a student held up a copy of The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree and the following conversation resulted:

MK: Did we ever decide what Jewish was?
ST: They don’t celebrate Christmas, Chanukah
ST: Christmas for us, Chanukah for them.
ST: Talking about what country
ST: Any country, Israel
ST: Russia
MK: What is Jewish? What are we looking for?
ST: Chanukah, clothes, things they celebrate, wear - the caps, a country, yes, Israel, no, yes, no
LD: Does it have to do with what they believe?
ST: No
LD: Tell me if you think Jewish is a religion?

No response from the students.

LD: If I said it had something to do with someone celebrating Christmas, does that have to do with a religion?
MK: Who celebrates Christmas?
ST: America
LD: All Americans celebrate Christmas. do you agree with that?
ST: Mostly all white
ST: No, mostly the people who aren’t Jewish
LD: Talk about that I celebrate Chanukah
MK: But you aren’t American are you?
LD: Yes, I am.

Martha and I then go through this litany:

MK: I celebrate Christmas.       LD: I celebrate Chanukah
MK: I am an American.           LD: I am an American.
ST: No you’re a Jewish American and you’re a regular (emphasis mine) American.
MK: (laughs) Most people think I’m irregular.
ST: Your family probably started in America.

Our litany continues:
LD: I was born in America. MK: So was I

LD: My grandparents weren't from America. MK: Neither were mine.

LD: Neither of our grandparents started in America. We're both white. We're both born in America.

ST: But it's got to do with your background race.

ST: What's in your blood.

LD: So, what you're saying is that I was born Jewish so I'm not a regular American?

ST: It's your religion.

MK: So, what's Jewish?

ST: A religion

MK: Catholic?

ST: A religion

MK: Baptist, Methodist......

ST: A religion

LD: So are all these people American? Jewish, Catholic.....

ST: Yes, If you were born here.

MK: You don't have to be born here. (Proceeds to have a short conversation about naturalized Americans.)

Picking up on the original thread of this conversation.

LD: Many people have a religion and a country where they come from.

Extending this point Martha asks the students their country of birth and their religion. While all could identify the country in which they were born, none could identify their religion.

ST: There are a lot of religions.

LD: Yes and we read some books about people who were Jewish. Some were Jewish American and some were from other countries. Part of the reason we read so many books about people who are Jewish is because I'm Jewish and I brought them in.

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MK: Teachers share books that they like or at least they respect.

LD: Do you know why I like these books? Why do I like Jewish books?

ST: You might find out what you’ll do when you grow up.

LD: There are two reasons, because I like other people to know about my religion. I, also, like books where I can see myself.

As already noted above, Martha and I had made a clear decision about the information we would share with the students about our work together. As a result there were silences and absences in our conversations, because we all did not come to those conversations with the same background. It is clear from the above transcript that although I had shared numerous books about Jewish families and culture, Martha and I had not realized the types of understandings or lack of understandings being developed by the students. Had we allowed the students a chance to hear more specific information about our work together, perhaps we would not have heard on the next to the last day of school about “regular” Americans. Perhaps we would have had prior conversations about specific issues related to multiculturalism.

As I consider the transcript of this videotape I am particularly struck not only by the social context created by Martha and myself, but also by the social context created as a result of society’s choices regarding the decision to remove religion from our public schools. As I attempt to place this analysis within the social context and to consider it’s text both as it occurred and as it is occurring in my reading, I am struck by just how powerfully silence has impacted our students, ourselves and the meanings we are able to construct together. As I have noted, through this conversation, Martha and I were clearly made aware of the impact our choices had made on the students and on their understandings. However, as I consider the transcript with benefit of time and hindsight and try to place it within its social context, I am also struck by the number of power relationships which exist within its complexity and which I would argue exist within the
silences fostered both consciously and unconsciously by our institutions. While this is not an issue which Martha and I realized or discussed at the time, it is one which clearly impacted our instruction, and with which anyone dealing with the issues surrounding multicultural literature must consider.

Presumably because of my experiences as a child in regards to religion and the classroom I have always strongly supported the separation of church and state, and the removal of religious instruction from the public school classroom. It has been a silence which I happily supported and condoned, but which my decisions within the dissertation project has perhaps called into question. While I eagerly placed books regarding Jewish custom and tradition within the curriculum, I would equally eagerly have argued against the inclusion of prayer. Why such a strong dichotomy?

I would argue that rather than being a-religious the United States is a Christian country where Christian values would predominate if prayer and religion were brought back to our classrooms. However, I would also argue that there is indeed a place for instruction about religion within the classroom. If an important goal of multicultural education and the use of multicultural literature is to enable our children to see themselves and others reflected positively in the books they read, then to eliminate books which show their religious identity is to remove the opportunity to see what for some is an important facet of their humanity. At what point do we make the argument for inclusion within our use of literature, and yet choose to exclude the religious identity of our students? The complexity of the issues involved in the inclusion of religion in the curriculum suggests by its very nature the importance of including the voices rather than silencing them. Martha's students might have had a better sense of the concept of religion had it been an element of the curriculum.

As a student I was upset not by the presence of my religion in the classroom but by its absence. In an attempt to alleviate this problem the decision has been made to remove all
aspects of religion from classroom instruction, because of the complexity of the issues. However, as Martha and I learned silence and lack of knowledge merely perpetuated more silence. Issues of power and control and voice are never simple, they are never just part of the classroom or of our own thinking they are part of our society and our world. My inclusion of literature representing Jewish Americans in the dissertation was fueled by silences in my world. Martha and I made a decision about silence which certainly affected our work with the students. Multicultural literature brings to the forefront the issue and importance of voice. Power can silence voices or illuminate them. We need to carefully consider the issues of silence and of what our students have the right to know.

3.5 Final Structured Interview

continuum n. pl. -tinua or -ums. Something in which no part can be distinguished from neighboring parts except by arbitrary division.

As I noted at the outset of this chapter the collaborative relationship Martha and I had changed across time in relationship to the students, ourselves and the institutions to which we belonged, and in relationship to the discourse we used to represent that world. Discourse can change the construction and alter the meaning (Fairclough, 1992) as we attempt to make sense of our relationships. It is, therefore, interesting that as we found and negotiated power between ourselves we began to think of and visualize our work in terms of a series of continua. As we found our own voices and our own power we also began to “play” with a way to approach the complexities of our work together which for us often seemed to exist across a complex plane and which we divided often abstractly and sometimes concretely in terms of a continuum. It was our discourse within this final structured interview which helped us to consider the parts within the whole in ways that held meaning not for others but for ourselves. As a result power which began outside ourselves began to be perceived within our own work and within our own discourse, and then ultimately back outside ourselves again.

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Although the questions remained the same in both the initial and final structured interviews our relationship with each other and our approach to the interview changed. At the outset we each discretely answered the list of questions which at the request of my committee began with Martha to eliminate any potential bias. However, as we approached the final interview we recognized that we could not respond in the same fashion as we had at the outset. Our relationship and our work together precluded this possibility. We, therefore, chose to discuss each question together in more of a conversation format, and while we ensured that each voice would respond to each question, we did not focus on who responded first or in what order the responses occurred. At the conclusion of this final interview as we responded to the debriefing questions, we realized just how powerfully this approach changed our attitudes to the entire process.

LD: We were talking about how this process affected our understanding of ourselves and then the last question was how we might change our process when we do this at the end of the project. How could we change the process if we ever do this again?

MK: We did change the process. We did.

LD: We made it much more interactive.

MK: And that's where the collaboration comes in. I didn't collaborate with you on the questions and what questions to use and all that stuff.

LD: We wrote the ones you read though.

MK: And with the going through it I think especially this time we did it a lot more collaboratively by just deciding to do it together.

LD: Which is what I would rather have done in the fall too, if I had to have done it.

MK: Did we actually go through and I answered the questions and there was no conversation?

LD: There was conversation.

MK: Just not quite as much. But it seemed like from what I can remember having conversation about a lot of questions.

LD: Oh we did because we had to figure out what the questions meant. Just not as much and not as interactive I don't think. It felt to me more like researcher asking participant questions in the fall.
MK: And all the conversation geared more toward what I thought or how I answered it.

Further reflection on the process showed not just the value we placed on the interactive nature of the conversation, but also the power of shared meaning making as we discussed the “story” we had created together.

LD: What do you feel about what we have just done? Honestly!

MK: I think I felt better about it this time than I did the first time.

LD: How come?

MK: I think it was more, more what, more representative. It related more to what we did.

LD: But I think in the beginning there wasn’t anything to relate to. We were talking more in a vacuum to start out with.

MK: Right. It was just more difficult. It’s a lot easier to tell the story, I think. To have the thing to relate to and I also liked the sharing. Having it more as a conversation than a question, answer.

LD: Me, too. More interactive. Rather than you answer questions, I answer questions.

MK: Right.

LD: Did this process affect your understanding of the project in any way? I think that goes back for me to what I just said that any time we talk any more it affects my understanding of the project.

MK: And I think that going beyond this interview and beyond the way that we have collected data and talked all along. I think that when we do the article, when we really start to talk about those continuums, that’s when the stuff is going to come out.

As I noted in the analysis of the original structured interview conversations are never free of history or of institutional, cultural, social and political forces (Mailloux, 1989). This remained true in the final interview with the added significant component that the history or “story” which framed our discussion was the one we had shared and had developed together, and as noted throughout this chapter this history was not a static entity but one which grew and changed across time, and which had been discussed and
developed across a continuum of events. As a result Martha responded this way as she defined herself politically:

MK: I'm not real politically active except now I will be different for that, because now I'm thinking of the politics of education.

LD: And you think you're getting more active?

MK: More active and more pissed off I guess is why I'm getting more active. And I see education as being very political. The way I see it is because of the University-School connection. I see the University as being the political part of it because they talk about it.

LD: Talk about the schools.

MK: Yeah and they talk about the relationship

LD: Is there some measure that it's the University's responsibility to analyze what's going on?

MK: Right. So it's more atmosphere.

LD: Should teachers be doing that, the same kind of analyzing?

MK: That's what I think and that's why I think I've become more political and that's why I'm talking about politics, the politics of education.

Earlier when Martha and I discussed the University-School relationship we had done so in a more descriptive manner. We had looked at that relationship as participants but had discussed its significance and the role which we felt each partner should be playing in a more dispassionate analytical manner. The above exchange occurred within the first minute of our final interview and clearly signaled that Martha was not willing to remain a silent participant. The format of this discussion allowed for this as well as the work we had done together over a year long period. Not only had our collaborative relationship changed across time in relationship to power relationships, the collaboration had become a part of the power. The knowledge we had developed together added to our understandings and enabled us to make meaning together. Rather than looking to those outside ourselves for answers, we found answers in our shared "herstory" The text or story we created was clearly influenced by institutions, cultural and societal forces, but as Scholes (1989)
indicates we brought that story into our own lives and situated it so that we could re-write ourselves as we read the text that was our lives. Through the continuum of events that was our story we found our voices and our power.

This is clearly apparent when we reached the point of the interview which discussed multicultural literature and its role within the classroom. Our discussion of these issues moved beyond the elementary classroom to the university and to its role in preparing teachers to use the literature.

**MK:** I think in the past I was aware of multicultural literature and even aware of its importance. Maybe I couldn’t define it like I can now, but I certainly didn’t tend to it as much, certainly didn’t select everything on that basis. I think I did more literature that I knew, and if I found it was multicultural then it wouldn’t have been by actively seeking it out.

**LD:** Do you think that most of the literature that you knew which would probably have been from your undergraduate education was not multicultural?

**MK:** Yeah, I have a problem with that. Now, I’m starting this business about looking at every list I see for multicultural books and to see if there’s some sort of balance. I’m a lot more critical about what people are saying to other people like teachers.

As we continued this discussion we felt the need to backtrack and define our terms, but unlike our original discussion we did not focus on the outside “experts”, but on our own expertise and opinions.

**LD:** Let’s define multicultural literature for children.

**MK:** I think it’s literature that represents; I’m still not very good at stating this. Literature that represents under-represented cultures. And I’m not sure if bad multicultural literature is multicultural literature.

**LD:** I think ideally multicultural literature, if you stretch it, is literature about everybody. About the diversity that makes up the world, and that we want literature to reflect that diversity.

**MK:** And you cannot have a course called multicultural literature and eliminate white people.

**LD:** I can have a course called literature about people of color and to me that’s fine, but that’s not multicultural literature, that’s literature about people of color.
For Martha every issue was inextricably linked to the classroom, but as we progressed and found our power, issues were also linked to the university and to the relationship which existed between the two and the responsibility which each held in that relationship.

LD: We talked about how books were selected in your class in the past and how they're selected -

MK: Now I'll definitely look for - now I'm not saying that all of the literature I use will be - see I might use The Great Gilly Hopkins, although in my definition I can throw Gilly Hopkins in there.

LD: If multicultural literature has to do with women, women's issues, gender issues then that gets in anything that has -

MK: And socio-economic too. I think kind of -

LD: When we're dealing with gender and socio-economic we're going beyond people of color.

MK: Under represented groups, I said I have a big problem with people of color because I think the same things are happening with other groups. Now see that's where you can get into the gay and lesbian too.

Martha and I struggled with our definition and tried to consider all the parameters which might influence our decisions.

MK: That's my definition of multicultural, but that's not my definition of the use of literature in the classroom. I think that multicultural literature still has its niche and it needs to be until it's so infused in all this other stuff that we don't have to think of it as a separate thing. I think that we're not there so we do have to think of it as a separate thing.

LD: Again we're back to what happens here. If the Advanced Children's Literature Courses don't have enough multicultural literature in them then it has to be a separate course.

MK: Right. So, therefore, it has to be a separate definition, to define what's going to be included in the course.

LD: And it's under-represented groups in your mind.

MK: Yeah. I include Appalachian, low socio-economic....

LD: Low socio-economic, Appalachian, different religions, all of that would be a part of under-represented groups.

MK: Right
As we rewrote our story through our discourse and with the power inherent in our collaboration, we were able to see ourselves and our work together along new lines. We began to be able to conceive our work and our ideas as new and as requiring a new format in which to visualize that complexity. This chapter has looked at that growth of our own power through a series of events which characterize that change. I have placed those events along a continuum stretching from the beginning to the end of the year, but as the definition of continuum indicates this has been an arbitrary division and often each part is more linked than it is separate. For that very reason as Martha and I continued to discuss our year we realized that the complexity of the issues surrounding multicultural literature might also be explored through the use of a series of continua. In the final section of this chapter I revisit a proposal we wrote at the end of our work together in which we outline the potential we see for the use of continua within the discussion of multicultural literature. Not only has our discourse become a way of making meaning between ourselves, it has begun to expand in a desire to have others enter the conversation, and in the realization that power can not continue to exist if it is not shared.

3.6 AERA Proposal

Techniques
Through the development of the continua, we are collaboratively developing and continuing to refine our understanding of the role culturally diverse literature plays in our conception of the world as well as our perspectives of the impact it can have on the children in a classroom. The continua provide a tool for discussion as we consider the complexities inherent in any consideration of culturally diverse literature. The continua help frame our discussions as we consider the books we have used and as we struggle to develop an understanding of the impact which the culturally diverse literature had on the classroom. The issues involved are complex and layered and resist any linear representation. Therefore, the continua provide a multi-faceted approach to our analysis of the books and in so doing, present a format which allows others to participate in the discussion as they consider the issues involved.

Results
We have found, through our discussion, that this cannot be a finished product. It is, of necessity, open and fluctuating as our understanding of the issues grows, develops and changes, and as others are added to the discussion. Therefore, the continua reflect but are not limited to the following issues:
- teaching similarities among cultures
- teaching cultural conflicts (tensions)
- universal themes/culturally distinct (dialect, setting, illustrations)
- teaching differences among cultures
- strength of characters
  family portraits (strong/self reliant)
  who does the helping
  perspectives

It is believed that for some of the literature instruction is necessary to add to the students' cultural understanding of the text, and, therefore, the continua need to reflect the importance of classroom interaction. Hence, each continuum is in two parts. The upper continuum shows the issue being considered while the lower considers instructional or didactic considerations.

Taken from the rejected 1996 AERA proposal entitled The Study and Analysis of Culturally Diverse Literature: Experiences and Theory from a Collaborative Research Study

At the end of each literature unit Martha and I would answer the same six debriefing questions (Appendix B). The original purpose of the questions was to allow us the opportunity to reflect on what had just been completed and to prepare the next unit which we would present to the students. In reality the planning for the next unit was always occurring in conjunction with the implementation of the preceding unit, and as the year went by implementation, planning and reflection were a continually occurring event. However the structured debriefing questions did provide one format for reflection and ultimately led to the development of the concept of the continua discussed in the above excerpted proposal. In particular three of the questions focused our thinking and stimulated our conversations. They were:

1) Do you think this is a good piece of multicultural literature?
2) What do you think the children learned from this/these books?
3) After finishing this/these books what are your opinions of the values of multicultural literature for classroom use?

These were not easily answered questions because they forced us to consider issues such as those related to the value and purpose of literature in the elementary classroom, the
definition and purpose of multicultural literature and the role which students play in the selection and use of literature in the classroom. There are not single answers to these issues nor are they free from the politics of the classroom and of society.

At the outset of our work together although aware of the “social heteroglossia” involved in the issues related to multicultural literature and the classroom, we were apart from the voices and considered others to be the “experts”. However, this perception did not continue over the course of the project. As we prepared the AERA proposal and considered the issues which framed the concepts of the continua, our experiences allowed us to fill the role of expert. As noted by Gutiérrez, at al. (1995) at the outset of this chapter, “power relations are learned and become a part of a person’s identity as one participates in the practices of particular communities”. Our collaborative participation in this year long project gave us the courage to present what we saw to be the complexities of the issues inherent in the use of multicultural literature in the elementary classroom through the discussion of continua based on the work we had done in one classroom with one particular set of children and one particular set of books. As will become clear we were not developing answers, but attempting to develop a way to visually represent the complexity of the issues. We were hoping to present the ideas so that others could “participate in the conversation”, and through this shared format determine sites of agreement as well as those sites which were contested.

MK: I think with just about everything we’ve done we’ve come up with different thoughts on what it is, what multicultural literature is

LD: And the value -

MK: The value and why the value and linking it to the kids in the class and the culture of the class

We began to consider the notion of the continua because of our own confusion regarding the qualities which made a book multicultural, and when we would feel comfortable labeling a book as multicultural. After finishing The Curse of the Trouble Dolls we
struggled with how to define the book. The book is a light and enjoyable and centers around a young Asian girl who is given Guatemalan trouble dolls, and shares them and their supposed wish giving properties with her friends. Of course her friends discover that they can’t pass spelling tests or determine the sex of their unborn siblings with the help of these dolls, and they become appropriately angry with her and with the dolls, but ultimately all is resolved. In discussing this book we found ourselves saying that the book was multicultural but that its value was not multicultural, and then struggled to figure out exactly what we had meant by that statement.

MK: This book doesn’t have value as multicultural even though the main character is Asian, because it’s... I was also thinking about On Mother’s Lap and I think it is valuable. It does have multicultural value even though it has an universal theme.

LD: The illustrator could have made it another culture and it would have worked.

MK: Right, but it has value. Now the difference between that one and this one I don’t know why but there is, there is a difference. But I don’t know why.

LD: Is it the universality of the other story?

MK: I think this is a kind of universal story too. The problem with Trouble Dolls is that it’s not that evident maybe.

LD: It doesn’t hit you over the head.

MK: But does On Mama’s Lap hit you over the head?

LD: No

MK: But it’s evident. It’s obvious there. It’s not that obvious here. Maybe there are no values.

LD: Are we saying something about multicultural because it’s not heavy?

MK: See that’s what I don’t know. Then there’s something here, it has to boil down to be multiculturaly valuable. There has to be something learned about the culture.

LD: I want to change my mind about it not being multicultural. I used to say that I wanted a book to be - I didn’t always want it to hit you over the head, I wanted some books out there just to have characters that were different.

MK: But I think that’s okay.
LD: And I think that makes it multicultural, the fact that she is Asian rather than American. It doesn’t hit you over the head. It’s not an important part of the story really, but it’s there so instead of always picking up a book and reading a story about a bunch of little white kids

MK: Then you do have a story, okay. Now that I can see.

LD: It’s a trivial story. This is not a deep story but at least the characters aren’t all white.

MK: Now I’m changing my mind, aren’t I?

LD: I could change mine again too.

MK: But I still think there’s this continuum, that the continuum has all these little interjections - almost like there’s two continuums that go along together - whether it’s multicultural and how multicultural it is and then the value, the multicultural value of it.

LD: Now, I’ve got another question. Is there a third continuum then that has to do with what you do when you teach it or use the book? If you read On Mama’s Lap and don’t mention that they are Eskimos, and then you have a discussion with the kids about how much fun it is to sit on your mama’s lap and how you get jealous when your brother wants to sit on it too. have you negated some of the multicultural value?

MK: Yeah, I think in some sense. Like the one end would just be having it in the class, sitting around on the shelf. So on the shelf would be one end and then really truly teaching the culture would be on the other end. Maybe that’s where the truly teaching the culture has to be an insider.

LD: What I’d argue is that if we have a multicultural literature program we have all of these things. We have books on the shelf. We have some books that we read that are multicultural that we don’t sit there and say this is multicultural and we have others that we do hit them over the head with.

The question of the “value” of books which are multicultural continued to be an area where Martha and I struggled to arrive at an answer. While I was willing to have books in the classroom that were not directly taught and not obviously didactic, Martha found herself continually questioning their value if there was no learning centered around the book.

While leaving herself room to ultimately change her mind Martha believed that for a book to be truly multicultural the students at least needed to learn something about the culture from the book being read.

MK: This is what always happens when I do this. I make these statements and I feel like I know what I’m saying, but you can bring up another point that totally
changes it. So now I don’t know, but I still think that there’s something to that statement. that it’s the multicultural

LD: But its value is not multicultural. Okay, I think that goes back to what we’ve already said. It’s a multicultural book. By that we mean it’s got characters that are not white.

MK: Yeah

LD: But it’s not multicultural in that it doesn’t - the kids are not going to walk away from this book saying that I know a lot about Asian Americans

MK: Right or even anything. See that’s what I mean. It has to be - there has to be some sort of learning that goes on about it.

Perhaps the greatest value of the concept of the continua was the format they provided for discussion. Martha and I ultimately decided that each continuum would be in two parts, the upper showing the issue being considered and the lower reflecting the instructional and didactic considerations which Martha found to be so important. Not only did the development of these continua force us to review each book we had used during the academic year, it also allowed us the opportunity to consider the multicultural aspects of each book, and to acknowledge the diverse and sometimes conflicting issues which comprise the use of multicultural literature. We looked not only at the teaching of similarities and differences, but also at the teaching of cultural conflicts and tensions, and at universal themes that are evident in all literature. This discussion also focused on the needs of this particular class and the value of seeing books in the classroom which reflect the background of the learners:

LD: See that goes back to what you didn’t think at the beginning but that kids need to see themselves reflected in the books more than reflect other people.

MK: And I think I am changing on that a little bit. I still think that they need to see other people. I still think that’s hugely important.

LD: But there’s theory that says you have to appreciate your own culture before you can appreciate other peoples’ cultures.

the importance of a member of a particular culture presenting the book being read;

MK: Not only teaching about the culture but teaching the kids to value the culture more. I felt like they valued and were interested in. See another thing about this
book is that a lot of that probably didn’t come from the book, it came from you presenting the book. And I think just knowing that you come from that culture. I wrote something about that. It’s like if you never work with African American people and you have all these preconceived notions of what that would be like, then you work with somebody and you start to value the culture more because you know someone in the culture.

and the importance we placed on teaching cultural conflict.

MK: A cultural conflict. And maybe that’s what it is. Maybe that’s what it boils down to. If there is a cultural conflict, and that’s one reason I like The Black Snowman so much, too. It’s a conflict. a cultural conflict, but it’s all within one kid. It’s not firm. It may be created from other people, but it’s all shown through that one kid. It doesn’t have this other kid coming over and beating him up or anything, but all that conflict is there within him. But it’s a cultural conflict. I think that might be it. So I would tend more toward Molly Pilgrim than The Carp.

The development of the concept of the continua was a reflection of the complexities involved in the implementation and use of multicultural literature in the classroom. It documented the complexities inherent in any single classroom. It also portrayed the complexities of a collaborative relationship. While Martha and I agreed about the significance and necessity of including multicultural literature in the curriculum, we did not always agree nor feel that we must agree about each issue we discussed. Our work together allowed us to develop as experts and to feel comfortable entering the conversation surrounding the use of culturally diverse literature. Our purpose in preparing the AERA proposal was to invite others to participate in our conversation. As we read the text of our work together the continua became one way in which we could situate that text and learn about it. By the end of the year we were in a different position in terms of power relationships and in terms of the social heteroglossia. We saw ourselves as insiders rather than outsiders and were seeking to expand our conversation to include others. If we were to maintain our perception of power we perceived that we must participate in the practices of the academic community. As Gutierrez, et al (1995) suggest practices are learned and become a part of our identity as we engage in them. While the intertextual nature of human interaction had inevitably allowed our work together to be more than just a conversation between individuals, our sense of power would not allow us to remain in a static
relationship. We believed that to maintain that power we must share the conversation with others and to constitute it within the social heteroglossia of the academic community.

3.7 Conclusion

While I stated at the outset that this chapter was taken from events which occurred across the academic year, and that the analysis of the data was framed by issues of power; the power of texts, the power of multicultural literature, the power of collaboration, the power of research, the power of ideas and the power of society or of our "culture", I did not suggest that the writing of the chapter was in itself an exercise of power. In fact although I hoped to document the issues related to the use of power which occurred over the course of the dissertation project, I did not acknowledge the power of the process itself. This process allows me to take the data I collected as a result of a topic I had selected and to view that data with a lens of my own choosing. The complexity lies in the fact that had I chosen another lens the analysis would have been different, but having the power to choose the course of the analysis renders the choice of power to be obvious. Regardless of my choice of lens, I am making the choice, selecting the data, and constructing the analysis. As Fairclough (1992) has suggested discourse constitutes, naturalizes and sustains power, but these are not static relationships. Discourse changes the construction, alters the meaning and changes the power relationships. In essence the dialogic nature of the dissertation process allows me to use the power of the process to alter or explore the nature of the power relationships, and perhaps in the analysis to change those relationships. If, as I believe to be the case, power is a part of all human interaction, the examination of that power and its exploration though discourse becomes one way in which power relationships can be made evident and where particularly important relationships can perhaps be altered. I, therefore, chose in this chapter which serves as an overview of the entire dissertation to highlight those areas of power which I believe influenced the work we did to the greatest extent.
As Bakhtin (1981) indicates words exist in the context in which they have lived and are constructed on the basis of their “socially charged life”. My reading of the words which comprise the data of this chapter of the dissertation reconstruct their meanings on the basis of their “herstory”. As such I move the language and the understanding of the language forward and backward in time (Scholes, 1989). The notion of time, therefore, becomes an important element in the understanding of the chapter. Martha and I developed and implemented multicultural units for the students and then audiotaped our reflections of those units. We allowed varying degrees of time to elapse between the implementation, reflection and planning of those units. The transcription of the audiotapes required time. Our work together occurred over a span of months comprising the academic year. The reading and analysis of the data is occurring at still a later date. This chapter seeks to place events from our work together along a continuum of time and to analyze those events on the basis of present understandings. One purpose of the dissertation was to look at the change which occurred in our attitudes and perspectives as a result of working with each other as we implemented this multicultural literature program. As such the words of this chapter have all occurred across periods of time, and their meanings are bound up within several different world views based upon a system of intertextuality. In the present time I have read the texts which comprise this data in terms of the issues of power which I believe are central to collaboration, to the dissertation process and to the issues surrounding the development and use of culturally diverse literature within the elementary classroom, and have discussed those issues as they presently hold meaning for me within the context of a history which is interpretive, institutional and cultural, and a reflection of social and political forces (Mailloux, 1989).

Martha and I began our work together with our involvement in the academy, we answered questions composed and directed by my dissertation committee and we deferred to the expertise and judgment of the outside “experts”. By the end of our work together we
also turned to the academy, not as inexperienced novices but as the experts seeking to share our work with others and to constitute it within the social heteroglossia of the academic community. Our discourse and our collaboration over the course of the project enabled us to alter the power relationships and to write ourselves.

The transformation from looking outside ourselves to looking within for a sense of power developed over the academic year as we examined the nature of our collaboration, considered issues central to the presentation and use of multicultural literature, discussed our willingness to share responsibility with the students, and examined for ourselves how our collaboration enabled us to make meaning within our shared “herstory”. As we struggled with the issues related to multicultural literature and as we explained to ourselves and to each other the political agendas of the institutions to which we belonged we were altering the power relationships and finding ourselves.

The complexity surrounding the issues of multiculturalism is evident throughout the events discussed in this chapter, and it was through these “events” that Martha and I were able to begin to make sense of the issues. As such it was a symbiotic relationship, one could not have occurred without the other. The events, and the issues of power which became evident through our discourse surrounding the events, enabled us to begin to come to terms with and develop a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the issues related to the implementation and use of multicultural literature. While at the outset we were able to intellectually discuss issues such as the need for and value of multicultural literature, authenticity and stereotypes, availability of quality literature, reviewers responsibility and selection criteria, there was a depth which was missing from our discussion. As we came to know each other better and to understand the politics which framed our work situations, and as we explored the literature with the students, we were able to deal not only with the practical issues involved but also with the complex issues for which we could find no immediate answers. The availability of quality multicultural
literature for students with limited reading abilities was a relatively straightforward issue, but the question of when and how to expose children to the notion that for many the world was not a fair place was less easy to resolve. Throughout the year our discussion of multiculturalism and the use of multicultural literature involved issues of ethnicity, culture and race, socio-economic background, religion, gender and sexual preference. Issues of power permeated and became part of the discussion, the power of the institutions, the power of teachers, the power of student voices and the power of ideas were all part of the issues involved.

The events discussed in this chapter provide an overview of the work Martha and I did together as viewed through a lens which explores issues of power. This lens is particularly appropriate when used to discuss issues related to multiculturalism because they deal directly with the notion of power and its absence. This chapter also begins to explore the power of collaboration and the relationships involved in school-university collaboration. Here, too, power can be both enabling and disabling. Through our work we found that our collaborative relationship needed to emerge, grow and change within the process, be shared and reflect both our interests. We came to recognize that as with anything power is not a static relationship. The issues of multiculturalism and collaboration which were central to this dissertation will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. However these issues emerged in this chapter because the events highlighted and the lens which was chosen for their analysis allowed them to emerge. It is hoped that the dialogic nature of this process will allow these issues to emerge, be discussed and altered, because discourse can alter meaning and where successful change the power relationships. This became apparent with Martha’s and my relationship to each other, to the institutions to which we belonged and to our understanding of and response to the issues related to the use of multicultural literature. I believe that discourse which considers the issues or power
can also have a significant effect upon those who carefully consider the importance of the implementation and use of multicultural literature in the elementary classroom.
CHAPTER 4

COLLABORATION: THE MYTH OF INDIVIDUALLY CONSTRUCTED RESEARCH

The popular image of research, in natural and social sciences, has long been dominated by the figure of the lone researcher, a figure toiling independently to create knowledge for the field. The dissertation process that budding researchers undergo is, in its usual depictions, an extreme example of isolation in search of knowledge. This image of the independent scholar, however, glosses over the very social nature of the research process, making invisible the researcher's connections to the participants of the study and the numerous others with whom the researcher worked during the course of a study and who made important contributions to his/her interpretation. (Wasser and Bresler, 1996, p. 5)

A dissertation is by tradition a single authored piece of research written "in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy". It is assumed that the dissertation represents an initial foray into the world of academic research, and that the data collection, analysis and presentation are the work of the individual candidate. A chapter entitled "collaboration" could therefore perhaps be perceived as a bit idiosyncratic. However, in reality a dissertation or any piece of research is in fact a collaboration, although many research projects are not developed or implemented in a collaborative manner.
This chapter looks at the notion of collaboration in terms of one individual dissertation and in so doing places the dissertation among the many voices which specifically frame it and more generally frame the research process.

Research or science involves the search for ways to represent, know and understand the world. Eisner (1990) argues that there are multiple ways of knowing and as a result suggests that we have a "pluralistic conception of knowledge". Our experiences as well as our beliefs impact how we view the world and how we choose to investigate what occurs around us. Robert Scholes (1989) would argue that our life is a text and we understand the world as we read the text that is our lives. What then is it that we are reading? There are those that would suggest that we are reading our culture, that we are cultural creations and that our mind is a cultural achievement (Eisner, 1990; Scholes, 1989; Lather, 1988). In other words it is our culture that frames us and it is our culture which we attempt to understand within the boundaries of our social science.

Erickson and Christman (1996) writing about a partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education's Center for Urban Ethnography suggest that ethnography can document what occurs within a culture because it makes visible what becomes invisible in the living, but they stress that "such attention is necessarily collective because views differ among the various participants" (p. 151). Science, therefore, becomes an opportunity to examine culture from the collective perceptions of the researcher and of the participants, and as such becomes infinitely more complex.

Capra (1996) extending Kuhn's (1962) scientific paradigm proposes a social paradigm which he defines as "a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and
practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself" (p.6), and suggests that we are in the process of a social paradigm shift which has moved us to a holistic worldview where the world is seen as integrated as opposed to "a dissociated collection of parts" (p. 6). He further expands the definition of holistic calling it a deep ecological awareness that "recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all the phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature".

As I argued in the preceding chapter Martha and I were part of a social heteroglossia which reflected the complex relationships inherent in the human experience (Bhaktin, 1981; Gutierrez, 1995; Fairclough, 1992; Mailloux, 1989; Scholes, 1989). While on the surface it appeared that we were two distinct individuals involved in conversation and dialogue regarding issues related to the classroom implementation of multicultural literature, we were in fact a part of a history which is interpretive, institutional and cultural, and a reflection of social and political forces (Mailloux, 1989). Implicit in this definition of history is the concept of power and the notion that complex power relations are taught and learned within a particular community as they are lived (Gutierrez et al., 1995). Martha and I, therefore, were part of a complex group of interdependent phenomena (Capra, 1996) which were in fact embedded in an entire process and were shared by the whole community. We were part of an interaction involving the work we were doing, the cultures of which we were a part, the society in which we lived, and the attitudes perceptions and notions of power which framed those societies. We were creating knowledge, but not an understanding which was static and
objective. Rather we were creating a fluid knowledge which was part of a complex whole, and which was continuously changing. As Davis and Sumara (1997) ask, “What if we were to reject the self-evident axiom that cognition is located within cognitive agents who are cast as isolated from one another and distinct from the world, and insist instead that all cognition exists in the interstices of a complex ecology of organismic relationality?”

Extending the work of biologists, ecologists, phenomenologists and complexivists who have begun to look at our world as a dynamic whole with complex interdependencies, Davis and Sumara (1997) have developed the theory of “enactivism” which they define as a framework which “speaks to pressing issues in teacher education”.

The starting point of such a theory is the assertion that each of us is, in the words of Merleau-Ponty (1962), a “complex fabric of relations,” fundamentally and inextricably intertwined with all else – both physically/biologically and experientially/phenomenologically. This notion helps us to rethink what it means to teach – and to interpret the difficulties of enacting alternative conceptions of teaching.

I believe that it also speaks well to the issues related to collaboration, as well as the issues inherent in multiculturalism and the implementation of multicultural literature in the classroom. An enactivist theory of cognition is a product of a social paradigm (Capra, 1996) shift, which has resulted in a view of our world as a set of complex interrelated systems, where “collective knowledge and individual understanding are dynamically co-emergent phenomena” (Davis and Sumara, 1997). If as Davis and Sumara have posited learning occurs not in our individual minds but through our joint action, our research must indeed be a collaborative process, and even more importantly as a community we must work together if as a complex system we are to survive.
This chapter looks at the notions of collaboration and multiculturalism through the perspective of deep ecology, enactivism and through the concept of complexity. Davis and Sumara (1997) have linked their work to that of the complexity theorists, who they suggest have gone beyond the metaphor of individual as machine, because, “machines, however complicated are always reducible to the sum of their retrospective parts, whereas complex systems—such as human beings or human communities—in contrast, are more dynamic, more unpredictable, more alive.” Complexivists acknowledge that individuals are not independent of each other, but rather are subsystems of more complex systems or interdependent phenomena. As Capra (1996) so eloquently states it,

In ecosystems the complexity of the network is a consequence of its biodiversity, and thus a diverse ecological community is a resilient community. In human communities ethnic and cultural diversity may play the same role. Diversity means many different relationships, many different approaches to the same problem. A diverse community is a resilient community, capable of adapting to changing situations.

However, diversity is a strategic advantage only if there is a truly vibrant community, sustained by a web of relationships. If the community is fragmented into isolated groups and individuals, diversity can easily become a source of prejudice and friction. But if the community is aware of the interdependence of all its members, diversity will enrich all the relationships, and thus enrich the community as a whole, as well as each individual member. In such a community information and ideas flow freely through the entire network, and the diversity of interpretations and learning styles—even the diversity of mistakes—will enrich the entire community. (p. 303-4)

4.1 Conversation in a Complex Collaborative Process

As our view of our world has shifted, becoming more holistic and interrelated, our view of appropriate research methods has also expanded to include processes which are more collaborative and recognize the interrelationship between the participants in the research process. Concomitantly those attempting to develop collaborative processes and
those writing about collaboration have come to realize the complexity inherent in the process and have attempted to develop complex models to describe what is involved in the collaborative process itself.

In the education literature collaboration is often seen as emerging from the work on action-research developed by the German social-psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1930's and 40's. Lewin believed it important to observe action in context rather than isolated from it's social setting. A clear beginning to the notion that our research must work in concert with those directly involved in the educational process, and that without conversation and interaction among participants understanding will not develop.

Writing in 1983 Tikunoff and Ward had expanded upon this concept, providing a good basic definition of collaboration, and identifying four common characteristics which they believed defined the notion of collaborative work including: 1) researchers and school practitioners work together on all phases of the effort; 2) the collaborative effort is focused on "real world" as well as theoretical problems; 3) both groups gain in understanding and mutual respect; and 4) the effort is concerned with both research and developmentation issues throughout. While these characteristics provide an excellent set of basic guidelines, it is the later researchers (Erickson & Christman, 1996; Hunsaker & Johnston, 1992; Johnston, 1997; Johnston et. al., 1997; McKernan, 1988; Oakes, Hare & Sirotnik, 1986; Ulichny & Schoener, 1996; Wasser & Bresler, 1996) who have dealt with the complexities inherent in the nature of collaborative work, and have attempted to define the qualities necessary for its successful completion. The complexity of the process is evident throughout all their work by the number of characteristics each has used to describe the process. While Tikunoff and Ward (1983) provided four
characteristics, Oakes, Hare and Sirotnik (1986) developed a list of 12 dichotomies or heuristics, and McKernan (1988) found 16 concepts which defined the countenance of his work which he called "rational-interactive curriculum research and development." All have dealt with the issues related to the implementation and dissemination of collaborative research which face researchers and participants who come from different institutions with different requirements and different sets of power structures such as, differing expectations, differing institutional norms and their requirements, issues of parity, perceptions of power and responsibility, issues of voice and authorship, and perceived goals and rewards for participation. While each acknowledges the difficulty of the endeavor because of the complexity of the issues, and some question the feasibility of the process, each have included conversation or dialogue as the one common trait which they believe to be an essential component of the collaborative process.

The goal of understanding can be achieved only through unconstrained dialogue with participants involved in a project. (McKernan, 1988)

Dialogue for us is a conversation where your convictions are on display for all to see. It is a "growth" environment where you never know exactly what will happen, except that ideas will be shared in a spirit of learning and understandings will develop beyond your individual capacity. (Johnston, et. al., 1997)

The model we present is one in which both teacher and researcher have a voice, because in our study, we have profited from a successful collaborative effort that has provided knowledge we both value. Neither of is on our own would have been able to produce the study that emerged through our collaboration. (Ulichny & Schoener, 1996)

However, none of the researchers has gone beyond the collaboration of the direct participants of the research projects to consider the complex whole. This chapter not only acknowledges the complexities inherent in the collaborative process, but places that process itself as a subsystem within a more complex system of interdependent
phenomena. Using conversations, a key element not only of the collaborative process but also of human communities, this chapter explores the interdependent phenomena which encompass this research process as well as the diversities which encompass our society.

4.2 Challenging the Hegemony

This dissertation was in and of itself a collaboration. It involved two people working together to implement a culturally diverse literature program in an urban fourth grade classroom. Each participant benefited in different ways and the project itself could not have occurred without the participation of both members. As the university researcher I could not have conducted the research without Martha’s participation, and the study itself would have been entirely different if Martha had chosen not to participate. We each brought different strengths and interests to the research process and we each received different benefits and insights from having worked together. As I noted during the debriefing of our final structured interview in June, at the end of the academic year, the study would have been less without the participation of either member, and our understandings would have also changed had either member not participated.

In some sense what I think is interesting about this project is something they talk about in reading, shared meaning. When kids are reading a book in class and have discussed it together they develop a shared meaning. Things that the class next door probably doesn’t have the same meaning for. You’re helping the understanding by talking about it together. I feel like for us the same thing has happened. Sometimes there’s more of a shared understanding of what’s going on, rather than mine or yours, I listen to yours and that adds to my understanding.

Our conversations together over the course of the research year had served as a site for the co-construction of knowledge or as the “interpretive zone, the place where multiple viewpoints are held in dynamic tension as a group seeks to make sense of fieldwork issues and meanings” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996, p. 6). In other words it was through our
work together and our conversations regarding that work that we created a “mutuality and interdependence” (Ulichny & Schoener, 1996) which made our work truly collaborative. Neither of us would have been able on our own to develop the study or the understandings which occurred as a result of our collaboration.

However, collaboration is far more complex than would this already complicated explanation imply. Martha and I did not come to the symbolic research table without our own relationships, attachments and prior understandings. While it appeared that only the two of us were at the table, it was in fact quite crowded. Understandings were not merely developed between the two of us, but between all those influences which impact human beings and the institutions to which they belong. In addition, the research had brought its own participants to the table. “The power of the paradigm is that it shapes in nearly unconscious and thus unquestioned ways, perceptions and practices within disciplines” (Maguire, 1987, p. 14). Science has become a political act because the preconceived notions are theory laden and exist within a value system which is the embodiment of a value position (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In other words science is a search for knowledge within a particular philosophy or theory, and given the diversity of existing theory the choice of a theory in which to ground a search for knowledge becomes a complicated and powerful act.

In this chapter and in this dissertation collaboration is foregrounded as well as part of the background. I would argue that given the nature of inquiry, all research projects are collaborative; it is in fact impossible for any science to be done in isolation. However, there was a conscious choice for this piece of research to go beyond the innate collaborative function of all science to incorporate a hermeneutic dialectic process to
challenge the dominant hegemony and to develop a more collaborative view of the research process. As such collaboration is inextricably part of the process but is foregrounded in this project to highlight its centrality to the research process. Action without thought deprives the action of its relevance and its importance. The method selected for this study was based not only on a strong belief in its relevance but also on its appropriateness for the research question. Both method and question must be foregrounded for their relevance and importance to be understood. The analysis of the conversations which follow document the complexity of both the method and the question.

4.3 Conference Presentation

The conversation below represents the complexity of the collaborative process as well as the numerous and complex issues involved in classroom research. While this study was designed to be a collaborative case study involving a teacher and a researcher, this excerpt documents the numerous voices which were a part of the research process and the impossibility of isolating any two voices. As in a symphony the beauty is in the complexity of the music, if instruments are removed the richness of the sound is diminished, and the response to the performance is incomplete. An analysis of the conversation highlights the complexity of the issues involved in this brief exchange.

LD: So that we’ve got Felita in there and we’ve got Cinderella and now we’ve got the beginning of Tecumseh. But also in there is the One Hundred Penny Box because that’s what you selected and Maniac McGee. And all the picture books that I’ve brought in. We’re supposed to be developing a multicultural literature program for your classroom. Now what does that mean we’ve done? What I’m looking at is your reactions to this multicultural literature program that we’re developing, how from your perspective you’re changing, that kind of thing. But we need to tell something about the program itself. What it is we’ve done.
MK: Now, I’ll tell you some of the things that I was thinking – the importance of it more to me than how I’ve grown. The things that have been important from this are what I feel the university can get out of this type of relationship, and you are the university in this case. See, I’m thinking about how you’ve (emphasis mine) changed and grown from it.

LD: Oh interesting!

MK: I was thinking about this the other day. I think that you have more of a sense, a wider view of what goes on in the school. I may be totally wrong about this. I thought that coming into this that you thought that it would be easy to put multicultural literature into the program and that it would fit in easily.

LD: To the classroom?

MK: To the classroom. That the curriculum, testing and all those other things that have to be done like special programs…how difficult it is to say at 10:00 on Tuesday morning that we’ll be doing this or that kind of thing. Now do you feel like that at all?

LD: You know what I’d like to add to that. I think I have more of a sense of the students now than I did. When I first started talking about this dissertation with Rob I thought that it would be really easy just to focus on you, and now I find that you go by the wayside as I focus on the kids.

MK: Or is it that the teacher would be the most important thing? Or more interesting, maybe? Whereas the students maybe are a little more interesting?

LD: No, not are more interesting but are more of a part of it than I thought. They hold my interest more than I thought they would. I thought that it would be really easy for me to just pay attention to you and it’s not. I find that my field notes have a lot more to do with the kids than what you’re doing.

MK: But the thing is the kids have so much to do with how I feel and think, and I think that you would see that more from year to year than through this year.

Planning for Ohio State Children’s Literature Conference

This conversation occurred as Martha and I began preparation for a presentation at the Ohio State Children’s Literature Conference. This mid-January conversation represents the first time we had taken the opportunity to reflect upon the whole body of our on-going work. While we had analyzed individual lessons and units, we had not
looked at our work in its entirety, nor had we reflected upon our attitudes and perspectives regarding the project itself. The process of preparing for the conference provided an excellent opportunity for reflection and to begin developing a shared perspective of what we were in the process of developing. For us collaboration was not just about shared development and implementation of a program, it was a relationship based on interdependence and mutual respect. As we prepared to tell others about our project and our process, we began to consider for ourselves the value we placed on our work together and to explore the meaning it held for us both personally and professionally. However, as is apparent from the transcript we were not the only ones involved in this process. Although this conversation occurred in my family room, and the only two people physically present were Martha and myself, the reality was that we were merely the catalysts for bringing together a host of voices, opinions and world views.

The Ohio State Children’s Literature Conference has a national reputation and while the majority of participants are local, it draws from across the country. Attending are publishers, authors, illustrators, classroom teachers and those involved in children’s literature at the university level in terms of teacher preparation as well as scholarship. It is with this background knowledge that I began to prepare with Martha for the presentation of our research. While I had attended the conference for numerous years and hosted several authors, this would be my first opportunity to present my own work and the first opportunity Martha had had of presenting at a research conference. This was also the first opportunity we had had to report on the progress of our research.

A public presentation allows participants the opportunity to present their work, but it is within the framework of the conference itself that the presentation is made. A
conference presentation is not prepared in isolation from the venue in which it is to be presented. Martha and I were well aware that we would be presenting to people who supported the use of literature for children and who believed in its value for classroom use. We also assumed that while perhaps not comfortable using multicultural literature themselves, our audience would be supportive of our work and would be open to learning more about its implementation and classroom use. We would therefore not have to convince our audience of the value of our work. Given another venue this would perhaps not have been the case. The classroom use of cross cultural literature is not routinely acknowledged as beneficial for children. There are those who would argue against its use, claiming among other things that it fosters unrest, divisiveness and prevents the establishment of a common national identity, a goal which many believe to be an important role for our public schools. Our audience, however, would for the most part, share out belief in the value of multicultural literature to enhance self-respect as well as an appreciation of others from differing backgrounds, and we began our preparation for the conference with this assumption.

While Martha and I were the only two people present during this brief exchange, it was shared with my research advisor, the university, the school district, the students in Martha’s classroom, and as noted above the audience of the Children’s Literature Conference. As Martha and I discussed the direction of our presentation we began to consider what we had accomplished to date, the units we had taught and the books which had been read, but this work had not been done in isolation from the classroom or university requirements. In detailing the importance of our work to her, Martha points to the university and states that for her I am the university and as such represent the
university’s ideals, attitudes and structures. Although not directly stated, the implication was that she represented the school district and its requirements, such as curriculum, testing and special programs. The structure of the institutions and our knowledge of that structure therefore became an important part of our discussion and added their voices to the conversation.

As a doctoral candidate at the university required to meet certain goals and objectives within my doctoral dissertation, I added the voice of my committee chair to the conversation as I noted an earlier concern of his regarding the role which the students in Martha’s class would play in the dissertation process. Questioning my earlier belief that the students would be only of peripheral interest, he had suggested that they needed to play a more significant role in my research design. In this conversation I acknowledge his voice and incorporate it into the discussion thus adding another dimension to our conversation.

Expanding upon my inclusion of the students into our conversation, Martha notes that the students indeed are an important part of how she reacts and responds, and notes that this would in fact be more obvious from year to year as she interacts with different groups of students. As a result she places the students as a central focus of the work she does and therefore includes their voices as primary participants in any conversation regarding the classroom and the research process.

While not all voices which have had the potential to influence us are apparent or could be apparent from this one excerpt, its inclusion does document the multiple voices which do influence any interaction however short and concise, and highlights the
importance of acknowledging those influences on our conversations and on our construction of knowledge or understanding.

Teacher-researcher collaboration is a contested site. As Ulichny and Schoener (1996) suggest there are those who view “collaboration” as merely exploitation of teachers on the part of the university (Ladwig, 1991) and others who call for research by teachers themselves to eliminate this misuse of teachers strictly for the research purposes of those in the academy (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). These arguments reflect the view that collaboration between university researchers and classroom teachers is difficult if not impossible given the disparity in their perceived status. It assumes that research is an individual task embarked upon by one person in isolation from all others, and neglects to consider the inter-relationship between the cast of characters.

I would suggest that the argument be reframed, because the issue is not whether classroom teachers and university researchers can work together, rather the question is how can they not when their work is so inextricably tied together. I would also suggest that it is the voices of those not physically present who render the research process to be innately collaborative. The very impossibility of conducting classroom research without considering its complexity is to negate the interdependencies inherent in the teaching and learning process. This is not to say that all voices are equal. Issues of power are apparent throughout our conversation as we both acknowledge the influences on our work and on our perceptions of that work. Some voices are indeed more equal than others, and it is perhaps this concern which leads critics to question the efficacy of collaborative classroom research.
However, as I suggested in the preceding chapter it was our discourse and collaboration over the course of the project which enabled us to alter the power relationships and to write ourselves. While we continued to acknowledge the voices which influenced our work, we also began to make meaning through our own shared "herstory". Our ongoing struggle with our own perceptions and beliefs, with the issues related to the classroom use of multicultural literature, and with the political agendas of the institutions to which we belonged enabled us to alter the power relationships and develop our own voices.

As such collaboration becomes a vehicle for altering the power structure rather than maintaining it. The diaologic nature of the collaborative process allows for the interdependence of all the voices and acknowledges a deep ecological awareness (Capra, 1996) that we are all embedded in the complex ecology of organismic relationality (Davis & Sumara, 1997). Or in other words through a conversation which acknowledges the complexity of our interactions we are able to alter meanings and change power relationships. Collaborative dialogic research becomes a means not of perpetuating the perceived status quo but of acknowledging the diversity of the plethora of voices which influence the research process, empowering the voices of those involved in the process, and as a result changing the power relationships in an ongoing cyclical fashion which respects the notion that our world is a dynamic whole with complex interdependencies.

4.4 The Reader, The Text and The Context

Noted in the previous example was the complexity of a single conversation within a collaborative study. However the complexity of the collaboration, interaction and reaction within the events of a collaborative study further documents not only the
collaborative nature of classroom research, but also the levels of complexity inherent in the research process. As discussed above as teacher and researcher collaborate they are not doing so in isolation, rather they are a part of a complex group of interdependent phenomena. For us included within the complexity were also the students and the multicultural texts which were consciously placed within their curriculum and which provided the focus for the collaborative process. The excerpt below taken from my researchers' notebook highlights the complexity.

After we read Make a Wish Molly, Martha asked a question about Emma and her mother and why they didn't defend Molly when Elizabeth was attacking Molly inaccurately about the customs of Jews. As she explained it, she talked about the duty of friends to each other, and about prejudice and asked them what they thought Emma should have done. (This was a really good question and ties into what Martha and I had been talking about - the purpose of multicultural literature. Is it to make the kids pro-active and to have them go out and change the world? Martha said that she had been thinking about our discussion when she asked the question. She said that she didn't want the students to turn out to be the Emma's of the world.) You could tell that Benjamin was really considering the question because his face was all screwed up and then he said that he thought that Emma and Mom should have asked Molly questions so that they could have found out the truth rather than saying nothing. He also asked me about whether anything in the story offended me. (Gave me a chance to talk about my experience in school and how bad it feels, but I don't think I did a very good job of explaining it. It's interesting to me that the kids know that I'm Jewish but it seems to make very little difference except that I can provide info. that they sometimes need.)

Researcher's Journal, April 4, 1995

Barbara Cohen, the author of Make a Wish, Molly tells the story of a young Russian Jewish immigrant invited to her first American birthday party. Unfamiliar with the custom she anxiously awaits the experience. However, the party occurs during the Jewish holiday of Passover when many Jews do not eat any food made with leavening, and as a result Molly is not allowed to eat the birthday cake. Challenged and mocked by a jealous classmate for customs different than her own, Molly flees the birthday party,
and it is not until later that the girls from the party learn the truth about the Jewish customs and the inaccuracy of the classmate's taunts.

As a result of our on-going conversations about the nature and purpose of cross-cultural literature and hoping to make the students more critical readers, Martha asked the class to consider what had been done to Molly and to suggest other ways in which the situation might have been handled. While Molly was being taunted her "friend" Emma had sat quietly doing and saying nothing. Wanting the students to know that silence was a form of acquiescence and that our beliefs about the nature of friendship and our understanding of the consequences of prejudice must fuel our actions, she asked the students to consider alternatives to Emma's behavior. Martha was creating a context in which societal issues could be discussed within the interpretive community of the classroom. Benjamin's response was made as an individual with his own complexities within the complexity of the interpretive community that was the classroom.

The collaboration which occurred in this event was heavily layered and complex and heavily dialogic in that each level involved a reader, a text and a context. On one level the students were invited to interact and respond to a read-aloud text within a community created from a series of events or stories which framed that community. On another Martha was reading the text of the classroom and of our prior conversations and responding to those texts by challenging the students and attempting to move their thinking. Classrooms and teaching are by their very nature collaborative. Teachers and students are continually involved in shaping and reshaping meaning for each other. As a participant in this particular classroom my voice is part of the classroom collaboration, and as a researcher I am in the present reading the text of that collaboration and am
writing and rewriting that text. In the preceding chapter I suggested that from my own perspective there were three texts which comprised the data of this dissertation, the individual, the conversations and dialogue, and the transcript. However within the events which fueled the conversations and were fueled by them there are multiple levels of text, because mine is not the only perspective which drives this work. Mine is the perspective which writes this particular piece, but it has been influenced by the events and the voices, and the texts that comprised the classroom. As Mailloux (1989) suggests the interpretive community which is the classroom provides the surroundings for conversations and acts of persuasion to take place, but that conversation and dialogue is part of the context in which it lives and has lived and is socially charged (Bhaktin, 1981), and as the writing of this dissertation indicates, it is a cyclical process which acknowledges the interdependence of all phenomena (Capra, 1996).

It is this interdependence of all phenomena which has made the work of reader response theorists so complex. Attempting to understand how readers make sense of text they have looked at response in terms of the reader, the text being read and the context in which the reading is taking place. They have used experimental as well as qualitative methods and have achieved varying results. The very complexity of the varying approaches serves to highlight the complexity of the collaboration which occurs when a reader and text interact. If as suggested earlier we read and write the text that ore our lives, we are reading and writing multiple levels of text, and in our research are looking at multiple levels of understanding. As complexity theorists have suggested we are not the sum of our retrospective parts, rather we are complex systems, and our research must
begin to find ways to look at the system itself, because to isolate the parts renders them inoperative and our understandings incomplete.

4.5 Multi-"cultural" Literature

A large part of our conversations looked to what on the surface appeared to be simple, but what were in reality the tremendously complex issues inherent in any project which involves literature which is considered to be cross-"cultural". In fact the complexities of the term itself foreground the intensity of the debate surrounding the classroom use of multicultural literature, and our struggle to come to terms with the nature and parameters of our project. Throughout the course of the year Martha and I struggled with the term culture as it applied to the students, to the classroom, and to the literature we were choosing for classroom use. Our discussions strove and failed to place boundaries around the term and to define it in a concrete manner. We used our conversations as sites for the co-construction of knowledge as we struggled not only with ourselves but with the voices of those who influenced our work.

In March, Martha and I were asked to consider presenting our work to a class of pre-service teachers. As we considered that possibility we struggled with the definition of culture and how we would help the class to define the term, but in so doing we also worked through some of the complexities of the issue for ourselves.

MK: The class that we're going to teach. Two things I thought about doing for it. One is asking the students to bring one multicultural book. No other explanation besides that - to see what they consider multicultural, and see what they bring, and see if they know anything about multicultural books.

LD: Do you want to talk about what their culture is like Rudine and I did when we taught that course?

MK: What do they consider is their culture?
LD: I was thinking about it too when I was driving home yesterday, wondering if we wanted them to talk about the different categories of multicultural literature. By then we might have more of this to talk about than the categories Rudine used like cross-cultural.

MK: It might have been what their culture was, but I think one thing - something Joanne (Martha's student teacher) said yesterday after you asked her if the AIDS - was it AIDS?

LD: AIDS quilt - Or whether the book - something about it was multicultural. You asked her that. Did she consider it multicultural, and basically she said no.

MK: I think that's where the term culture is different for a lot of people.

LD: Marsha talks about gay and lesbian literature too and argues that it is a culture

MK: Right. I think she didn't see

LD: People that had AIDS as

MK: gays and lesbians

LD: It's interesting - in one of the courses I taught one guy in the class defined his culture as poverty. He talked about growing up poor and not being invited to birthday parties because people thought that they could not afford to buy presents, and other things about how he grew up. And that's a cultural problem.

MK: I think so too and that's where I got messed up with my definition of myself, my own culture. I think the large family, that had an huge...I think the culture is the influence on your life.

LD: See you talked about the culture of this class. I think each class develops their own culture. Anthropologists would - the purists would say no that a culture is more than something that exists for 9 months in a year but I disagree. I think you have established a culture in here.

MK: I think so too.

LD: And this class has its own culture, it's own rules, its own customs, its own history. The kids here know about menorahs. They know about Felita. There's that whole history that we've set up through the year.

MK: And the interaction - there has to be an interaction within the culture
LD: And growth and change and there was that

MK: And where these people influence each other in the culture. And are influenced because of the culture that they're in. Does that make sense?

LD: Yeah. They are. And they grow and change because of that culture.

MK: So maybe what we need to define is culture not multicultural literature.

However, as our discussion indicates the definition of culture is as illusive and complex as is the notion of collaboration, which is in fact embedded within the concept of culture. Erlich (1990), an anthropologist, defines culture as the way of life of a particular human society and stresses that it is composed of learned, shared group behavior. He notes that anthropologists see culture as a survival mechanism for a way of life created by human groups. The paradox, as suggested by Erlich, is that while, on the surface, cultures appear to all be different they are, in reality all the same. They represent "adaptations to the similar demands of living a group existence" and are all organized around the same set of basic institutions kinship, law and politics, religious and economic. Each of these institutions is part of a set of integrated relationships, and, as a result, change within one institution will have repercussions in all other parts of the culture. Cultures are, therefore, systems which operate as a whole and are continually adapting to specific environmental changes. As Capra (1996) states we must recognize the "fundamental interdependence of all the phenomena", and that we are "all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature".

Multi-"cultural" literature seeks to provide our students with a site where they can recognize our inherent interdependence as well as appreciate our diverse community, because as with our work in social science literature makes "visible what becomes
invisible in the living" (Erickson & Christman, 1996). If as I have argued in this chapter we are part of complex interdependent phenomena, and if we are indeed cultural creations that read our lives as we read our culture, then multicultural literature becomes a vehicle by which on multiple levels we can collaborate with our students in the complex system which defines our world.

However, the complexity of the terms and of the process is apparent in Martha's and my ongoing discussions. While together we strove to make sense of the terms, and to consider their classroom applications we were unable to fit what we were doing into concrete forms. The complexity of the work, and of the issues which framed that work defied our efforts to place it into a neat precise package. We struggled not only with defining the term culture but with decisions about what made the literature "cultural". If the literature was to be a site for negotiation and for the development of understanding within the complexity which frames our world, we wanted to know what criteria we could use to make that determination. As a result we reviewed the books we had used with the students looking for characteristics and qualities which were consistent across the texts, and found that not only did we perceive that the value of the texts varied, but our belief in their value would vary based on the students who would be reading the texts. Collaboration occurred not only between ourselves but in conjunction with the students and with the issues which framed our work.

**MK:** Felita, I'm trying to think why I would put it lower than Mildred Taylor. That's something I would have to really think about.

**LD:** Well do that at some point, because when we figure out what it is about Mildred Taylor, we can make a list about why Mildred Taylor goes there, and then we'll be closer to our definitions, I think.
MK: I thinks so, too. I think part of it is need.

LD: Need?

MK: Yeah. I think if Mildred Taylor was above Felita, I think some of the things that would sway me on that would be the need in this classroom.

LD: For African American

MK: Yeah

LD: So, in a different classroom Felita might be a little higher

MK: Might be higher if there were a lot of Hispanic kids or Puerto Rican kids

LD: So that goes back to what you didn’t think at the beginning, but that the kids need to see themselves reflected in the books more than reflect other people

MK: And I think I am changing on that a little bit. I still think that they need to see other people. I still think that’s hugely important.

LD: But there’s a theory that says you have to appreciate your own culture before you can appreciate other peoples’ cultures.

MK: And that makes sense

LD: You’ve got to feel good about yourself before you can feel good

MK: Right

LD: Feel good about other people, which we’re still working on.

Through discussions such as the one above Martha and I were attempting to develop continuum on which we would place the literature we had used and could visually represent their multicultural value. This was, however, a far more complex process than we had originally anticipated. As is clear from the excerpt not only were we struggling to develop the criteria for placement, we also believed that placement could vary based on the needs of different groups of students.
While any given piece of literature exists on its own, when it's brought into a classroom culture it becomes a part of that interpretive community, one which is socially charged and cyclical and acknowledges the interdependence of all phenomena (Capra, 1996). It becomes a part of a complex cultural system which, as Martha and my struggle with continuum indicates, cannot be simplified, and which is more than the sum of its parts.

As noted earlier collaboration is embedded in the very notion of culture. A culture or a classroom represents a set of learned phenomena that are as Erlich (1990) suggested responses to the demands of living in a group existence. Change in one part of the culture cannot help but impact the rest of that culture and in so doing impact those across cultures and across worlds. Literature as one component of a culture and one piece of interaction within that culture can have tremendous power. Power relationships are learned and taught within a particular community as they are lived (Gutierrez et al., 1995), and the use of literature can become a part of that power structure. However, the dialogue, conversations and collaboration which framed Martha's and my work together brought those issues of power to the forefront, and as I argued in the preceding chapter such dialogue can alter meaning and change power relationships. Literature and the choice and use of that literature, therefore, becomes an important and political decision in the culture that is the classroom, and across the cultures that frame the complex systems of interdependent phenomena which comprise our world.

4.6 Conclusion

While this chapter appears to be a piece of single authored scholarship, it is in fact a piece of collaborative dialogic research which is embedded within a social paradigm.
(Capra, 1996) or culture. As such it becomes a part of the power structure (Guttierrez et al., 1995) which is learned and taught from within the interdependent phenomena which define the community. This chapter argues that the knowledge created through our collaboration is part of a complex whole which is fluid and continuously changing, because it is as enactivist theory (Davis & Sumara, 1997) suggests a piece of a complex system or culture. Or in the language of literary theory the text that is our collaboration is a part of the social heteroglossia which defines the human condition, and we read our lives as we read that text (Scholes, 1989).

In this chapter I position the work that Martha and I did within a complex community and suggest that while our collaboration was foregrounded in reality collaboration is embedded within a culture and as such is an integral part of that culture. I also argue that the multicultural nature and focus of our work serves to highlight the importance of collaboration given the diversity inherent in human communities.

Over the course of our year together Martha and I spent countless hours planning, implementing, analyzing, soul searching and questioning our development of a multicultural literature program in her classroom. The audio-taped transcripts of the conversations serve as the basis of the data collection and analysis for this work, and it is through these conversations that the complexity of the process is revealed. It is in fact the conversations between two individuals which document the embeddedness of collaboration within a culture, because the very nature of the conversations highlight the impossibility of two people interacting in isolation from the communities to which they belong. As the analysis of the conference presentation documents the interaction of two
individuals is influenced by multiple voices who are part of the co-construction of knowledge.

However, this co-construction of knowledge is multi-faceted and multilayered. Within the collaboration that formed this project were not only the voices which influenced our work, but also the dialogic nature of reading, of teaching and of a classroom culture. Teachers, students and researchers were continually involved in shaping and reshaping meaning for ourselves and for each other. We were all a part of the interpretive community or culture which is the classroom and which provides the surroundings and conversations where acts of understanding and persuasion take place (Mailloux, 1989). However as readers we each brought to the text our own context as we interacted in the shared culture of the classroom. As such we became part of "the interstices of a complex ecology of organismic relationality" (Davis and Sumara, 1997) where our learning occurs not in our individual minds but through our joint action.

Over the course of our year together Martha and I consciously placed literature which we at that point perceived to be multicultural into the complex ecology of the classroom. We believed that the students needed to see not only themselves but those who were in some way different from themselves reflected in the texts which were a part of the classroom. As we strove to make sense of our process we realized that the complexity of the interpretive community of the classroom made the process of categorization impossible to define in terms of the sum of its parts. We all were part of a complex interaction within the classroom and given the theory of enactivism we were all "inextricably intertwined with all else" (Davis and Sumara, 1997) and as such the
literature became a part of the collaboration or negotiation which defines cultural interaction.

However, Martha's and my conscious insertion of multicultural literature into the classroom was not a neutral act, we were using our power to influence the negotiation and hoped for our ideas to become a part of the complex mix of the classroom. We believed that by changing one part of the culture we could influence the rest of the culture of that classroom and ultimately impact across cultures and across worlds. We believed that by including our choice of literature as one component of the culture and one piece of the interaction that we could make change.

Ours was a political decision. Working within a complex cultural system Martha and I collaborated to change the power structure. When literature is placed within the dialogue of a culture it has the potential for far ranging influence as it becomes a part of the social heteroglossia which defines the human condition. It becomes a part of the collaboration.

In the preceding chapter I argued that dialogue can alter meaning and change power relationships, but it can only do so within a complex system or culture which is comprised of interdependent phenomena which are continuously changing as the community co-constructs knowledge. Literature as one component of that collaborative dialogue can have far ranging influence. This chapter looked at the nature of that collaborative dialogue. In the following chapter the importance and significance of the literature itself will be more closely examined.
CHAPTER 5

MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A COMPLEX PARADIGM

Tamika's eyes lit up as I begin to read the book Yo! Yes? by Chris Raschka. As I turned to the first page and read "Yo!". Tamika turned to Martha saying, "that's really how black people talk." and the smile on her face was boundless.

Yo! Yes? is a story with sparse text which details an interaction between a young African American boy and his apparently European American counterpart as they negotiate whether or not they can be friends and play together. On facing pages they talk to each other using one or two words and a great deal of facial and body language apparent from the illustrations to form a friendship.

As I read the first few pages of this text Tamika's enjoyment was palpable. Her eyes would go from the text to Martha and back again, and she could barely contain her glee. However, her enjoyment dimmed as I read the page with the African American boy saying, "What's up?" I noticed that she commented to herself, "no, that's wrong," and that her enjoyment of the text diminished after that page. Later as she and I discussed her reaction to the story, she explained that she felt that "What's up?" was inaccurate, and that "black people don't talk that way". She explained that black people would say " Whas
(my approximation of her pronunciation of the word) up man, brother or sister," but not simply "What's up?" For Tamika the perceived inaccuracy of a text that had been so reflective of her culture to that point made further engagement in the story impossible, but by sharing the text and responding to her reaction to that text, I had opened a door which allowed her to become an expert about herself and her world and to share her expertise on an ongoing basis. For a while I became Tamika's favorite adult and she wanted nothing more than to tell me about her neighborhood, her life and the way that black people coexisted in a world filled with white people. For a reticent, quiet child struggling with literacy this continual exchange was remarkable and exciting, especially as Martha reported Tamika's new found interest in checking out of the library and struggling to read biographies of African American heroes, particularly women. Unfortunately Tamika moved several weeks after these events began, and therefore, the story of her involvement with us has a rather abrupt end. Tamika left the school form one day to the next, but made sure that Martha would return to me the book Aunt Flossies Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) which I had lent to her to read after having read it to the class.

Stories can indeed be powerful. They open up worlds, allowing us to see how and where we fit in varying social and cultural contexts. They allows us experiences that we might or might not have had on our own. They can broaden our horizons. Classrooms are filled with stories, both our own and those of others. As Barbara Hardy (1997) has noted "narrative is a primary act of mind". As we read we make the text our own. Or as Robert Scholes (1989) would say, as we read we bring the book into our lives and thoughts and as a result we learn about ourselves and re-write our lives. We bring our
own culture and our own background to our reading, but in so doing we can broaden that background and our culture through our struggle with and our enjoyment of the text. As I have argued throughout this text, although each of us are individuals, we are a part of a social heteroglossia which reflects the complex social and political forces inherent in the human experience (Bakhtin, 1981; Gutierrez, 1995; Fairclough, 1992; Mailloux, 1989; Scholes, 1989). We are part of a complex group of interdependent phenomena (Capra, 1996), or as enactivist theory suggests, we are part of a set of complex interrelated systems, where "collective knowledge and individual understanding are dynamically co-emergent phenomena" (Davis & Sumara, 1997). Through the stories in the classroom, both those written and those shared orally, we can begin to make sense of ourselves and our world. Classrooms can provide sites for the development of understanding and the making of meaning. They are not, however, free from our history which is interpretive, institutional and cultural, and a reflection of social and political forces (Mailloux, 1989).

This study was based on the belief that our classrooms reflect our worlds, and that our choice of literature within those classrooms needs to reflect the complexity which defines those worlds, and that the interpretive community which comprises the classroom must allow conversations, because it is the conversation or text or story which allows meaning to be determined and understandings to be developed. This study was also based on the notion of change. The design of the study was based on the assumption that the participants would change and grow as they developed a program using cross-cultural literature. The proceeding chapters have looked at that change through the stories found in the data. The change and growth have been discussed in terms of issues regarding power and in terms of the power of the collaborative process. This chapter comes full
circle and through story begins to look at the power of the texts used in the classroom, in the power of the cross-cultural literature. Given that the collection of the data is part of the history of the process, as a reader of the data I am outside the text and have the opportunity to re-write myself, to interrogate the process and to continue to change. As a result this chapter reflects thinking which occurred not only during the process but which continues at the present moment. It allows me to present what was done and what was considered during data collection as well as what sense and what understanding is currently being negotiated based upon the social and political forces which currently shape my thinking. This chapter reflects my understanding of change, change which is mediated by story, by narrative, by "the primary act of mind".

Barbara Rogoff (1995) suggests that an individual is not a separate entity apart from the social cultural environment, and that to understand how learning and understanding occurs we can not separate the two.

The use of "activity" or "event" as the unit of analysis - with active and dynamic contributions from individuals, their social partners, and historical traditions and materials and their transformations - allows a reformulation of the relation between the individual and the social and cultural environments in which each is inherently involved in the others' definition. None exists separately. (p. 140)

She further argues that understanding or sociocultural activity develops through a three stage process involving apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. Apprenticeship involves interpersonal involvement's where individuals become involved in a culturally organized activity and become more active participants, while the guided participation component allows for the involvement of not only the individual but the social partner in the "socioculturally structured collective activity" (p. 101)
Finally in participatory appropriation individuals "transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation" (p. 150). She states that "events and activities are inherently dynamic, rather than being static conditions to which time is added as a separate element. Change and development, rather than static characteristics or elements are assumed to be basic." (p. 152)

As I write this text I am engaged in a three-fold sociocultural activity involving data collection, analysis and writing. It is an on-going process and as Bakhtin (1981) has suggested it moves forward and backward in time. As I write I engage in Rogoff’s (1995) final stage. Through my writing I am able to transform my thinking, to grow, to develop and to make change. It is through my active involvement in the text of this dissertation that I am able not only to analyze what has gone before, but to alter what has been done and to take steps towards the future.

Any event in the present is an extension of previous events and is directed toward goals that have not yet been accomplished. As such the present extends through the past and future and cannot be separated from them. (Rogoff, 1995, p. 155)

In a classroom as children are involved in the varying kinds and natures of text, they too are engaged in a sociocultural activity. Their own reading of the texts becomes their apprenticeship, and the interpretive community of the classroom allows for the guided participation of the individual students and their social partners. Through their engagement with the text, their conversations and their intertextual connections, they are able to transform and to grow within their own understandings. Finally, through their active involvement in what they have read and discussed, through their participatory appropriation they are able to make change.
In the participatory appropriation perspective, personal, interpersonal and cultural processes all constitute each other as they transform sociocultural activity. (Rogoff, 1995, p. 157)

As Martha and I began this study we shared a belief in the value of multicultural literature, and a commitment for including it within the classroom curriculum. We believed in its ability to affect the lives of those it touched. We believed that multicultural literature should provide a "mirror" for children to see themselves and a "window" for them to see others different from themselves.

LD: Someone asked me, did I think that multicultural literature was going to make the world a better place, and it sounded real corny, but I do. I know that by reading a book, one book is not going to solve all the problems. But maybe it will help attitudes change and..

MK: And maybe it won't be one book.

LD: Right. But still maybe over time that can help make a difference, because I've told you before that I didn't see any Jewish kids in any of the books I was reading when I was growing up and I know that had an affect on me.

MK: I think it's not just the multicultural literature. It's the whole attitude that goes along with it, and the attitude that something does need to be there, and if you have the attitude that something needs to be there then you're going to teach more multiculturally

Initial Structured Interview, September, 1994

However, we did not know what this inclusion of multicultural literature would look like within the classroom and we did not know exactly how we would proceed. We did anticipate learning as the study progressed and as we involved ourselves and the students in the reading of the literature. We anticipated that we would change and that we would make a difference in the lives of the children. This chapter explores those differences and changes. It also explores issues which we did not extend, and places where, as I now read the data, we failed to involve the students in active participation. While we offered
the students multiple opportunities to engage in the first two of Rogoff's (1995) three stages we avoided, often consciously, the final stage. While we allowed ourselves to change, we did not share that opportunity with our students. We followed what Grant and Sleeter (1985) have labeled the Multicultural Education Approach. According to their definition in this approach multicultural education is aimed at all students and recognizes that cultural diversity is a fact of life and a valuable resource. It calls for teachers helping students to develop ethnic self identities, knowledge about different cultural groups, and respect for others' right to be different. It is accomplished by integrating information into the entire curriculum and by using teaching strategies which build on different learning styles. All of which are excellent and important strategies, but strategies which do not take what I now believe to be the final step. We did not allow the students to become involved in what Grant and Sleeter have called Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist. We did not teach "directly about political and economic oppression and discrimination" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 7) and we did not prepare them "to take a more active and collective role in restructuring unequal relationships" (Grant & Sleeter, 1985, p. 101). We continued to struggle with these issues throughout the year, and this chapter looks at and analyzes that struggle. It considers what was accomplished and moves those accomplishments forward and backwards in time because change is not static and growth is an active continual process. In so doing this chapter strives to be a voice which connects the power of story and of cross cultural literature with those who are attempting to teach for social justice. It argues that they need to be one in the same because stories open worlds and allow us to see ourselves in varying social and cultural contexts, and social justice demands that we not only see and
understand but that we become actively involved in making a difference. The problem with the mirror and window metaphor is that we are still within our own home, social justice asks us to look in the mirror and to look out the window and then to open the door and walk out and change the world.

To teach for social justice is to teach for enhanced perception and imaginative explorations, for the recognition of social wrongs, of sufferings, of pestilences wherever and whenever they arise. It is to find models in literature and history of the indignant ones, the ones forever ill at ease, and the loving ones who have taken the side of victims of pestilences, whatever their names or places of origin. It is to teach so that the young may be awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change the world. (Greene, 1998. p. xiv)

Reflecting her belief in the power of story, Rudine Sims Bishop (1998) has written an essay using a series of vignettes highlighting the power and the need for multicultural literature. She has written not only about the power of literacy and literature to change one's thinking but also for it to change one's life, if it is read critically and if meaning is determined intertextually. She reminds us that censorship arises out of just such readings because they challenge the status quo, they question "traditional" values, and they inspire change. Such readings ask that our world be held accountable; they ask for social justice.

It may be that some people in power are afraid that, if we make the millions of poor children in our cities truly literate, they will grow up to hold this nation to its promise - that we all have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Perhaps they are afraid that if we make them truly literate, they will begin to question why "liberty and justice" are not evenly distributed in a nation purportedly built on the promise that "all men are created equal." Perhaps that they are afraid that literate people will begin to understand that the conditions under which they live are not entirely accidental and not at all inevitable. Perhaps they are afraid that these children will discover the power of the written word. Perhaps they even fear that people who are critically literate will begin to hold the
leaders of government responsible for their actions. (Sims Bishop, 1998, p. 95)

In her essay Sims Bishop heralds a call for action, she suggests that it is up to us to begin to make change, that we need to be the advocates for our children, for their right to a critical literacy, and for their right to a better world.

This chapter seeks to be a part of that march as it interrogates itself, as it looks at the power of cross-cultural literature to touch lives and to build understandings, and as it questions how "to make the world a better place".

It seems likely that, when personal voices are released among a few persons in a small place, a registering of others suffering may emerge in the very sharing of inquiry and exploration, when unexpected and deeply shared concerns arise as desire and thought. (Greene, 1998, p. xliii)

5.1 Complexity and the Definition of Terms

In the introduction to this chapter I suggested that our school classrooms reflect our worlds. It would perhaps have been more accurate had I said that it is my belief that our classrooms should reflect our worlds. However, that sentence, too, would be problematic because it fails to define what is meant by our worlds. In the introduction I also implied that cross-cultural or multi-cultural literature could be the vehicle by which those worlds are introduced and experienced, but again did not define the terms cross-cultural or multi-cultural. Further, I argued for the power of story to broaden horizons and to help readers to find where they and others fit in varying social and cultural contexts, but did not define those terms.

It is my contention that while I believe that the data from this study can and does support each of these statements, others reading the same data would arrive at different conclusions. This apparent disparity would be based on the definitions supplied by the
reader to terms such as race, ethnicity, culture and to the terms cross or multicultural literature. Each of these terms are contested sites and the definitions for each are based on an individual's socio-economic position, their racial and ethnic background and their willingness to consider and perhaps ultimately to challenge the dominant hegemony. While these definitions and opinions vary widely, it is important that the terms are considered and the issues examined so that a reader is aware and informed. These issues are important. They impact not only how terms are defined but how literature is used in the classroom, and ultimately how children are prepared to leave the classroom and enter the world. They are not neutral.

The concept of education that is multicultural first developed in response to the ethnic revitalization movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 1979). However there was no one program nor one method that could be pointed to as "the" multicultural program. While all the programs whether called multiethnic, multiracial or multicultural were theoretically designed "to help students from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural and societal groups to experience educational equality and to increase their academic achievement" (Banks, 1985, p. 131) they neither functioned in the same manner nor used the same materials. In their exhaustive review of the literature Grant and Sleeter (1985) identified five different types of multicultural education programs which they labeled education of the culturally different, ethnic studies, human relations, multicultural education and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. Each type targeted different children and had a different range of purposes from providing a bridge to the mainstream to programs which asked for a critical analysis of oppression and an active role in making change. Given the variety of content as well as instructional theory
inherent in these programs, Banks argued in 1979 for the need to define the terms more carefully. He suggested that scientific propositions and theories can develop only within an academic field where the key concepts share similar meanings. Grant and Sleeter (1985) shared this concern and took it one step further by suggesting that "multicultural education theorists need to expend more work conceptualizing implications of multicultural goals and theory for instruction" (p. 111).

Twenty years after Grant's original plea the terms are still being debated and are still open to contention. This is not a reflection of academic laziness rather it is a reflection of the controversy surrounding the terms and the fear engendered when the status quo is challenged and multicultural education programs do indeed challenge the status quo.

Perhaps the greatest challenge comes from the term cultural pluralism which originated in the 1950's with the writings of Horace Kallen, the early twentieth century democratic philosopher, and was incorporated into and appears repeatedly in definitions of multicultural education. Bennet (1995) defines multicultural education as "an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and seeks to foster cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world" (p.13). Cultural pluralism was seen as a reaction to the melting pot myth which argued that assimilation to an "American" ideology was a primary goal of schooling. It challenged the notion that everyone had to think in one way to be a valuable contributing member of society. It challenged the dominant hegemony and defacto notions of equality. "Cultural pluralism not only assumes that minorities and ethnic groups have rights, but that their life-styles are legitimate and desirable ways of participating in
society. These diverse ethnic, cultural and racial groups are integral parts which strengthen the whole society" (McCormick, 1984, p. 94).

As a term, multicultural literature appears to have emerged from the multicultural education movement and as such is invested in the controversy surrounding issues of proper schooling and of curricular reform. It has become a part of a forty year old debate questioning the picture of America and the story which that picture tells. It is a debate which appears to have no end and which ebbs and flows over time. It is a debate in which the language often changes but in which the concepts remain eerily the same. It is a debate where many hear only themselves. In her book Against Borders, Hazel Rochman (1993) argues that myth cuts across all cultures and that there is a universalism in the archetypal stories of the journey we all must take and suggests that multicultural literature provides a bridge to connect those stories. Stories can indeed be powerful and perhaps in telling the story of the debate the borders can be crossed.

A key issue in the debate about defining literature which is multicultural is not only the definition of the term multicultural but the concept itself. It is a complex process because not only must the books grouped under the heading be defined and their authorship be determined, so too must the purpose of the books be explained, and the audience determined. Schwartz (1995) argues that perspective is also a piece of this puzzle and suggests that the definition depends on whether one defines oneself as a modernist or a postmodernist. Finally the terms used in the definitions themselves can prove problematic, how do we define race, ethnicity and culture, are they synonymous or does each have its own distinct meaning? Writing in the preface of her edited volume Using Multiethnic Literature in the K-8 Classroom, Violet Harris (1997) says,
Terms such as race, ethnicity, multicultural, multiethnic, culture, and cultural diversity are defined in the same manner by some authors and in different ways by others. I chose not to impose shared conceptions or definitions for these terms because that would result in unwanted conformity and limitations on the visions and the ideas of the authors. No consensus exists about the definition(s) of multicultural or multiethnic. Only three markers of identity - race, gender, and class - are routinely included under its umbrella.

Language and words are powerful, and therefore, given their power, the words which are used must be carefully considered. Stories are powerful. Were they not slave masters would not have forbidden slaves to learn to read, and Nazis would not have burned books. Therefore, how we use our words to talk about stories and to talk about books are indeed important issues, because they reflect how we define our world.

Today the United States is largely a nation of immigrants except for the indigenous Indians and Mexicans. We came to this country in different ways and for different purposes, not always voluntarily. Based on language, race, religion and socio-economic status immigrants have had varying experiences and thus have differing perspectives about the country itself. While as Americans we share many experiences, we are essentially a diverse group of people from different backgrounds and with different experiences and are thus what is often termed a rich mosaic. However, until recently European Americans were seen as the majority and it was their perspective and attitudes and racial background which was imposed upon the schools and which was considered to be more equal than others. It was their faces which appeared in the books children read and it was their stories which were repeated. Other voices and perspectives were silenced because they were in the "minority", and did not reflect the "American" perspective.
The term and the concept of multicultural literature has evolved over the years to try and capture this rich mosaic and to redress the inequalities inherent in a system that has recognized and honored only one group of citizens, and has marginalized and demeaned the rest. The literal meaning of the term does indeed capture the concept of many cultures, but that being the case the question of the need for such a term arises. Isn't multicultural literature synonymous with children's literature? In the best of all possible worlds the answer would be yes, but we do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Discrimination of all sorts continues to exist and to proliferate. Multicultural literature serves as a vehicle for redressing the wrongs and for including those who have been traditionally excluded. "At best, it is a demand for a complete re-envisioning, reforming, or restructuring of schooling, and ultimately of the society itself" (Sims Bishop, 1994). That being the case it is important that those groups who have been marginalized are focused upon and that their history and their stories become a part of the mainstream. However there is not general agreement about which groups should be the primary focus of study. There are questions and debates about who has been marginalized, the degree of marginalization and the importance of redressing those wrongs. Ultimately each scholar must answer those questions for him or herself, as is apparent in the conversation between Shannon, Sims Bishop and Harris in the Spring, 1994 edition of the Journal of Children's Literature. While each of these scholars acknowledges and agrees upon the need and value of multicultural literature, they disagree about the focus. Shannon suggests that in their writings Sims Bishop and Harris have relegated multicultural literature to issues of race and that they conflate the concepts of race and culture. He says
Culture, then, is not limited to race because it includes religion, gender, language, ethnicity, economic class, and other social markers which can demarcate a social group from others. In this broader conceptualization, neither teachers nor anyone else can stand apart from culture and each is a member of many sub-cultures within her or his social contexts. (p. 2)

In their responses, Harris and Sims Bishop indicate that indeed they do not ignore issues of culture but that they choose to focus on issues of race/ethnicity rather than other issues. Sims Bishop clearly states,

Ultimately, my discussions of multicultural literature generally focus on books that feature what I prefer to call "people of color". This is not an attempt to exclude any other groups from the body of multicultural literature. It is to call attention to the voices that have been traditionally omitted from the canon. I make no apologies for that. That is the chunk of multicultural literature that I choose to focus on, and I've tried to be clear that, if we are committed to multiculturalism, that is not the whole picture. It is, however, the part of the picture that needs most to be filled in. (p. 7)

Nieto (1992) further complicates the issue by reminding us that "in scientific terms, race does not exist and is often simply used to oppress further entire groups of people for their supposed racial differences. Yet there is really only one race, and that is the human race" (p. 17). However she goes on to suggest that "the problem with using terms that emphasize culture rather than race is that they tend to obscure the very real issue of racism in society" (p. 17).

Each of these scholars acknowledges the complexity of the term culture and the inability of anyone to define themselves by any one marker, but each also acknowledges that for "people of color" it is impossible to ignore their racial background and that because of that they have been marked as "the other" and have experienced discrimination and marginalization.

Shannon can decide to join the struggle at his leisure; I cannot. I am a central part of multicultural struggles whether I decide to join or not.
My skin color is an immediate marker of status, usually low, in a range of contexts. I do not possess that level of power or the luxury of privilege to hide behind my class status, education, religion, or other element of difference. (Harris, 1994, p. 10)

Schwartz (1995) suggests in her rebuttal to these articles in the Harvard Educational Review that Sims Bishop and Harris fail to understand that Shannon is "calling for a struggle against the canon, a struggle to foster an inclusive multiculturalism within a full-fledged social analysis of the relations between language, culture and power" (p. 637). It is, I believe Schwartz, who does not understand. While she couches her arguments in the language of post-modernism suggesting that Shannon's thinking has moved beyond the modernistic beliefs of Harris and Sims Bishop, she fails to acknowledge the complexity of the human experience. While we are indeed each a part of a complex set of interdependent phenomenon or interrelated systems, it is our individual understandings that work along with the collective knowledge which help new understandings to develop. It is therefore important not to silence the voices of any person from whatever perspective whether they define themselves as a modernist, postmodernist or just plain folks. It is the work of scholars like, Grant, Harris, Nieto and Sims Bishop who have brought us to the point where this conversation can take place.

Shannon's (1994) asking whether as a white, male, heterosexual, middle class Protestant there is a place for him and his white middle-class students in the discussion of multiculturalism and literature is like asking whether they can become a part of the social heteroglossia reflecting the social and political forces which are a part of the human experience. By virtue of being alive and being participating members of this society they are inevitably a part of the process, because as Rogoff (1995) suggests an individual is
not a separate entity apart from their social cultural environment. Permission is not needed and indeed need not be expected. If nothing else multiculturalism is about inclusion.

Multiculturalism is also about controversy. It is about changing the status quo and challenging the dominant hegemony. It is about change. At the outset of this section I suggested that I had failed to define some significant terms - race, ethnicity, culture, cross or multi-cultural literature, and I suggested that how one chose to define those terms reflected ones world-view, ones space within the social heteroglossia. However, there is no one accepted definition of these terms and no need for such a definition. There is a need for an on-going discussion of these issues and for a debate of these terms, for a co-construction of knowledge. Conversations are a site where “multiple viewpoints are held in dynamic tension as a group seeks to make sense of fieldwork issues and meanings” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996, p.6) While Grant called for a debate so that these concepts could share a similar meaning, I would suggest that we need an on-going collaborative conversation so that these terms continue to evolve and develop, so that we can create a fluid knowledge which is a part of a complex whole and which is continuously changing. (Capra, 1996) This chapter seeks to become part of that conversation by examining the role multicultural literature and our collaboration played in Martha’s classroom, and by considering how with hindsight and critical analysis that role might help to inform the conversation and move the dialogue and to perhaps make change.
5.2 A Beginning

Martha and I began the year with the book Felita by Nicholasa Mohr. It is a deceptively simple book with a complex message. As the book opens Felita, a young Puerto Rican girl, is reluctantly getting ready to move to a new neighborhood with better apartments and better schools. Her family living the "American dream" have worked hard and are trying to provide better opportunities for their children. However in this case the dream becomes a nightmare as they are forced from their new neighborhood by ignorant, racist people who want them to go back and live with "their own kind". Back once again in their own neighborhood the family deals with poverty, strong family ties and Felita's jealousy over a friend's getting the part in the school play which she desperately wanted. In short they deal with the issues of day to day living, faced not just by a Puerto Rican family, but by many families struggling to make ends meet and to raise their children in the best way they believe possible.

As we began this book we thought it ideal because the relatively simple text reflected a family and neighborhood much like those of the students in Martha's classroom. However while the children were able to decode the story with ease, we quickly discovered that the concepts within the text were complex and difficult for the children to understand. We also discovered that their own experiences and understandings limited their ability to understand the text as written. Rather than read the text, the students read their lives in the text, and in so doing often missed points and lost the thread of the story. While this was frustrating for Martha as she informally assessed the student's ability to comprehend written text, it was both enlightening and profoundly disheartening as well. It allowed us to achieve a greater understanding of the children,
their sense of self and their view of the world, and it allowed us to rethink the role of multicultural literature for all children.

In the beginning chapter Felita's friends refer to the children in her new neighborhood as "gringos". Knowing the importance of this word to the rest of the story, Martha focused on it asking the students for a definition from their own knowledge or from the context of the story. The students struggled with the term, seemingly unable to comprehend that there could be a derogative term made in reference to "white" people. They also struggled with the concept of immigrant and with the idea that Felita's family had come from a country other than the United States, a country for which they had strong ties and strong affection. Even the most recent Asian immigrant children in Martha's class struggled with the notion of what made an American. They struggled with the notion that all the people in the story we were reading were immigrants because they all did not have dark skin. The children had no sense that we were a nation of immigrants and that their families had come for varying reasons from countries around the globe. They were simply Americans, and if not born in Ohio, they and their families were simply from a different state. None of the children made the link between Africa and being called African Americans, and none of the black children believed their families had ever lived in Africa. For the most part the class believed that they were just from Ohio and consultation with their families did little to dispel this notion as their families had little knowledge of family ties beyond the immediately proceeding generation.

Even more disturbing for us was their stereotypic views of African Americans. While still trying to help the children make sense of the term gringo, and reflecting the
comments made by the students, Martha tried to help the students understand who the people were who were bothering Felita and her family in the new neighborhood. She wanted them to realize that it was the "gringos", the European Americans, who were attempting to force Felita's family from the neighborhood. She asked the children to respond in their book log to the question, "are there African American people in the new neighborhood?" Martha's journal reflects her shock and sadness as she reflects on their responses.

Several students said yes because they were the people picking on Felita and her family because they fight people. Needless to say I was shocked to hear this explanation. However when I asked how many people believed this and had nearly half of the class African American, white and Asian raising their hands I was beyond shocked. I went to my desk, put my head down and fought back tears. Boy how we have let these kids down. I then explained (this time the tears did come) why we read multicultural literature in our classroom. We talked about stereotypes, a word no one had heard before.

By using this piece of literature we had learned many important things about the students. We had learned that the students missed key ideas and foreshadowing because of their inability to comprehend. We also learned that we needed to help the students move beyond reading everything as though it was a reflection of their own life, an ironic twist given that that had been one of our selection criteria. Even more importantly we learned that the students needed literature that reflected diversity, because even in a diverse classroom and in a diverse community, stereotypes predominated. Had we not used this text our stereotypes and our preconceptions would have continued to inform our instruction and we would not have met the needs of the students. As we began the year Martha believed that the value of multicultural literature for this class was going to be in
the reflection of themselves in the literature, and not in the need to see others who were
different from themselves. In our debriefing of this first text, Martha says,

I thought that these kids were fairly culturally aware. I thought we had a
multicultural classroom, and that they would tend less toward stereotypes, and
that they would be more open-minded, and all that business, because of their
wonderful mix, and I found out that that's not true at all. They still need to be
taught. I thought that the value of multicultural literature in this classroom would
be more of just allowing them to see themselves in literature and be proud of
themselves, be proud of people like themselves, more along those lines as
opposed to seeing other people and being able to look at other people and respect
other peoples differences. See I thought they had that. And I don't think so
anymore. I think I was making an assumption because they've grown up with all
of this, and had it in their school, that that was the minor part of multicultural
literature and that the more major part of it was just allowing the positive images
of themselves.

As a result of this text our understandings of our own views and of our perception
of the needs of the students were broadened. our belief in the power of literature was
expanded, and our awareness of the difficulty of the road ahead was heightened.

LD: You were saying that Felita is not as simple as it seems when you first look
at the book. And I wonder if the issues of stereotypes and understandings of
different cultures is not as simple as we make it out to be either.

MD: Yeah, I think so.

LD: And that it takes a while to work through all that

MK: Right and we just automatically assume that they're going to.

LD: Because then you go back to think about what happens in school, but there
is also what happens with them outside of school, and outside of school my guess
is they're pretty much in their own communities.

While Martha and I had both read numerous articles about multicultural literature
and had both talked a great deal about it's value, ours had been an intellectual discussion,
as it became practical and as the literature became a part of the curriculum we could
appropriate it for ourselves and transform our understandings (Rogoff, 1995).
5.3 Sharing Stories

As a result of the students stereotypic reactions to episodes in Felita, and in order to expose them to as many different cultures and aspects of those cultures as possible, Martha and I decided that each time I was in the classroom I would share a different piece of literature with the students. My purpose was two-fold to expose them to a broad range of multicultural literature and to model and encourage the enjoyment of reading. Therefore I shared the books as read alouds and while we encouraged responses to the books, and noted responses for informal assessment purposes, we did not require the students to respond to any text. We hoped that the books I read would be for enjoyment and would help to foster a joy or reading, and that they would provide the metaphorical mirror and window for the students. We also believed that we were modeling a respect for and an interest in a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Many lessons are learned not by word but by deed.

Books were selected for a variety of reasons and purposes, as a reflection or an extension of an idea or concept being discussed in class, to reflect the cultural background of a student in the class or because the book was new to me and one which I had enjoyed reading and wanted to share with the students. All the books shared what I believed to be a multicultural component. For my purposes multicultural was defined as books which reflected underrepresented groups, groups who have been absent from our literature and our history and or who have been misrepresented or presented in a stereotypical manner by mainstream society. As a result, the books considered issues of race, religion, gender, language, ethnicity, economic class and physical disabilities. They were not necessarily didactic and the multicultural component was not necessarily the
primary component or the focus of the story but it was always an element within the story.

For example I considered Petey Moroni's Camp Runamok Diary, written and illustrated by Pat Cummings to be a piece of multicultural literature, not because the author and illustrator is African American and not because of the content of the story which is a light hearted summer camp experience, but because the illustrations are "multicultural". The children attending the camp are represented as racially mixed and handicapped and while their racial background and handicap have nothing to do with their search for the camp food thief, a rambunctious raccoon, I believe the illustrations make the book multicultural, and further believe that books such as these are an important part of a multicultural literature collection.

One concern which Martha and I shared was the timing of the stories. Often we wondered whether the books would have an impact given when they were read and the fact that they were often read in isolation from the event which triggered their reading. In effect we questioned our own original goal. Was merely hearing and seeing a book being read enough? Did we have "to teach" each book which we shared with the students? An important issue to consider when using multicultural literature and one which we answered differently throughout the year based often on instinct or the sense of a teachable moment.

I began my read alouds with Aunt Flossies Hats (And Crab Cakes Later) written by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard and illustrated by James Ransome.

I choose that because I wanted them to see the illustrations of middle/upper class black people. They had such stereotypes of black people when talking about Felita. I thought sharing this book would be a good idea. The purpose is not to hit
them over the head with it but to just make this book a part of their lives/experiences.

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However, when I read The Bracelet illustrated by Joanna Yardley and written by Yoshika Uchida a week later we made a different decision. We wanted them to take more from the book then the idea of friendship and of remembering those we love in our hearts, we also wanted them to understand something of the reasons behind the unethical and immoral internment of Japanese Americans, and we wanted to reinforce the concept of Americans from different ethnic backgrounds which they had struggled with in Felita as we discussed African Americans.

We talked a bit about the treatment of Japanese Americans and some of the students seemed to have grasped the idea that they were treated badly. We also had the chance to review the notion of Japanese Americans. Martha tied it to what we had talked about with African Americans during Felita. I don't know if they understood any better, but I think that it is good that they had a chance to hear the concept again. It is something that they really need to understand and we became aware that they didn't during Felita. This might be a better book to use within a discussion of World War II and the Japanese internment camps. I don't know about its power in isolation. Again an important issue to consider when using multicultural literature. Do we use it just as a story or in connection to something in social studies or both?

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We continued to consider issues of timing and of reading books in isolation throughout the year. Shortly after Martha had had a Native American guest speaker in her classroom I shared the story of Iktomi and the Ducks written and illustrated by Paul Goble, and noted in my journal the impact her visit had had on the students and on their understanding of a component of the text.

The students noticed the thump-thump-thump being the heartbeat. Their Native American guest speaker had talked about that and they remembered and picked up
on it with no prompting. I think that it's exciting and shows how literature needs to support what's going on in the classroom and vice versa. If they hadn't had the guest speaker they wouldn't have known about the heart beat, but if they hadn't had the book it wouldn't have been reinforced.

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The timing of the stories read certainly had a relationship to the impact of the text, but we believed and I continue to believe that the sharing of the books on whatever level provided the students with at least exposure to a wide variety of cultures and experiences. Furthermore the sharing of these stories was not the only exposure which this group of students had to multicultural literature.

Another criterion for the sharing of stories was to allow the students to see themselves reflected in the books we were reading. As a result I selected Silent Lotus written and illustrated by Jeanne M. Lee to read to the class. It is a story set in Kampuchea, formerly Cambodia, and reflected the culture of three girls in Martha's class all whose families were recent immigrants to the United States. Having noticed that the girls were often together and were not often active participants in class discussion, we looked for a book which might draw them into the class and into discussions. Our fear was that the girls would not identify with the tale because it placed the setting as Kampuchea and not the name Cambodia with which the girls were more familiar. However our concern was misplaced, not only did two out of three recognize the location, they all responded eagerly to the text and were more than delighted to offer corrections of the pronunciation of terms and then to supply any information which they had about the country itself.

It was interesting to see how willing the three of them were to talk and to correct pronunciations, and to give us the information they had about Cambodia. It was
as if the book unlocked something in them. Was this an example of the importance of seeing yourself reflected in the books that are read in the classroom? Certainly brought them into the discussion. They were very willing to talk. Unusual for them.

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This story and the girls' reaction to it also enabled Martha to extend the discussion to an important issue stemming from ignorance and stereotype. She introduced the idea that many Americans perceived all Asian people to be Chinese because they were unable to distinguish people from various Asian countries. The girls quickly agreed with her saying that they were often called "chin chin" which made them feel diminished, and which clearly hurt their feelings and affected their self-esteem. We believed it was important for the girls to share their reaction and for the entire class to understand what was being said and to hear Martha explain that using such names to identify a group of people was due to the ignorance of others.

However, as a result of this conversation two incidents occurred which were disappointing to us, but also enlightening in terms of the need for such literature and such discussions to take place. The incidents also highlighted the necessity for great care to be taken in the facilitating of such conversations. As our conversation took place four boys sat at the back of the group stretching their eyes in imitation of what they perceived Asian faces to look like. Since no one else could see them, and knowing that they would not answer me directly, I asked them what they were doing, and they quickly stopped the behavior. Martha separated them and we discussed the situation privately with them later, but were still left with the feeling that the boys did not understand their cruelty or
the ignorance of their behavior, and that we did not know how to mediate that kind of understanding.

The second incident was part of the group conversation and was initiated by a student talking about her Chinese neighbors and their "stinky food". While the correction of the Cambodian girls and their explanation that the neighbors were Laotian seemed to have little effect on her, and while we hoped that our discussion of the need to appreciate foods and customs which are different from our own, and the importance of taking time to understand and become accustomed to the differences might have an impact, we doubted that it would make much of a difference.

As a result of these incidents we were frustrated with our inability to make change, and saddened by attitudes which we believed to be ignorant and prejudiced, but felt pleased that the events and conversations had occurred within the classroom discussion, were acknowledged by us, and could perhaps be dealt with over time.

Later in the day when we were taping, Martha and I said that maybe we were expecting too much too fast. We can't expect the children and their attitudes to change over night just because we hope they would or just because we give one explanation of why they should change. We decided that we were both guilty of expecting too much too fast. Martha said that it might be next year before we notice any differences. She also said that we need to be happy with small things, individual changes. For example, two African American girls were both listening very intently to what the Cambodian girls were saying. It really seemed to make a difference to them. Again to me the value of using the literature.

The response to the sharing of Silent Lotus highlights the importance of using multicultural literature in the classroom. For the young Cambodian girls it provided the mirror for them to see themselves and their families reflected in the literature being used in the classroom, and in so doing it raised their self-esteem, and enhanced their sense of
belonging in the classroom. For the other students in the classroom, it allowed issues to be raised which needed to be aired and discussed within a safe community. It provided the site for the development of understanding and the making of meaning. However given the complexity of the classroom, and the political views that are a part of the human experience, such views are often diverse and at odds with what we might hope for them to be. In this case our political and moral compass differed from that of many of the students and we hoped to try and steer a different course. We hoped to inject a different set of understandings into the interpretive community of the classroom. We were striving to help eliminate ignorance and fear, and in so doing realized that it was an on-going process that would take time and a great deal of effort to change. Teaching for social justice can be a daunting task. How can you ask children to want to change the world when they have no realization that it is broken? How do you ask students to change attitudes and perceptions that have been learned through their own life experiences and have been taught by adults who are significant to them and to their well-being? Again and again as we considered these issues Martha and I were struck by just how powerful and how complex they were.

We continued to discuss and to question our goals and expectations through out the year. As the year progressed an issue which became quite significant for us was what we wanted the students to do about the racism, prejudice and ignorance which we believed exited and flourished in our world, and which we were hoping to identify and to fight within Martha's classroom through the use of multicultural literature. Was it enough to merely understand or did we want to encourage the students to do something, to make change? While we never directly discussed or encouraged any direct action by
the students, these issues did impact our classroom discussions of individual responsibility toward each other.

In April, during the Passover season, I read two beginning chapter books to the students. I introduced them as books which were new to me and which were my current favorites. Molly's Pilgrim and Make a Wish Molly by Barbara Cohen tell the story of Molly, a young Russian Jewish immigrant, whose family has moved to America to find freedom and escape persecution, but who is taunted and ridiculed by some members of her third grade class because of her religion, her accent and clothes and because she must live above the store where her father works. In Make a Wish Molly, Molly is taunted because she will not eat cake made with flour and yeast during Passover. As she is being ridiculed during her friend Emma's birthday party, Emma does nothing to help or defend her.

After we read Make a Wish Molly, Martha asked a question about Emma and her mother and why they didn't defend Molly when Elizabeth was attacking Molly inaccurately about the customs of the Jews. As she explained it, she talked about the duty of friends to each other and about prejudice and asked them what they thought Emma should have done. This was a really good question and ties into what Martha and I had been talking about, about the purpose of multicultural literature. Is it to make the kids pro-active and to have them go out and change the world? Martha said that she had been thinking about our discussion when she asked the question. She said that she didn't want the students to turn out to be the Emma's of the world.

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Emma's inaction could easily be seen not as an error of commission but one of omission. While she did nothing to hurt her friend neither did she do anything to help or defend her. In this case silence appeared to be acquiescence and Martha wanted the students to understand that doing nothing was often the same as being a party to the
crime. Again our efforts were merely those of conversation, but in instigating the conversation we were placing the issue within the interpretive community of the classroom and were allowing the guided participation of the students in a "socially structured collective activity" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 146). That perhaps is ultimately not enough, but at the same time change cannot occur without understanding. As Rogoff notes in her final stage of participatory appropriation individuals transform their understanding through their active participation in activities, and the question which remains is how much transformation can be expected to occur without an initial understanding of the motivation for the action?

5.4 Reflection

Often during the year Martha and I took time to look at what we had been doing with the students and to reflect on our progress and to consider what it meant to us and to the students. By the end of March we had covered a wide range of texts representing numerous different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and covering a wide scope of history. The students had been exposed to Cinderella stories beginning with Yeh Shen, the original tale told in China, to present day stories of Puerto Rican Americans in Felita, to the story of Tecumseh in Ohio, and the stories of the Logan family in the segregated racist south of the 1930's told by Mildred Taylor. They had read The Carp in the Bathtub, the lighthearted story of a Jewish family at Passover and the equally amusing Curse of the Trouble Dolls, featuring a Chinese main character with her Guatemalan trouble dolls helping to determine the sex of unborn children, and the passing of tests in school. They had been exposed to dozens of picture books representing African American, Japanese American, Chinese American, Jewish American, and Native American, Japanese American, Chinese American, Jewish American, and Native
American cultures, as well as families from the Appalachian regions of the United States, and books about Europeans and Asians. (A complete listing of all books read can be found in Table XX) The children had seen books showing wealthy families, poor families, handicapped children, children enjoying life and children overcoming obstacles. They had had stories read and re-read to them and had borrowed the books to read to themselves. Martha and I had truly immersed them in print, and had fostered a love of story, and yet we still questioned what it was that we were doing and why, and even more importantly, we continually reevaluated the scope of our project.

MK: I don't know. It just scared me. I think it's just the whole thing of teaching is a scary thing because you have this power over these kids and you think -

LD: What are we teaching them?

MK: Yeah, what are we teaching? Are we teaching the things we want to teach them? That's why I think about things with my son. Am I teaching him to look at African Americans as someone different than us, the other people? Or am I teaching that there are African American people whose skin is different than ours?

This dialogue took place during a conversation Martha and I were having about the teaching of similarities and differences. While we had begun this project with a shared belief in the value of multicultural literature, we needed to construct and re-construct for ourselves exactly what that meant, and what we hoped to accomplish. Using multicultural literature involved more than merely selecting books and teaching concepts, it also required a sense of purpose and place. What did we hope the students would gain from using the literature and what place did the literature hold in the curriculum, in our lives and in the lives of the students? In the excerpt which follows Martha and I struggle with how we define the notion of difference, which at this point is synonymous with how we visualize the use and purpose of multicultural literature.
MK: See that's where I think you get into this. Do you teach kids to - the ultimate goal I would think would be that we are all people and everybody is different but two white people are just as different from each other as a black person and a white person.

LD: But the other reality is that if you are a black person - if everything else was equal and either you or I were black - whichever one of us is black would have a tougher life.

MK: Yeah, but aren't we trying to correct that. Isn't that what we're trying to correct?

LD: But do we correct it by not letting the kids know the situation. How are they going to fix it if they don't see anything as wrong?

MK: Okay, but I don't know if I'm saying that they need to see anything as wrong. I mean that I'm saying that it's good that they don't -

LD: They don't notice.

MK: Notice the difference and if we're making them notice the difference. But that's where the conundrum comes in because you can't do one without the other. I think we're making people see difference and in the same breath telling them that that's not important.

Throughout this conversation Martha and I continue to discuss the issue of difference and in so doing attempt to place a value on the concept. Does different necessarily mean less than? Are we holding up one way of being as the norm and then comparing and contrasting? Or out of concern or perhaps a sense of political correctness are we attempting to remove or ignore a concept which continues to play a role in our society?

If for however moral the reason we choose to ignore a situation will we allow it to continue or will we by our unwillingness to acknowledge it eradicate it? Or is it merely the vocabulary and our definition of terms which we need to change?

LD: That we're all the same, but we're all different, and it's nice to have some things that are the same that are in common, and it's also nice to have things that are different, because that's what makes life so interesting. What happens is that the reality is people are different. Even if you're talking about a whole bunch of
white people or a whole bunch of Native Americans, they're all different. And our natural inclination is to be afraid of, make fun of, ridicule what is different, and what I think we want to create are kids that appreciate the differences. You know what I mean?

MK: So we want them to see the differences but in seeing them just react to that difference differently. Actually I think I'm understanding it.

LD: I don't think we're all alike. I think that as kids we think we're all alike. But as we get older we realize that we're different too.

MK: But I think what I'm missing is that different is okay.

While Martha and I struggled with the concept of difference we ultimately broke it apart into two separate issues. Are the differences between people something we want to call to the students attention, and if so, how can we teach them to value rather than fear those differences? And secondly, as I kept insisting, given that differences do exist and that many of societies inequities are maintained or perpetuated because of those differences, what are we obligated to teach our students about difference and ultimately about social justice?

LD: But see what I'm thinking about is the fact that - and I don't know that we do it at fourth grade, but I think that at some point we need to make the kids aware that there are a lot of injustices that still exist in our world. And the only way they're going to change is if they as the next generation do something about it, that it's their responsibility. That if you hear somebody making fun of somebody else because they're handicapped do you laugh too or do you do something else? Do you say that's not a nice thing to do? Or do you even get more militant than that? Do you go out if you realize that a handicapped child can't get around the building, do you then get proactive about it and go to the school board and say there should be elevators in all our schools. What do we teach the kids?

As we struggled with what we were teaching and why, Martha added another complicating factor to our discussion. It was her concern that rather than teaching our students to appreciate the similarities and differences between us, that by pointing to the
inequities in society we were promoting resistance, we were causing the students to
come defensive and as a result were ultimately defeating our own purposes.

LD: No, you start on a more simplistic level but you can even start with first
graders, making them aware that the world is not fair and that people are treated
badly and that you should do something about it.

MK: That bothers me because I'm not sure that these kids can process that type of
thing and that they can - that what we want them to get from it is what they're
getting from it. I'm afraid that they're going to get something like becoming
defensive. I don't know if I actually saw it Sam or if I thought I might see it.

LD: The it's not me that's doing this.

MK: No not so much that as well I'm white - they can't separate the - I don't even
know how to say - it's just like a defensive thing. I'm going to defend the white
person because I am white. And not to be able to say that yes I'm white but I
don't have to be like those people. And it's like Sara saying she would have rather
been black because the white people - not even occurring to her that she could
still be white and not act that way. I don't know if these kids have that - not just
these kids but 4th grade kids are able to do that. At what level and how do you get

There were no immediate answers to the questions Martha and I were posing and
no simple solutions. Our involvement with the use of the literature enabled us to see the
issues and to ask the questions, but it did not provide clear or immediate answers. It did,
however, allow for more educated guesses. It allowed us to consider the kind of books
we were using and the purposes we had for those books.

MK: When you are specifically pointing out things and specifically reading -

LD: I think Mildred Taylor books and even Felita pointed out differences and
how hard differences can be on kids. Felita went over their heads somewhat.
Felita's family had problems because they were different.

MK: Yeah. Different from the people they lived around.

LD: And I'd want these kids to walk away with that thinking that the people who
were mean to Felita's family were wrong. They didn't give Felita's family a
chance. They just looked at them from the outside and saw a difference and didn't
go any further than that. Isn't that what we want to do in schools is make good citizens. How can we do that if we don't teach them to be tolerant of others?

MK: I think it's like getting at the same end but I question if we're going about it the right way.

LD: But what would we do differently?

MK: I don't know.

As we considered the impact which our choice of texts might be having on the students, and whether that impact was running at cross-purposes to our goals, we again considered the selection of texts, the timing of their use, and the importance of "teaching" about the multicultural component of the story. For a book to be truly "multicultural" did it need to hit the reader over the head about an issue or was it enough for there merely to be "ethnic" characters in the text? What kind of exposure did our students need if they were to become "good citizens"? Was there an appropriate way to begin to allay the fears and to remove the resistance which might derail the entire process?

LD: We're not saying that difference doesn't exist. We're saying that there are differences and they don't matter.

MK: But see not seeing it, does that mean that it doesn't matter?

LD: I think it matters to the people that are whatever isn't seen. Does that make sense?

MK: I think so. You were talking about The Curse of the Trouble Dolls, and you said something about it being not really multicultural. The only thing multicultural about it is that they have dolls from Guatemala and

LD: And the little girl

MK: happens to be Chinese. Isn't that - having the person in there being Chinese, isn't that important to the book?

LD: Yeah
MK: Because then we don't have any Chinese girls in here or boys

LD: If they happen to see the Chinese girl - yes, that is important. I think what I meant when I said that was that all the others we've used so far have been more blatant, hit you over the head multicultural. That dealing with some problems or -

MK: And maybe that's where we went wrong, too. Maybe we should have not started with those hit you over the head books but started - I think the picture books that you have, you really haven't

LD: Haven't hit them over the head

MK: Yeah, and haven't made reference to it, but see that's where I think an infusion of all that type of literature and just constantly bringing in stuff like that is important.

Martha and I did not come to any conclusions in this discussion, and we did not decide to change anything which we were currently doing in the classroom. However, this was an important conversation, it highlighted issues which needed to be considered, issues with which we were unfamiliar at the outset of our work together. For multicultural literature to have an impact in the classroom it is not enough to simply share the books, and it is not enough to want to develop students who will become socially responsible citizens. While those are admirable goals they are insufficient, they do not consider a sense of purpose and place. However, such a sense can not be taught, it must be learned through experience, through active involvement in the process, because only then can it be appropriated for ourselves and only then can we transform our understandings (Rogoff, 1995). The issues surrounding the use of multicultural literature are complex and the social and political forces impinging on them are enormous. As this section indicates we often had more questions than answers and as we grew and appropriated knowledge for ourselves we were often left with more questions, because it is only through the process of using the literature that we can find the questions, and then
it is only through analysis of the questions that we can begin to understand and to perhaps make change.

5.5 Analysis

The use of multicultural literature in an elementary classroom is a complex process. It is as much a philosophy as it is a practice. It requires a philosophy about the nature and purpose of teaching. It requires an understanding of the social goals we have for our students. It requires a knowledge of the curriculum and a willingness to integrate the literature into that curriculum, as well as a knowledge of the available literature. It, also, requires a willingness to mediate difficult and complex situations with students whose moral compasses are all set at different points. In so doing it asks that as educators we become self-reflective and willing to consider complex, emotionally charged issues, and to approach them not only by ourselves but with our students. It asks for a commitment to social justice and to change.

However, to understand the role which multicultural literature will take in a classroom and to develop a philosophy which will guide that practice takes time, a willingness to explore the issues and a willingness to implement a program knowing that the questions and perspectives to help it succeed must be developed throughout the process.

As I have noted throughout this chapter Martha and I began this process with a shared commitment to the use of multicultural literature and a belief in it's value in the classroom. We had both read a great deal and had discussed our perceptions of that reading, but had at the outset only an initial sense of how our "multicultural literature
program" would be implemented in the classroom, and even less of a sense as to how the students would react, and how we would change as a result.

Over the course of our year together Martha and I spent hundreds of hours discussing what we were doing and considering the impact we were having on the students. At the outset we had anticipated growth and change and in our discussions we looked for that change in both ourselves and in the students. While change did occur within the classroom, it was through our discussions that meaning was determined and understandings developed. It was through the discussions that we were able to bring the interdependent phenomena which formed us to the table, and it was through our discussions that we were able to consider the issues which frame the use of multicultural literature and which framed our thinking and our action in the classroom. It was through the stories we had shared in the classroom and then through the stories we told each other that we attempted to make sense of ourselves and our world. The discussions were an integral part of the process because it was through the discussions that we were able to transform sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995).

Through our discussions Martha and I were often able to reach conclusions and make decisions based on those conclusions. However, that was not always the case. Often our discussions merely opened avenues for further thought and consideration. In the present the writing of this dissertation has extended that thinking and altered my thoughts because this present event is linked not only to the past but to the future. As such the events are intertwined and inseparable from each other.

At the outset of our work together we quickly discovered that even in a multicultural setting, stereotypes and misconceptions about others from different ethnic...
backgrounds predominated. While our students often lived next to those from different cultures and spent their school days with a diverse population, many still maintained that it was African Americans who hurt people and that all Asians were alike and all ate stinky food. For us these and other stereotypes which predominated were disheartening and frustratingly difficult to mediate. However, without the use of multicultural literature and the discussions surrounding that literature, such attitudes and perceptions would not have been evident. Such attitudes would not have been brought within the interpretive community of the classroom, and such intertextual connections could not have been mediated.

Martha's and my decision to share as many picture books representing as many cultures as possible was made as a result of our observations and discussions. It was our belief that the students needed to be exposed to many different cultures in as many diverse settings as was possible. Through the sharing and discussion of picture books we believed that the students would have the opportunity to learn about a diverse group of people in the least threatening manner possible. We hoped that such sharing would also help to eliminate stereotypes and misconceptions about others from different ethnic backgrounds, while it supported and reaffirmed those who saw themselves reflected in the pages of the books.

We, however, struggled more with other decisions as we tried to decide how to approach the "politics of difference" and as we discussed the issues of discrimination and prejudice. Here our discussions were more varied and more complex as we struggled to develop a philosophy for our practice and an approach which would reflect our philosophy and our goals. While in essence we hoped to create a group of tolerant
"color-blind" students, through our discussions we acknowledged and struggled with the true complexity of the situation. Prejudice is still endemic to our world and we debated whether it was prudent to point out that prejudice, or whether by calling it to our students attention we were merely perpetuating the ignorance and perhaps fostering a climate of resistance. Was there a point at which students were developmentally ready to hear and learn about bigotry or ignorance and were our students at this point? Did it better serve our goals at this point to merely expose children to a wide range of books representing diverse ethnic cultures? It was not that we did not want to make change, it was rather that we were concerned about approach and genuinely wanted to help foster children who were open-minded socially responsible citizens with a commitment toward equality for all.

Throughout the year we worked with different texts. those like Felita and the books of Mildred Taylor that did indeed hit the children over the head and force them to consider issues of racism and stereotype and those like The Curse of the Trouble Dolls which contained "ethnic" characters but whose story could have been told with any character from any ethnic background. It was a result of using such diverse books and noting students reactions and responses that the questions we asked were fostered. Had we not used the books and observed the students behavior and had we not attempted to mediate discussions, we would not have developed the questions. Such questions can not be asked a priori. Understanding of the question to be considered comes only with time, experience and preferably in collaboration with someone else working toward the same goals.
Hindsight often yields answers to questions which we at the present can not answer. However that is not the case with the questions which Martha and I posed. Such questions will need more research and perhaps the developing of more questions. Throughout our work together Martha and I did not move the students to action. Our work with the students was often theoretical and occurred through the use of dialogue. We asked them questions about how they might feel were they put in the position of "other". We asked them to consider their obligation to friends. We exposed them to numerous diverse cultures in their reading. We saw students respond positively to texts where they believed they were accurately represented, and we saw students blatantly ignore discussions about appreciating differences. We did not as has been discussed in other chapters explicitly tell them what our goals were or the explicit purpose behind Martha's and my work together. We allowed them only to appropriate knowledge on an intellectual level and not through dynamic activities.

Perhaps we limited them because we were not developmentally ready to do more. Literature is indeed powerful. It can foster great joy and enhance self-esteem. It can expose students to worlds and to people they might have never known. And it can foster anger and resistance and can perpetuate hatred and stereotypes. Anything with such power must be approached carefully and with a great deal of thought.

As I now look at the data where I think Martha and I did not ask enough questions of ourselves is in the area of power. While we wanted the students to feel good about themselves and to respect others, we did not let them know about the power which they might have to make a difference. Resistance and anger often arise as a result of the perception of weakness. Conversation can perpetuate the weakness without fostering a
sense of strength, without creating a climate where change might happen. We wanted to create change in the attitudes of the students but we modeled only one way which that might happen, we did not go beyond recognition to action. We did not allow the students to feel the power that results as they attempt to right a wrong, as they become actively involved in social justice. While Martha and I were engaged in what we believed to be social justice, we did not allow this for the students and as a result could not add that knowledge to the questions we were formulating about the process of the use of multicultural literature.

The questions surrounding the use of multicultural literature need not focus on its power to influence and it's power to incite strong feelings, the questions remaining must focus on the philosophy behind its use and on the implementation in the classroom. What remains are questions of purpose and of place.
CHAPTER 6

THE END AS THE BEGINNING

This chapter seeks to be both an ending and a beginning and to serve not so much as a synopsis but as an opening. It is hoped that this chapter can provide a sense of purpose and place for the classroom use of multicultural literature and in so doing can serve as a sight where difference can be celebrated, where understandings can be mediated and where power can be shared within the social heteroglossia of the academic community.

Over the course of our year together Martha and I placed multicultural literature within the dialogue of both her classroom culture and the culture we created through our work together. However, as I have noted we were not working in isolation, but were a part of a complex interaction which as suggested by enactivist theory means that we are all "inextricably intertwined with all else" (Davis & Sumara, 1997). As a result the knowledge created is a part of a complex whole which is fluid and continuously changing. The learning Martha and I did through our work together, and the learning which has occurred through the course of writing this document is a part of an interpretive community which is socially charged and cyclical and which acknowledges the interdependence of all phenomena (Capra, 1996).
At the outset I argued that there were three texts which comprised the data for this dissertation, the individual researcher who reads and writes herself, the conversations and dialogues which Martha and I created, observed and discussed as we "read" our work together, and the written transcripts which serve as cultural artifacts of conversations and can be placed forward and backward in time. However, the document itself has become a fourth text, a text which invites the reader to respond. My perspectives, influenced by the events, voices and texts which at present comprise my world, have created this document, but the interpretive community which reads the document will provide the context for conversations and acts of meaning to take place (Mailloux, 1989). The recurring reflection action cycles which were part of the data collection process for this work are also a part of the context in which it lives and are socially charged (Bakhtin, 1981). It is my hope that this dissertation places its understandings within a dialogic cyclical process within the research community, and that in so doing this model enables the issues related to multiculturalism and the use of multicultural literature to become a part of a dialogue which will engage a diversity of voices and which will allow for change.

6.1 Once Upon a Time

All told this dissertation is simply about stories and the power in the sharing of stories to change the lives of the people they touch. However, in reality there is nothing simple about story, power, or the lives of people, and there is certainly nothing simple in a dissertation which explores these issues. This dissertation is the story of the experiences of two white women, a teacher and a researcher, who attempted to implement a multicultural literature classroom program in a fourth grade urban classroom. It is interesting in that it is a story about stories, and it is a story told from
stories. Stories can open up worlds and can allow us to see how are where we fit in varying social and cultural contexts. They allow us experiences we might not have had on our own and in so doing they broaden our horizons.

This study was based on the belief that our classrooms reflect our worlds, and that the choice of literature within the classroom needs to reflect the complexity and the diversity which comprises our world. It was also based on the understanding that the interpretive community of the classroom must allow conversations, because it is the conversation or text or story which allows meaning to be determined and from which understandings can be developed. The notion of change was also an inherent part of this study, and part of it's cyclical design. It was believed that as participants we would change over the course of the academic year as we attempted to develop the program which as I have noted throughout was a systematic, emergent process which involved open communication, mutuality and which acknowledged and dealt with issues of power (Erickson & Christman, 1996). As with the classroom conversations, it was through our discussions that we were able to bring the independent phenomena which formed us to the table, and to co-construct meaning and develop understandings.

6.2 Purpose and Place

We found that for us the classroom use of multicultural literature asks that as educators we become self-reflective and willing to consider, explore and present complex emotionally charged issues not only between ourselves but with our students. In turn it asks that we become advocates for social justice and for change. As such it is as much a philosophy as it is a practice, requiring us to examine our academic and social goals for teaching, and to explore methods and procedures for implementing the literature into the
curriculum. It is not, therefore, something which can just be considered theoretically. To pursue an understanding of the role which multicultural literature will take in a classroom and to develop a philosophy which will guide that practice, takes time and a willingness to implement a program knowing that at the outset there will be more questions than answers, and that while some knowledge and understanding will come through practice, that in reality the practice itself is about questions, particularly those of purpose and place. It involves out understanding not only the purpose and place of the classroom use of the literature, but the purpose and place of those reflected in the literature, and the purpose and place of those learning through the exploration of those texts.

It is through shared stories that we attempt to make sense of ourselves and our world. As Mary Dilg (1999), a high school English teacher so eloquently states:

I am a multiculturalist. I believe in the power of the imagined stories of these writers and the real stories of my students as they discuss them, to change our lives for the better (p. 107).

As such the use of multicultural literature is also about power, the power to make change. While the use of multicultural literature involves the exploration of issues related to difference, to prejudice and wrong doing, it must also be coupled with an exploration of power and the role which the students might play in making a difference. Conversation often has as its outcome resistance and anger as a result of a perception of weakness. It is, therefore, important that students feel the power that results as they attempt to right a wrong, as they become actively involved in the issues about which they are reading. Students need to learn not only about difference and the acceptance of difference, but also about social justice and about their power to make change.
6.3 "Differencing"

Multicultural literature should be about accepting, appreciating, and celebrating difference, rather than fearing its consequences. In fact in many ways multicultural literature can be synonymous with this concept of "differencing". It's as Martha said when we dealt with the politics of difference. "But I think what I'm missing is that different is okay".

Throughout our work together as we struggled with this question of purpose and place we continually returned to the notion of difference. Over the course of the year we had come to realize that Martha's students wanted and perhaps needed to believe that as human beings we are all alike, and that what we were doing in reality was exploding that myth. We were sharing stories which showed people both similar and different and were continually pointing to both their similarities and their differences. Through our choice of literature we were highlighting ways in which our history had unfairly treated many members of our society because of they way they differed from a self-proclaimed majority or norm. We were pointing out that many people fear difference and had as a result labeled that difference as less than, and were attempting to show that it is ignorance and fear which is the problem rather than difference.

While we struggled with this concept we ultimately asked ourselves two separate questions. If we want to call to our students attention the differences between people, how can we teach them to value rather than fear those differences? And secondly, given that in reality differences do exist and that many inequities are maintained or perpetuated because of these differences, what are we obligated to teach our students about difference
and ultimately about social justice? In essence, therefore, by asking these questions we were asking ourselves the important questions of purpose and place.

6.4 The Power of Differencing

Ultimately we were trying to deal with the power of differencing. I choose this term because it reflects the goals of those who believe in the opportunity of making a difference through the use of multicultural literature, and in the hope that it can in some way transform a negative concept to one which suggests a celebration. I also choose this term because it implies action rather than passive acknowledgement and acceptance. It implies social justice. It creates a sense of purpose and place and a chance to make a change - a chance to create a world that is different, because we are not just individuals independent of each other, but rather are a part of a complex interdependent system (Capra, 1996). I choose this term because if we can learn to celebrate our differences as well as the ties which bind us, we will make a difference, and we will make the world a better place.
APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please share your portfolio with me.

**Background & Culture**

Tell me about yourself? politically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually?

Tell me about your ethnic background and culture?

What role does your background play in how you function in the world? in the school? in the classroom? with students? with parents?

How do your beliefs and values influence your interactions?

What are your views on diversity in the world? in the school? in the classroom? with students? with parents?

How would you define diversity?

How do your views and beliefs on diversity affect your interactions with others in the world? in the school? in the classroom? with students? with parents?

**Explanation of terms & practices**

What are your goals as a teacher? What prepared and prepares you to be a teacher?

Define good and bad teaching? How does your practice measure up to your explanation of good and bad teaching?

What is multicultural education?
What do you feel multicultural education is not?

What books get selected for use in your classroom?

Define multicultural literature for children.

How do you currently use books in your teaching?

What role does multicultural literature play in your classroom?

How do you think your teaching might change by the end of this year?

Tell me about your prior experience with multicultural literature for children.

Community/School/Students

Define the Medary community. How did you learn this?

Tell me about the similarities and differences between you and the Medary students.

What things do you try to find out about your students and why? How does it influence your thinking? What things do you try to find out about the family situation? How does it influence your thinking?

What do your students try to find out about you? How does it influence their behavior in the classroom?

What role would you like me to play in your classroom? What role do you think I will play in your classroom?

How will your students learn about me?

How can I best learn about them?

Would you tell me about this year's students?

Debriefing

Portfolio

How did you feel about putting together this portfolio?
Structured Interview

What do you feel about what we have just done?

Did this process affect your understanding of the project in any way?

How has this process affected your understanding of yourself?

How might we change our process when we do this at the end of the project?
APPENDIX B

UNIT DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

Do you think this is a good piece of multicultural literature?

Tell me about your reactions to using this book. (and what you did).

Would you use it again and what would you do differently?

What do you think the children learned from this/these books?

After finishing this/these book what are your opinions of the value of multicultural literature for use in the classroom?

What else is relevant to our study that we haven’t talked about?
APPENDIX C

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE USED


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LIST OF REFERENCES


