Is October Brown Chinese? A Cultural Modeling Activity System for Underachieving Students

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This article analyzes the quality of intellectual reasoning of a class of high school students with standardized reading scores in the bottom quartile. The analysis situates the intellectual work on 1 day of instruction in terms of the history of the activity system out of which the dispositions of these students were constructed over time. The analysis deconstructs the historical dimensions of the cultural practices these students learned to acquire. Using a framework of cultural-historical activity theory, the article examines the knowledge base of the teacher, in this case the researcher, to coach and scaffold a radically different intellectual culture among students who were underachieving. The framework for the curricular design implemented and the strategies modeled explicitly aligned the cultural funds of knowledge of the African American students with the cultural practices of the subject matter, in this case, response to literature.

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In *Voices of the Mind*, James Wertsch (1991) introduced the idea of a psychological tool kit that all individuals draw upon to reason through problem-solving activity. The tool kit is made up of symbol systems, which are embedded in the experience of culture and history. Wertsch was influenced by Vygotsky's (1987) arguments regarding sociocultural history and the semiotic potentials of language. Perhaps, the most notable among the psychological or cognitive resources is language. Bruner (1990) expanded this notion of a psychological tool kit to include the concept of a communal tool kit that is accessible through culture. Bruner argued that through narrative traditions, cultures represent the canonical values and ideals and ways of acting and thinking that are institutionalized. Beliefs that are so institutionalized constitute an interpretive framework through which a member of the culture may make sense of certain phenomena. Wertsch also used Bakhtin's concepts of dialogicality and voice (1981) to examine the semiotic potential of language. Bakhtin believed that when we speak, we do not speak as individuals. Rather, we ventriloquate and transform that which we have heard from others. We sculpt our utterances in consideration both of the voices we have heard and the voices to whom we are directing our statements. Bakhtin claimed that in order to understand an utterance, we must take into account both the content and the perspective of previous dialogues. Two central questions for Bakhtin were: Who is talking? Who are the voices behind and ahead of that which we hear and that which we say? I will explore some of the issues raised by Bakhtin in relation to instructional discourse in a freshman English Language Arts classroom in an underachieving African American urban high school.

There are commonalities in the arguments articulated by Wertsch, Bruner, and Bakhtin. First, the quality of thought demonstrated by individuals is constructed out of interactions with others. Second, these others include those with whom individuals have direct contact as well historical others from whom cultural forms of talk, reasoning, and artifacts have been embedded in traditions.

This article is about a group of African American high school freshmen. By all traditional criteria, they would be considered underachievers. They are disengaged from schooling and speak variations of English, which many see as indices of underdevelopment. However, if the claims of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Wertsch, Bruner, and others are reasonable, then African American students who speak African American English Vernacular both participate in and inherit semiotic potential grounded in their use of language, ways of reasoning, thinking about the world, and thinking about story. If these claims are reasonable, then the quality of academic work produced by underachieving students must be understood not only in terms of what occurs in their homes, with their families and with their peers in neighborhood life, but also in terms of what goes on in the daily life of classrooms in which they participate year in and year out. In the effort to teach students who speak varieties of English not valued by the academy or languages other than English, or students whose families live in poverty, it is very important to understand the intersections between the ways that students use language

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and reason in their home and community experiences and the routine practices of classrooms.

This article offers an analysis of a day of instruction in an English Languge Arts classroom in an underachieving high school, Fairgate, serving African American students. I provide an analysis of the activity of the day in question and document the history of the classroom activity that led to the development of an intellectual community within the class. I also describe the ways in which the students' cultural funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) were incorporated to support learning. I use as a unit of analysis Bourdieu's (1990) construct of *habitus*, which is defined by Duranti (1997) as: "A system of dispositions with historical dimensions through which novices acquire competence by entering activities through which they develop a series of expectations about the world and about ways of being in it" (p. 44). I document the historical antecedents that shaped the students' expectations about participation in the culture of this classroom, as well as the ways in which the culture of this classroom was explicitly linked to particular routine practices from the students' experiences in their home communities. Although this article concentrates on the teaching of literature, the principles of curriculum design, instructional routines, and pedagogical knowledge apply across subject matters.

Background

Fairgate High School is in an urban district that has been known historically for its poor schools. Over the past two decades, middle-class White and Black families have left the city to avoid sending their children to the public schools in that area. In the last 12 years, the district has undergone radical reorganization. One major focus of this reorganization has been to shift increasing power to the local school community, including parents, community residents, and teachers. Although this reform has been useful in engaging parents and community members in a number of schools, it has had marginal large-scale impact on the quality of education for most students in the district, especially at the high school level. Even though there has been substantive improvement across years of accountability based reform efforts, students still achieve well below national norms, the discrepancies being greatest for African American and Latino youngsters.

Fairgate High School is an all-Black high school. Sixty-nine percent of its students are from low-income families. At the time of the intervention described in this article, the 1994–1995 graduation rate was 65%, in contrast to the state graduation rate of 80%. In 1995, 73% of the sophomores did not meet the basic goals of the state-mandated achievement test in reading, 25% met state goals, and only 2% exceeded those goals. The average ACT score in reading for all students who took the exam was 15.4. For students who completed a core high school program, their average was 13.7. These numbers are in contrast to the the state reading average of 23.1. This is a school in transition, with a faculty and administration who are working hard to

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transform the school. One of the school's reform programs is the Cultural Modeling Project.

The class described in this article is part of the Cultural Modeling Project. The Cultural Modeling Project is an attempt to provide support for the empowerment of the English departments in urban high schools through curriculum development, technology infusion, professional development, and assessment. It is based on the premise that students bring to the Language Arts classroom a rich array of knowledge that is useful for learning generative concepts and strategies in reading and writing. Although the project focuses on African American students who speak African American English Vernacular, it has implications for students from other speech communities whose language variety is devalued in the broader U.S. culture (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995c). The framework on which the project is based posits that strategic knowledge of the ways that literary authors embed meaning in tropes and certain literary forms is necessary to negotiate rich literary texts. The quality of response to literature that the project seeks to develop goes beyond summaries of plot. An idealized response includes a personal, empathetic response, as well as a response to issues of form and structure. Readers must come to the literary text with a mental model (Perkins, 1992) of language play as a worthwhile end in itself for communication. Adolescents who speak African American English Vernacular demonstrate in their daily language use outside of classrooms a rich understanding of and appreciation for language play. This language play is demonstrated most directly in a genre of talk known as signifying, although it is evident in many other forms of talk that are part of the African American rhetorical tradition (Smitherman, 1977).

Signifying has been passed down from one generation to another within the African American speech community since the Holocaust of Enslavement, referred ubiquitously by many simply as slavery (with the implicit assumption that slave and African American are synonymous). Signifying may involve, but is not limited to, ritual insult. One specialized category of signifying is called playing the dozens, as exemplified in phrases like, "Your mother is so fat, she got hit by a car and the car sued for body damages" (Percelay, Ivey, & Dweck, 1994, p. 49). Other categories of signifying include rapping, loud talking, and marking (Mitchell-Kernan, 1981; Smitherman, 1977). Signifying always involves indirection and double entendre and invites participants to look beyond the surface meaning to subtle interpretations to be inferred. It is vivid in its use of metaphor and often involves satire, irony, and shifts in point of view. African American adolescents who routinely participate in such talk make tacit use of strategies for interpreting metaphors, symbols, irony, and satire. These same strategies are required to negotiate literary texts in which such tropes and literary constructs operate to communicate meaning that must be inferred. Lee (1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997) developed an instructional strategy that involves having students analyze samples of signifying dialogues to determine the intended meanings for each turn of talk, and then extrapolate the strategies they used to con-

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struct these inferred meanings. Through this process, the students make public and explicit knowledge of strategies that they routinely use that have been intuitive and implicit. They then apply the same strategies to literary texts in which characters communicate using African American English Vernacular and in which signifying and other oral genres are appropriated and manipulated by writers for literary purposes. Such texts have included works by Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Toni Cade Bambara, and Toni Morrison. Jones (1991) offered an excellent analysis of the appropriation of oral forms in African American fiction and Gates (1988) provided an excellent analysis of the appropriation of signifying as a literary trope in African American fiction. The idea behind the Cultural Modeling Project is that African American English Vernacular offers a fertile bridge for scaffolding literary response, rather than a deficit to be overcome.

Another view of the project is that prior knowledge is powerful in the reader's negotiation with rich literary texts. Literature constructs a social world that the reader is invited to enter. Readers are expected to enter a subjunctive world, which may be very different from their experiences. The readers' skill, use of reading strategies, and their history of reading other texts allow them to enter a text world that is distant from their own experience. The negotiation process with unfamiliar story worlds is difficult for novice readers, those who lack strong reading strategies, and those who have little history of reading many different kinds of literary texts. This difficulty often results in disengagement on the part of novice readers and an inability to generate an efferent aesthetic response to the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). For this reason, a strategy of the Cultural Modeling Project is to sequence texts so that the initial set of texts for any unit are ones for which they have relevant knowledge of the social codes operating in the text while they are developing powerful strategies for reading literature. Texts in later units are ones for which students have less prior social knowledge, but for which over time they have developed a set of strategies that allow them to overcome the limitations of prior social knowledge relevant to a given text.[1] In the class discussion that is the focus of this article, the students have consequential prior knowledge that enhances the quality of interpretations they offer and their level of engagement with the text.

The class in question is taught by this researcher. During the first year of the project at Fairgate, four other teachers from the English department implemented the framework with the entire freshman class at the school. Teachers met over the summer prior to the school year and read a variety of materials on African American English Vernacular, response to literature, composition, and constructivist learning theories. They were asked to confront their assumptions about the language spoken by their students and to understand what intellectual and cultural capital their students contributed to the English Language Arts classroom that could be productively tapped. This researcher taught one class in the school for two reasons: (1) to understand the process of implementing such a framework and (2) to develop a peerlike relationship with the faculty in order to promote mutual understanding and

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communication over the 3 years of the project. The second year of the project focused on the sophmore and junior classes and the third year focused on the seniors. By the end of the third year of the project, the entire school had used the framework of the Cultural Modeling Project. By the second year of the project, the entire English department faculty participated.

The classes taught by this researcher were videotaped daily. The videotapes and student work provided the data on which the analysis in this article is based.

Is October Brown Chinese?

Rattlebone (Claire, 1994) was the first novel selected for the freshman class. *Rattlebone* is an imaginatively structured novel that consists of a series of related short stories that cohere around the experiences of a girl named Irene Wilson and her family and friends during the 1950s in Kansas City. The novel employs extraordinarily vivid language, with an imaginative use of African American English Vernacular, and illustrates a subtle unearthing of sociocultural values grounded in African American historical experiences. On this particular day of instruction, the class had completed several days of activities involving answering questions about the opening chapter "October Brown" that required close reading. "October Brown" is told from the point of view of a child narrator, Irene. October Brown is the teacher in a segregated African American elementary school. Not only is she educated, she also has tastes that distinguish her from the working-class families of the children she teaches. Below is a summary of key elements in the story, which is necessary to understand the class discussion.

> October Brown teaches in a segregated school in Kansas City in the 1950s. Her students are from poor families. However, October Brown is well educated and dresses as well as eats her lunch in ways that clearly distinguish her from the working-class families whose children she teaches. There is a running reference to rumors that suggest the children and their families are jealous of October Brown. In the beginning of the story, we are told that "We heard it from our friends, who got it from their near-eye-witness grandmothers and their must-be-psychic neighbor ladies" that when a child, October Brown's father killed her mother in a fit of rage. Thereafter, the rumor goes, the Devil visited October Brown and marked her face with a white spot the neighbors called "a Devil's kiss" (p. 3).
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> The child protagonist, Irene Wilson, is sent to school after her mother and father had a fight. Her mother is pregnant and during the fight the father inadvertently pushed her down the steps. He reports the accident over the party line telephone. Thus, Irene is embarrassed when she is called to the blackboard because she believes her rumor-mongering classmates are aware that her father pushed her mother down the stairs, and Irene sucks the chalk while standing at the blackboard.
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> Later in the school year, there is a huge snow blizzard. For the first time, Irene's father visits school to bring food for the children in

the class from the mothers in the neighborhood. October Brown, who wears dresses "draped at her waist or flounced, crepe with sequined dragons and peacocks, glittery butterflies, dresses that shone like the sun in the drab circle of dark clothes dark girls wore at the rear of the classroom" (p. 6), offers Irene's father, James, part of her lunch: "She peeled her orange, dangled her legs on the aisles. She held it out to him, a flower offering on a china plate. He shook his head no. She ate one section, cherry-slick fingertips into cherry-red lips, so proper . . . Smiling, she touched the many-colored, parrot-appliqued shoulder of her dress" (p. 12). There is a subtle allusion suggesting that October Brown may be trying to seduce Irene's father.

This article offers an analysis of one day of class discussion of the opening chapter, "October Brown," and a history of the culture of class activity out of which this day was constructed over time. For analytical purposes, the discussion is divided into three episodes, each of which revolves around one or more discussion questions.

In the first episode, the teacher[2] asks the question: "What does the narrator mean when she says they were on opposite ends of the same track?" This question refers to the scene where Irene's mother and father were fighting: "They were on opposite ends of the same track, and I knew from time and again that they would both speed up, bear down until they had only inches left between them, then they would both fall back and rumble until silence prevailed" (p. 7). The students were required to attend to the metaphor and symbolism of these lines.

In the second episode, one question is posed by the teacher and two are posed independently by students. The teacher's question, "Why does Irene suck chalk," refers to the section in the story where Irene is called to the front of the class while embarrassed, imagining that particular students whose families share the party line telephone with her family are aware that Irene's father pushed her pregnant mother down the stairs, and at the same time worried about her mother and the baby. Again, this question demands attention to an image that is both metaphorical and symbolic: "Certain that my mother's fall was preface to disaster, I stood there at the blackboard with the chalk in my mouth, sucking on the fact that one or the other, mother or baby, would die" (pp. 8–9). The teacher's question is followed by two questions initiated by students. The first student question on the surface is unrelated to the focus the teacher is attempting to establish. The student asks: "How come 'a,' 'l' and 'b' are capitalized on the cover of the book?" This is a reference to the graphics of the title on the cover of the book, *rAttLeBOnE*. A second student asks a question that implicitly directs the class's attention to the similarities between the fact that Irene's father pushed her pregnant mother down the stairs and the rumor that October Brown's father killed her mother:

> We heard it from our friends, who got it from their near-eye witness grandmothers and their must-be-psychic neighbor ladies, that when she was our same age, our teacher, Miss October Brown, watched her

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Table 1
Question 1

Track references in the text	Parallel patterns in the text related to Irene's parents' relationship	Prior knowledge associations
1. Opposite ends	1. Parents arguing	1. Two train cars
2. Speed up	2. Mother follows father up stairs, "not letting up"	2. Engine moving
3. Fall back	3. Later father would bring home sherbert and mother would rub his back	3. Social relationships
4. Same track	4. Same text as 3	4. Railroad track

> father fire through his rage right on into her mother's heart . . . The story went on that immediately thereafter, Satan himself had made a visitation to October Brown, and from that time until the year she became our grown-woman school teacher, the burnt brown of her left cheek was marked by a wavery spot of white: a brand, a Devil's kiss. (p. 1)

The third episode is driven entirely by an assertion posed by a student, "I think October Brown is Chinese." Although it is never explicitly stated, the clear inference is that October Brown and her students are Black. Thus, a highly provocative volley of discussion follows this young man's assertion.

Analysis of Discourse

I have analyzed the transcript from that day's discussion to determine the underlying structure of what occurred that day. The focus of the discussion was driven by the questions on the floor. The transcript was divided into three instructional episodes, each focusing on a question or series of related questions. The analysis then examines student and teacher talk in order to make assertions about the reasoning processes in which these students engaged as well as the sources of support for that reasoning.

Episode 1: On Opposite Ends of the Same Track

The first episode revolves around a teacher-generated question: "What does the narrator mean when she says they were on opposite ends of the same track?" The question refers to a scene in which Irene's parents had been arguing. To arrive at a warrantable response, readers must engage in analogical reasoning. Readers must reject a literal interpretation of the lines "they were on opposite ends of the same track" and must infer an unstated relationship between the image of trains on a railroad track and the relationship between Irene's parents. Table 1 summarizes associations that can be made between references to the track image in the text and patterns of activity carried out by the parents.

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I provide an idealized model of text analysis to attack the question as well as the pattern of reasoning in which the students engaged. Students had to recognize pronoun referents, use prior knowledge, and hypothesize a warrantable generalization.

- Students had to recognize that "they" in paragraph 2 refers to Irene's parents.
- Students had to recognize that the reference to people being on the opposite ends of the same track does not fit what had been described in the scene so far.
- Students had to reason that the reference to the tracks must not be literal.
- Students had to note patterns in the text that relate to the image of the people on the track.
- Students had to use prior knowledge of tracks and make warrantable potential associations between what they know about tracks and the pattern they notice in the text.
- Students had to hypothesize a generalization based on the analysis of the patterns and their world knowledge.
- Students had to test that hypothesis against the scenario in the text.

I note the pattern of reasoning in which the students successfully engaged for several reasons. With few exceptions, these students score in the bottom two quartiles of the distribution in standardized scores of reading comprehension. However, the practices in which they engage in order to respond to the teacher's question are consistent with research on the strategies that more expert readers invoke (Pearson & Fielding, 1991), the self-monitoring that characterizes better readers (Garner, 1987), and the literary inferences that more experienced readers of fiction routinely construct (van den Broek, 1996). The script is clearly teacher directed in this episode (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995), but the reasoning is still at a high level. Although the level of reasoning is advanced, the distribution of talk is limited to a few students. What should be the balance between teacher-directed scripts and student-intiated norms for discourse remains an open question, which is of particular import when orchestrating intellectually rigorous discussions among low-achieving students (Delpit, 1986; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1997; Wells, 1995).

Episode 2: A Shift to Student-Generated Questions

The second instructional episode differs from the first in that the questions on which the discussion focuses are generated by both the teacher and students. The emergence of student-generated questions marks an important shift in the activity of the class and in the level and distribution of student engagement in the discussion. The student-generated questions are complex in at least two ways. One question is explicitly stated. Shanee[3] asked: "How come 'a,' 'l' and 'b' are capitalized on the cover of the book?" Gutierrez et al.

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(1995) wrote about the need to examine the "counterscripts" of classroom discourse. Counterscripts focus on issues that are different from the immediate goals of the teacher. Often, they are pockets of activity viewed by the teacher as being disruptive. Although the student-generated questions are not direct outgrowths of the focus initially established by the teacher, in a sense constituting a counterscript, they are still consistent with the larger, long-range goals of the teacher in terms of apprenticing the students into sophisticated literary analyses.

In addition, during the second instructional episode, Shanee and Marilyn co-constructed two additional questions. The co-construction evolves from an interchange they initiate with one another. The questions are actually implied, rather than directly stated. Shanee said, "In the beginning, October Brown's father killed her mother, right? Her mama and father arguing. Her dad made her fall down the steps." As will happen again in the next instructional episode, a creative attention to "errors" opens up space for provocative literary debate. Marilyn corrected Shanee, "That's Irene." Shanee has linked two parallel incidents in the story, namely, the fight between October Brown's parents and the resulting violence reported as rumor in the very beginning of the story and the fight between Irene's parents that resulted in Irene's mother falling down the steps of the house while she is pregnant. Implicit in the interchange that ensues are the following questions: (1) What are we to make of the similarities between what happened between October Brown's parents and what is happening between Irene's parents? (2) Who is talking when it is reported that Irene's daddy made her mama fall down the steps and how was this incident known by a student in Irene's class? In the process of exploring these two questions as well as the question explicitly asked by the teacher ("Why does Irene suck chalk?"), the students end up focusing on and interpreting oxymorons, text that represent subtle interpretations of point of view, as well as attending to warnings in the narrator's voice. The paragraph that described Irene's chagrin when fellow student Jewel Hicks, "the pink-ribboned, talks-too-much, needs-her-butt-beat Jewel daughter of the on-our-party-line Mrs. Hicks" (p. 8) shouts out, "Her daddy made her mamma fall down the steps and her mamma's going to have a baby" (p. 9), is replete with oxymorons:

> Wailing is the sound you make to straighten out a **tangled throat** so that you can breathe, and to spill tears from **boiling eyes** so that you can see your **"Come on, Irene" way out into the hall**. Our janitor pushing his T-broom nodded, "How do, Miss Brown" in the dimness of the hallway, and the **cedar-sawdust-muted click of her high-heeled shoes** comforted me as much as her arm around my shoulders all the way to the girl's restroom while I cried myself into hiccups. (p. 9)

I have marked in boldface the oxymorons and metaphors that posed interpretive challenges to the students. The students had to link problems of prior knowledge, in this case the use of the old-fashioned party telephone line, as warrants in arguments about problems of point of view. For example, how

did Jewel Hicks's mother think she knew what had happened between Irene's parents? Additional problems of point of view are encountered through warnings in the author's or narrator's voice, as when Irene says (reflecting not merely her point of view but that of the author), "Certain that my mother's fall was preface to disaster." This is a problem of point of view because the narrator shifts throughout the story from the voice of Irene to that of an omniscient narrator who shares values with the author. The disaster being foreshadowed is more than the physical health of Irene's mother and the baby in the womb. Jewel Hicks's revelation that Irene's father made Mrs. Wilson fall down the steps leads students to question whether the assertions made about October Brown's parents are believable, which in turn is a question about point of view and the reliability of the point of view of characters. Problems of point of view are among the most sophisticated and challenging of enduring literary questions (Booth, 1983). The focus on interpretive problems as point of view in this episode was not initiated by the teacher, but by students, students with standardized reading scores that would not predict their initiation of such complex interpretive problems, let alone their ability to handle such problems with rigor.

The second instructional episode is revealing as a transitional phase in the interactions of this day's activity. First, the questions posed by the teacher in this and the first episode as well as the questions posed explicitly and implicitly by the students share crucial attributes. They are questions for which there is no simple right or wrong answer; each requires complex inferencing; two focus on actions in the plot that serve symbolic functions in the text (in addition to the book cover question posed by Shanee). These shared norms represent an evolving epistemological stance being constructed in the culture of this classroom. Although the questions are posed by two students, there is widespread conversation initiated by the students in response to these questions. If the student-initiated questions were only relevant or valued by the two students who posed them, the level of student interaction in responding to the questions likely would not have occurred. This happens often in classrooms where teachers pose interpretive questions that mean little to the students who then do not respond. In addition, the norms for arguing or debating these questions are shared by other students in the class. For example, using the interchange around the teacher's question, "Why did Irene suck chalk?", Trevor, Shanee, Marilyn, and Anthony all offer competing interpretations, cite textual evidence to support their claims, and recall real-world warrants to argue for the reasonableness of their interpretations. Figure 1 offers a graphic representation of the epistemological norms for interpretation in this episode.

Episode 3: Error as Opportunity

The third instructional episode is initiated and dominated by a question posed by a young man, Yetu. Yetu believes that October Brown is Chinese. For the purposes of analysis, I have divided the course of discussion into

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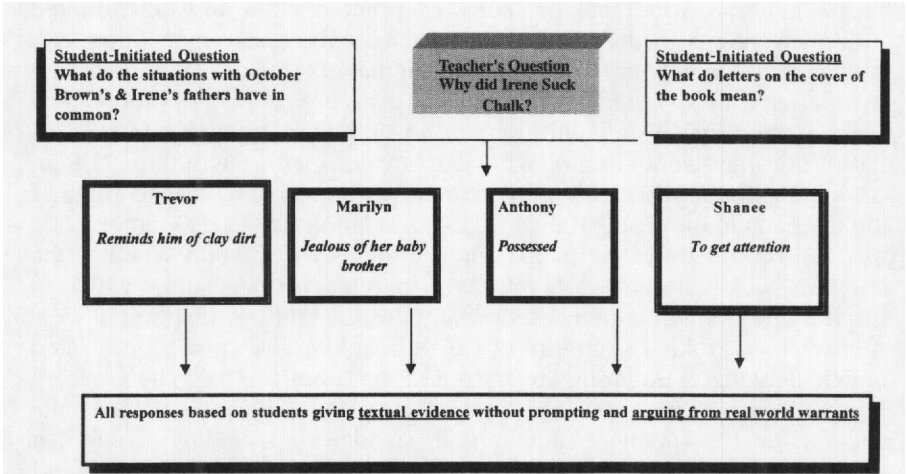COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS AND COMPETITION FOR THE FLOOR

Figure 1. **Episode 2: Establishing epistemological norms for interpretation and classroom discourse.**

these three distinct episodes, categorized according to the questions on the floor. However, the divisions are arbitrary. Once the students have begun to pursue the questions raised by Shanee and Marilyn, which occurs about midway through the second episode, the interactional space has completely changed since the first episode. The discussion abounds with multiparty talk. Students are talking at the same time, responding to one another, responding to several questions on the floor at once. The role of the teacher has dramatically shifted from one who directs conversation in the classroom to that of a coach who tries to make space for each voice to be heard by the entire group. Although not the specific focus of this article, it is important to note that the talk among the students is entirely in African American English Vernacular, not simply in terms of vernacular syntax forms, but more importantly in terms of the performance of the discourse. Students signify on one another,[4] display body language for emphasis, and reflect a rhythm and prosody in their speech that is dramatic and culturally Black. When Yetu hypothesized that October Brown was Chinese, he was bombarded with responses from students.

Yetu's question is exciting for several reasons. As with Shanee's earlier question about possible parallels between October Brown's parents and Irene's parents, Yetu's question easily can be construed as an error (although I have no doubt that a deconstructionist critic could well launch a warrantable argument that October Brown could be Chinese). As is the case with pedagogical techniques in some reform mathematics classrooms (Lampert, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992), attention to errors may reveal complex forms of reasoning pursued by students, even though they do not get the

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"right" answer. Yetu had paid attention to particular details used to describe October Brown:

> She peeled her orange, dangled her legs in the aisle. She held it out to him, a flower offering on a china plate. . . . She looked eyes-through-hair at him. She snapped straight and threw the mass of hair back . . . Smiling, she touched the many-colored, parrot-appliqued shoulder of her dress. (p. 12)

Underlying Yetu's claim is an implicit process of literary reasoning in which he (a) infers that an abundance of detail signifies importance; (b) looks for patterns in the detail; (c) make real-world associations with the patterns in the textual details; (d) hypothesizes a generalization that supports the patterns he sees; (e) evaluates the reasonableness of his hypothesis based on the details in the text and what he knows about the world; and (f) infers that external or physical images may represent an internal trait of the character. Strategies b through e are both literary and generic. Readers use these strategies to construct inferences and literary readers use them to make sense of metaphor and symbolism. Strategies a and f are specialized to literary interpretation. Rabinowitz (1987) argued that specialized strategies are part of the pool of accumulated knowledge from which readers of fiction draw as they make sense of diverse texts. As all but four students respond vigorously to Yetu's question, they also summon the same strategies to build their supporting and counter claims.

Yetu is asked by the teacher why he believes October Brown is Chinese. Yetu directs the class to the details cited above. Several students (not Shanee or Marilyn) contradict Yetu, citing other textual evidence from the beginning of the story:

> The story went on that, immediately thereafter, Satan himself had made a visitation to October Brown, and from that time until the year she became our grown-woman school teacher, the burnt brown of her left cheek was marked by a wavery spot of white: a brand, a Devil's kiss. (p. 1)

Students reference this section of the text as proof that October Brown has "burnt brown" colored skin.

At that point, an intense debate ensues about how to determine if a person is Chinese. A young man, Marcus, who has been so disruptive that he has been escorted out of the class to sit for a while in the hall, reenters the discussion. From viewing the videotaping of the class on that day, Marcus can be seen consciously making markedly grimaced faces at the camera, making faces at a female student sitting next to him, and generally acting out the essence of what Gutierrez et al. (1995) characterized as student counterscripts. As Marcus is being escorted out of the class by the teacher and other students are talking "out of turn," Marilyn shouts out: "HEY, excu::se me. y'a::ll so RUDE! . . . > ^You [referring to the teacher] need to kick his

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BUTT < ou::t this class."[5] Persons without insider knowledge of the nature and history of the raucously loud, overlapping, multiparty talk would most likely view the interchanges as out of turn and disruptive. Marcus returns to class in the midst of the debate over whether October Brown is Chinese. Monica says after quoting from the text about the burnt brown color of October Brown's skin, "Chinese people ain't brown." Marcus responds for the first time in the class discussion, "Yeah they is . . . They brown; they brown skinnded." Marcus's comment is interesting because what he is doing, albeit unconsciously, is refuting the textual evidence referring to the color of October Brown's skin as sufficient proof of her being Black, rather than Chinese. He essentially questions the warrants on which definitions of being Chinese are based. Marcus suggests that if Chinese people have "colored" skin, then that reference in the text is not sufficient evidence to prove Monica's position. Patricia then introduces a different body of textual evidence based on a different set of warrants: "Chinese women have the dresses where they have the like, uhh, sequined dragons and glittery butterflies and, you know, all that. Like the sun." Another student responds to Patricia, "Maybe she just like Chinese customs." A hotly debated conversation continues around the central question of what it means to be Chinese. This debate is significant because it is an intellectual argument over warrants in pursuit of literary inquiry. Both Kuhn (1991) and Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik (1984) contended that appeals to warrants represent the most sophisticated forms of argumentative reasoning. A debate over literary warrants, that is, what counts as credible evidence for a hypothesis when the text itself is insufficient, was initiated and sustained by low-achieving high school freshmen. The class debate provides additional evidence that an epistemology of literary inquiry was evolving as routine practice in this classroom.

The interactional space typical of the second and especially the third episode is represented by one stretch of talk captured in Figure 2. The interactional space is entirely dominated and directed by students. Students initiate comments to one another, contradict one another, and always cite textual evidence and real-world warrants to support their claims.

Shifts in Who Scaffolds Learning Across Episodes

The beginning and ending of the episodes are marked by changes in the questions around which instructional discussion occurs. One pattern that marks the shifts is the movement from interpretive discussion initiated by questions posed by the teacher to questions posed by both teacher and students, and finally to questions posed by the students. After ascertaining this pattern, the shifts in who was scaffolding within each episode emerged in the analysis. Scaffolding may be viewed as activities by a more knowledgeable person to provide temporary support for those who are learning. The temporary support may focus on strategies, norms for reasoning, and generally more expertlike ways of solving a kind of problem (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989).[6]
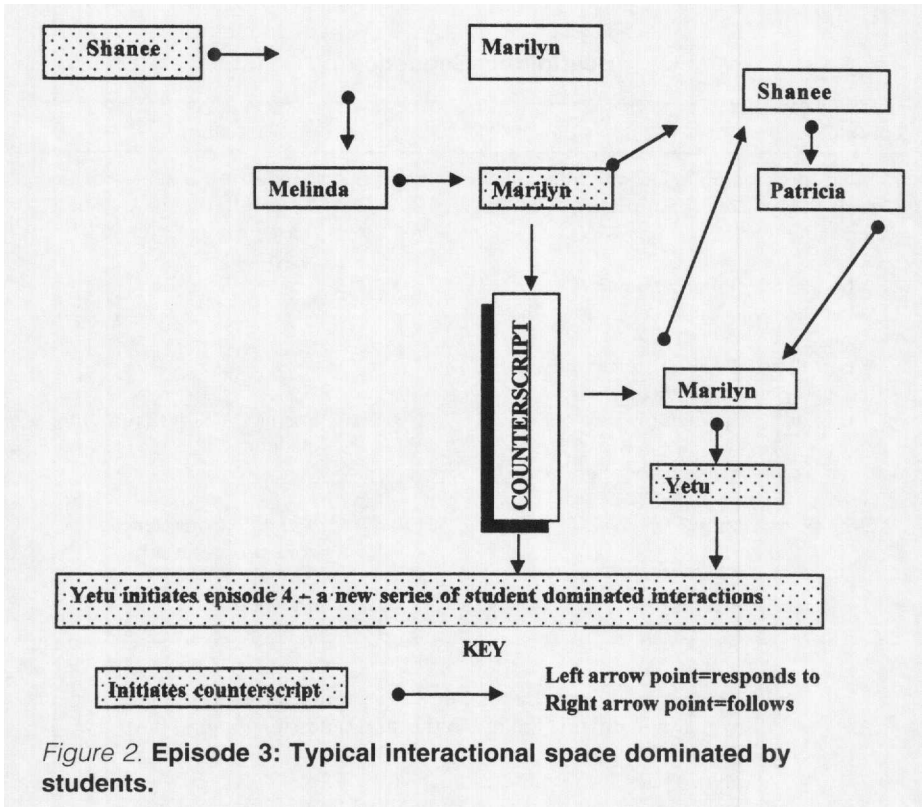
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Figure 2. **Episode 3: Typical interactional space dominated by students.**

After the first question posed by the teacher ("Why does Irene suck chalk?"), there is not the multiparty overlapping enthusiastic talk that is typical of Episodes 2 and 3. The teacher poses a series of questions that break down the steps in order to figure out a way of thinking about a question about a symbol in the text. The questions posed by the teacher (Table 2) model for the students how to reason. They invoke the need to examine the text for evidence and to weigh the reasonableness of one's propositions. Posed by the teacher, the questions scaffold the reasoning processes from which students draw. Each student responds to the reasoning questions, but there is little interaction among students.

By the second episode, scaffolding is shared by two other students, Marilyn and Shanee. When Shanee raised the question about October Brown's parents and Irene's parents, implying that there were parallels in the two subplots, Marilyn challenges her.

> Shanee: At the beginning of this book it said that October Brown's father had killed her mother. Right?
> T: Uh Huh.
> Shanee: And then its a part in this book where uhh I forget, let me see [flips through pages in her book], it says when her mama was

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Table 2
Scaffolding Sequence 1

Episode 1	Function
1. What does narrator mean when she says they were on opposite sides of the same track?	(Nos. 1–4) Model and coach—how to reason through a question based on interpreting a symbol
2. Who are they talking about?	
3. What are the mother's and father's names?	
4. When they talk about tracks, are they talking about a real track?	
5. Let's read that paragraph.	(No. 5) Examine text for supporting evidence
6. What is the comparison being made here?	
7. How do you know?	(No. 7) Weigh reasonableness of your proposition by drawing on text and world knowledge

going to, no her mother and her father was arguing, and then she said her daddy made her mama fall down the steps and she going to have her baby.

> Marilyn: That's Irene, uhh, mother and father.
> Shanee: I know but then at the beginning on the first page it say
> Marilyn: That's October's father did that to her mother,
> Shanee: I know but then at the beginning on the first page it say
> Marilyn: That's October's father did that to her mother.
> Shanee: I know but it but I believe that its something in common

because it say [inaudible comment from a student out of the camera's view. The camera pans around the room. Most students are looking at their books and quietly listening]

> Shanee: Yeah, her father.
> Marilyn: But now that wasn't done on purpose. Read through it.

That was not done on purpose. That was a rumor, that was a rumor. She accidentally fell down the steps. That was a rumor that uhh, that he made her uhh fall down the steps. (Lines 361–381, Transcript November 1, 1995)

In this interchange between Marilyn and Shanee, Shanee models a powerful strategy for literary interpretation based on structuralist principles (Culler, 1975). She notes parallels in elements of the plot, attends to the details through which those elements are communicated, and is ready to hypothesize a generalization that the two elements may represent a common proposition or they at least have something in common as Shanee notes. In her role as coach in this evolving apprenticeship,[7] the teacher makes public

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Table 3
Scaffolding Sequence 2

Episode 2	Function
Marilyn: Read it through. It was not done on purpose. That was a rumor.	Marilyn invokes norms for evidence—read it.
Teacher: What about October Brown and her father?	
Marilyn: That's a fact; probably is not because kids said that.	Marilyn weighs evidence and alters her hypothesis.
Teacher: You've (referring to Marilyn and Shanee) done something powerful; looking for things happening to different characters, but seem to be the same; they're there for a purpose; good readers think about that.	Teacher makes explicit powerful heuristic students have invoked without being conscious of the heuristic.
Marilyn: People spread rumors about Irene, but that was just rumors; and they spread rumors about October Brown.	
Teacher: If the author consciously put details there, why; who is the author trying to say something about? These are wonderful details.	Teacher makes explicit through the question another set of important assumptions about literary texts necessary for close textual analysis.

and explicit what Shanee has done so that both Shanee and others in the class may have access to this as strategic knowledge that is applicable to other cases in this reading and future texts they may study or read.

Marilyn adds another dimension of modeling in the full interchange. She models that the norms for interpretation and discussion, at least in this class, impart that it is okay to challenge others and that the warrants on which counter claims are made should be based on textual evidence. Marilyn says to Shanee, "Read it through. It was not done on purpose. That was a rumor." Marilyn also weighs alternative interpretations, again against textual evidence:

> T: What about October Brown and her father?
> Marilyn: That's a fact; probably is not because kids said that.
> (Lines 384–385, Transcript November 1, 1995)

Marilyn is willing to change her interpretation when confronted with disconfirming textual evidence; she also seeks the evidence on her own. In the scaffolding sequence in Episode 2, the major modeling is carried out by two students in the class, rather than by the teacher. Table 3 summarizes the key scaffolding moves by the two students and the teacher and the function each serves in moving the instructional conversation forward.

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The shift in who is modeling and scaffolding from the first to the second episodes lays the preparation for the intense interactional space of the third episode. The third episode is totally run by the students in terms of the focus of discussion, the complex interactions of multiparty overlapping talk, and the norms for argumentation. It would be possible to highlight only the talk of the third episode as evidence of the quality of reasoning shown by the students. However, my interest in this article is to construct an argument to account for the interactional spaces in the third episode, namely, that one must understand the history behind the evolvement of the activity. The explication in the "Analysis of Discourse" section of this article offers an analysis of the microhistory behind Episode 3. This day is representative of a history of classroom routines and activities that constitute what has now become classroom culture.

The History Out of Which the Culture of this Classroom is Constituted

The Santa Barbara Discourse Group (Green & Dixon, 1994) has made a convincing contribution to understanding the activity of classroom life. I chose this exemplary day of classroom discussion to illustrate literary reasoning and interpretation carried out by a group of African American high school freshmen who by most traditional standards would be seen as underachieving. I also chose this layered discussion because it is carried out entirely in African American Vernacular English, not only in terms of syntax and phonology, but also in terms of prosody and discourse style. The discussion focuses on a noncanonical African American work of fiction. Using the three criteria (students, language use, and text), the illustration embodies subjugated knowledge and persons. The literature on classroom instruction needs more exemplars of this type. However, at least as important as the exemplars are the insights into the development of this quality of intellectual activity. Did students come in on the first day of instruction eager and ready to engage literary texts in this way? They did not. Thus, while privileging the cultural capital or funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) that the students brought to the classroom from their home and community lives, I must also address how a particular culture of inquiry was constructed over time in this classroom. To address this issue, it is necessary to trace and analyze the history of activity, the nature of interactions, and the artifacts and routines through which certain habits, habits of mind (Perkins, 1992) evolved.

From the beginning to the end of the school year, this was a very difficult class to manage. Students complained that the teacher gave too much work, that the work was too difficult. They rarely completed homework and getting them to complete written assignments was always a major chore. They came into the class with clear epistemologies about school and school knowledge. School was a place where teachers told you what they wanted you to know and your job was to fill in blanks on worksheets or

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write single sentence answers that you could copy from the book. The answers were always either right or wrong and the arbiter of correctness was always the teacher. In classrooms, if you sit long enough the teacher will tell you what she wants you to know. If you are good, you will sit quietly, passively, and listen. If you are more aggressive, you will try to institute countermeasures in the form of disruptive behavior to change the agenda of the class to one more palatable to you. These students had experienced school in this way for at least 8 long years and had well-established ideas about what you do in school. There was a clear culture that they expected to find when they entered the classroom on the first day. The challenge for the teacher was to alter these cultural expectations, to craft a classroom culture over time and with the support of students that operated from a different set of norms.

The Santa Barbara Discourse Group believes that classroom culture is constituted through talk, activities, and artifacts. Norms for talk tell which members who can talk, when, and about what. Routine activities show members the interactions that are valued, the problems that are worth addressing, and useful ways of attacking these worthwhile problems. Artifacts provide members with tools, in the Vygotskian sense (Vygotsky, 1978), with which to conduct inquiry. In the context of this instructional model, artifacts included books, computer-based supports, and cognitively guided graphic organizers and journal prompts. Talk, routine activities, and artifacts are the stuff out of which classroom culture is constructed over time. Classrooms are highly resonant and potentially dialogic interactional spaces. Students, in particular adolescents, contribute as much to classroom culture as teachers because students either engage or resist the classroom norms. Because of these last two premises, I argue that what students bring from their home and community lives are as important as the hybrid space that is constructed in the classroom.

Through analysis of videotapes of classroom instruction over time, of artifacts of student work, as well as of the teacher's journals and lesson plans, six categories are offered for analyzing over time how this class came to where it was on November 1, 1995. I argue that classroom culture was shaped by creating community, building new norms for reading, valuing complex problems, modeling strategies for solving complex literary problems, building intertextual links, and using routine artifacts to support critical thinking.

Creating Community

When discussions began on any given day, students were fairly active and unsettled as they came in from the rowdy, noisy halls between classes. Because it was not unusual for some students to talk about/off task subjects while instructional discussion was going on and because some students were quiet and shy, the teacher routinely asked something like, "Patricia, did you hear what Brian said? Brian speak up so that Patricia can hear what you have to say." Time was taken on all days to make sure every student had a

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book and was looking at the appropriate passage under discussion. Although this may seem commonplace, it was not uncommon to walk through the halls of this high school and look through the windows of classrooms to see teachers lecturing to students who were sleeping with heads on their desks or who were looking out the window or talking to other students. This daily routine established a set of expectations for participation in this class; that is, students at least must look at the book and give the appearance of being alert. Second, the teacher made efforts daily to engage the most disengaged. A student like Marcus who acted out daily in class was asked to sit outside in the hall for a while until he was prepared to participate productively. Although the school provided teachers with the option of sending disruptive students to the discipline office for in-school suspension, parent conferences, or regular suspension for several days out of school, the teacher never opted to use these forms of discipline. She wanted Marcus and the several other students who routinely acted out to believe that they were members of this class community, that they had the choice of engaging or not engaging, but they did not have the right to prevent others from learning. During the November 1 discussion, Marcus's comments, which added another dimension to the argument over whether October Brown is Chinese, came after he returned to class from one of his regular respites in the hall. Had Marcus seen himself only as part of the castigated "other," I do not believe that he would have come back and directly entered the evolving debate. Several students in the class were labeled as learning disabled, went to a special resource class, and as remedial readers demonstrated problems with vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension well beyond the reading problems of the rest of the class. Again, special efforts were made to bring them into the discussion. Special assignments were designed for them that were consistent with the work that the rest of the class was doing, but in smaller chunks so that they would better cope.

Two other crucial routines through which a sense of community evolved included linking the texts to students' prior experience and providing routines that made students take responsibility for their own reading. Again, daily, the teacher asked each student to write down ideas about a passage in question on one of the routine artifacts used in the class. Daily routines might involve asking questions about a target passage, making observations of salient details from a passage, or making inferences from a character's actions or descriptions. This was always done *before* the class discussion. The teacher understood that the students, despite their low achievement, valued grades. They saw the work they produced and the efforts they extended in class as having a utilitarian function for getting good grades. They had high expectations for themselves in terms of grades. Knowing that their initial reflections in response to the close reading of a text would be collected and graded gave them a reason that they valued to extend effort. From the teacher's point of view, this routine activity socialized the students into taking responsibility for their own thinking and did not privilege the habit of sitting and waiting for others to think for them.

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In the midst of counterscripts, the most intense and interactional discussions occurred when students had opportunities to link their home and community experiences in meaningful ways to extend the thinking about a passage. For example, on November 1, the class was asked to hypothesize about what particular books October Brown might be reading to her class. During the days of legal school segregation and explicit second-class resources to schools serving Black youngsters, October Brown brings books from her own library to read to her students, but no titles are given in the text. Some students suggest that she reads the Bible, others suggest history books. In all cases, they offer textual evidence to support their claims. Shanee says she thinks October Brown brings the poem "Invictus." The teacher invites Shanee to bring in a copy of "Invictus" to share with the class the next day and indicates that she [the teacher] will bring in another poem that she thinks October Brown reads to her students. The next day, Shanee dutifully brings in "Invicutus" and renders a moving reading of the poem and the teacher brings in a copy of "The Creation" by James Weldon Johnson and reads that poem in the rhetorical manner of a Black preacher from the pulpit. On another day before the November 1 discussion, the students are working to interpret the phrase from "October Brown," "intuition is the guardian of childhood" (p. 4). Marilyn tells a story about being invited to a party given by a close friend and having an intuitive feeling that she ought not go. She follows that intuition and does not go. There is a shooting at the party and her friend is hurt. A history of links to the students' prior knowledge and experiences contributes strongly to the collective understanding of the text and assists in the evolution of an intellectual community in the classroom. This may be why on the November 1 videotape, Marilyn literally shouts to the teacher and to the class, "That's not important. You need to kick his BUTT<out::t this class." Marilyn is trying to make an important point and is responding to Marcus, who is acting out and diverting the teacher's attention away from the class as she escorts him from the classroom for his daily hall visit.

Building New Norms for Reading

Listening to comments that students make, especially at the beginning of the school year, clearly suggests that students in many cases did not see reading as requiring an effort to make meaning. Reading in school involved looking at or saying the words. Reading in school was looking at or saying the words, often to find a set of words that matched the words in the question from the back of the story in the anthology on the worksheet and writing down the sentences that contained the matching phrase. One certainly did not read the same text or passage more than once. The routine activities and artifacts used from the very beginning of the school year encouraged students to complete multiple readings of the same text or passage, consider multiple points of view, provide textual evidence to support claims, attend to unusual details in the text, and link the text to life experiences.

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Statements like the following were routinely made by the teacher:

> 10/23 T: I know that you did [read it]. I've read it more times than
> you have. (Line 50)
> 10/23 T: There are lots. There's not one unusual thing; there are
> lots of unusual statements about those marigolds. (Lines 122–123)
> 10/31 T: You have to read the book. You can't answer the ques-
> tions without reading the story carefully. (Lines 223–224)

Every day the teacher responded to students' replies with the question, "How do you know?" These statements were made by the teacher and communicated daily from the beginning of the school year. They were re-inforced by activities in which all students were expected to engage. This approach helped to develop habits, which Perkins (1992) called habits of mind.[8]

At Fairgate High School, the teacher must commit a great deal of energy to ensure that even the most resistant students participate in the intellectual activity of the class. Teachers who believe that these students cannot learn, that they contribute nothing of value from their home and community lives, and that their language is inferior are not likely to invest the energy, the tenacity, and the sheer will demanded to reengage students who have dis-engaged from school over the course of nearly a decade. During my 34-year career in education and my 3-year experience of teaching and conducting research at Fairgate High School, I have seen teachers who fit both catego-ries. This observation speaks to the uneven nature of the school experience for such students. The inconsistency of expectations and in the quality of intellectual and emotional experience with schooling may explain students' conceptions of school and how they learn to adapt.

This brief interchange from October 23 shows that the ways of reading and interpreting seen on November 1 were emergent and were not part of how students perceived school-based reading before this class:

> T: And third I want you to look again for unusual statements,
> used to describe the act of what they did. You know what they did.
> They took some stones and threw them to destroy the flowers, but
> Eugenia Collier describes what they did using some unusual words.
> Words you wouldn't normally think of to describe kids throwing
> rocks at flowers.
> S: Describe some words?
> T: . . . but she uses some words to describe what they are doing
> that seem bigger than what they did. They are unusual ways to de-
> scribe throwing rocks at flowers.
> S: I don't understand this.
> T: I'll come over there. (Lines 179–199, October 23, 1995)

Using the strengths of highly verbal students like Shanee and Marilyn in whole group and small group work and interacting individually with stu-dents over time were part of the activity through which the culture of this classroom was constructed. Lave and Wenger (1991) described the quality of participation by those who are learning the activity of a community of prac-

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tice as "peripheral participation." These students were learning to read literary texts in ways valued by as expertly as literary critics (Rabinowitz,1987) and sophisticated readers of canonical literature. This statement is not meant to suggest that all literary critics or readers of canonical literature agree on norms for interpetation. Reader response (Langer,1990; Rosenblatt, 1978), structuralist (Culler, 1975), deconstructionist (Bloom, deMan, Derrida, & Hartman, 1987), feminist (Donovan, 1975), and Black aesthetic (Gayle, 1972) traditions of literary interpretation are distinct communities of practice. Fish (1980) argued that the norms for interpretation constitute interpretive communities. Although I accept these differences, I believe strongly that two fundamental stances are required for participation in any of these traditions, especially for novice readers: close reading of the text, attributing generalizations beyond the text to what the tradition signifies as salient details, and a willingness to critique the text (Rabinowitz, 1987). Other empirical studies have suggested common stances among expert readers of fiction (Graves & Frederiksen, 1996; van den Broek, 1996).

Before describing the remaining categories that characterize the classroom culture that evolved, I offer a theoretical framework for understanding the other four categories of classroom culture.

Activity Theory as a Lens for Understanding Classroom Practices

Creating a sense of an intellectual community of practice and establishing new norms for reading reflect the goals of reform Language Arts instruction. However, Delpit (1986) raised a serious challenge to Language Arts reformers. She said that minority and underachieving students need to be taught explicitly the rules and language of power. Delpit's critique suggests a need to make explicit the strategies for problem solving. One of the pivotal goals of the Cultural Modeling Project (Lee, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 2000) is to make explicit forms of knowledge that students use tacitly in their routine everyday practices as well as to make explicit the links between these new explicitly articulated strategies and the academic tasks at hand. Analytical tools are needed to analyze how explicit scaffolding occurs in real classrooms serving students with diverse backgrounds. Activity theory (Leontiev, 1981) offers useful ways to understand the practices through which the culture of this classroom were constituted over time.

Activity theory (Leontiev, 1981) posits that any analysis considers the goals of the activity, the goals of the actors, the artifacts accessible, and the context of the practice. Looking at the history of the problems tackled, the strategies modeled and coached for attacking those problems, and the role that intertextual links (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) played in building a body of common practices is one way of understanding how the students on November 1 raised such quality questions, constructed heated and sophisticated arguments about complex literary problems, and assumed responsibility for the direction of this intellectual inquiry.

It certainly seems commonsense and axiomatic that students will learn to attack complex problems by guided practice with similar problems. How-

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ever, there is an extensive body of research that suggests that schools often demonstrate low academic expectations for minority and poor students generally through tracking, differential treatment in racially mixed classrooms, and through mediocre course offerings (Means & Knapp, 1991; Oakes, 1985; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). Newman and Associates (1996) suggested that the use of authentic teaching (a term they used) in the schools they studied did not have much impact over more traditional teaching on the achievement standards of minority underachieving students. In Fairgate High School, there were no advanced placement courses at all. There was one honors class at each grade level for English. However, the classes were more similar to regular classes in high-achieving high schools than to honors classes in such institutions. The need to focus on complex intellectual problems (in this case, the study of literature) may not be as axiomatic as it seems because these practices are not the norm in most underachieving high schools. An analysis of both student talk, especially the distribution of talk, and of student work indicates that students have not mastered reasoning through such problems by the eighth week of school. However, comparisons of the quality of reasoning and the distribution of talk from the beginning of the school year as students tackle such problems indicates tremendous progress.

Valuing Complex Problems and Building Intertextual Links

Table 4 lists examples of the intellectual problems posed by texts and tackled by the students. The texts were chosen thematically because the students contributed much from their life experiences to the texts and because each story revolved around central images, metaphors, and vivid figurative language through which essential symbols and points of view are communicated. The sequence of the texts provided a history of common practice by posing similar rhetorical and interpretive problems over time. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) argued for the importance of intertextual links in classroom instruction and discourse. It is important to note again that the questions highlighted probably reflect a structuralist (Culler, 1975) or New Critics' (Ransom, 1941) close textual analysis. Some may argue that a more personalized reader response (Tompkins, 1980) approach would be more appropriate where students primarily make personal and affective responses to the text. I absolutely agree with Rosenblatt (1978) that an aesthetic response to the texts allows students to subjunctively enter the text world. I am also convinced that they negotiate that subjunctivity through close textual analysis and an ability to link the world of the text to some anchors in their own personal experience. This is particularly so for underachieving, disengaged novice readers who are asked to read canonical texts that are obtuse in syntax, vocabulary, and removed in terms of the social codes that operate in the world of the texts. In some sense, the most widespread effect of the traditional English Language Arts curriculum at the high school level for most students is tremendous disengagement. The net result for most students is to dedicate themselves after high school never to read Shakespeare, Keats, or

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Table 4

Valuing Complex Problems and Intertextual Links

To Da-Duh, In Memoriam Paule Marshall	1. What do the images used to describe the shed in the beginning of the story and the images used to describe Da-Duh's orchard have in common? 2. What might images of light and dark stand for in this story? 3. What do you think the tree in the orchard might symbolize? 4. What do you think Da-Duh's garden symbolized in the story?
Marigolds Eugenia Collier	1. Looking closely at the descriptions of the marigolds, what do you think the marigolds represented to Miss Lottie? to the children? 2. Why do you think the author uses the term "beheaded" to describe Joey's destruction of the garden? 3. What does the narrator mean when she says in retrospect, "And I too have planted marigolds"? 4. Why do you think the scene between the mother and father is in the story?
Rattlebone—"October Brown" Maxine Claire	1. Whose point of view is represented in the statement, "Intuition is the guardian of childhood; it was keen in us, and we were right"? 2. In the context of the story, what does the phrase "They were on opposite ends of the same track" mean? 3. Why does Irene suck chalk?

Faulkner ever again in life. The focus over time on problems of symbolism, points of view, and interpretation of complex inferences in this class was cultural modeling's curriculum design to apprentice these students into a community of intellectual inquiry that valued problems that demanded close textual analysis.

Modeling Strategies for Solving Complex Literary Problems

A young man at Fairgate High School talked to me about his math class. He complained that the teacher would give the class problems, but when students experienced difficulties, the teacher would tell them to try to discover how to tackle the problem on their own. He said, "She won't tell us." Included in the questions at the end of selections in the anthologies once used by the department (which I am sure are representative of literature anthologies generally) were product questions. The questions are posed after the student has read the story or poem and they presume that a process of close reading has preceded. Langer (1990) talked about the horizons of possibility

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that emerge while one is reading. The modeling strategies and the artifacts used over time from the beginning of the school year were aimed at helping students learn how to construct horizons of possibilities while they were reading. When the broader questions were encountered that spanned episodes and details across the text, the students were already engaged in paying close attention to detail and thinking about the details while they were in the midst of reading. Using the artifacts and the modeling strategies are one attempt to address Delpit's (1986) challenge about the need to be explicit in instruction.

Thelma Hilton, one of the teachers who works in the Cultural Modeling Project with me, explicitly articulated the cornerstones of this instructional framework. She said that the three most important aspects of this program were modeling the strategies, helping the students take responsibility for their own close reading and thinking, and engaging the students in close reading of the texts, a process that makes the pace of instruction very slow. She lamented the fact that some teachers see coverage as the aim and define their responsibilities as having exposed students to texts. Mrs. Hilton always asks herself, "Did the students learn?" Not, "Did I teach?" She compared modeling strategies for solving interpretive problems with the Biblical story of Jesus teaching the masses to fish, rather than Jesus giving them the fish.

From the beginning of the school year, the class analyzed samples of signifying dialogues. As previously stated, signifying is a form of discourse in the African American speech community that involves innuendo, double entendre, satire, and irony, and is dense in figurative language. It often involves forms of ritual insult, but is not limited to insult. An example of signifying might be "Yo mama so skinny, she can do the hula hoop in a cheerio." African American adolescents and adults who speak African American English Vernacular participate in this form of language play (Abrahams, 1970; Kochman, 1972; Labov, 1972; Mitchell-Kernan, 1981; Smitherman, 1977). This discourse form privileges indirection, multiple layers of meaning, and language play as valuable in their own right. The routine practice of this kind of talk necessarily engages participants in reasoning about issues of irony and satire and socializes participants into valuing certain aesthetic stances toward language that are central to the practice of literary interpretation (Lee, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997). In other studies using signifying as a model for strategies to detect the need to reject literal interpretations and to reconstruct an inferred interpretation, students have achieved statistically significant gains in achievement (Lee 1993, 1995a, 1995b).

The modeling activities were central to the construction of an intellectual community in the class. The modeling activities are a form of guided participation (Rogoff, 1995). Through the use of modeling activities, students practice the strategies that will be used to solve problems in canonical texts while receiving guidance and support from the teacher and more knowledgeable others (such as other students in small group work). African American adolescents who speak African American English Vernacular and

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participate in signifying dialogues in their everyday lives have a form of tacit knowledge that is applicable to the analysis of canonical literary texts. This tacit knowledge, however, is limited to the circumstances of their everyday talk. When students face problems of interpreting figurative language, symbols, irony, and satire in canonical literary texts, they do not consciously refer to the strategies they use to understand and participate in signifying dialogues outside the school. This is because that everyday knowledge is not linked to other instantiations and is, therefore, inert and not generalizable. Through the instructional conversations in which students analyze stretches of signifying dialogues, the teacher asks the students to make public how they know the meaning of each turn of talk in a signifying dialogue. The teacher then provides the students with a more abstract language in which to couch the strategies they use. The teacher also helps the students to make connections between the strategies they make public regarding their interpretation of the signifying dialogues and the application of the strategies to the canonical texts that follow in the instructional unit. These modeling activities were characterized by metacognitive talk in which students focus on their processes of reasoning.

Students were asked to hypothesize, weigh evidence, and alter their hypotheses as evidence warranted. In addition to analyzing samples of signifying dialogues in order to construct a mental model of the norms for interpretation that were valued in this class, the modeling continued in the form of coaching students as they engaged daily in the practice of interpretation. This coaching involved offering students feedback as they attended to details that stood out because they were unusual or because they were densely repeated in the context. The artifacts routinely used across time coupled with the verbal coaching from the teacher and eventually from other students in small groups were the tools that students used to act on the complex problems posed.

Although the examples are taken from literature classes, the approach to modeling strategies by drawing on students' prior knowledge and world experiences has applications across subject matters. For example, the Algebra Project (Moses, 1994) helps students to make analogies between navigating points and directionality on a transit system and positive and negative integers on a number line. The method is conceptually similar to the approach of the Cultural Modeling Project, which helps students make connections between their knowledge of signifying and the demands of reading canonical literary texts. Another example is provided by Che Che Konnen (Rosebery, Warren, & Conant, 1992), a group of science teachers and researchers associated with the Technical Educational Research Center (TERC). They apprentice linguistically and ethnically diverse students in the Cambridge, MA, area into strategic uses of scientific discourse. One exemplary case involved Haitian American students who were learning the scientific representation or inscription of sound by constructing analogies between their knowledge of Afro-Haitian drum techniques and sound production with computer-generated scientific inscriptions (Conant, 1996). Stu-

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dents also communicated alternatively in both English and Haitian Creole as they appropriated norms for scientific discourse.

Using Routine Artifacts To Support Critical Thinking

The artifacts used routinely from the first few weeks of instruction are likened to tools to support thinking. Vygotsky (1987) argued that tools augmented and extended the possibilities of thought. For example, hypertext technology restructures how we think about linearity in texts. The traditional sense of story grammar may be historically altered by the evolution of this technological tool. Although the tradition of stream-of-consciousness fiction was a conceptual tool that restructured how readers think about the structure of storytelling, the universe of readers of such texts is relatively small. The computer tools that support hypertext environments are more accessible, used more widely, and are likely to have a more distributed impact on thinking. In cultural-historical activity theory (Cole, 1996), tools or mediating artifacts are not only material (e.g., a hammer or a computer) but ideational (e.g., software programs, theorems in geometry, or literary constructs such as symbolism and unreliable narrators). Although some of the artifacts routinely employed in this class were physical (e.g., the use of computers), most were ideational, such as routine categories of questions, graphic organizers, and software programs that scaffolded literary response.[9]

In an attempt to distribute expertise (Salomon, 1993), students were asked to answer detailed questions about each page of an assigned text in order to influence active attention to salient details while they were in the process of reading, rather than after they had completed reading. Students had to answer the questions in writing before class discussions occurred. The teacher walked around the room while students responded to the questions in order to provide support for problems individual students were having. Although some of the activity occurred as homework, much of it took place in class in order to ensure that each student engaged in the activity. Especially at the beginning of the school year, the teacher could not depend on the majority of students to complete homework assignments. If the teacher had depended on homework in order to move along the pace of instruction, she would also have lost many students who were disengaged from school.

In addition to the categories of close reading questions answered while students were in the process of reading, students almost daily used another tool or artifact aimed at apprenticing them into taking responsibility for monitoring their own emerging understandings. Reading research documents that poor readers do not engage in metacognitive or executive control over whether they are understanding in order to take active steps to resolve their lack of comprehension (Garner, 1987). The reflective journal was used each time students began a new reading assignment. In this journal, students recorded questions they had while reading, posited possible responses to those questions, described evidence that might support what they thought

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Table 5
Student-Generated Questions: Marigolds—Eugenia Colliers

Questions generated by students during the fifth week of instruction	Quality of questions
1. If Lizabeth hates the marigolds, why does she talk about them as rising "suddenly and shockingly a dazzling strip of bright blossoms and clumped together in enormous mounds warm and passionate and sun golden?"	These questions do not have simple right or wrong answers. They focus on the internal states of characters that must be inferred from the story. They also focus explicitly on interpreting the specific language of the text, with a clear attention to figurative language, as in Questions 1, 7, and 9. Raising questions of this sort indicate that students are engaging in metacognitive strategies, monitoring their understanding of the story as it evolves. The discussion that followed on their questions, rather than the teachers.
2. Why did Lizabeth feel ashamed after acting so mean?	
3. Why do they want to bother Miss Lottie's flowers?	
4. Why don't they want something in their neighborhood to look nice?	
5. Why was Miss Lottie so overprotective with her flowers?	
6. Why would Miss Lottie put flowers in front of her yard instead of remodeling her house?	
7. What did Lizabeth mean by "my favorite gesture of phony bravado"?	
8. What did the narrator mean when she said the marigolds interfered with the perfect ugliness of the place?	
9. What does Lizabeth mean when she says "we children were not consciously aware of how thick were the bars of our cages"?	
10. Why did the children think Miss Lottie was a witch?	

was a reasonable response to their questions, and what others might say to counter that position. Because the journal was so detailed, students did not complete all sections all the time. The process yielded thoughtful and complex question posing. After 5 weeks of instruction, students read the short story "Marigolds" (Collier, 1992). The quality of questions raised by the students in their journals reflected their understanding of the quality of questions this community had come to value. They are not questions about plot, but rather about the internal motivations of characters that must be inferred and about the meaning of specific figurative language in the story. Table 5 includes a sample of questions generated by students weeks before November 1, during the analysis of the short story "Marigolds." These questions became the source of whole and small group discussions.

As a conceptual tool, the reflective journal is also used in other subject areas. Lampert and Ball (1998) used journal entries in their reform math classes as a daily routine in which students communicated their understanding of the mathematical problem being investigated, the procedures they

used to solve the problem, and an explanation of why their answer and how they solved the problem made sense. The structure of the journal provided daily guidance about a mode of reasoning that was valued not only in that class, but as part of the cultural practice of mathematics. I continue to point out connections between this literature class and classes in reform-based instruction in other subject areas because the point of this argument is not subject matter specific.

As preparation for the complex literary questions listed in Table 5, students used various graphic organizers developed by the Cultural Modeling Project to record observations from their close reading and to structure ways of reasoning about particular categories of questions. For example, students recorded details from descriptions of the marigolds in "Marigolds" (Collier, 1992) or details from descriptions of Da-Duh's garden in "To Da-Duh, In Memoriam" (Marshall, 1992). The visual record became an object about which hypothesizing about generalizations and significance occurred. The activity occurred in small and whole group work. It recurred from the first weeks of instruction, almost daily, not only through the November 1 class, which is the subject of this article, but through the end of the school year.

One particular graphic organizer tool was a table structure. When students were given questions about symbolic images, they were asked to list in a two or three-column table all the references that were associated with that image in one column. In a second column, they were asked to hypothesize about the patterns they saw in the details listed in the first column. Through discussion in whole group and in small group work, students weighed the evidence that supported their hypotheses. Whole group discussions invited multiple and often rival hypotheses for debate, not debate aimed at one right conclusion, but rather at the reasonableness of multiple possible points of view.

Finally, it was understood that vocabulary was an important variable in negotiating texts. Although it was equally important that students memorize vocabulary, it was also important that they be empowered to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words from the contexts in which they are used. Thus, another routine artifact used was sheets of paper on which were listed sentences and paragraphs from the assigned texts with vocabulary highlighted. Students were asked to make predictions from the context about the meaning of words and to match that prediction with the definition from the dictionary. Again, the attempt was to teach the students to fish rather than simply to feed them directly.

The culture of this classroom of African American underachieving freshmen that is evident in the discussion that occurred on November 1, 1995 evolved slowly over an 8-week period. The evolution continued during the school year as patterns of interactions, strategies for attacking interpretive problems in canonical literature, categories and qualities of problems, and patterns of rhetorical possibilities across texts were negotiated between the teacher and students and among students. The talk, problems, modes of

Table 6

Activity Through Which Classroom Culture Is Constituted

Creating community	Building new norms for reading	Valuing complex problems	Modeling strategies	Building intertextual links	Artifacts
Expect all to read text	Value multiple readings	Symbolism	Signifying strategies	Common problems across	Reflective journals
Speak so others can hear you	Multiple points of view	Point of view	Close reading	To Da-Dub—Marshall	Tables to analyze symbols
Praise the disengaged	Invoke textual evidence	Complex inferences	Attention to details	Marigolds—Collier	Close reading questions
Link prior experience	Attend to unusual details		Hypothesizing	Rattlebone—Claire	Graphic organizers
Take responsibility	Link to life experiences		Weighing evidence		Using context
	Close reading of text				vocab sheets

reasoning, texts, and artifacts constituted the activity system (Engestrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999; Leontiev, 1981) through which classroom culture was constructed. Table 6 summarizes each of these categories.

Script, Counterscript, and Teacher Knowledge

One dimension of understanding the history and nature of the activity system out of which the intellectual quality of the students' literary analysis was constructed involves using routines that support the creation of a sense of community or shared norms, building new norms for reading as a process, valuing complex problems, modeling strategies by drawing on knowledge the students had constructed from their language experiences outside of school, building links across texts, and using artifacts that help to structure how students reason. A second important dimension concerns the knowledge base of the teacher that informed how she designed the instruction, and less obviously, how she responded in the moment of the minute-by-minute performance on the classroom floor. Because I am the teacher, hopefully there is some validity to my deconstruction of my own thinking processes as I engaged in this complex practice of teaching. It is interesting to note here that most of the observations I will make in this section of the article have been reconstructed from my repeated observations of the videotapes of my instruction. I can honestly say that I was not conscious of these moves during the act of performance.

For several reasons, the metaphor of performance is a functional metaphor for thinking about teaching. First, because no matter how much in advance plans are made, there is a high degree of principled improvisation as a teacher interacts with students on a daily basis. Teaching is without question a creative act, but it is also a disciplined and principled practice. Part of what I hope to describe in this section are the disciplinary knowledge base and the pedagogical principles that informed my practice and that I believe characterize patterns of effective teaching.

I have divided into several categories what I will call the pedagogical funds of knowledge that were operationalized on this day of instruction. Some aspects of this knowledge base are examples of the construct of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). However, other aspects go beyond content knowledge. The two categories that fit pedagogical content knowledge are knowing when and how to uptake student ideas as well as knowing how to respond to what might be termed student errors. Related but different is the teacher's knowledge of how to respond to students' counterscripts. A fourth has to do with the teacher's knowledge of when to enter multiparty overlapping talk. Finally, the teacher's knowledge of the human dimensions of valuing the students and her knowledge of how that valuing relates to the intellectual goals of the instruction are also important.

Student Uptake and Errors

I have already described examples of the teacher's response to questions formulated together by Shanee and Marilyn about the fighting between Oc-

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tober Brown's parents and the fighting between Irene Wilson's parents. The observations of Shanee and Marilyn were not part of the teacher's planned script; that is, they were not questions formulated by the teacher in advance. In order to respond in the moment to these observations, the teacher had to deconstruct the students' thinking at a deeper, more structural level. She then had to map her perceived understanding of the deep structure of the students' thinking to her own cognitive map of the domain (in this case, response to literature, more specifically interpretation of fiction). The teacher's response involved much more than affirming a correct or anticipated response to a preformed question. The students did not understand the power of what they had achieved. The power of what they had done was not so much in the interpretation, that is, answering the question: What was the relationship between the two plot events? Rather, the power was in the formulation of a problem that is very generative in the domain: Looking at two events that, on the surface, appear either unrelated or superficially related and searching at a deeper level for a pattern that helps to explicate a larger theme in the work. Using Delpit's (1986) challenge to make explicit the language of power as a metaphor for making the deep structure logic of a domain public and accessible, this teacher in her role as coach made a public and explicit comment to the entire class about what Shanee and Marilyn had done.

> Shanee has done something that's very very powerful for us as readers and that is to look for things that seem to be the same, situations, things that maybe happened to different characters, different people in the story, but they're the same thing. They are always there for a reason, for a purpose, and one of the things that good readers do is to think about that. And that's an interesting observation. (Lines 389–396, Transcript November 1, 1995)

In a similar vein, the teacher's response to Yetu's obviously erroneous assertion that October Brown is Chinese is an example of the teacher's knowledge of the relevance of "errors" to students' evolving conceptual models. The simplest response would have been to either ignore Yetu's assertion or to label it as incorrect. Instead, by prodding Yetu to explain how he came to this conclusion made public for the teacher a line of reasoning that she could characterize in more abstract terms: Yetu is paying attention to a set of descriptive details in the text that have greater force and function in the text than a mere description. Had Yetu not made public the basis for his conclusion that October Brown is Chinese, the teacher would have had no basis for deconstructing his logic. In a discussion of reform-based mathematics instruction in Japanese classrooms (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992), explanations of errors provide an entry into student thinking. Lampert (1990) referred to this when she asked us to consider "when the problem is not the question and the solution is not the answer."

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In both examples described above, the disciplinary knowledge base on which a teacher draws is not a set of disconnected "facts" about the domain; it is a nexus of interrelated constructs and an understanding of a developmental sequence to their mastery. The disciplinary knowledge base includes an understanding of how these constructs are operationalized in the practice of the domain, that is, the problems that can be tackled in works of literature if these ideas are understood. In this sense, the teacher's pedagogical content knowledge, say in mathematics, differs from that of the mathematician; in response to literature, it differs from that of the literary critic. Holt-Reynolds (1999) made similar observations. She studied preservice English majors and discovered that the literary knowledge they learned in their classwork in the English department was not taken up and transformed as pedagogical knowledge. In the case of literature teachers, the content knowledge is most often tacit; it is an understanding of literature constructed intuitively over years of reading widely. However, because so many of the students do not read widely, especially not the kind of texts taught in the high school literature curricula, it is highly unlikely that they will learn the rules of the literary game without being explicitly taught. For many underachieving students, the rules of the literary game will not be learned by immersion, largely because they resist reading in an engaged way the texts assigned in the school curricula. Part of their resistance is attributed to a lack of understanding of what they are asked to do. Rabinowitz (1987) referred to the knowledge of the literary game as knowledge that readers bring to the reading of literature before the act of reading begins, thus his phrase "before narrative."

Managing Multiparty Talk

The challenge of managing multiparty, overlapping talk is not necessarily an issue in most classrooms. However, in my years of experience working with African American students, especially adolescents, who are also speakers of African American English, multiparty, overlapping, loud talk is a routine indice of engagement. In the Cultural Modeling Project, we have collected 3 years of daily videotapes of my classroom, as well as videotapes of other participating classrooms over a 3-year period (although not daily). This pattern of discourse has been seen consistently. Au (1980) made similar observations about "talk story" in native Hawaiian discourse communities and the power of its adoption in KEEP (Kamehameha Early Education Program) classrooms. On the other hand, research into discourse patterns in some Native American or indigenous classrooms (e.g., the Navajo) reflects a very different pattern of discourse (Phillips, 1983). There has been a significant body of research on classroom discourse documenting the I-R-E (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) discourse pattern, which involves teacher initiation of a question, student response, and teacher evaluation of that response. It is a linear process of one person talking at a time and turn-taking is regulated by the teacher through the raising of hands (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979; Wells, 1995). However, because so many large urban school districts have a ma-

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jority population of African American and Latino students, some attention to how to manage multiparty, overlapping classroom discourse may have some wider currency.

Some linguists have argued that in multiparty dialogue, one speaker anticipates the closure of communication by the person holding the floor and uses this anticipation to gauge when to begin a response (Goodwin, 1981; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). This explanation, however, does not apply to the participants in multiparty, overlapping talk because a number of students speak simultaneously. The challenge is for the teacher to hear the conversation, make sense of it, and understand when to enter and try to manage the discourse.

It has been my experience that many teachers, especially those who are not African American, have difficulty even understanding what the students are saying. When I show videotapes of my teaching, I often give audiences a written transcript to follow the talk. I have made several observations of the multiparty discourse pattern from the videos of my teaching. First, students engage in clusters of talk, sharing their observations with students sitting physically close to them. Some of the loudness occurs when five or six groups of students all talk at the same time. Some of the loudness is a result of the students adjusting the tone of their talk to the volume of talk going on around them. The loudness is also due to the dramatic presentation that characterizes African American English discourse (Morgan, 1998; Smitherman, 1977). The teacher responds by walking around clusters of students, staying long enough to hear the gist of arguments being crafted. Once she has heard enough to determine what talk revealed a disciplinary logic, what talk revealed fundamental misconceptions, and what talk was simply off task (although much less than one would anticipate), she would enter the talk, as if to push a pause button on a taperecorder. To ensure that the talk in the self-formed groups did not remain private, she would ask students who had articulated powerful constructs and/or pervasive misconceptions to make public what they had said. The reconstructed dialogue that followed gave students a chance to interrogate the reasoning that had taken place and to offer hypothesis, claims, and warrants based on both textual and real-world evidence.

I have shown videotapes of multiparty, overlapping talk on several occasions. Some teachers' response was that they believed the students were being rude and off task. In one instance, an adult (not a teacher) of European ancestry said she was frightened by the demeanor of the students. For some teachers, managing multiparty talk may elicit fear of not being in control and a sense of powerlessness. I believe that understanding discourse patterns of speakers of African American English, as well as students who speak other varieties of English or for whom English is a second language, is a necessary tool in a teacher's pedagogical toolkit. Language, oral and written, is the most dominant medium through which students communicate their evolving understanding. To misread their use of language or to not be able to read their use of language conceals from the teacher a potent window into the

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students' thinking. When those who view my videotapes comment on the limitations of this loud and dramatic way of communicating, I urge them to look at a videotape of a debate in the British Parliament. Participants in Britain's high culture regularly talk over each other, interrupt, and raise their voices.

Encountering Counterscripts

Gutierrez et al. (1995) claimed that both teachers and researchers on teaching need to pay attention to the ways that students move away from the preplanned script of the teacher. I would argue that teachers' responses to counterscripts are informed by a knowledge base. In this classroom, there were daily instances of counterscripts. On this day of instruction, Marcus is clearly resisting the teacher's plan. On the videotape, he is seen grimacing and making faces to the camera and nudging the young lady sitting next to him in an attempt to bring her into his resistant space. The teacher could have responded by sending Marcus to the office for discipline, such as in-school suspension, an ironic school policy to remove from class disruptive students. She could have also disciplined Marilyn for her inappropriate and somewhat profane language and shouting (and I mean literally shouting). Just as the teacher had looked for the logic in Yetu's error and in Shanee and Marilyn's co-constructed question about October Brown's and Irene's parents, she also looked for the underlying logic to Marcus's resistance and to Marilyn's shouting. She understood the personal issues in Marcus's life history that contributed to his disequilibrium and she responded out of an appreciation for Marcus's potential. As stated earlier, his willingness and ability to enter the heat of the debate over whether October Brown was Chinese is an interesting example of a student moving away from his space of resistance. Consistent with the observations of Gutierrez et al. (1995), the debate over October Brown was a hybrid space that allowed cohabitation of teacher-initiated instructional goals (although not her explicit lesson plan for that day) and student-initiated questions. Gutierrez et al. asserted that hybrid spaces that attend to both student and teacher goals hold possibilities for meaningful learning. They did not propose that teacher scripts are irrelevant nor that learning cannot occur in such spaces. Rather, they argued that teachers' responses to student resistance and their method of mapping their larger instructional goals to students' interests and issues are necessary prerequisites for creating a hybrid space. If teachers do not hear and understand the essential logic and relevance of student resistance to the overarching goals of instruction, then teacher and student scripts simply coexist. They often occurr simultaneously in discourse, with the consequence that little, if any, learning occurs for either students or teachers.

The Human Dimension of Teaching

A traditional African perspective is to view education as a form of socialization, a way to shape human beings wholistically to become community

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members whose behavior is predictable (Kenyatta, 1965; Tedla, 1995). That is not to say that Africans do not respect individual variation; they believe that communities have stability when members act according to shared norms. So much of the emphasis in educational research today is on the cognitive demands of learning, not on what it means to help shape a whole human being. I stress the humane focus of teaching to try to bring more balance to what we view as our mission.

From the first day of instruction, students in this class actively resisted the teacher. Their attitude was a response to low expectations and mixed messages regarding academic achievement that they experienced through-out 8 years of elementary schooling. Students came late to class, were late in turning in homework, and looked at the teacher as if she were crazy when she asked them to reread, to pose their own questions, or to tackle compli-cated texts. The teacher's vision for their future was tied to her own future well-being and to the historical traditions that preceded this generation. When students complained about reading, the teacher reminded them that Blacks in America had died for the right to read and literally preached that they had no right not to read. When students behaved inappropriately, the teacher would ask if they would act that way if their mama or grandmama were watching. When they would not put forth the requisite energy for the academic work, she would ask if the behavior they were exhibiting was exemplary of how they would want their own children to behave. The warrants on which her appeals to them were based were rooted in social-ization through education as described by Siddle-Walker (1983) when she wrote about Caswell County School, a typical school organization during the era of school segregation. The teacher's warrants were also based on the socializing function of the Black family before the 1970s, particularly in the South, as described by Irvine and Irvine (1983) and Billingsley (1968). Al-though I may sound like I am preaching from the soapbox, I cannot stress enough how foundational are these assumptions about the function of teaching and about the parenting role that teachers play in the lives of young people.

The teacher saw these youngsters as she saw her own biological chil-dren, for whom failure is simply not an option. She had to appreciate the humanity of these young people, their innate talents, and their infinite ability to learn, grow, and develop. They could not garner enough resistant behav-ior to deter her determination that they would learn and master intellectually difficult problem solving. There is no question in my mind that such a stance was one of the most powerful tools in the teacher's pedagogical toolkit.

Loving and respecting young people is the mortar from which good teaching is built. As a field, we have not expended sufficient efforts to document systematically how to socialize beginning teachers into this view of the profession and of young people (Noddings, 1984). The life and work of educators such as Anna Julia Cooper (Cooper, 1892/1996), Mary McLeod Bethune (Bethune, 1996), Septima Clark (Clark, 1962), and Ella Baker (Grant, 1998) represent this tradition of teaching. The research literature

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documents the negative impact of teachers' low expectations of students of color, students who are poor, and those who speak a variety of English devalued by the academy or a first language other than English (Anyon, 1981; Oakes, 1985, 1990). The Cultural Modeling Project was a necessary, but insufficient, first step in recognizing and using students' out of school language competencies to construct an activity system that shaped the November 1995 debate over October Brown. Equally important was the unequivocal perspective that these students would meet the intellectually demanding challenges of the curriculum. As educational researchers, we must hold a public looking glass on the demonization of Black children and adolescents, especially males, and other students who are colorized by poverty or language difference.[10] Our field must examine the roots of such demonization and peel away the layers that stench underneath the caution that so-called minority students will inherently be problematic. This is the mantra that begins almost every manifesto for curricular reform and methods of accountability: More and more poor and colored children are coming and bring with them problems which schools must figure out how to fix.

Conclusion

I have described intellectual rigor demonstrated by a class of African American underachieving freshmen on a particular day of instruction. The intellectual rigor demonstrated in the activity of that day shares important attributes with a community of practice shared by literary critics and readers of canonical literature (from a variety of ethnic, national, and intellectual traditions). The shared practices involve close reading of literary texts and attention to figurative details that embody symbols, irony, satire, and other categorical literary tropes. These students demonstrate "peripheral participation" as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991), not having full mastery but in the process of a slow apprenticeship. I have also documented the history of activities and patterns of interaction that provided the foundation for a new sense of intellectual community among these students. This sense of intellectual community does not fit the norm for activity in English Language Arts classrooms in traditional schools serving poor and minority students, especially at the high school level. This is a community in progress. There certainly still are disengaged students and students with serious academic needs. The depth of transformation for these students in long-range terms is influenced by the process of transformation of the English department in the school and across departments. The primary goal of the Cultural Modeling Project, of which this classroom is a part, is to support the transformation of Language Arts instruction at schools like Fairgate High School. Because such transformations are slow and tedious, it is important to describe and understand the negotiated processes through which intellectual change takes place. The foundations of cultural modeling assume that the culture that students bring from their home and community lives, their assumptions about schooling from prior educational experiences, and specific practices

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and activity within classrooms over time interact in complex ways to create a hybrid culture within the classroom. This hybrid culture is not static and cannot be copied from one classroom to another. It demands teachers who understand the complexity of teaching, who respect the students they teach, and who believe in the endless possibility of transformation for high academic achievement for all students.

The evolution of the abilities of underachieving students to participate in a community practicing literary analysis is important because of its implications for reform in schools such as Fairgate. This classroom became a hybrid site in which collective ethnic culture, the culture of a discipline (in this case, literary analysis), and a system of classroom practices intersect. The design of the intervention, the Cultural Modeling Project, consciously drew upon the productive intersection among these three cultural arenas. Bourdieu (1990) warned against the "'occasionalist fallacy' of believing that each encounter is created on the spot. Instead, Bourdieu argues, the world of any encounter is predefined by broader racial, gender, and class relations . . ." (Duranti, 1997, p. 8). Too often, ethnographic representations of classroom activity suffer from the occasionalist fallacy because the history of the productive encounters is not documented. Further, especially when looking at instructional activity among culturally diverse students, the broader racial and class relations that play out in students' dispositions are often not considered.

In this article, I have chosen Bourdieu's construct of habitus (Bourdieu, 1988) as a conceptual unit of analysis, the historical dimensions of the dispositions that participants bring to an activity. There are multiple historical dimensions impacting the novices reported in this article. These dimensions include their ethnic cultural history, their personal histories, and the history of practices over time within this classroom. Much of this history is instantiated through language and modes of interaction. The challenge in designing instructional interventions is to consider in strategically informed ways the generativity of what students bring to the space of classrooms, the psychological (Wertsch, 1991) and communal (Bruner, 1990) toolkits of their experiences. Design challenges are further complicated by the demands of the disciplines taught and the difficulties of orchestrating a system of practices in classrooms that invite and support meaningful forms of guided participation in intellectually demanding problems.

Ladson-Billings (1994) and Foster (1997) documented the work of teachers who constructed classroom cultures that draw productively on the funds of knowledge that students bring from their home and community experiences to promote wholistic development and learning. There have been criticisms (Irvine & York, 1995) of the research on learning styles as a meaningful guide to the design of culturally responsive learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, a strong argument has been made for cultural responsivity that considers social practices grounded in the historically based experiences of students (Boykin, 1994). This body of research is complemented by other work that considers the classroom and other

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factors that address culture as a lever to support learning. Siddle-Walker (1993) documented that powerful relationships between communities and schools provide both a classroom and a school culture that socialize students toward productive learning. Irvine (1990) argued for classroom, schoolwide, and systemic practices that treat the cultural backgrounds of students as supports for learning, rather than as deficits to be overcome. The analysis offered in this article, hopefully, adds to this growing body of research on the role of culture, broadly conceived, as a force that can meaningfully enhance the quality of learning experiences for students.

Notes

[1]For example, a reader who does not understand the assumptions about the role of fate in Greek life is not likely to view the experiences of characters like Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* as making much sense. Similarly, a reader who is not aware of the social norms under which Hester Prynne would have operated is likely to have a less sympathetic response to Hawthorne's *A Scarlet Letter*. Knowledge of the social codes assumed to be operating in the social world of the text is an important element of the knowledge a skilled reader brings to a literary text (Rabinowitz, 1987). Such knowledge allows the reader to enter the subjunctive world of the text, but does not preclude the reader from assuming a critical stance and rejecting the social codes, as many generations of readers have done with *A Scarlet Letter*. However, novice readers cannot assume the role of informed critic when they do not recognize the social codes operating in the text and assume the work to be nonsensical instead.

[2]Throughout this article, I shift point of view. I refer to myself in the third person voice as "the teacher" when reporting on observable actions as part of classroom activity. When interpreting those actions of myself as "the teacher," I use the first person point of view. The reason for this shift is that I play two separate roles. When I was in the classroom teaching daily, I was not thinking analytically as a researcher. Rather, I was thinking analytically as a classroom teacher. My critique as the author of the analysis reported in this article is separate from my role as the teacher. I use the pronoun referent "we" when referring to the work of the Cultural Modeling Project as a whole, reflecting the collective thinking of the many persons who have worked as researchers and teachers on that project.

[3]All names of students and teachers are pseudonyms.

[4]Signifying is an oral genre of talk within the African American English Vernacular speech community that involves indirection, double entendre, and a high degree of figurative language.

[5]The following transcription codes are used: < > faster pace than surrounding talk; ^ rising intonation (data from Jefferson, 1979); CAPS emphatic stress; :: elongation of vowel sound (data from Tannen, 1989).

[6]In this case, scaffolding supports were provided by people. Scaffolding supports may also be provided through the design of smart computer-based tools that dynamically respond to changes in competence evidenced by users.

[7]It will be useful here to distinguish among modeling, coaching, and the acts of scaffolding that constitute cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1989). In *modeling*, one with more or at least equal knowledge demonstrates the strategy, heuristic, or mode of reasoning. The act of *coaching* involves providing advice and commentary on the problem-solving activity of the learner or more novice other. Such commentary often involves an expertlike explanation of the usefulness of the moves made by the learner, advice on how the move could be improved, or a comment on how what the novice or peer has

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done may be linked to other powerful strategies or kinds of knowledge. The process of providing more modeling and coaching at the beginning and removing those sources of support dynamically across time as needed is *scaffolding*.

[8]Perkins (1992) defined habits of mind as dispositions "to be broad and adventurous"; "toward sustained intellectual curiosity"; "to clarify and seek understanding"; "to be planful and strategic"; "to be intellectually careful"; "to seek and evaluate reasons"; "to be metacognitive" (p. 116).

[9]A version of the Collaboratory Notebook (Edelson & O'Neill, 1994) was especially designed for the Cultural Modeling Project and used by students. The software program provides an environment in which links to relevant prior knowledge useful to a section of a text being read in class and opportunities to respond to one another's responses are accessible (Lee, in press).

[10]Society uses the term *people of color* to categorize non-White U.S. citizens. This broad category carries with it a subtle but implied stigma of inferiority. As educational researchers, we often lump as parallel categories children of color, children living in poverty, children who speak first languages other than English or varieties of English deemed nonstandard by the academy. I make the claim here that these students are then viewed and treated to carry the political and economic burdens of being "colored" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

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