A Case Study of the Developing Literacy of African-American Learners Attending a Tutoring Program at an Urban African-American Church.

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A CASE STUDY OF THE DEVELOPING LITERACY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEARNERS ATTENDING A TUTORING PROGRAM AT AN URBAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of English

by

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May 2000
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ABSTRACT

This study describes the literate abilities of a group of upper level elementary African-American school children who participated in an urban, African-American, church-sponsored, after-school tutorial program. Using an ethnographic research method, I relied on field notes, audio-taped interviews, and writing samples to collect and analyze the data. The participants in the study were six subjects (five females and one male, ages 10 to 12) who were enrolled in the tutorial program.

Over the course of seven months (October, 1997 to May, 1998), I observed all activities in which writing literacy took place at the tutorial program. From this observation three themes emerged: (1) the Black church as literacy mentor, (2) the tutors as agents of change, and (3) the subjects, constructed existence as a “little community.” That is, despite having diverse personalities and character traits, they each shared common goals and interests.

Certain factors peculiar to the traditions and customs of the Black church — its ritual and performance helped upper elementary children increase their literate abilities. The findings of this study expand the body of research literature on non-school writing development in African-American children; thus, the study should interest literacy researchers and writing instructors who seek to understand the nature of literacy in African-American school children.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The stillness in the room was heavy. The only sound was an almost inaudible
one that came from the big wall clock as its hands moved to measure time. All fourteen
upper level elementary school children who were participating in the after-school
tutorial program sat, hunched over long tables, trying to figure out how they would put
into words their thoughts on the topic, “The Best Gift I Ever Received.” Mrs. Allen,
one of the tutors, having led the children in careful directions for the writing
assignment, was now standing at the front of the room watching the children, while
Mrs. Gibson, the other tutor for the upper level, stood nearby. Suddenly Brian (a
pseudonym) exclaimed, “Oh - I know! It was the Game Boy set my Uncle Charles gave
me for my birthday. Boy, that was so neat!” Brian’s outburst sparked contributions
from the other writers; quickly they were engaged in animated dialogue about the topic.
Soon, Mrs. Gibson stepped forward and in a forceful tone commanded the children to
quiet down and return to their writing. The talking continued for a couple of more
minutes, but, after a laser-like glare from Mrs. Gibson, it came to an end.

In contrast to the atmosphere that had preceded Brian’s outcry, the climate
seemed charged with electricity. Pencils flew over paper as the children excitedly
formed their ideas and found the words to write what they wanted to say. As a
researcher who had been granted permission to use this program site to study the
strategies African American elementary school children use to become competent in
written literacy, I realized this oral outburst was the spark of invention in Brian’s
“writing event.”
“Writing events,” the term coined by Basso (1974), have been defined as any incident in which writing takes place. These events include interactions involving teachers, students, their peers, the locale as context, and the locale’s climate. The events are a reflection upon Basso’s statement that “the activity of writing, like the act of speaking, is a supremely social act” (p. 432). Exploring the nature of these interactions as African American upper elementary school children negotiate their home and school literacies to achieve competence in mainstream written literacy, and describing the significance of church-sponsored tutorial programs on the accomplishment of these tasks, has been the mission of this research.

Writing as an Interactive and Socialized Process

In recent years attention has been placed on socializing interactions between writers and others. Social constructionists like Doheny-Farina (1989) and Beaufort (1997), for example, have been interested in how interactions between writers and others in a social setting help writers learn the “culture and discourse conventions of that setting” (Lutz, 1989). Knowledge about the milieu of a setting can have a direct bearing on what writers can or cannot do with their writing. A study of writing in a reproductive services clinic by Doheny-Farina (1989), for example, demonstrated the extent to which the political ethos of that agency constrained the composing of one public relations report. More recently, Beaufort’s (1997) study of a non-profit literacy and job skills center demonstrated how institutional norms dictated the purpose and content of inter-office memos. In both these settings the writers’ understanding and knowledge had to encompass a network of social relationships and institutional goals before wording and persuasive strategies to address a given rhetorical situation could be arrived at successfully.
Interactions between writers and others lead writers to learn how to use language as a means of becoming "competent in the discourse of a given community" (Gere, 1975). In fact, a number of theorists have drawn close parallels between written literacy, the ability to transfer coded symbols of language into a printed form for the purpose of expressing ideas, and the manner in which we use oral language (Heath, 1983; Gere, 1987; LeFevre; 1987). In sum, the research concludes that our past histories of observation and participation in one community's ways of using language lead us to develop patterns of literacy, which may function well in that community, but may not function as smoothly in other contexts. Then, to accommodate our acceptance into a new discourse community, we establish new modes or channels of discourse.

While there is ample research exploring the "multiple meanings of literacy" (Heath, 1980) or the "variety of configurations of literacy" (Szwed, 1981), there is little information from research that explores how elementary school children, particularly African American children, negotiate a plurality of literacies as they strive for competence in the written discourse of mainstream American society.

Current Research

There are studies of written literacy development in small children, but these do not illuminate the parallels of context and culture upon the developing writing abilities of African American school children. Carini (1979), for example, observed the writing of children as they engaged in the process of producing descriptive written texts. She concluded that children use description to make themselves "visible," using the shared territory of language as a means to identify self. Her findings were significant because they revealed that children's written texts, as serious objects of thought, demonstrate the fundamental human impulse to make, build, and narrate our lives.
Dyson's (1984) research has been significant in its attention to detailing the relationship between learning to write and learning to perform school writing tasks. She addressed the nature of young children's varying interpretations of classroom writing behaviors, their written products, and how they talked about those products. Her findings revealed that young writers' interactions with others can affect both the nature of the writing strategies used and the content of the final product.

Another study by McGinley and Kambrells (1996) is important because it connects young children's developing literacy to social relationships. Much attention was given to how children used reading and writing to understand, affirm, and negotiate social relationships and to develop their awareness of significant social problems. Negotiating social relationships was one of the most common of these social functions (p. 91). Their study showed the usefulness of reading and writing to affirm or reconstruct social relationships in children's immediate worlds, to fashion social and moral codes, and to consider possibilities for social change (pp. 104-105). Moreover, it was found that the act of reading fostered motivations to write and make public new understandings about self and perhaps transform the attitudes of others.

There is additional work that addresses aspects of African-American language use in a study by Moss (1988). It is invaluable because it addresses the African-American church and its sermons as significant instruments to exploring literate abilities in its members. The sermon was examined both as text and act leading Moss to conclude that the ministers' written discourse, their use of the discourse, and the congregations' interpretations of the discourse, once heard, all combined to create "literacy events" for all involved. More importantly, Moss raises the notion of the acceptability of the black sermon as "formal text in the black community for all its
people, including the children” (p. 208). She speculates, therefore, that black children’s perception of formal text is girded by their exposure to these sermons and may lead to demonstrations of written literacy which are “in opposition to written mainstream literacy” (p. 209). Language used by members of the Black community reveal, in both its oral and written forms, depictions of both vernacular and Standard English, whereas the dominant language used by mainstream society is that of Standard English. Moss’ findings are important to this research because the sermon functions as part of ritual text in most Black Baptist Churches, as was the case at the church site studied here, even in its tutoring program.

Research Question

In this study I describe the ingredients, dimensions, and parameters in an after-school, church-based tutorial program as they help children develop written literate abilities. I explore what learning to write means for the children in this setting. I also discuss the implications of this setting upon the children’s writing success. In short, I am interested in the meaning of writing as a mode of communication, and of the processes of becoming literate in one non-academic context, a church-sponsored after-school tutoring program. The guiding issue for exploration therefore is, “What effect do church-based tutorial programs have upon literate success?” The theoretical perspectives guiding the research came from ethnographies of communication and literacy, which I shall elaborate upon further in the next chapter. Ethnography, therefore, is the most appropriate research approach to describe how children’s written literacy develops in a non-traditional setting.
Argument for the Approach

The six subjects of this study will help to describe the ways African-American upper level elementary school children make meaning of written language outside their home and school and the ways they interact with tutors and learners when "writing events" are the focus of the tutoring activity. Thus, this research is an aspect of the ethnography of communication. As Hymes has defined it,

The term "ethnography of communication" is intended to indicate the necessary scope, and to encourage the doing, of studies ethnographic in basis, and communicative in the range and kind of patterned complexity with which they deal (Hymes, 1974, p. 3).

Hymes suggested that socio-linguistics conceptualize and study that "patterned complexity of language" used in social contexts. He saw a need for "a general theory and body of knowledge within which diversity of speech, repertoires, ways of speaking and choosing among them find a natural place." He continues, "...In order to develop models, or theories, of the interaction between language and social life, there must be adequate descriptions of that interaction..." (Hymes, 1972, pp. 43-44). He also argued for the thematic drawing together of various disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, and socio-linguistics to undertake the description of ways of speaking and using language in different societies.

Similarly, Kantor (1981), in a comprehensive review of the increasing number and diversified uses of ethnography in educational research studies, surveys five significant reasons for employing ethnographic techniques in "...language, composition, literature, and reading studies, particularly those which question basic assumptions about the growth in writing..." (p. 239). His five reasons are condensed in the following:

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1. Ethnographic techniques allow for an hypothesis forming approach, encouraging the exploration of a wide array of questions in relation to each other. Furthermore, hypotheses can be rejected as the study proceeds, when alternative explanations seem more plausible and applicable.

2. Rather than dismissing the influence of the social context - the discourse topic, setting, and audience - and cultural values of language users as too broad for evaluation, ethnography "emphasizes the contextual elements, so essential to understanding the dynamics of language" (p. 296).

3. Via extensive field work - field notes, recorded or transcribed interviews, and explicit descriptions of physical traces - ethnography charts "the particulars of experience" (p. 297), thereby enabling interested researchers to enter similar cultural scenes with an extensive background of pertinent information.

4. Ethnographic researchers, assuming the role of "participant observer," do not dismiss the influence of their bias, experiences and predispositions on the gathering and interpretation of data. Thus, ethnographic procedures account for the inevitable influence of subjective dynamics on perception and symbolic representation.

5. Ethnographic methods allow for the discovery of the way in which reality is perceived by the individual. Meaning is not attributed to the situation by a supposedly unbiased researcher. Instead, the meaning attributed to situations by individuals is discovered.

Athanases and Heath (1995) make similar claims for the method. They say that "examining language uses in their social contexts enables ethnographers to cast cognitive processes in active form, accounting for language and activities that give
evidence of remembering, thinking, and perceiving rather than as objects such as memories, perceptions, and cognitions in the mind of the writer and reader" (p. 266).

Ethnographic techniques, therefore, can reveal the complexities of human life. Case subjects are not stripped from social contexts, labeled as having high, middle, or low intelligence from culturally biased intelligence tests, or labeled as representative of high, low, or middle class simply by economic determiners. This study, like others using ethnographic methods, seeks to understand, not reduce, the range of complexities of human interaction.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the chapters which follow I consider the culture of the "little community" (Redfield. 1956) which is the classroom of a church-sponsored tutorial program where African American elementary school children participate. Although I use Redfield’s term to describe these children and the classroom where they worked, I do not mean to apply his meaning of that term to this setting. Instead, I mean that despite their diverse personalities and characteristics, the children came together as a group of writers who through writing, reading, and talking to each other suggested the importance of writing as a personal and social event. In this setting students negotiated a plurality of literacies to develop the written literacy of mainstream society. I have tried to walk around inside the topic of written literacy and say something about how it occurs in a non-traditional context.

While conducting the study I tried to guard against the instinct to merely address teaching concepts or methodology, which is what many studies in educational research have done, but rather to address the particular sets of interactions among tutors, tutor concepts, beliefs, aims, students, environment (especially the church environment), and
classroom context. These interactions are important because they support the view that
the classroom is but one situation in which socialization into written communication
occurs. In short, learning to write can occur through different social relationships in
different contexts in different speech communities. These contexts may be viewed as
scaffolds onto which socialization into the ways of literacy is built, even while the
contexts may be different and perhaps in conflict with another.

Chapter Two establishes a theoretical framework for the study and for placing
the achievement of writing success, as an aspect of the process of socialization into the
literacy of a speech community, within the perspective of an ethnography of
communication. It provides a general review of the background of research in writing
and literacy and justifies the need for careful observational studies of writing
development in African American elementary school children in non-traditional
contexts. Further, it provides an overview of the history of the Black Church as
literacy mentor and reveals its significance in the achievement of written literacy for its
members.

Chapter Three describes the methodology and includes descriptions of the site,
the process of selecting the subjects for case study, and data collecting methods. The
description of these factors allows for the discussion of socialization as a central theme
in the chapter that follows.

Chapter Four focuses on three themes revealed in the data I collected: (1) the
African American church as a conduit to literacy, (2) the tutors as agents of change, and
(3) the learners as members of a distinct “little community” of writers. I describe the
significance of the church to literacy practices within its walls and the interactions
between the tutors and learners who participate in the tutorial program. The interactions
at play between the tutors and students, as they engage in writing events, are presented as a backdrop against a discussion of the strategies that underpin socialization into literacy. Particular attention is given to descriptions of literate activity, to the uses of reading and writing, and to ways of relating to text.

Chapter Five continues my descriptions of the themes mentioned in the previous chapter. Here, I focus on the subjects, but with added sub-texts to the focus addressed in the previous chapter. I describe the writing events of six students and the diversity of their strategies to define themselves as writers and to define what writing means to them. I describe the social dynamics of the classroom context and reveal how these dynamics are shaped to fit the peculiarity of purpose for the students as users of written language.

Chapter Six draws the threads of all the preceding chapters together. I suggest in this concluding chapter a view to looking at the way we think of emergent written literacy and writing abilities in African American elementary school children. The case studies presented here challenge us to reconceptualize the process of learning to write and the way we talk about it. More importantly, couched within issues of culture and context, I draw attention to an institution of major significance to the Black community, the Black church. It deserves this attention because its literate practices are powerful in the lives of its members, shaping, in part, their identities and ways of thinking, writing, and engaging in everyday discourse. In sum, I raise the suggestion that this study has been primarily focused on a description of how members make meaning and explain and interpret social actions in their own communities; in short, how they define culture and literacy.
CHAPTER 2
WRITING AND LITERACY: ESTABLISHING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH

Introduction

This research was performed to discover the ways African-American learners negotiate their home and school literacies to achieve success in mainstream written literacy and to examine the effect church-sponsored tutorial programs have on this accomplishment. I place the theoretical basis for pursuing the answers to these queries within the framework of an ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974). Within that framework I review research which has contributed to ethnographies of writing and literacy as significant means to describe how a speech community uses whatever means available to it for social interaction and discourse. This discussion underpins issues related to a wider framework for studying language development and the nature of literacy.

Specifically, I consider the process of socialization into literacy and ask, "What do African American learners know about literacy and how do they know it? What do they know about literacy in their daily lives and how different is that literacy from what they demonstrate in the school writing class?" I comment upon some of the research studies which have broadly addressed these questions and consider the implication of these studies to the importance of relationships between literacy uses and functions in different contexts.

Writing - Communication in Context, Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Writing is a socialized activity requiring the convergence and interactions of language with social life. It operates out of a range of motivations to address the
complexities of language use. It emerges in a variety of ways including the ways that meaning is shaped for different purposes in a particular context.

One who considers a descriptive analysis must do so with regard to an understanding of the relevance of social interaction to language use. Of primary significance is the speech community which Hymes has defined as “a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety” (Hymes, 1972, p. 54). It is necessary, however, that both these conditions be present for a sharing of rules may mean only that one’s speech community may understand and vocalize some rules (norms) but not all of them, and sentences that syntactically agree may have different semantic functions.

When we talk about the speech community we are speaking of a variety of groups where each member participates in language use out of a shared knowledge of communication between each member of the group. A speech community can develop in different places: the home, street, school, workplace, church, and even a church-based tutorial program, such as that which is the site of this research. The important thing is that the discourse of all these communities denotes communicative behavior that comprises distinctive ways of speaking. Hymes has suggested it is possible to assess these ways of speaking in terms of a mnemonic code - “SPEKING” (p. 67-68) - as a means of codifying them:

S - scene/setting
P - participants
E - event
K - keys
I - instrumentality
N - norms (rules)
G - goals

Such a code thus illuminates the nature of the speech community and suggests that the "interaction of language with social life is viewed as first of all a matter of human action, based on a knowledge, sometimes conscious, often unconscious, that enables persons to use language" (Hymes, 1972, p. 53), and thus appropriates a descriptive analysis and theory rooted in an "ethnography of communication."

The term "ethnography of communication" is suggestive of a broad perspective on what it is that people do when they communicate. Hymes has stated that the concept is a way of considering "the use of language in contexts of situation, so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity; patterns that escape separate studies of grammar, of personality, of social structure, religion and the like, each abstracting from the patterning of speech activity into some other frame of reference" (1974, p. 4). He goes on to indicate that, "One must take context as a community, or network of persons, investigating its communicative activities as a whole, so that any use of channel and code takes its place as part of the resources upon which the members draw" (p. 4).

Basso carries Hymes' observations further, when he points to the importance of uncovering the "social patterning" of writing activity and also "the contributions it makes to the maintenance of a social system" (1974, p. 431). He advised the discovery of the classes of communicative acts - acts of writing or writing events which are accepted and used by a community (p. 428). Such a study would reveal the social and
cultural factors which influence the use of writing and the basis for developing an
"ethnography of writing."

After Hymes' and Basso's call, ethnographic research began to surface in this
area. Research by Heath (1982), Odell and Goswami (in business contexts, 1980), and
Beaufort (in the context of a non-profit organization 1997), and many others in a variety
of contexts, has sought to relate functional literacy activities to social contexts, and
show, as Basso notes, that "the activity of writing, like the act of speaking, is a
supremely social act" (p. 432). Research which attempts to observe and describe the
complexities of human interaction must, therefore, consider the negotiation of language
as a process firmly couched in the social dynamics of discourse. This notion may well
have implications for students' attitudes about themselves as speakers and for the way
they define themselves as writers and literate beings.

Writing and Learning to Write

The process of writing has been viewed through a variety of prisms. Seen as
being process-oriented or discourse type (Emig, 1971, p. 39; Britton, 1975, p. 22;
Flower, 1980, p. 2), the theories of writing have often clashed. In recent years,
however, writing has become linked to socialization. Flower (1994), seeing the effects
of both an individual's knowledge and his/her existence as a social being, speaks of
writing as being "socio-cognitive." For her, the composing process is embedded in the
"construction of negotiated meaning" (p. 36). She sees both the influence of the
individual and society. Viewed socio-cognitively, writing is an act that requires a writer
to negotiate a multiplicity of options in an effort to create a text.

According to Flower, writers enter the composing process accompanied by a set
of significant forces (i.e., social and cultural expectations, discourse conventions,
language, teachers' expectations, and collaborator's prompts) which, appearing as inner voices, speak in conjunction with the writer's own goals and available knowledge. As these voices open doors, promote options, and suggest or even demand certain action, they may come into conflict. Writers who choose to entertain and attend to those conflicts negotiate meaning as they construct text (1994).

Thus, writing research reveals that becoming a member of a speech community means becoming competent in using language for different purposes, in different contexts and in different ways, including different forms and style. In acquiring such competence one learns the forms and functions of communication modes appropriate to the particular society. When we consider what it means to become a writer in our society, we consider the implications of writing as a mode of communication - an alternate way of expressing thought and exchanging information. Thus, becoming a writer means learning the skills of literacy, of decoding and encoding orthographic symbols, and of learning when and how such skills are used.

Significant in learning the role of the written mode is the learning of the social dimensions of the use of the written word. The process of socialization into the uses and functions of writing begins early in the child's life. This process does not stop for most of us, for we are always in the position of encountering print and of learning to use it for different purposes. Both inside and outside the traditional classroom, we learn in an ongoing process something of the worth of writing as a tool for communicating, the use and functions of writing for ourselves as individuals, and the relationship of self as writer to the process of writing.
Literacy and Socio-Cultural Identity

Literacy is bound up with identification of self in relation to one or more speech communities, of identification of a group as a community, and with the maintenance of a particular world view. World view and socio-cultural values are involved in a dynamic structural relationship with the uses and purposes of reading and writing within the organization of a community's communicative conduct. Bi-literate communities reveal the plural literacies their members negotiate well. As Fishman has indicated, students in bi-literate school and community situations in New York City are influenced in their perceptions about reading and writing by community practices, in which the importance of ethnic identity in uses of literacy is strongly asserted. He asks how literacy functions for these communities and notes that, "...in stable bilingual communities the two languages employed have different functional allocations, i.e., to say they are used for at least partially unique (unduplicated) situations, topics, role relations or institutions...Speech communities maintain biliteracy institutions (such as schools) because they are convinced that they need two literacies for two, at least, partially distinct sets of functions" (Fishman, 1980).

Based on his research in French, Hebrew, Chinese, and Greek schools, Fishman comments that:

...ethnic mother tongue literacy is perceived, and well mastered by children during their school years because their parents, who may have already lost part of the biliterate fluency they too had as children, nevertheless view it as a mark of ethnic belonging, sophistication, and leadership. Ethnic language literacy is associated, among adult members of the community, with the finest it has to offer. It is primarily of symbolic usefulness rather than of practical usefulness; it has sentimental value rather than broad instrumental functionality (p. 74).
Fishman concludes, therefore, that for some ethnic groups, the value of ethnic language function coincides with the value placed upon the assimilation of another tongue. This is not so for African Americans who view ethnic language as strictly identifiable with their culture. As Smitherman notes,

Historically, black speech has been demanded of those who wish to retain close affinities with the black community, and intrusions of White English are likely to be frowned upon and any black users thereof promptly ostracized by the group...Hence, even when there is no compelling social pressure to use Black English, there may be an inner compulsion to "talk black" (1977, p. 12).

In sum, the emphasis is on community functionality of literacy as symbolic, as well as in the way it is interrelated with specific roles in the heritage and life styles of the different ethnic groups. Each group values literacy in particular ways and these are revealed in the way the community uses reading and writing in different social contexts.

Literacy’s Social Meanings in Different Communities

In any society people need to learn not only the skills, but also the role of reading and writing activities in social interactions. David Harmon, in a useful discussion about issues of literacy, referred to the societal implications of the development of literacy skills in 1970. He describes the awareness of a socially interactive relationship to written text as the "internalization of a literacy consciousness" and suggests that a definition of literacy encompass these steps:

The first is a conceptualization of literacy as a tool. The second is literacy attainment, the learning of reading and writing skills. The third is the practical application of these activities meaningful to the learner. Each stage is contingent on the former; each is a necessary component of literacy (1970, p. 228)

He continues with reference to societal implications for the development of literacy skills:
Conceptualization of literacy is applicable at the societal level as well as to the individual level. Pre-literate societies need to undergo a process of “literalization” before their members can be considered literate. Such a process is tantamount to a cultural metamorphosis and will not be achieved through the relatively simple “alphabetization” of the language. It implies more fundamentally the internalization of a literacy consciousness (p.228).

The “internalization of literacy consciousness” has to do with not only the way a society or group “locates” literacy and with the way it typifies literacy, but also with the way the individual is socialized into literacy. It has to do with the dynamics of interaction between the participants in the group (i.e., the care-taker/child relationship in the early stages of socialization, Bissex, 1980; Snow, 1988). It also involves the behavior and activities with typify the society’s modes of communicating and its social structure, the expectations and attitudes the society, community or group maintains toward reading and writing, any modeling of literate behaviors, and the specific training, formal or informal, in literate modes of communication.

Conceptualization of literacy (that is, knowing what writing is and its uses and functions), as one of the modes of communication available, and attainment of the required skills and the capacity to apply them, are components of both individual literate behaviors and also of a community’s literate behavior. The three components viewed together are the underlying means whereby literacy is realized by the individual or the community. The social and individual meaning of literacy is inseparable from the interaction of these interrelated components. Any theory of literacy and of the development of literacy skills, therefore, must account for the interplay between conceptualization, skills attainment, and the capacity (including the decision) to apply these skills of literacy.

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Different individuals and different communities will exhibit different ways of conceptualizing literacy skills, and exhibit different degrees of attainment of the skills of literacy in their particular contexts. The nature of the interplay of the differences within a community and the nature of the differences between communities must be explored from this fundamental point of view.

Ritual and Oral Performance in the Black Church - A Wider Perspective

Ritual is an example of the manner in which a speech community employs ways of speaking in particular contexts. It provides members of a community with an occasion and a set of symbols to either reinforce or transform the ways in which they think and feel about themselves and the world in which they live. I have sought to look at ritualistic patterns involving the structure of the tutorial program at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church (a pseudonym, as are all names related to the program housed there, which will be used later) in an attempt to not only address here the dimensions of this event but also establish a theoretical framework for interpreting the nature and function of this activity in this context.

Rebecca Slough defines ritual as “a strategic social activity whose purpose is socialization. The actions that define or give shape to particular ritual practices highlight certain social values or networks of relationship and sublimate others. Thus, ritual participants gain knowledge of themselves in the presence of various types of relationships, and, through collective action, explore how to act in the ritual context” (1996, p. 185). Slough’s definition provides a particularly useful point for considering the processes of knowing through oral performance. In religious contexts performers engaged in events such as hymn singing gain knowledge of the ritual pattern and the types of actions that achieve successful movement through it. Singers new to the event
are initiated into the action of the event with the help of other experienced singers and those experienced singers who know the ritual pattern find opportunities to improve their vocal production and singing pleasure. Thus, singers acting within the context of a hymn singing event become a kind of “ritualized body” where the pattern of action shapes the way they “know” in the ritual environment and how they understand themselves and their actions within that setting.

Slough’s definition of ritual is one among many that have been offered by anthropologists. Others have defined ritual as “a repetitive social practice composed of a sequence of symbolic activities that are set off from the social routines of everyday life, that adhere to a culturally-defined ritual schema, and that are closely connected to a specific set of ideas often encoded in myth” (Shultz and Lavenda, 1990, p. 176). In other words, ritual action can take place in a variety of contexts, both religious and secular. All aspects of the ritual text - the events, the language, the code - become meaningful when participants perform the ritual. Further, this meaning-making nature applies to ritual practices that occur in any context, sacred or secular. As we perform the ritual, we give meaning to the text.

Specifically significant to this investigation is Pitts’ classification of ritual in the Black church and the manner in which he categorizes ritual structure into two distinct metaphoric frames: Devotion and Service. Demonstrated mostly in the fundamentalist, working class Black church, Pitts suggests that these two ritual frames function as “metaphoric paradigms that join to produce the ritual syntax, or structure of the worship experience” (1993, p. 31). The origin of these frames is embedded in a long history in the Black church, a history which has changed somewhat over the course of time.

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The origin of ritual in the Black church predates the origin of the church itself, which began in the antebellum South. Diverse African tribes, brought over to North America as slaves during the Middle Passage and faced with the arduous task of retaining some semblance of their tribal beliefs and customs, resorted to the practice of holding clandestine meetings in the woods and forests away from the interference of plantation owners (Pitts, 1993, p. 36). It was in these meetings that sacred ritual practices observed within African ethnic communities were retained and continued as a way of helping new slaves to maintain their sanity and sense of order in the midst of the disorder around them (p. 36).

In the years after Reconstruction, a number of major national events (i.e., World War I, Prohibition, the Depression, World War II, and the 1960's Civil Rights Movement) occurred which had a marked effect on change in some aspects of ritual practiced in the Black church. Prominent to these developments was the ritual practice involving music. The migration of blacks to the North following World War I and the assimilation of these blacks into a middle class status created a need to replace their rhythmic religious music with sacred music imitative of the music sung in the white churches. Yet, these immigrants remained unsettled and dissatisfied with their separation from ritualistic traditional practices ingrained in their music which had become so dear to them. The impact of the Depression era, however, which affected these blacks the hardest, thus fostered the need to turn to a more bluesy, gospel type music to express their frustrations and hope. The combination of Black secular and gospel music performed during the 1930's by singers such as Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward, Rosetta Thorpe, et al., and, January 19, 2000 in the 1970's by Reverend James Cleveland, started as an innovation in the Black church that continues even today.
Although the musical cycle has waxed and waned over the years, basic ritual practices accommodate new material with the old so that little is lost. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the ritual practice of singing the *lined* hymn, a hymn singing event where one person sings a line from a hymn and the congregation follows in unison. The *lined* hymn singing event demonstrates the retention of the tradition of call/response begun in early African ethnic communities. Far from dying out, the long-metered *lined* hymn continues to be sung in wealthy Black churches as well as in those where the members are poor and working class.

This is not to suggest, however, that ritual patterning or structure is the same in all Black churches. As Pitts notes, “Depending largely on the socioeconomic status of its members, and clergy, Black Baptist churches differ greatly from each other in terms of ritual expectations and behavior exhibited during the ritual” (p. 28). Black middle-class Baptists who are college educated are more likely to assume the values of white mainstream society and also choose a minister who, like themselves, is also college educated and seminary trained. Thus, the nuances of worship in terms of preaching, style, amount of music used for worship and musical style in this setting will more likely be closer to that heard in the churches of white counterparts.

Some Past Directions in Writing and Literacy Research

The landscape of writing research has expanded considerably in the years since Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schwer noted, in 1963, that composition research was not at the time well-developed. They described the field at that time as being “laced with dreams, prejudices, and makeshift operations” (1963, p. 5). After reviewing a number of studies addressing factors which may influence the student’s written performance, they concluded their findings by suggesting a list of research issues towards which
further research might be directed and warranted. "Some questions," they said, "which seem fundamental in the teaching and learning of written communication apparently have gone almost untouched by careful research" (p. 52). Included in the list of questions are those which refer to the act of writing, to the writer’s process, to the kinds of writing provided by different situations, to the development of writing abilities, and to the teaching of writing to special groups.

In the years since this research summary, researchers have examined writing in a number of different ways. In recent years, research studies have covered the following topics, among others: the oral language process in writing, the relationship between concentration and motivation upon writing performance, interactions between context and composing, and inter-cultural collaboration between writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Chin, 1994; McGinley and Kambrells, 1996; Flower, 1996).

The field of literacy research has also burgeoned since Scollon and Scollon, who in 1979, laid the foundation for the philosophical belief that literacy is demonstrated in different ways by different groups, in different places for different purposes. Their findings suggested that researchers must consider not only many kinds of situations without literacy (they refer to these as "multiple non-literacies"), but also many kinds of literacies which interact with different discourse patterns which may have different learning styles, and, therefore, educational practice.

Following Scollon and Scollon came research that suggested there are multiple definitions of literacy (Heath, 1980) and that there exists a plurality of literacies or a variety of configurations of literacy (Szwed, 1981). Since these two groundbreaking studies, there have been others whose findings suggest that literacy functions primarily to mediate domains of human activity rather than as an isolated skill (Teale, 1984; Moll,
This is significant, for as Soviet psychologist, Vygotsky (1978) pointed out early in this century, there is a direct link between society and the mind (p. 106). In other words, the foundations of cognition are themselves social. Thus, clearly there is more to literacy than merely reading and writing.

Summary

Within the past thirty-five years there has been the development of an impressive body of research into literacy and writing, its uses and functions, in both school and community. Literacy research in specific contexts, in cross-cultural settings, and in both school and community has been explored by Heath (1980), Moss (1988), and Doheny-Farina (1997). These researchers, as well as others, indicated how ethnographic research can be used in remaking curricula and classroom practices. What is more significant, however, is how these studies relate the acquisition of writing skills to the individual's growth toward literate competence in the several communities he/she inhabits.

While the field of writing research has indeed changed and the energies of researchers been challenged as the focus of concerns with writing and literacy has shifted, there is still much debate and many perplexing questions. Since Ogbu (1978) raised the issue, the question of how minority school children build upon their primary literacies to achieve writing success continues to bear attention. The research described here partially answers the questions.

Couched withing perspectives on ways of speaking I comment on how the speakers participate in networks of social interaction that illuminate the uses and functions of language. More directly, I address the features of a specific speech community and describe how the members of the community negotiate a variety of
experiences in an effort to use language in particular ways, in particular situations.

Finally, I also comment on how each of these events (including ritual and performance) establish a climate of social interaction conducive to growth in literacy.
CHAPTER THREE
DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In settings where writing is an instructional focus, the ethnographer can discover many dimensions of what happens when teachers and students engage in writing events. Specifically, ethnography allows the researcher to describe and interpret the interactions between the setting's many elements as a context for writing, for teaching writing, and for learning to be a writer.

In research on writing, itself a complex individual and social process, there must be a research effort that is satisfactory between both the researcher and the participants if the researcher desires to understand young writers as they engage in the composing process when that process occurs within a specific cultural context. Fortunately I was accepted onto the site as "insider," my presence did little to affect the activities that occurred there. I arrived with thirty-seven years of teaching experience behind me, so I shared a professional background with the tutors and center director. I am also Black and attend a Black Baptist church; therefore, I was like the participants both in racial background and observance of Christian values. I view teaching as a profession that exacts enormous influence upon literacy and learning. These aspects of my being and the shared knowledge that existed between the participants and myself allowed me to be accepted as one of them, and, by extension, accepted as a participant observer of their activities.

Research Background

For two years prior to beginning this research, I was a tutor in a church-sponsored after school tutorial program. In this setting, at the St. John No. 4 Baptist
Church (a pseudonym), junior and senior high school African-American students participated in a tutorial aimed at improving their writing abilities so that they could achieve success on graduation exit exams and college entrance exams. Meeting twice weekly for ninety minutes each session, these eleven students demonstrated the astounding effects of the program. Not only did these students begin to show marked improvement in the quarterly report grades in English composition, but five of the six seniors passed the essay section of the ACT college entrance examination. Impressed with these results, I decided to focus my research on this program and its students.

Before I was able to do that, however, the tutorial program was disbanded due to a dispute between the pastor of the church and members of its Trustee Board. The congregation thereafter split into two groups - one side supporting the pastor and the other side supporting the Board. The dispute was so acrimonious that the church imploded upon itself, resulting in many members, along with the pastor, leaving to establish a new church. In all this disarray, all outreach programs, including the tutorial program, were dissolved. I was, of course, dismayed because the program had two unique features which interested me: (1) its participants were high school students and (2) it was a popular component of the church’s outreach ministry.

At this point, I turned to church-sponsored tutorial programs funded by the Louisiana State Department of Education. Mr. Donald Crockett, director of the Louisiana Network of Church-Sponsored Programs, provided a list of churches in the New Orleans area where I live.

The network includes partnerships with the family, church and local school systems, businesses and industry, community organizations, state legislators, and the Department of Education. The Louisiana Church-Sponsored Tutorial Network is large.
It consists of five educational programs: the Five-Day After-School Tutorial Program, the Saturday Academy, the Summer Enrichment Program, the Student Referral Center, the Volunteer Tutorial Program, and the Computer Lab Support System.

The Five-Day-After-School Tutorial Program is one that operates five days a week with the aim of assisting students in completing homework assignments for the regular school year. The Saturday Academy, however, is a program that meets only on Saturday and, as opposed to tutorial services, also introduces skills in math, reading, conflict resolution, self-concept, and self-awareness. Likewise, the Summer Enrichment Program, which begins at the end of the regular school session and stops during the second week of August, also teaches the skills that are focused upon in the Saturday Academy. The Student Referral Center, on the other hand, is a program designed for the continuance of education for those students who have been suspended or expelled from their regular school. The Volunteer Tutorial Program, the original program within the Network, operates three days per week and its attributes are the same as those of the Five-Day Program. Lastly, the Computer Lab Support System is a program that operates at one flagship church in each region and is designed to exist as a central laboratory for assisting students in computer-assisted learning in math and language arts for grades K-12. Each tutorial program requires a director and a tutor/teacher student ratio of 1 to 10. The Network is composed of eight regions; the New Orleans area is Region 1.

The requisite forms and applications for the Volunteer Tutorial Program, the object of this study, can be found in Appendix A. They show the amount of record-keeping necessary for tracking the enrollment and progress of the participants in the program. At the time I prepared to conduct this research, there were nineteen churches
enrolled in the Network from this region. Over a four-month period, I visited six of those churches and found, to my disappointment, that five of those churches only provided services limited strictly to homework assistance. The sixth church, however, Calvary Baptist Church, provided a number of other activities, including formal writing instruction. In October, 1997, I began my research at that site.

The Site

I chose Calvary Baptist Church (a pseudonym) in New Orleans, Louisiana, as the site for this research project. A grand and magnificent edifice, the building is more than one hundred twenty-five years old. The church draws its membership of about five hundred congregants from people who live in various parts of the city.

The church is located in a low-income, impoverished neighborhood just east of the city’s downtown central business district. Many of the houses in the area are dilapidated and in states of disrepair; some of them have been abandoned, and, with broken doors and windows, suggest they exist as havens for unlawful activities. Unemployment is also probably high in this area because I observed young adults of working age sitting on stoops and loitering on street corners at all hours of the working day. Nevertheless, Calvary Baptist Church enjoys a high level of serenity, stability, and security within the confines of its dismal surroundings, Reverend Sanders, the pastor, is wont to gleefully note, “We have had two, only two, break-ins in the twenty odd years I have been here. And what’s more, my membership has remained constant.” (Rev. Sanders, Personal Interview, 7 October 1997)

A small building attached to the church and behind the sanctuary serves a triple function as an educational facility, administrative suite, and dining room. A small room, off to the left of the dining area, serves as a meeting room for lower elementary school
children. The largest area, the dining room, is where the tutorial for upper level elementary school children is conducted, and it is here and in the sanctuary where I observed upper level elementary school children as they engaged in a variety of writing activities.

At this site I observed the tutorial program from its official beginning in October, 1997 to its end in May, 1998. (Although the academic school year had begun in August, the church did not receive its state funding until October.) At the beginning twenty-nine (29) children were enrolled - nine (9) in the lower elementary group and twenty (20) in the upper level elementary group. At the end, however, fourteen (14) children remained in the latter group, resulting in a total of twenty-three (23) learners. The number of students at each grade level was as follows:

- Kindergarten - 2
- First grade - 3
- Second grade - 4
- Third grade - 3
- Fourth grade - 6
- Fifth grade - 5

Most of the children who participated in the program came there in response to announcement flyers and application forms that were sent by the program director to the elementary schools in the surrounding area. Of the original twenty-nine participants, twenty-one (21) came from Bunche Elementary School (a pseudonym), two (2) were from Mirabeau Elementary School (a pseudonym), one (1) from St. Rita Catholic Elementary School (a pseudonym), and five (5) came from schools farther outside the
area. These five children, four (4) offspring and one grandchild, were related to two of the tutors, who brought these children along with them to the center.

The Subjects

I used a systematic and carefully controlled process to select the subjects who would participate in the project. Since my knowledge of child development and major teaching experience of twenty-eight years out of thirty-seven was with students at the middle/junior high school level, I wanted the focus of my research to be directed upon learners in the tutorial program who were either at or approaching this level. Consequently, I began to attend to learners enrolled in the two upper level elementary classes. The grade levels of these students were from grades three to five.

For two weeks I observed all the learners in these two classes. During this time the tutors obligingly made copies of the students' writings for me. (I had previously informed them of this necessity to assist me in making a final determination of which students I would choose as subjects for the project.) Coupled with my observations and two writing samples taken from each learner, I was able to select children with diverse ages, personalities, and writing abilities.

Important to my research was the need to study a diverse population. I considered this aim to be of value as I observed the social interactions that occurred among the participants. Likewise, I wanted to observe how a speech community, with different personalities, became a cohesive group with common goals and interests. The six children I finally selected met this criteria and there was no backlash from those who were not selected. In fact, the children who were not selected continued to behave with warmth and friendliness toward their colleagues who became the subjects of this study.
This may be because many of the children were prior participants in the program and had developed collegial relationships which this study could not undermine.

During my initial observations I was looking for evidence of unique personality traits, of how the learners interacted with each other and the tutors, of how they interacted with writing events, and of how they produced texts during these events as criteria for selection. The six subjects that I finally selected not only revealed a wide range of personality traits, they also demonstrated varying degrees of writing ability. This latter factor was important to my aim of assessing progressive syntactical maturity as an effect of the tutorial program. Of the four fourth graders, Gene's (a pseudonym) writing skills were the poorest; he did not write one coherent sentence in the two writing samples I considered. Jessica's (a pseudonym) writings, while not quite as poor as Gene's, demonstrated lack of familiarity with basic conventions. Barbara and Jackie (both pseudonyms), on the other hand, were average. Of the two fifth graders, Wendy (a pseudonym) demonstrated average ability, while Margaret's (a pseudonym) writings depicted a high degree of sophistication and maturity. The difference in literate abilities among these learners led me to conclude that these six subjects demonstrated the most potential for allowing me to explore the diversity of their speech community and the dimensions of their socialization into written literacy.

Observation Schedule and Data Collection

I spent twenty-six weeks at the center observing and collecting data. During the months of December 1997 and February 1998 I made one visit to the home of each subject, during which time I interviewed their parent(s). In April, 1998, I made one visit to the school(s) where each of the subjects were enrolled. Since three of the six subjects attended the same school and these three were in the same class, I was able to
interview their classroom teacher about each of them during one visit. Two of the remaining three subjects attended another school and had different teachers. I was still able, however, to interview these teachers on the same day. The one remaining subject attended another school and I interviewed her teacher on another day.

I first interviewed the director of the tutoring program, the pastor of the church, the tutors, and each of the six subjects in early November, 1997. I then interviewed them again in late May, 1998, as the program officially came to an end. An unexpected, but delightful, development was the inclusion of a parent who also came to the center seemingly to seek its services as much for herself as for her three children. I interviewed her as well. In all, I collected a total of twenty-seven (27) audiotapes of these interviews. Samples of these interview forms are in Appendix B.

Understanding that triangulation of data is important to ethnographic research and since this project is a case study using ethnographic methods, I tried to compile as much data as possible in the form of field notes, interviews, and writing samples. I realized, however, during my interpretations, that much of the information contained in my field notes resurfaced in my transcriptions of the audio-taped interviews. This redundancy is the reason why most of the interview data is not reported.

Crucial to the research were samples of written texts which were produced during the formal writing segment of the tutorial. I focused upon these because a primary aim in this project was to describe the strategies the learners used as they engaged in the composing process and to describe their progress toward syntactical maturity in the production of these texts. Therefore, I excluded writing which was done for school homework or for the copying of prose pieces (more about that in a later chapter) to be recited at special center programs. I first collected two (2) writing
samples from all of the upper level elementary school children enrolled in the program in November, 1997. In December, 1997, having then selected the six case subjects. I began to collect writing samples from them.

In addition, I made field notes during observation and analytical memos about those observations periodically. While most of the notes reflected my observations of actions that occurred during the formal tutorial segment of the daily schedule, many others concern other aspects of the program and site, such as the church's worship services and noting how the participants made use of printed texts during the opening/closing assemblies and describing their performance during programs to commemorate special holidays. These opening/closing assemblies, held daily from 3:30 p.m. - 3:50 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. - 5:20 p.m., and special programs, usually one hour long, provided important information relevant to one of the aims of the project - to describe the influence of the Black Church upon written literacy.

I used analytic memos, written every two weeks in private reflection, as aids to help me sift through the data as I selected it. These memos also pulled out theoretical issues which I addressed the next time I visited the site. Frequently, I would present these issues to the program director and tutors for comment, and their responses would be added to the data. Thus, the field notes, analytic memos, and steady monitoring of interactions between program participants and researcher made it possible to gather data and use it to generate a reliable account of how each child developed as a competent language user.

Summary

This chapter describes the research site and its selection, the selection of the subjects, and methodology of data collection. Although the majority of the institutions
in the New Orleans area that participate in the State Department’s network of church-sponsored tutorial programs adhere strictly to state guidelines, the site selected is unique in its insistence to go beyond the policies. This site’s uniqueness, therefore, allowed me to pursue pertinent issues fundamental to this study. These issues and this methodology form the basis for the data interpretation that follows in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCOVERING WRITING ABILITIES: EVENTS, INTERACTIONS, AND LITERACIES

Introduction

This study describes writing ability in a group of upper elementary African-American school children. I observed how these children engaged in social interactions which established a climate for writing at an after school tutorial program.

In the study reported here, while the emphasis is on the writing events that occurred in the tutorial context, I also sought to observe the occurrence of traditional ritual practices performed in the Black church and note how performance of these practices became a factor relevant to growth in writing ability. Interpretation of the data collected from these observations thus allowed for the discussion of several issues related to competence in writing.

In this chapter I address topics related to the learning and teaching of writing in this tutorial context: ritual action and performance, writing events, participants, tutors' platforms, and classroom environment. These aspects of the tutoring environment are key topics for a descriptive analysis of the operations of a speech community as it engages in socialization into written literacy.

Significant to these descriptions is the interpretation of the data which suggests that the performance of ritual at the church functions as text that weaves a thread through all of the events that occur in this setting. Consequently, it is this ritual action that establishes a frame for discussing not only the achievement of written literacy but also the uses and functions of language in a specialized speech community. The participants, the tutors' personal fronts, their ways of negotiating the classroom climate,
and their ways of establishing the tutorial program and classroom climate as a context for writing. It is into the social dynamics of this tutorial context that the activity of writing becomes meaningful for participants. It suggests that a speech community, working with cultural traditions and shared resources, will use language in ways that are purposeful and meaningful to that community. The first part of this chapter discusses the church's ritual while the second part discusses the tutorial context – the participants, the tutors' personal fronts, their ways of negotiating the classroom climate, and their ways of establishing the tutorial program and classroom climate as contexts for writing.

Theme One: The African-American Church, A Conduit to Literacy

The Site and Important Figures

The site for data collection was the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in downtown New Orleans, Louisiana. The tutorial program from which the data was gathered comprised a group of twenty-three African-American boys and girls (six boys and seventeen girls) whose abilities ranged from low to advanced. Of these twenty-three learners, six were chosen as subjects for this study (one boy and five girls, ages 10-12). These six were chosen because they demonstrated an interesting mix of writing ability; they portrayed diverse personalities and character traits; and each one suggested potential for growth in writing.

Reverend Sanders (a pseudonym) is the pastor of the church. He is a “hands-on” leader who actively participates in all facets of his church's activities. He is an accomplished organist and will frequently come to the tutoring program whereupon he will provide musical accompaniment to the songs rendered during its opening and closing assemblies. He is also the self-appointed musician to lend accompaniment to
the songs to be sung during program sponsored celebrations commemorating holidays and special events.

Reverend Sanders is a tall, stately, elegant man, appearing to be somewhere in his late fifties, and who speaks in the measured, articulate, cultured tone of a scholar. He holds several academic degrees, the highest the Ph.D. in theology, and has published several respected papers both individually and in collaboration with other theologians.

He has been the pastor of the church for twenty-two years and has been the leading force in progressively moving the institution to minister to the basic human needs of the surrounding community. Besides leading traditional religious services (i.e., Sunday Worship, Tuesday Bible Study, and Friday Witnessing Service), he has also instituted and participates in a variety of outreach ministries (i.e., the monthly clothing drives and food distributions for the poor, and the Saturday soup kitchen for the homeless and hungry).

In an effort to impact the literate abilities of the people living in the surrounding area, he has also been instrumental in establishing a number of literacy programs at the church (i.e., G.E.D. training, the Summer Enrichment Program, and the Volunteer Tutorial Program), and often participates in events and activities involving these programs.

I learned that the impetus for the after school tutorial program came about through a conversation Reverend Sanders had with a state official while attending the annual state Baptist convention fourteen years ago. The program was a start-up one at that time designed to assist at-risk children with their homework and give help to parents who, because of other responsibilities, could not give their children the help they required. Reverend Sanders, understanding the needs of the children and their
parents who resided near his church, immediately obtained the necessary forms and applied for the program to be instituted at his church. The application was approved and the program has been in force ever since.

Reverend Sanders has in every way been a hands-on administrator of the program and has included in the state mandated guidelines other components to customize the program more to his liking. He added the opening and closing rituals and the programs to commemorate special events and holidays and personally selects the songs and prose pieces for the former. For Reverend Sanders believes the tutoring program must connect with the Black church’s ritual if the children who are participating are to develop properly. Purposely, he links the program to the rich reservoir of literacies that exist at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

Calvary Missionary Baptist Church- A Reservoir of Literacies

Calvary Missionary Baptist Church is a successful survivor of the age old fundamentalist Black Baptist Church. Hymn lining, call-and-response between preacher and congregation, hand clapping to rhythmic music, and ecstatic shouting in response to spoken words or phrases are major features of the working-class fundamentalist Black Baptist Church. Calvary, whose pastor is seminary trained and whose congregation is a mixture of working and middle classes, has retained each of these customs, seemingly with the approval of its middle class members.

That Calvary has survived and retained old traditions is interesting since there has been in recent years movements that have resulted in changes in doctrine and policy in the Black Baptist Church. In recent years some Black Baptist Churches have affiliated with the Southern Baptist Association, an umbrella organization which oversees the policies and doctrine of a majority of white Baptist Churches. In these
churches the worship service is no more than a hour long and the music and sermons follow a strictly prescribed linear pattern. Other Black Baptist Churches however, have affiliated with the Full Gospel Movement, a movement which dictates a re-interpretation of Scripture calling for speaking in tongues and active, physical displays of emotion and feeling to the music, prayers, and sermon.

On the three occasions when I visited Calvary to observe its Sunday worship service, I noticed that while there were numerous displays of active, physical emotion (shouting), there were no demonstrations of the speaking in tongues called for in Full Gospel. The worship service, nearly two hours long, follows almost to the letter the two demarcations of ritual frame - Devotion and Service- that Pitts (1993, p. 31) found in his study.

The worship service started at 11:00 a.m. For the first ten minutes the two great double doors to the sanctuary were open and led to a long center aisle which extended up to the pulpit. On each side of these doors stood ushers clad in white who handed church bulletins to worshipers as they entered the sanctuary. Other ushers then guided these worshipers to seats either by way of the center aisle or along the two outer aisles. At this point, the choir loft was empty while choir members assembled in the choir room putting on their robes and preparing for the processional. This small room is located off to the right of the foyer of the church. During this ten minute interval a deacon and another preacher (not Reverend Sanders) led the congregation in the two introductory devotional hymns that are a part of the first ritual frame. The mood was somber and I heard no laughter or loud conversation as the worshipers were being led to their seats. Except for the one aforementioned preacher, the pulpit was vacant and no
organist was seated at the organ to lend musical accompaniment to the hymns being sung.

About ten minutes into the service the organist arrived and took his place at the organ. Immediately he began to play the organ, sending out great peals of music that seemed to reverberate throughout the sanctuary. The anthem he played seemed to send a signal to both the congregation and the choir, which had now assembled in the foyer, for the congregation stood and the choir, marching two-by-two, began their processional down the center aisle, then separated to go either to the left or right around the sides of the pulpit on into the choir loft. As the last two choir members departed the foyer and marched down the center aisle, an usher placed a red velvet rope across this aisle. During the rest of the service until the offertory service, no one would be allowed to walk down the center aisle.

After the anthem had ended and the choir and congregation had sat down the preacher invited the congregation to turn to a particular Scripture in their Bibles and to read the verses aloud in unison with him. The Scripture reading was then followed by a prayer led by one of the deacons. The completion of this prayer signaled the message that it was now time for the offertory period dedicated to the collection for the missions. While the choir sang a soft prayer chant, the ushers passed the big brass collection trays throughout the pews.

Then it was time for the song service. During this event the choir sang the two songs which had been previously selected by the organist whose dual role was also choir director. The third song, however, was one that appeared to have been selected by the pastor, Reverend Sanders, because this hymn signaled his approach to the pulpit.
Thus, the pastor’s approach signaled the end of the first ritual frame, Devotion, and the beginning of the second, Worship.

Reverend Sanders is also an accomplished organist and singer. Immediately after his approach to the pulpit he went straight to the organ and began to play another hymn and personally led the congregation in singing this hymn. In this way he deviated from Pitts’ (1993, p 18) description of the unfolding of events in this ritual frame by choosing to personally set up the context for his sermon rather than leave the task to someone else. The timbre of his voice and the energetic performance he gave to his singing was enough to prompt several members of the congregation to begin clapping their hands, standing, or shouting as demonstrations of joy. I suspected that Reverend Sanders used this event to hype the emotional participation of his congregation into the service and prepare them for active engagement in the text of his sermon.

As he preached his sermon Reverend Sanders infused into it both contemporary and traditional elements. He spoke from a written text, though he would often depart from his written notes and extemporaneously weave into this text dramatic images and poetic detail in which he juxtaposed the epic-like sagas of biblical heroes against practical exhortations for daily living. In so doing he would demonstrate the skill he has achieved over the years in vocalizing his mastery of certain aspects of language, rhythm, and change in voice pitch patterns, devices which are designed to elicit a favorable response from his congregation.

That Reverend Sanders’ remarks are not rigidly controlled by a written text gives testimony to a pattern he has perfected over his twenty-two years of preaching. Despite his modern day seminary training, he has retained certain elements of tradition from the Black Baptist Church and has devised a formula for the performance of his
sermons much like that used and performed by the Black folk preacher of yesteryear.

Of the formula and its performance, Jackson says,

Some preachers can effectively read parts of a sermon out loud, but if they continue reading throughout, the sermon loses its desired effect. If forced to rely on a fixed text, they cannot make the adjustment between stress for the sake of sound and for the sake of meaning. Thus, it is most difficult for a preacher to utilize his personal style of meter and intonation while he is reading a manuscript (1981, p. 215).

An interesting corollary to this sermon event is Reverend Sanders' language use and the manner in which he wove vernacular and Standard English into his text. Perhaps incorporating into his performance a high degree of sensitivity to his congregation’s facility in vernacular language and a purposeful intention to act as a force to model literacy in Standard English for the working class and youth population in his congregation, he would adroitly switch from vernacular to Standard English and back at certain intervals in his sermon. To achieve this he depended upon an ear for timing which allowed him to expertly maintain and pace his performance to always elicit a positive response (i.e., hand clapping, shouting, etc.) from the congregation.

On this particular Sunday Reverend Sanders built the text of his sermon around the biblical story of Samson and Delilah and the need for people to be wary of enticing temptations. After initially referring to his written notes in which he addressed biblical Scripture relevant to the Samson and Delilah saga and then delivering introductory remarks designed to set the context for his message, he then began to move into a cadence of extemporaneous performance. Moving away from the pulpit with microphone in hand, he began to say:

"You all have seen what the Bible tells us about this man Samson. He thought as a cool dude. He thought he was all that. Yeah. But Delilah was gorgeous. She could have had anyone she wanted, but she wanted him. He didn't think about no consequences. No. the temptation was too
great. And we see what happened to him. What happened to Samson back there so long ago is no different from the temptations we face today. We must always be on the lookout for things and people who don't mean us no good. Can I get an Amen?" (Field notes, Jan. 25)

As we can see, Reverend Sanders slipped back and forth between vernacular and Standard English. The use of the double negative is a syntactical feature commonly found in Black speech, as are the slang phrases, "cool dude" and "all that." Believing his congregation to be bidialectal, he threads vernacular and Standard English into his text, demonstrating that he is bidialectal as well.

As he neared the end of his sermon Reverend Sanders called upon a final element of the traditional Black folk sermon - the chant. His voice pitch became noticeably deeper and the intonational quality like that of a moan. This event never lasted more than three or four minutes but its effect was powerful. By this time the entire congregation was in an uproar and ushers were kept busy rushing here and there fanning and giving aid to members who had become overcome with emotion and feeling.

Rules of speaking are the ways in which speakers associate particular modes of speaking, topic, or message forms, with particular settings and activities. Reverend Sanders' use of the vernacular, Standard English, and the chant in his sermons exemplify how he uses particular modes of speaking to fit the sermon event. It is probably believing his congregation to also be bidialectal, he can switch between the two speech modes without offending or confusing his listeners. That he applies a rhythmic style and proper timing to his utterances is an example of the value he places on verbal artistry and style, which is, in turn, valued and well received by his listeners.
After ending his sermon Reverend Sanders, tired and spent, slumped down in a tall chair on the pulpit. Streams of sweat poured down his face. An usher brought him a towel to wipe his face and a tall glass of water to drink. In the meantime the choir began to sing a hymn and the deacons took their places around the offertory table. It was now time for the public offering. An usher got up to remove the velvet rope from across the center aisle and the congregation stood to march down this aisle, row-by-row to the two offertory tables in front of the pulpit to place their offerings in the collection trays. After the congregation had returned to their seats, the choir came down next. Dramatically clapping their hands and swaying to the beat of the music, they marched down from the choir loft in two groups, one group going down one of the outer aisles and the other group going down the other aisle. The two groups met at the back of the church and then two-by-two marched down the center aisle, just as they had done in the processional. Swaying and rocking they placed their offerings on the tables and then split into two groups again as they marched around opposite sides of the pulpit back to their seats in the choir loft. Reverend Sanders' sermon and the rousing display of congregational response to it and the choir's dramatic performance here demonstrate the distinct demarcations between the two ritual frames as practiced at Calvary. The somber, grave mood of Devotion had been replaced by the exuberance of Worship.

At a nod from Reverend Sanders the organist began to play another hymn, "I Come to the Garden," this one softer than the lively song sung for collection. It was now time to open the doors of the church and Reverend Sanders, now rested, came forward to extend an invitation to anyone in the congregation who did not belong to the church to join Calvary either as a backslider or candidate for baptism. As each newcomer came forward a deacon opened a folding chair for each one to sit on facing
the congregation. A deaconess hovered over each one with a pad and pencil to write
their names and other significant information. As the deaconess read each name the
person stood and addressed the congregation explaining why he/she wanted to join
Calvary and/or be baptized.

Then Reverend Sanders welcomed the newcomers into the church and instructed
them to follow Sister Fisher to the rear of the church to the choir room where she would
talk to them about the policies of the church and extract other significant information
from them. As the new members followed Sister Fisher, Reverend Sanders called for
Bernadette, the church secretary, to come forward and read the announcements. Some
of these announcements were already printed in the church bulletin, but others were not.
As Bernadette read these, Reverend Sanders interrupted her at intervals to elaborate
more on them. After the reading of the announcements was over, Reverend Sanders
said a short benediction and the worship service was over.

Thus we can see that Calvary Missionary Baptist Church is very much like the
old Black folk Baptist churches of years long ago. The ritual events that occur within
its worship service can be divided into two distinct frames: Devotion and Worship.
There are clear demarcations between these two as one notices how the somber, grave
mood of Devotion gives way to the lively, exuberance of Worship, where the rhythmic
music and the pastor's sermon are designed to open the air to the Holy Spirit.

We notice also that the Church is a rich reservoir of literacies. With its ritual
practices and its singing and preaching, it has continued a legacy that began many years
ago. The use of printed text in the church bulletins and hymnals and in Reverend
Sanders' written sermons call for the display of literate abilities both by the minister and
the congregation. Likewise, Reverend Sanders' application of rhythm and timing to his
sermons and his use of language are geared to elicit a certain kind of response from his congregation.

Some might consider it a stretch to conclude that the worship service at Calvary welds its influence to other activities in the church, especially its outreach ministries, but if one were to consider the structure of the binary ritual frames in this setting, it is not all that puzzling. The religious ritual practiced at Calvary serves to umbrella its outreach ministries (i.e., the after school tutorial program) and prompts participants to engage in rites of passage symbolic of the initiation practices that were observed in Africa long ago. The somber tone of the first stage of the African initiation process which evolves into the energetic, unrestrained mood of the last stage is comparable to the binary frames of ritual practiced at Calvary. Turner (1969, p. 94) speaks of African initiation rites which functioned as rites of passage for the initiates. The rites of passage ritual involved three stages: structure, anti-structure, and re-structure. In the first stage the initiates are separated from their social group who treat them as though they were dead. In the second stage they are suspended in limbo and placed in a transitional state. In the last stage they are regenerated and welcomed back into their social group but recognized now as newly fashioned people with a new status in the group. This initiation rite and its subsequent rite of passage is embedded in the two ritual frames practiced today in Black Churches like Calvary.

If one looks at this process from a linguistic perspective, the children in the tutorial program evolve through the stages first as part of a social group that uses the stock phrases and language of that group to convey special meaning of the situation (i.e., the opening/closing assemblies). The purpose of the speech acts that occur here is, as in the Devotion frame of the ritual, somber and grave. As the children move through
other activities, the homework assistance segment and then the Writing Time segment, 
the children's evolution can be likened to that of African initiates going through the 
anti-structure and then re-structure stages of the rites of passage, arriving at the end of 
age three newly fashioned and different.

Likewise language use at the third stage is different and the children have 
adapted their speech acts in this stage to accommodate this change. The production of 
their written texts during this stage displays evidence of loosened code structuring 
because vernacular and Standard English forms can likely be seen and read in their 
texts. This loosened code structuring is different from the rigid code structuring in the 
opening/closing assemblies which call for expected speech or actions.

Given these reflections then, perhaps an important way of looking at the children 
in Calvary's tutorial program and the influence the church has upon their literate 
abilities is couched in the notion that the children, like Reverend Sanders and his 
congregation, adjust their language use to the particular situation and the situation is a 
reflection of the cultural values embedded in it.

Interestingly, however, Calvary Missionary Baptist Church (a pseudonym), the 
site of this research, has continued to retain the ritualistic structure of the working-class 
fundamentalist Baptist church, even though its minister is college and seminary trained 
and some of its members are also college educated and middle-class. This may be 
because the church was founded in 1871 during an era when the newly freed slaves 
were free to openly worship and publicly import some African form of worship into 
their Christian faith. Whatever the reason, Calvary has studiously chosen to maintain its 
traditional ritualistic structure throughout the years.
An analysis of the speech that occurs during the rituals is also of importance. Today Black Vernacular English (BVE) is spoken by many working-class African-Americans as the language of the “home, familiarity, racial identity, and group loyalty” (Baugh, 1983, p. 55). In many Black churches, however, dialectal shifting from BVE to Standard American English (SAE) occurs to establish demarcation between the two ritual frames. Such dialectal shifting suggests that the participants in worship in the Black church know when to use and listen for BVE and SAE during the rituals. In fact, Pitts notes that even “younger church members are sensitive to both standard and vernacular forms of speech and can manipulate them within a ritual context” (p. 143).

Ritual practices are undergirded by a number of factors, all of which converge to establish a climate for socialization into literacy. Any descriptive analysis of events within a context where ritual is an accepted practice must take into account all of the nuances of ritual showing how the threads are woven together in order to understand the uses and functions of language in that speech community.

A Typical Day in the Tutorial Program

I have suggested that the programming of special holidays is part of a pattern of ritual, a tradition honored in the Black church. Further demonstrations of this tradition can be noted in the consistency of program activities as they are played out each day. In determining the relation of ritual to the general behavior of the participants, it must be pointed out that ritual as a tradition in the Black church has served not only to promote a sense of constancy to events but also to promote a feeling of “community” in its inclusion of everyone regardless of social standing. The social situation of the rituals promoted an intimate relationship between the participants and a shared understanding.
of the purpose of the activities which were designed to create a climate of warmth and well-being.

Daily activities at the center followed a strictly prescribed schedule and rarely, except for the scheduling of special programs, was there any departure from these activities. While Mrs. Parker, the center director, must be credited, in large part, for rigidly insisting on the establishment of structure in the program, credit must also be given to the three tutors who worked along with her as a team and who shared her desire for consistency.

Such structure had a telling effect upon the children. At first they were recalcitrant and hostile. Perceiving the formulaic structure of the program to be too much like the school classrooms they had so recently left earlier in the day, many of them were prompted to mutter statements like “Hey, this ain’t no school!” or “Aw shucks! I can’t have no fun here.” or “I’m not coming back here!”(Field notes, Oct. 26) To such outbursts Mrs. Parker would sternly respond, “No, this is not a school, but it’s connected to what you do in school. In time you will see that what we do here can be fun. And yes, you will be back. Your parents will see to that” (Field notes, Oct. 26).

Mrs. Parker (a pseudonym) is the director of the Summer Enrichment Program and the Volunteer Tutorial Program, the after-school tutorial program from which the data for the study was gathered. A tall, graceful, elegant woman, her classy and stylish attire belies the fact that she is “somewhere in her seventies.” She is always doing something (i.e., talking on the telephone, filling out reports, taking inventory, etc.) and appears detached. This is a mistaken impression because she sees everything. She has a pleasant personality, but underneath one senses a toughness about her that she will display when necessary.
One day, for example, while Mrs. Parker seemed to be busily engaged in filling out a state report, she stopped what she was doing, walked over to Ms. Curtis (a pseudonym), a parent, and clearly reprimanded her for peeking at the field notes I had laid aside while I was engaged in a conversation with one of the center tutors. In a stinging tone, Mrs. Parker sharply scolded Ms. Curtis for this misdeed, making it pointedly clear that such notes "were not open to the inspection of hers or any other prying eyes, unless Mrs. Duskin says so. And I did not hear her tell you it was okay. Is that clear?" (Field notes, Dec. 4). All movement and talking ceased, and, as a hush settled over the room, all eyes focused on Ms. Curtis. Stung by Mrs. Parker's toughness and directness, Ms. Curtis apologized and silently moved away. Mrs. Parker's consistency to maintain a sense of order in the program was reflected in her daily interactions with all of its participants.

For the first two weeks of the program both Mrs. Parker and the tutors faced a challenging task of regulating the children to the timed order of center activities. Their patience and firmness were rewarded, for about the third week the children had settled into a comfortable and familiar routine. A typical day went like this:

2:45 p.m. - I arrive at the site. The church is deserted, but I like to use this time to make sure I have assembled all of my data collecting materials and also review my memos so that I may jot down any additional ideas, questions, or concerns that may need to be addressed. I usually do not have much time for this quiet reflection, however, because approximately ten minutes later the children begin arriving. Upon noticing me they begin to talk to me, including me in their banter and play as we wait for Mrs. Parker to arrive.
3:00 p.m. - Mrs. Parker arrives and makes a big production of taking out a large key ring and choosing a child to take the key and unlock the huge, heavy church doors so that we may enter. We all troop into the church, straight through the sanctuary to the classroom area in the back where we stow our belongings in the area where we regularly sit. I always sit at the rear left of the classroom. My chair is in the aisle and beside the water fountain. Once or twice I sat in the body of the class - between the two long tables used by the two tutors relevant to this study, Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen - but when all the children were present, there was usually no space for me. So a folding chair in the rear is my usual vantage point. Once I sit down, I don’t get up until all formal tutoring activities have ended. Mrs. Parker, in the meantime, goes to her office at the left front of the classroom area to retrieve telephone messages and assemble the materials for the center’s activities.

3:15 p.m. - Mrs. Parker calls everyone to order, announcing we can now sign in on the state-mandated daily roster. This roster is always placed on the table manned by Mrs. Gibson, one of the tutors. While this activity is going on other children are also arriving. All three tutors will also begin arriving, usually Mrs. Gibson first, then Mrs. Haynes, and finally, Mrs. Allen. We all must sign the roster and, as a participant-observer to the program, I do so as well.

3:25 p.m. - Mrs. Parker announces it is now time for our opening assembly. She orders the children to line up with their tutor and cautions them to remain seated together as a group with their tutor once we enter the church sanctuary. She will also use this time to select various children to either read a selected prose piece or lead the group in singing a particular song. There is
usually much clamor and bedlam as children excitedly yell at Mrs. Parker imploring her recognition and selection of one of them to perform.

3:30 p.m. - The opening assembly begins. Mrs. Parker hands stacks of prepared assembly booklets to each of the three tutors, who, in turn, distributes each one to the children in their group. The prose pieces and songs, all previously selected by Reverend Sanders, follow a strict pattern and the children who will perform need no further instructions since their readings or songs are placed in order in the booklet. As we come to each recitation or song, Mrs. Parker simply calls a child’s name and he/she walks up to the front and either reads the selection or begins to lead the group in singing a particular song.

Frequently, Reverend Sanders has arrived by this time and now sits at the organ to provide musical accompaniment. During the proceedings I sit on the right of the center aisle at the far right end of the first pew. I am the only occupant of this pew and it gives me a clear view of the proceedings. Mrs. Gibson and her students sit behind me and Mrs. Allen and her students sit behind Mrs. Gibson’s group. Mrs. Haynes and her class of lower elementary students sit across the center aisle in the first two pews. At the front of the sanctuary there are two chairs on each side of a table used for depositing offerings during Sunday service. Mrs. Parker always sits in one of these chairs. Here she is close enough to supply the correct pronunciation of a word or give directions to children as they come up to perform in this ritual. At the conclusion of this activity Mrs. Parker will make the announcements (if any) which might be of interest or which may be pertinent to the program. The assembly ends and the children follow their tutors back to their places in the classroom. Mrs. Haynes exits first.
since she tutors the little ones - those in kindergarten, first, and second grade -
and there seems to be tacit agreement that she must get her group squared away
without disruption. I, too, leave the sanctuary along with Mrs. Haynes and her
group so that I can take my regular seat and continue to observe every
action/event as it unfolds.

3:50 p.m. - Official homework assistance begins. It is for assistance in
language arts and social studies. Two of the tutors, Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen,
sit at the head of two long tables and the children assigned to them sit in chairs
on both sides of these tables. The other tutor, Mrs. Haynes, has already taken
the small children to a small anteroom off to the right at the front of this area.
For twenty-five minutes the scene is one of constant movement and whispered
conversation as children go up to the tutors to request an explanation about some
aspect of their assignments, submit their completed work for review and
approval, or assist each other. Writing is a necessary part of this routine.
Children may write the answers to questions devised by their school classroom
teachers, copy information from prepared ditto sheets, write spelling word lists,
or even draft their plans for projects. Sometimes when all of her charges are
busily engaged in their work, Mrs. Gibson will take out a professional journal
(she always seems to have one handy) and begin to quietly read. Knowing that
she is a retired teacher and away from active public school teaching, I once
asked her, while she was reading an issue of Teacher magazine, why does she
continue to engage in this practice. Turning down the page she was reading to
mark it, she closed the magazine, took off her eyeglasses, and gave me a
withering look, saying, "I may be retired, child, but I'm not yet dead. In my

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mind I will always be a teacher until I die. So I keep up with all my subscriptions to these journals so I can know what’s going on in the field” (Field notes, Dec. 10). Dismissing me, she once again put on her eyeglasses, opened her magazine, and returned to her reading. Even in this activity the focus is on ritual and the compulsion to repeat an activity over and over again.

4:15 p.m. A small kitchen timer operated by Mrs. Allen signals the end of the language arts/social studies segment and the beginning of the math/science segment of the program’s activities. The scene is almost like the one that transpired before during language arts and social studies, but with a small difference. Groups of children or a tutor and a child may go to the portable blackboard at the rear of the classroom to collaboratively work out confusing math problems there. The scene is always one of collegiality, cooperation, and helpfulness.

Likewise, as in the previous segment, writing is a necessary part of the routine. The children may write the answers to questions assigned to them in their science textbooks and Mrs. Gibson, the quintessential purist, will even demand that the children in her group write complete sentences as they answer the math word problems assigned to them in their math textbooks.

4:40 p.m. - Once again the timer sounds and signals it is time for Writing Time. This is another component of the program’s activities that is not mandated by state guidelines but was included by Reverend Sanders with the delighted approval of Mrs. Parker and the two tutors who would be involved. Each of these four individuals expressed a philosophy toward the need for such an activity founded in a belief that written literacy frees individuals to aim for
goals that will enrich their lives and that the Black church has an obligation to assist in any way it can.

Once regarded by the children as a bore, this segment of the center’s activities has become for them the most special and anticipated time. Once where children remarked, “I can’t write!” or “I don’t know what to say!” or “I hate having to do this!” (Field notes, Nov. 19), they can now be observed, two months later, laughing and slapping each other’s hands in the African-American tradition of giving the “high five,” as they excitedly put away their textbooks and get out their writing materials.

Both Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen come together as a team during this segment where one will lead the discussion of the writing topic and the other will float around to keep order. When the children are busy writing they will both walk around reading texts in progress or answering questions. The atmosphere is animated and excitedly charged, but, paradoxically, unnerving to Mrs. Gibson who is known to insist on absolute quietness. I once asked her to explain the irony of this situation. While bending over to read Jackie’s (a pseudonym) text, she raised herself to her full five foot two height, gave me another withering look and said, “Writers must talk about their work, otherwise it won’t make any sense to them or their readers. As they talk about it, the more logical it becomes to them. The whole end result of this is to help these children to become thinkers” (Field notes, Jan. 10). Therefore, the children will talk to each other as they share texts or respond to inquiries on correct word spellings. Much peer tutoring also goes on as the children portray dual roles as writers and readers and seek to achieve their own personal voice.
When viewed from this vantage point the socio-cultural dimensions of writing are apparent, that is, we see children actively engaged in the process of becoming writers, becoming members of a speech community who can choose to use writing as a mode of communication for purposes appropriate to different situations. It is indeed a happy time and the children are clearly dismayed when it comes to an end.

5:00 p.m. - Writing Time ends and the timer signals time for everyone to secure his/her belongings and prepare to return to the sanctuary for the closing assembly. As the children line up with their tutors, Mrs. Parker repeats the selection process to choose individual children to perform in this event. Excited and animated, the noise level increases as several children implore her to select each of them as performers. Once selections are made, we all file into the sanctuary. Reverend Sanders, who has been in his office, re-joins us and takes his place at the organ. The selections to be read and sung are different from those performed at the opening assembly, but procedures in both assemblies are alike, even seating. Sometimes parents who have arrived early to pick up their children will sit in the back of the sanctuary but will join in the singing along with the rest of us.

5:20 p.m. - The closing assembly ends and Mrs. Parker makes additional announcements. Reverend Sanders will also speak to the children, usually to compliment them on their behavior and progress. Like a coach he reminds them of their “duty to do their best in their schoolwork, to their parents as good children, and most importantly, to God as good Christians” (Field notes, Dec. 15). Mrs. Parker announces to the children the need to gather their belongings
and get their snacks. Reverend Sanders leaves. As the children return to the classroom area to get their books, Mrs. Parker and one of the tutors, usually Mrs. Haynes, head for the kitchen area beyond the classroom to begin pouring cups of punch and parceling out napkin wrapped cookies to be given to each child. Snacks in hand the children depart to meet their parents who have been waiting at the back of the sanctuary or outside in their automobiles. Within ten minutes the children are gone. Sometime within the next five minutes all the tutors are also gone and there is no one left but Mrs. Parker and me. Refusing my overture to help I leave her in the kitchen putting away leftover punch and walk through the empty classroom and silent sanctuary.

Oral Performance as Ritual and Discourse in the Black Church

An important corollary to the ritual practices that take place within the Black church is the oral performance driven by the two ritual frames: Devotion and Service. In many Black churches hymn singing and preaching represent the two major demonstrations of oral performance and serve as demarcations between these two frames. As it is done at Calvary and at any other given Black Baptist church the following scenario might occur:

At Sunday worship a church deacon may begin singing a hymn, which the congregation will then join, as a signal to initiate the opening of the worship service. Shortly thereafter, following the opening prayer, another church deacon will begin singing a second hymn to signal the beginning of the offertory period for the collection of the missions. This event is then routinely followed by two or three hymns sung by the choir, the last being a lively and invigorating piece, usually pre-selected by the pastor, that signals the minister’s approach to the pulpit. Often some other preacher on
the pulpit, other than the pastor, will offer a prayer and lead the congregation in a hymn to set the context for the pastor’s sermon. This hymn singing event also signals the end of the first major segment of the worship service, Devotion, and the beginning of the second, Service.

At the conclusion of this first ritual frame, the pastor approaches the lectern to preach the sermon. Often the pastor’s preaching style will parallel that of the West African griot in rhythmic tone, timing, and delivery, in which the chant is the most prominent stylistic feature. The preacher’s style and role, therefore, may be viewed as “an elaboration and reinterpretation of traditional West African-derived roles” (Jackson, 1980, p. 213).

At the end of the sermon, during which time the pastor has woven Scripture into exhortations for daily living, the pastor will begin a hymn, which is immediately taken up by the choir and used to signal the invitation that “opens the doors of the church” to sinners and others who have fallen from grace. Once having fulfilled the church’s basic mission to receive all lost souls to God, the pastor will then call for the church secretary to read the announcements, most of which are already printed in the church bulletin. Reading the announcements, however, presents the opportunity for the pastor to provide further elaboration to those he deems necessary. Finally, the pastor will offer a benedictory prayer, thus signaling the close of that Sunday’s worship.

This scenario provides both backdrop and point of entry to explore the power of performance as literacy and to draw connections between literacy and the oral aspects of performance. Polanyi (1962) finds literacy and performance inextricably connected. He claims that through performance,
Knowing is achieved through the action. Knowing processes produce tacit knowledge in the knower, who is shaped by a social context. Knowing is the result of the repository of skills and tacit knowledge the knower brings to a specific context (p. vii).

Thus, ritual and its performance make way for the text of ritual to be transformed. As participants perform the action of the ritual they perform their ideas and understandings, all interwoven into the elements of language use in the speech community.

One can be led to view the process of ritual in the tutorial program in the same way as does Turner (1969) who in addressing the issues of liminality and communitas notes, "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (p. 95). He notes further that bound to this state is that of communitas, "a transitory moment of social reversal and leveling" (p. 156). He concludes that communitas gives "recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society" (p. 97).

During the ritual actions of the tutorial program, which began with the opening and closing assemblies, the participants engaged in a rite of passage which evolved into the establishment of other rituals, but of different kinds, especially Writing Time Writing. The period of communitas between the texts of the two rituals involved what Pitts (1993) notes as "increased code structuring, code consistency, invoking positional identities, and the emergence of a structural focus" (p. 158).

Guided by these issues, I began to observe how language use in the tutorial program was embedded in these ritual texts and how ritual and performance, a shared interaction in language use, served as a precursor to written literacy. It seems
reasonable, therefore, to talk about the varieties of events in ritual action in which such interactions occurred. The following is one such scenario:

The first day of center activities in the first week of February begins on a day that is cold and windy. It is a climate uncommon to the typically balmy weather usually enjoyed in New Orleans. The gray sky and somber atmosphere outside the church sanctuary, however, stands in stark contrast against the charged electricity of the activities transpiring inside the church. The children have all been informed that they will be practicing and rehearsing selections to be performed later in the month in a program to culminate in Black History Month. Upon observing the children’s heightened energy and excitement in anticipation of this program, I began to realize fully how the historical tradition of black oral performed discourse has permeated the literate abilities of black people. It was obvious that the children in these four months had become more and more confident in themselves as readers and speakers as they assumed the tasks meted out to them by the center tutors. This was obvious even in January when the children began to crowd around Mrs. Parker, the center director, all seeking her selection of them to perform in the ritual. This clamoring to perform stood in stark contrast to their previous resistance to stand before the group in a public performance. Thus, the children at Calvary Baptist Church respond to recreate the traditions of their forebears. As Dorsey-Gaines and Garnett (1988) assert, “Black oral and performed discourses, originating in Africa and inextricably tied to the Black church, underscore the linguistic manipulations of African-Americans in forging a new language that retained many of the subtleties and indirection of the African languages but used English to speak new realities” (p. 254-55).
Such is the power of the Black church and the performed word within its walls. Most often the “performed word” has routinely meant the music and the sermon. The sermon, or more accurately, the preaching is the focal point of worship, all other activities find their place in some subsidiary relationship. In most Black churches music, or more precisely, singing is second only to preaching as the magnet of attraction and the primary vehicle of spiritual transport for the worshiping congregation. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) have said, “In some of the more traditional churches even the sermon (and often the prayers of the ministers or deacons) are still ‘sung’ in a kind of ritualistic cadence peculiar to the Black church.” Of music, James Cone stated, “Black music is unity music. It unites the joy and the sorrow, the love and the hate, the hope and the despair of black people... It shapes and defines black being and creates cultural structures for black expression. Black music is unifying because it affirms that black state of being is possible only in a communal context” (p. 63). Born out of a desire to find meaningful participation in worship denied to them by white churches, black slaves called upon a variety of performed word discourses in their own churches where they could express themselves and celebrate their sense of community through communal songs, prayers, and sermons born of a common experience.

These performances, were rooted in centuries-old Africanisms in which ritual had played a prominent part. The ceremonial demonstrations of the sermons, prayers, and songs observed in today’s black churches are not far removed from the West African setting for polytheistic worship in the open air, with its prominent placing of drums and other ritualistic paraphernalia. These traditions are resilient and continue to inspire today’s African-Americans.
One of the most important influences of these traditions has been upon the literate abilities of the members of the Black church. Emboldened with a spirit of commonality and community, African-Americans find themselves, through their participation in these rituals, infused with a sense of confidence and preparedness, armed with vigor and vitality to construct some meaning in their lives. It is against the backdrop of such traditions that the tutorial program, the object of this study, exists.

For weeks preceding the February Black History Program planning event, the children had been routinely engaging in the ritual of performance in a variety of ways. Including the Thanksgiving and Christmas programs, they had been required to participate in the opening and closing assemblies. At these assemblies all the children are called together to meet in the church sanctuary. These assemblies require the participation of all the children in singing and reciting a variety of songs and prose pieces. The selected works are diverse and touch upon both the secular and the religious. Included, for example, are songs such as “America the Beautiful,” “The Negro National Anthem,” and “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” Prose pieces are recited such as “The Pledge to the Christian Flag and Bible,” “The Pledge to the American Flag,” and the “Preamble to the Constitution.”

One day I voiced my curiosity about the purpose for these assemblies in a homework assisted program to Reverend Sanders and Mrs. Parker. Reverend Sanders, not at all offended by my question, said, “Yes, I can understand your wonder, but these assemblies have a twofold purpose. One is to teach the children the principles of patriotism and the other is to instill a reverence for God” (Field notes, Nov. 17). At this statement, Mrs. Parker nodded her head in agreement. I realized then that both of these individuals saw the Black church as an institution that must help build morals,
character, and citizenship, while at the same time serve as a mentor toward literacy. The assemblies enabled development in civic and spiritual ways important to the Black church.

After approximately twelve weeks of observation I began to notice that many of the upper level children were becoming more confident in their readings of the prose works during these assemblies. Even though no one child was given the same selection to read each day, whatever piece the child had to read was done with appropriate fluency, articulation, and comprehension. These performances were stark contrasts to the students' initial displays of hesitancy, awkwardness, and lack of understanding, a change I found most intriguing and encouraging. In October, for example, I noticed how difficult it was for Mrs. Parker to find someone, anyone, who would agree to read any of the prose pieces Reverend Sanders had selected to be read at the opening and closing assemblies. Children would hide behind each other or adamantly refuse to participate. Such behavior was so rampant that Mrs. Parker would be forced to angrily chastize the children and then forcibly select a reader, shoving the paper in his/her hands. By January, however, the power of these rituals had begun to take effect. All of the children, both big and little, would surround Mrs. Parker, sometimes as she was just arriving, and eagerly implore her to select one of them to read or sing the day's selections. Confident and sure, they now unhesitatingly stepped forward to perform before their peers.

The eagerness the children displayed toward performing on the program to culminate Black History Month resonated as one of the major residual effects of the attention given to the celebration of certain holidays and events. Mrs. Haynes (a pseudonym), one of the center's tutors, coordinates these special events assemblies and
gives the children selected relevant prose pieces to read, practice, and then recite at special programs for their parents and other invited guests. After months in the program, the children excitingly prepared for their performances, I found it fascinating to note how the Black church and its rituals created a nexus for literacy development in the children who attended the Calvary Baptist Church tutoring program.

Clearly these assemblies with their performance opportunities and ritual structure follow the pattern of initiation rites and rites of passage that abound in ethnic communities located in the African continent long ago. Turner (1969, p. 94) recognized that initiates experience the first stage, structure, in a climate of solemnity and gravity. As they progress through the second and third stages, anti-structure and re-structure, the mood changes to joy and exuberance and the initiates emerge as newly fashioned individuals who enjoy a new status in their social group. There is a sense then that the events at Calvary are rooted in this age old African ethnic tradition.

Another way of understanding these activities is to look at them as “literacy events.” Heath (1980) defines a literacy event as “any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a large role” (p. 92). Thus, the worship service at a Black church can be seen as having many literacy events. Moss (1988), explored the nature of the sermon in the black Church as a literacy event and saw how the sermon “serves as a model of formal language use to many members of the Black church community much the way the expository essay serves as a model of formal language use in the writing classroom” (p. 34).

Moss’ research, which has focused upon the sermon as the outgrowth of a shared understanding between the minister and congregation and which has revealed the manner in which “the ministers create a sense of community and promote the theme of
community within the sermons” (p. 185) is relevant to what we should be considering in other contexts as we look at the process of acquisition of written literacy at the tutoring program I observed.

The nature of the tutor’s involvement in organizing the events and the children’s eager participation in them reflect upon a shared understanding of the significance of these events. In viewing these interactions from this perspective we can see these events as one significant aspect of socialization into literacy. One of the compelling strengths of the Black church is the powerful influence it has exerted on the Black community, especially in language.

The Power of Performance

Like Reverend Sanders who engages in dramatic performance through the chanting of his sermons, the children enter a parallel realm of performance through the opening/closing assemblies, the brainchild of Reverend Sanders. While the tutorial program is state supported, state guidelines do not mandate these assemblies and many other churches which sponsor similar state supported tutorial programs do not include these assemblies in their slate of activities. Also, like Reverend Sanders, for whom discourse is channeled through the social structure and value of his cultural milieu, so it is for the children in the tutorial program. I have mentioned that one of the benefits of performance is self-confidence. But there is another benefit just as important. It is the ability to carry on relationships with others in varied and subtle ways. The children did this through handling a variety of discourses in the tutorial classroom and in the church sanctuary, and even at school and home among family and friends as they used language for various social functions. As we all are, the children were surrounded by the discourses which were loaded with the intentions of others. Needing to make these
discourses submit to their own intentions, they resorted to creating voices for themselves that were neither wholly those of the church, or of the tutorial program, but were their own creation to meet the particular needs of specific situations. Thus, children in the tutorial program handled pieces of sacred church discourse - i.e., reciting the pledge to the Christian flag - and, on the other hand, handled pieces of secular discourse as well, all within the tutorial program.

An important way in which children construct self and build up discourse layers in their talk is through performances which involve the reporting and taking on of other people's voices. "Discourse layers" is Hymes (1972) term for explaining the variety of "Cultural variables that enter into the patterning of speech behavior" (p. 100). Thus, the cultural assumptions we have about various samples of discourse lead us to communicate different types of subject matter in different situations. The articulation of different discourse layers and the references one makes of these discourses to other contexts both serve to create resources for negotiating and constructing meaning.

The Role of the Church in Influencing the Total Person

The speech acts, ritual, and performances of the worship service at Calvary extend into its tutorial program because many of the children who participate in the tutorial program also attend services at the church. Most Sundays they attend worship service along with their parents and routinely observe and participate in the variety of speech acts that occur. Consequently, they develop codes of language use which they bring into the tutorial program. Like Reverend Sanders, they also have become accomplished at code structuring and have determined the occasions when the use of vernacular and Standard English is warranted. Thus, Barbara, for example, may engage in a particular kind of speech act customary to the Black community called "playing the
dozens.” Such verbal play may be intended to be positive and affirming, but can quite often have negative overtones.

For example, I overheard Barbara one day tell Gene, “Your momma so black, people need a flashlight to find her,” to which Gene replied, “Yeah, and your momma so stupid, they call her Forest Gump Two,” (Field notes, Mar. 25). At this exchange the other children laughed appreciatively as a sign that the dialogue had served its purpose - to put someone down.

In Black speech playing the dozens can reach a highly skilled level. It is an accepted and highly valued verbal art and the children are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to sharpen their skills. But they are also discerning of the context in which such speech acts may occur and will only “play the dozens” when the situation is informal.

It is in interactions such as the bantering in verbal play and the formality of discourse in the homework and Writing Time segments of the tutorial program where it became evident to me that the children had learned to discern the particularity of speech events and to adapt their speech acts to accommodate these events.

Orality and Literacy

The Black community has long been characterized as an oral culture. Talk is an important commodity and is used in a variety of ways in particular settings to convey particular meanings. Such vernacular talk depends heavily on its artistry which has much to do with the style of the speech act, i.e., with the way something is said rather than with the topic itself. The variety of speech acts which exemplify this artistry such as signifying, rapping, playing the dozens, woofing, shucking, and jiving has been explored at great lengths by theorists such as Mitchell-Kernan, (1972) and Smitherman,
(1977). I have already mentioned one example of such verbal play between Barbara and Gene and have considered aspects of language use in Reverend Sanders' sermons as a way of drawing attention to the notion that orality is a dominant theme in Black culture. Here, I turn instead to explore the close integration of oral and literate practices and the complexities of language use which the children in the tutorial setting negotiate.

As I pored through the data I had collected, I concluded it is probable that the children's ability to make meaning in their written texts is derived from their engagement in language practices which connect orality and literacy. Such language practices occurred on two fronts: talk between tutors and students, and talk between the students with each other, as the following examples show:

(It is two weeks before the Thanksgiving holiday and Mrs. Haynes has finally put together the program to commemorate this holiday. In prior consultation with Mrs. Parker, the center director, Mrs. Haynes has received permission to shorten the Writing Time activity so that she may dictate to the older children a poem which they all must recite in unison on the program.)

Mrs. Haynes: Okay, young people. In two weeks we will have our Thanksgiving program. All of you will play a part on the program, some individually, others by themselves. I'm going to dictate a poem you will all say together. I want you to copy it down. (She waits a few seconds as the children get ready to write.) Okay, here goes. What God gives comma and what we take comma is a gift for Christ comma and his sake period.

Jackie: Wait. What comes after take again?

Mrs. Haynes: What we take comma is a gift for Christ comma and his sake period. Be The meal of beans and peas comma God be thanked for those and these period. Got that? Okay, Jackie, read it back please?

Jackie: What God gives comma and what we take comma is a gift for Christ comma and his sake period Be the meal of beans and peas comma God be thanked for those and these period.

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Mrs. Haynes: Very good, Jackie.  
(Field notes, Nov. 10)

We see the attempt in this interaction to connect the oral discourse with a written assignment, and we see also the kinds of oral interactions that are generally supported in the school classroom. The children showed evidence of this by copying the poem down when directed to do so, by requesting clarification of something they did not catch the first time, and by repeating the poem so exactly that it included Mrs. Haynes' dictated punctuation marks. The official and unofficial discourses here (Mrs. Haynes' dictation and Jackie's question) are examples of Hymes' conclusion that "different layers of context within any particular social situation contribute to the meaning of the language being used" (1974, p. 5).

In another example, the Writing Time activity had begun and the children were busily writing as Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Gibson stood nearby. The following exchange occurred between Jackie and Barbara:

Barbara: Oh, shucks. I'm stumped. I can't think of anything else to say.

Jackie: (Looking up from her paper) Well, what have you said so far?

Barbara: (She hands her paper to Jackie.) I'll let you read it.

Jackie: (Reads silently) Why do you say here that a best friend is like the wind?

Barbara: Because they can run hot and cold. That's why.

Jackie: That doesn't make sense. Best friends are always there for you. That's what makes them best friends.

Barbara: You know, you're right. I'll have to change that.

(Field notes, Feb. 10)
Again we see the connection between oral and written discourse. The involvement between Barbara and Jackie is based upon collaboration and is very social in nature, accomplishing both social and intellectual ends. The incident illustrates how particular meanings can be challenged or changed within the space of one brief conversation. Jackie's question and extraction of an explanation from Barbara is an example of one particular way of engaging a text and using it. Uncomfortable with Barbara's depiction of a best friend, Jackie used a soft questioning approach to assist Barbara in arriving at a clearer understanding of what she meant to say and is, I believe, a reflection of the way knowledge is constructed in student peer dialogues.

Language is a resource for making meaning but it is not a neutral one. Language choices bring with them particular values and positions, so that individuals are inducted into cultural practices. The provisionality and ambiguity of informal talk helps children to negotiate the complex relationship between individual purposes and cultural authority, and to develop their own personal identities, all while learning to write standard English.

The Tutorial Program - A Neighborhood Partnership

Early in this research I observed in another way how the church setting contributes to literacy development. During my first two weeks of observation I noticed a situation that was most intriguing. Ms. Curtis, the parent I mentioned earlier, would arrive each day, like clockwork, with four children in tow. Three of them enrolled in the program - one in kindergarten, one in first grade, and the other in second grade. All of them were in the lower level elementary class of Mrs. Haynes, one of the tutors. The fourth child was a toddler not yet in school. I was curious at Ms. Curtis' dedication and effort to make these sustained treks to the center under obviously trying conditions. She

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had no automobile transportation, and, while she lived but five blocks away from Calvary Church, she had to cross a wide and busy thoroughfare to get there. I speculated at the time that it must have been quite burdensome for her to set out each day to come to the center with four children, especially since she did not have even a carriage to transport the toddler. Yet, she persevered and would occasionally arrive even before Mrs. Parker, sit on the church’s front steps, and await Mrs. Parker’s arrival to unlock the doors.

Physically, Ms. Curtis is a huge, imposing figure with large hands and feet. On the surface she has pleasant facial features and smiles often and readily, but there is a subtle slackness in these features that leads one to speculate that she might be somewhat mentally challenged. Upon interviewing her, I noticed that her responses quickly affirmed this belief. Nonetheless, she is clear on one thing and that is that she wants her children to “know more than me, and this place will help them do that” (Anna Curtis. Personal Interview, 15 October 1997).

Her background is typical of many children whose special needs are often unattended to or neglected. After an educational nightmare during which she faced retention in every grade level from the first to the fourth, she chose not to repeat an event that became too painfully familiar - repetition of a grade. She was fourteen, and, left with nothing else to occupy her mind or her time, became pregnant with her first child. Unfamiliar with the methods of proper prenatal care, this child, born prematurely and with insurmountable medical problems, died shortly after its birth. Her second child also suffered the same fate. By the time she was eighteen years old, however, and pregnant with her third child, she had learned more about caring for herself and her unborn child and has since given birth to four physically and mentally healthy children.
In 1997 she was twenty-five years old and receiving government assistance. She spoke openly about her “handicap” and its limitations, becoming quite forceful as she talked about her children and her desire to “want better for them” (Anna Curtis. Personal Interview, 19 October 1997)

Consequently, Ms. Curtis unfailingly trudged to the center for every session. While there she would listen intently to the tutor and often join her children as they did their homework following the tutor’s instructions. More importantly, she would eagerly join in the center’s opening and closing assemblies. Warmed by the communal climate, she felt encouraged to try reading the selections along with the other participants, even though I noticed many of the words were unfamiliar and comprehension of the texts largely beyond her. Nevertheless, she continued to joyfully participate in all of the activities. In a very real way, by including Ms. Carter in its tutoring program for her children, the Black church has exerted a powerful and commanding force in changing her outlook toward the role of education in one’s life.

Theme Two: The Tutors as Agents of Change

When observing the center’s tutors, it is easy to understand why the children are so excited about the work they undertake. The tutors are a vibrant, active force within the tutorial setting and their enthusiasm for what they do is evident in their behavior. Each one sees herself as an “agent of change” in the sense that they perceive themselves as the tools or conduits through which the information the children must have is acquired. They see themselves as instruments capable of making an indelible impact upon the lives of the children and providing them with the means to open new and challenging vistas. They believe that every child has the capacity to learn and that given time, patience, love, and understanding, a caring teacher can reach even the most
resistant student and make a difference. Despite the fact that the tutors share these similar philosophies, they comprise an interesting mix of personalities and professionalism.

I observed all three tutors as they performed their daily routines, although two of them were more closely observed than the third. Two of these tutors, Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen, were actively involved in writing instruction, a primary focus of this research and so I observed them primarily.

Secondarily, I observed Mrs. Haynes, the third tutor. She dominated the center and was a respected and influential figure there. Her role as the resident center librarian, resource teacher, and event program coordinator coincided with her tutorial duties to give homework assistance to students at the lower elementary level. While I did not have the opportunity to observe her involved in writing instruction, much of what she did in scheduling children to perform on various programs or in supplying enrichment works to students was within my purview.

Mrs. Haynes would take advantage of a lull in center activities, for instance, and use that time to provide all students with dittoed copies of games and activities (i.e., crossword puzzles, word finds, math puzzles, two-minute mystery stories, etc.) which she would take from her collection of resource materials, all designed to further enrich the students’ basic skills and stimulate their learning growth. She would signal the approach of an upcoming holiday and a program to celebrate that event by detaining the children at the end of a closing assembly so that they could hard copy the pieces they would be required to recite on the program. In the days preceding the program she would rehearse the children, this done always at the end of the closing assembly.
I tried to maintain a constant and close contact with all the individuals significant to this project. While I chose a passive role in my observation of the activities that took place at the center, I was warmly accepted as a teaching colleague and welcomed on more than one occasion to become a more active member of the community. On the occasion of one of these invitations, Mrs. Allen stated, "You see us as we are. You're one of us and we're not on stage for you" (Field notes, Jan. 10).

All three tutors admitted that initially they had felt as if they were to be "on stage" but gradually I became a familiar figure in the center and everyone ceased to feel themselves the objects of an outsider's gaze.

The complex nature of each working relationship is not easily captured in a word or a phrase. The researcher, especially one perhaps who has been a teacher and who can readily accept a teacher's role, can be accepted as a teaching colleague, and must be aware of her role in a particular way. Maintaining the stance of the observer and recorder of what happens in the context being studied is vital. The degree of participation in each classroom was always mutually negotiated. Occasionally, I was drawn into different roles as the following descriptions and scenarios suggest.

Betty Gibson, Assistant Center Coordinator and Upper Elementary Tutor

Mrs. Gibson is the oldest member of the team and is primarily in charge of children in the middle grade levels - grades six, seven, and eight. Although the state funds the program to serve children in the seventh and eighth grade, there are no children at these levels enrolled in the program, so Mrs. Gibson has some of the fourth and fifth graders too. A veteran of the program for eight years, she is a retired public school teacher who has spent more than thirty years in education. Physically, she is small in stature and could be called petite, but her physical appearance belies her
professional stance. She has a loud and booming voice and uses it and her volatile presence in the room to emphasize what she expects from the children. She is a stern, no nonsense individual and is a stickler for neatness and detail. Once I saw her send Jessica (a pseudonym), a fourth grader, back to her seat three times because the letter “n” in a word Jessica had written looked too much like a “w” and Mrs. Gibson insisted upon it being made more legible. Finally, Jessica got it right and Mrs. Gibson showed her approval with a wave of her hand. I noticed that the other children also seemed to understand Mrs. Gibson’s penchant for accuracy and precision because the work that they handed in to her for her review received her approval without further incident.

Mrs. Gibson determined from the beginning that I was not going to alter her way of conducting the class or the way she behaved in the room. Moreover, if she could use my presence in the classroom she would do so. Within minutes of my first entry into the room she vacated her seat at the head of the table where her students were clustered and asked me to talk to children about myself, my life, and my purpose for joining their community. She created a situation where the children in this class were led by the researcher in a “listening comprehension,” that is, understanding and sharing in oral discourse.

This was clearly a test situation for me. I heard some days later from Mrs. Parker that Mrs. Gibson liked having me in the class, and felt she could work with me because she knew that “...she knows classrooms and knows what to do with kids” (Field notes, Oct 9). Mrs. Gibson also commented later in the second week that the children liked having me in the class. She confided in me that she would not like having anyone to sit in her classroom who could not “fit in,” meaning, I understood, one who could not adopt a “teacherly” role. My first experience in talking to the class and leading a
discussion had been a test of my ability to enter the classroom climate in a quasi-teacher role.

Clearly the initial experience was a test and not an indication of what would be regularly required of me. After this first encounter, Mrs. Gibson accepted my presence but did not expect or suggest an active involvement by me for the next three weeks. During this time I took copious field notes and asked some questions of her but attempted to limit these so as not to impose on her or to suggest any sort of judgmental attitude. The three weeks were a time of establishing my presence and my interest in the class.

Gradually Mrs. Gibson shared her reactions to the children in the class and reviewed the changes in the behavior and attitudes of those students she had taught during the previous year and who had returned to the program this year. Her willingness to include me in her reflections and share her thoughts about the class, the work, the individual students, and center matters in general enabled me to feel comfortable about my place in this classroom community. The term "community" in another sense is appropriate, I believe, because there was a feeling that once the door to the tutorial area was closed, everything that happened was between the participants in that room and not for anyone else outside. My handling of field notes and my constant attention to these notes with Mrs. Gibson also helped to establish my credibility and trustworthiness as an "inside" member of the tutoring program.

Although my participation in the classroom interactions were limited to passive observation, there were other ways in which Mrs. Gibson influenced my participation. This participation was in the daily conversations which characterized the verbal interaction of the classroom. This operated in two distinct ways:
In one role I was made part of the classroom conversation when Mrs. Gibson referred to me or directed a comment to the children via me. In this respect I was used rather like a straight man to the entertainer or a confirmer and support for actions or statements she would make to the class. For example, when she reprimanded Darrell (a pseudonym) for making a “D” in Science, she pushed him to say aloud that next marking period he would “Make Honor Roll.” And in a loud and demanding tone she insisted that he repeat the phrase in response to her question, “What are you going to do this report card?” When, after several repeated thrusts her question was finally answered by Darrell, with his eyes down turned and his voice directed to his chest, “Make Honor Roll,” she said, “I don’t hear you!” Darrell repeated the phrase a little louder. At this point Mrs. Gibson looked at me and asked, “Did you hear that?” I replied, “I did but I had to work hard at it.” To which she responded, directing her voice loudly in Darrell’s direction, “We don’t want to have to work hard to hear Darrell. What are you going to do?” Darrell finished the interaction by shouting, “MAKE HONOR ROLL!” To which Mrs. Gibson smiled broadly and turned to the rest of the class (Field notes, Jan. 20). My part in this exchange is slight, but Mrs. Gibson’s use of me as a respondent or as a “silent prop” for her interactions was not unusual.

A second role emerged, I think, when conversations about the students, and about what Mrs. Gibson hoped to achieve with them traveled into the realm of personal issues and concerns. She was toying with the idea of ending her position as a tutor, principally because of her age and nagging worry about her health. At age sixty-seven and compromised by diabetes and hypertension, she frets that she will be felled by a stroke or some other physical crisis before she has had a chance to really enjoy her retirement. Conflicted by health concerns and her love for teaching and continual
involvement in the profession, she anguishes that she is shortchanging herself of the personal rewards of retirement. In these conversations, carried out in the sanctuary prior to the beginning of a holiday program (Field notes, Dec. 23) and in the tutorial area during snack time (Field notes, Jan. 7), I was a supportive listener and my role became, as Powdermaker has described it, that of “stranger and friend” (1966), although the “stranger” had rapidly transformed into that of “familiar presence.” On both of these occasions Mrs. Parker was also a part of these conversations (Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Gibson had worked together for eight years and they both had a close and collegial relationship). Thus, Mrs. Parker had naturally become Mrs. Gibson’s confidante about concerns.

These interactions and the participant roles I assumed helped to enrich my research. They made me an “insider” to the tutors who then revealed more of themselves to me. They showed that the cynicism that Mrs. Gibson had previously harbored toward a perceived “outsider” had changed.

Maxine Allen, Upper Elementary Tutor

Mrs. Allen is the youngest member of the tutoring team. She is primarily in charge of children at the upper elementary grade levels - grades three, four, and five - but she splits some of her fourth and fifth graders with Mrs. Gibson because there are just three children enrolled in the program at the third grade level. Mrs. Allen’s split of some of the children in her class has helped both tutors to balance the numbers of children they tutor in each class. Included in this group are two of her four daughters, all of whom participate in the program. A veteran of three years in the program, Mrs. Allen has a college degree in Social Work but is presently working as a long-term substitute in the public schools while she pursues a teaching certification in elementary
education at Southern University in New Orleans. Mrs. Allen is a slight, slender woman, taller than Mrs. Gibson, and she is completely opposite in personality and teaching style. Mrs. Allen has a more laid-back, easygoing personality and smiles frequently and easily. She seems to have lots of patience and takes time to softly explain confusing or unfamiliar terms to the children. The children gravitate to her and cluster around her because she seems at ease with them. She is no pushover, however, and calls upon several strategies to maintain discipline and order. For example, when the children’s’ voices become too loud she will stand and clap her hands three times, pause, and then clap three times again.

The first time I saw her do this I was impressed with the quickness of the children’s’ response. Immediately they quieted down and she complimented them for this response, all the while smiling and speaking softly as she did so. It was a win-win situation, for the children, warmed by her smile and approval, still felt good about themselves and Mrs. Allen got the order she wanted.

Warm and exceedingly gracious, Mrs. Allen welcomed me with a hug and a sly wink on my first day at the site. Recognizing that Mrs. Gibson had already locked me into position in her area so that I could introduce myself to her group, Mrs. Allen then hurried, her African braids flying, to her area in the rear of the room where her students awaited. Taking advantage of the occasion, she ordered silence from these students as all listened intently to my introductory talk.

While Mrs. Allen shares Mrs. Gibson’s love for children and joy in teaching, she is clearly unlike Mrs. Gibson in many ways. First, her approach to my presence was not based upon a cynicism to be disproved later, but rather an open and friendly acceptance. It was she who queried me on where I would like to sit during my observations and who
obtained a chair for me to sit on across the aisle from her tables. I found this to be a
good location because it put me in the perfect place to clearly observe both her class and
Mrs. Gibson’s.

Second, Mrs. Allen moves around her area. Unlike Mrs. Gibson, she is not
content to remain seated at the head of the table and require the students to bring their
work to her for inspection. She moves lightly and quickly. Her eyes light up and her
face assumes a smile, a grin, a frown, and a querulousness by turns. A lively and
decisive teacher, she has a way of motivating her students to be stimulated and engaged
in their tasks. Frequently she will initiate the homework assistance segment of the
activities with statements such as, “Okay gang, let’s take a trip today. Along the way
we’ll do all kinds of neat things like learn new words, meet interesting characters in
stories, or find out amazing things in science. I know you don’t want to get left behind,
so let’s begin now” (Field notes, Oct. 22).

Moving about the area as children work, Mrs. Allen will read over their
shoulders, stopping and calling attention to errors or complimenting good work as the
student writes or responding as the student calls her name or touches her sleeve as she
passes by.

The utilization of space raises an interesting paradox between the two tutors,
Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Gibson. Negotiating the classroom space and using it, in Mrs.
Allen’s area, is a purposeful, although not rigid strategy for creating the classroom as a
community and for carrying out her plans for tutoring fundamental skills and practice.
Her students do not move during the tutoring sessions. Rather, it is Mrs. Allen who
lightly spins the paths in her area and in so doing effects a climate which is at once
warm, energetic, supportive and, within the lines established by her, responsive to
student growth and their needs as people and learners. She is sensitive to their reaction and to nuances of interactions. These she responds to in her interactions with them, tending always to use student responses as the catalysts for her discussions with them.

The situation in Mrs. Gibson’s area is somewhat different. There is a deliberately structured order here and it is maintained with rigid consistency. Mrs. Gibson always sits at the head of the table, rather like a monarch as she “commands” an audience. Once this audience with her has concluded, the student will return to his/her seat. While this rigid demand for order and structure may seem stifling, it is not, for any number of different interactional sets can still be going on while Mrs. Gibson may be talking to a particular student. Mrs. Gibson sees the maintenance of order and discipline serving as useful tools to practice discipline in the lives of her students. In different ways both Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen use the classroom space as an integral part of their construction and framing of the learning activities of their classes.

Experiencing two different types of order, as shown here, is, I believe, good for the children, for these actions placed upon those learners the need to adapt to particular situations managed by particular individuals. Such actions, required the children to negotiate particular behaviors and speech acts to conform to the events.

Gloria Haynes, Special Events Coordinator and Lower Level Elementary Tutor

Mrs. Haynes’s domain is hers alone. No one else uses it. Here she spends an hour three days each week with a group of six, seven, and eight-year old children in kindergarten, first, and second grade. In this small room set off to the right of the larger classroom dominated by Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Haynes assists her charges with their homework assignments in language arts, math, science, and social studies. It is a scruffy environment packed with a long table and chairs, a battered teacher’s desk,
three ancient file cabinets, a small portable blackboard, and an assortment of church
related equipment and materials.

Mrs. Haynes is a tall, solidly-built woman who invariably dresses in wear that
could be called “elegantly casual,” that is, skirts and matching sweaters and pantsuits.
She is a licensed, certified teacher who still works in the public schools and is “two
years away from retirement.” She does not smile much and has a somewhat somber
demeanor, but there is a kindly air about her that can be easily detected beneath her dour
facade. She will explain things, calmly, carefully, and clearly to the children, seemingly
being quite sensitive to their age group. She takes pride in the children’s
accomplishments and is generous in her recognition of these deeds. The tutor in charge
of the lower elementary grade levels, she has been involved with the tutorial program
since its inception fourteen years ago.

While it is here in this domain where Mrs. Haynes presents herself as teacher
and purveyor of the knowledge the students must acquire in their academic pursuits, it is
outside this domain where she accentuates her role as literacy mentor and provocateur.
On the day of a scheduled program, she uses the dead time between the ending of
official tutoring and the beginning of the regular closing assembly as a time to extend
learning activities. She uses the elimination of the closing assembly and the time the
children are awaiting the arrival of parents and other invited guests as an opportunity to
pull from her file of resources an assortment of enrichment activities designed not only
to keep the children busy but to be continuously involved in the learning process every
minute the children are at the center.

The use of her voice is her most compelling trait and she uses it to convey
definite messages to the children to gain their attention and participation. Authoritative
and firm, she issues such messages in a clear and modulated tone, with the full understanding that she would brook no nonsense. In one such incident I observed the following exchange:

Mrs. Haynes: Okay, young people, our program is set to begin in twenty minutes. While we are waiting for Mrs. Parker's order to go into the church and take our places we will take advantage of this time to continue learning how to be the best we can be. Here is something you can do while we wait. (She passes out dittoed sheets of learning games.) I don't want to see anyone walking around or hear anyone talking too loud. Remember, even back here we are still in God's house. (Field notes, Dec. 18)

The fact that Mrs. Haynes reminds the children of their learning in church demonstrates the view how Christian moral values are inextricably connected to all of the activities which take place there. In this exchange Mrs. Haynes is clearly using the power and sacredness of God to instill obedience.

Here she uses classroom space deliberately and purposefully to frame the learning activities taking place. She moves through the tables, stopping at individual children to answer a question or, like Mrs. Allen, to pat someone on the shoulder as a sign of good work.

In her teaching style she is unlike either Mrs. Gibson or Mrs. Allen. She is neither rigid nor casual, closed nor open. She strikes a balance in establishing a classroom climate where everyone's needs are considered.

Interactions, Teacher and Student Relationships - Mrs. Gibson's Class

While the area designated for tutorial assistance is one large room in which all the upper level learners are assembled, there are partitions separating the classes taught by Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen. Each of these two "classrooms" projects a different
climate which can be largely attributed to the differing personalities of the two tutors in charge.

It is clear to see that this area marked by two long tables and folding chairs is Mrs. Gibson's domain. Here, seated at the head of one of the tables, she presents herself as the teacher, the one in charge. Here in the interaction with the students, in this space, her teaching style is defined.

Many of Mrs. Gibson's instructions are delivered in a loud and authoritarian tone. Her approaches to students are similarly characterized in a stentorian voice: "Hey, young people, WHAT'S WITH ALL THIS NOISE? LET'S GET BUSY...; GET THOSE NOTEBOOKS...; GET THOSE BOOKS OUT, NOW!...; O.K., GET WITH IT!!" (Field notes, Oct. 26).

Such verbal displays are deliberately delivered for their shock value, and Mrs. Gibson does this when she needs to gain the students' attention and participation. While the facade is that of the domineering, hard-driving taskmaster, she will sometimes turn away from the students, once having whipped them into submission, and allow herself a little smile.

The smile is the only unexpected thing about her, but it is significant to the feelings she has toward the students and teaching. Her patience is limitless and she will explore different ways to make some detail more meaningful and understandable. Her domineering persona is, therefore, tempered with gentleness and the students are acutely aware of her care for them. They respond to her. Consider the following exchange with two students which shows the children's respect and admiration for her.

(The students are all quietly reading or writing their respective homework assignments. Mrs. Gibson is seated at the head of the table reading and annotating an article in a professional journal. Occasionally

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she looks up, pen in hand, to assure the group that she is still aware and on top of things.)

Darrell: (Looks up from his notebook - in which his writing a vocabulary list.) Mrs. Gibson, what’s insipid mean?

Mrs. Gibson: It means weak, tasteless, uninteresting.

Darrell: Is that like a person? A boring person?

Dominique: No, dummy. That’s like a person who ain’t got no guts. That’s right, huh, Mrs. Gibson?

Mrs. Gibson: It’s “who doesn’t have any [guts],” Dominique. And I wouldn’t put it quite like that, but yes, I guess something like that. Here’s an example, Darrell. Let’s say you go out one evening to dine out at a restaurant and the bowl of gumbo you order is watery and has no taste. That’s insipid.

Darrell: (Snapping his fingers and sitting back in his seat) Oh - I see now. My Aunt Janice makes gumbo like that. Insipid! Yeah! (Whispering to Dominique) See. I told you. She don’t always hafta yell at us. (Field notes, Dec. 8)

There is an unconventionality in Mrs. Gibson’s approach, an unconventionality she cultivates. At various times she is authoritarian, meditative, rigid, or condescending. Yet it is the unconventionality of her approach that marks her teaching style and self-presentation, which includes the loud bantering interaction between herself and the students. Self assured and positive, she evokes a persona predicated upon competence and efficiency. Thus, her students have a clear idea of what is expected of them and of what they will be experiencing.

Interactions, Teacher and Student Relationships - Mrs. Allen’s Class

Mrs. Allen encourages talk and verbal play between herself and the students, but takes a controlling and initiating role in classroom talk of this kind. Students talk among themselves in order to collaborate on a writing task. Absolute silence is not
rigidly maintained as the norm, except when the noise becomes too raucous and she uses a special tactic of clapping her hands to quell it. In allowing talk I see that she values the ability “to speak up” and assert personal identity, based on a knowledge of one’s personal values. For example, during a Writing Time session Mrs. Allen actively encouraged dialogue to continue between Wendy and Barbara (pseudonyms), when Wendy, in an attempt to keep peace, acquiesced to Barbara. The discussion focused upon the question, “What characterizes a best friend?” Wendy offered the notion that a best friend is one who, above all, is trustworthy, someone who can be counted upon to “watch my back.” Barbara, on the other hand, discounted this idea, viewing a best friend as one who is generous, who “shares with me when I don’t have stuff. Like pencils and paper.” With Barbara dogmatically refusing to concede that a best friend can be both trustworthy and generous, an argument ensued and Wendy gave in. At this point Mrs. Allen stepped in and gently chided Wendy for giving in to Barbara (or anyone for that matter), especially since she placed great value in her belief (Field notes, Feb. 3). The notion of valuing oneself and of maintaining the integrity of one’s belief is a core component of Mrs. Allen’s approach to teaching. On this occasion, and others, Mrs. Allen often talks to the children about standing up for themselves and their beliefs. Such actions are characteristic of the value members of the African-American community place on standing up for oneself as a means to augment one’s sense of self-worth and identity.

Unlike Mrs. Gibson whose verbal interaction is always commanding, authoritarian, and related to the transaction of knowledge, Mrs. Allen’s use of talk is more varied. For her, talk and verbal interaction are used in primarily two ways: first, as a part of learning routines and second, as part of the talk establishing the social
climate of the classroom. Learning-centered talk accompanies the specific teaching routines (i.e., providing general information about details in math, language, science, or social studies) which may assist the children to greater understanding as they prepare to do their homework assignments.

Beyond the talk for transmission of knowledge which is maintained during learning routines, is talk for social purposes - directed by Mrs. Allen to create the social relationships and classroom climate. Social talk initiated by the teacher permeates the whole of the classroom discourse. As such, social talk operates as a constant accompaniment to the talk in learning routines. This means that frequently when there is a lull between cessation of the learning routines and the next scheduled activity, such interludes may be filled with the teacher’s humorous (and sometimes serious) anecdotes, or a monologue of praise or criticism for a particular student or the whole class.

Mrs. Allen may use a monologue to praise the class - “I’m proud of the way you handled yourselves today. Proud of the way you buckled down and took responsibility...” Or, she may use a monologue to criticize the class or a student: “I don’t like the manners in this room!,” she might begin, and then proceed to deliver an extended and solemn statement about the students’ poor behavior and her disappointment in them.

She may also simply entertain the class with a funny story - spontaneously presented and often based on a personal anecdote. Sometimes these are used to moralize about life or personal beliefs or values. Such tales serve a moral purpose and Mrs. Allen deliberately uses them for this. By focusing on personal incidents, she can share her life with the class and use this as a vehicle for socializing. The students accept
this segment of teacher talk as a shared event and often comment on something she has told them by offering similar situations that have occurred in their life. Once during a class session when Jackie admitted her fright at having to give the welcome address to a local television personality who would be visiting her school, Mrs. Allen seized this opportunity to talk to the class about "being scared." Currently in the process of buying her first home, she confided in them her anxiety - and joy - upon becoming a new homeowner. She noted that worry over whether she could obtain financing for such an expensive purchase had, for several years, kept her from taking this step. Realizing "the only way to get something done is to just do it," she began looking for a house and filing applications with lenders to seek pre-qualification. To her surprise, she was approved and now she was eagerly awaiting the day when she would sign the papers to close the sale. Upon the conclusion of this narrative, other students were moved to chime in and relate their past experiences with being scared and tell of how they had conquered their fears (Field notes, Mar. 11). Telling this personal anecdote likely had a positive effect on students as they saw a respected adult confess a fear and show how she conquered it. In this way, instruction at the tutoring center can help students build the self-confidence which then can reveal itself in more capable speaking and writing.

Platform for Teaching Writing - Mrs. Gibson

The basic aim for teaching writing which has informed Mrs. Gibson’s platform as a writing teacher has not changed since she officially retired from active public school teaching. She still wants to teach students to enjoy writing and to use writing competently. While actively engaged in teaching English at the junior high school level, she felt frustrations and difficulties in teaching composition - the problems of teaching students something about writing (its methods, modes, nuances) while
stimulating them to write. Midway into her teaching career she realized that an
emphasis upon teaching grammatical concepts accomplished very little toward turning
students into good writers and she was frustrated by administrative policy that mandated
this focus. Her frustration was also bolstered by her belief that elementary school
teachers were not teaching writing to the extent necessary for students to become
competent, with the result that students were enrolling in her classes with severely
limited writing ability.

Mrs. Gibson relishes the teaching of writing as a component of the after school
tutorial program. Her aims for the course extend to a concern that students see writing
as a personal life skill, something which “covers their whole lives” (Hattie Gibson.
Personal Interview). Her ultimate goal is stated in terms of students coming to see that,
“Writing is not just part of this component - it extends beyond this place for them - so
they can transfer these skills and their confidence as writers into other subjects and their
own lives.” It reflects a clearly articulated role for herself in their learning process.

Platform for Teaching Writing - Mrs. Allen

Mrs. Allen’s task, as she sees it, is to make writing meaningful for the children
she teaches. Her platform is, as she articulates it, not only to make writing meaningful
but to enable the children to use it effectively and appropriately. Her goal is to strike a
balance between encouraging children to want to write while teaching them how to
improve their writing skills and extend their writing abilities.

Her main emphasis thus is on breaking down the barriers to writing. She wants
the children to understand that just as they are able to talk about something, they can
also write about it. She wants, therefore, for each child to feel that he/she can be a
writer - an author, that it is an enjoyable personal and social activity to pick up a pen
and tell a story on a page. She takes the concept of writing as personal expression, as a
priority. She acts upon this philosophy by cajoling, coaxing, or manipulating her
students in any way she can to unblock their imaginations, to channel and motivate
them never to stop working toward becoming better, to stimulate them by encouraging
interactions with herself and others, and, by all these actions to facilitate learning (and
growth) in writing. She believes, therefore, that inside every child there is a writer and
her task is to unlock that writer through varied stimuli.

Summary

In this chapter I have characterized two of the three themes that have emerged
from this study: (1) the Black church as a conduit to literate abilities, and (2) the tutors
as agents of change. I have indicated how the retention of traditional African customs
and traditions (ritual and performance) undergirds the achievement of literacy in
members of the Black church and how these traditions practiced in a particular Black
church within the context of its after school tutorial program operate as but one example
of the uses and functions of language in a speech community.

I have also suggested that the confluence of the tutors' personal philosophies,
their negotiation of space, their use of talk, and the interactions they encouraged and
controlled between themselves and the learners, led to the emergence of a distinct "little
community" for the subjects. Although the tutors demonstrated their philosophies in
different ways, they each saw themselves as tools capable of generating learning in their
students and of cohesively creating a sense of community and cooperative engagement
in the activities of their students.
CHAPTER FIVE
LEARNERS EMERGING INTO LITERACY

Introduction

This chapter continues the emphasis of the themes addressed in the previous chapter but focuses particularly upon the third theme - the subjects' establishment of themselves as a distinct "little community" of writers. Here I describe the subjects at the beginning of the tutoring program, that is, their interactions with each other and their participation in writing events. How students socialized themselves into greater language competence and how they progressed in syntactical maturity in the production of their texts, in particular, is the focus of this chapter. Writing samples are reproduced and interpreted based upon four levels of "growth maturity" as suggested by Moffett (1992).

During the seven-month period of observation during which I conducted the research, I observed all the activities in which some form of writing took place. This included the opening and closing assemblies, the special programs, homework assistance, and formal writing. I classified the activities into three groups: Occasional Writing, Routine Writing, and Writing Time Writing, using Basso's (1974) scheme.

As my goal was to assess syntactical maturity and to describe the subjects' gradual progressions toward competent and confident writing, I collected as data only from those texts which were produced during the Writing Time Writing segment of the tutorial program. Writing done in Occasional and Routine Writing segments of the Center's program did not call for the kind of personal expressive writing that would reveal growth in writing competence.

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Theme Three: Exhibiting Growth in Literate Ability

Writing as a social tool grows directly out of children's experiences with other tools - speech, gestures - and their relationships with other people. Children who find their written voices, bring their individual stances toward the world into their written words. Those words then become avenues for expressing, reflecting upon, and interacting with others about life experiences. Over the course of this seven-month study, the children I observed grew and stretched into their own writing processes. In addition, they used writing as a means to establish and maintain social relationships and to carry on their personal expressions via the written word, as well as in their speech and play. Thus, Jessica writes notes to classmates, Jackie writes a poem and shares it with a friend, Margaret writes a book review and shares it with me. These activities suggest that writing has, in fact, personal and social meaning for these students.

The six subject children in my study were chosen primarily from my review of writing samples taken from all fourteen of the learners in the upper elementary section of the Center's program. They seemed to have different ways of working and writing. As the case studies will show, there was not only diversity in their personalities but also in their writing abilities.

The results and discussion in this section focus on the various writing events which occurred during center activities and my classification of these events, especially the Writing Time Writing sessions. I identify certain characteristics about the subjects gained from my observations of them during the Writing Time Writing sessions, characteristics which suggests the children's establishment as a "little community," that is in this case a group of writers who through writing, reading, and talking to each other suggest the importance of writing as a personal and social event.
In each of the three categories of writing, Occasional Writing was the one segment where less time was spent on writing. The writing done then was in preparation for holiday special events programs; therefore, the production of texts was minimal. Writing in Routine Writing was a daily occurrence but not always a daily one for every child. A homework assignment could entail reading chapters in textbooks or filling in information on teacher-supplied ditto sheets, if writing were required. Time spent on writing, therefore, was flexible, and, depending on the kind of writing assigned for homework, could last anywhere from five to fifteen minutes. On the other hand, Writing Time Writing, lasting one hour, was a daily event, dedicated absolutely to formal writing instruction and practice. Some stage of the writing process (i.e., prewriting, drafting, editing, or revision) would be undertaken each day. Sometimes a stage would continue into the next session, and the process toward producing a completed text could sometimes take up to two weeks. This segment of the tutoring program demonstrated the composing process most clearly and was the main focus of this research.

Categories of Writing Events

Basso’s (1974) ethnography of writing requires a description and categorization of writing events which occur in different social contexts. He has suggested that such events, or occasions for writing, be described in terms of their participants, purpose, and the social interactions which create the way the particular writing events occur. Over the course of the seven months during which I conducted this study, I observed and described all the occasions when writing of any kind took place. The following three categories are those which I made after sifting through the data.
The writing, which I have placed in three categories: Occasional Writing, Routine Writing, and Writing Time Writing, will be explained in greater detail in the discussion which follows. Of particular significance to the discussion, however, is Writing Time Writing, because it shows the way the subjects interacted with writing instruction and each other.

Categories for Writing

**Occasional Writing:** (Directed Non-Instructional Writing). Writing which is occasional and done in preparation for special events, includes:

- copying from prepared ditto sheets
- copying dictation (of words, sentences, passages)
- language arts games and puzzles from ditto sheets created and/or compiled by Mrs. Haynes, (usually given for enrichment purposes)

**Routine Writing:** (Directed Instructional Writing). Writing which is ongoing and accompanies daily center homework assistance routines, includes:

- writing answers to questions for reading comprehension, social studies, science, etc.
- writing plans for projects in social studies and science
- writing spelling and vocabulary lists
- writing answers to crossword puzzles and word find puzzles supplied by school
- writing in conjunction with language arts, social studies, and science subjects

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Writing Time Writing: (Personal Expressive Writing). Writing which occurs daily and is designed to encourage students to write freely and without fear of teacher evaluation.

- **Teacher Generated.** Topics are teacher-chosen and discussed prior to writing to fuel interest and motivation.
- **Student Generated.** Topics are student-chosen and encouraged by the teachers. Upcoming writing topics are chosen from a list of suggestions previously compiled by the students.

Occasional Writing began two weeks after the tutorial program officially began. This was because the order for the Thanksgiving program had not yet been done by Mrs. Haynes. During the first week of November, however, Mrs. Haynes gave the children copies of ditto sheets containing the words to poems and songs to be sung commemorating the approaching Thanksgiving holiday. This Thanksgiving Day program would be the first of several which the children would be required to participate in to commemorate special holidays and events. Mrs. Haynes, displaying rigid control over possession of her treasured dittoed copies, would require the children to hand copy the poems and songs assigned to them in preparation for their performances on the holiday program. Copying was done, she said, “in the event some child loses his piece and comes crying to me because he can’t perform. I’ve lost some good pieces because of this and I can’t always remember the books I got them out of, so I make them copy now” (Field notes, Nov. 4).

Interestingly, Mrs. Haynes was using a classical pedagogical tool for learning rhetoric. Copying was viewed as a mechanism to memorization. In the Latin text, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (ca. 86-82 B.C.), copying is addressed as a major aspect of invention invaluable to rhetorical discourse. Moreover, copying or imitation was actively
used with rhetorical instruction through the 19th century. Thus, it may be safe to assume that the dictation and copying that the children did was more beneficial to the children than Mrs. Haynes articulated.

These sessions, like the opening and closing assemblies, are not part of the state-mandated guidelines for this program. State funding is given primarily for homework assistance, but Reverend Sanders, theorizing that the church has a larger responsibility for "rounding out" the children, has chosen to include these components. The writing events that occurred to further seasonal celebrations thus function as important practice of the literacy practices for the children at the Center. Further, while the children seemed scarcely conscious of the educational import of dictation and copying, these events highlight the literacy mentoring practices long established in the Black church. Reverend Sanders routinely reports to the congregation that Sunday's Scripture and waits as members write this information down during Sunday worship service at Calvary.

After the copying was done and the dittoed sheets handed back to Mrs. Haynes, she would then call upon individual students to read their written copies back to the group to ensure that all copies were accurate. Consequently, writing down a model text and then dictating it as others checked for accuracy became the two major writing acts which occurred during Occasional Writing.

Routine Writing (Directed Instructional Writing) began the very first day of the official opening of the program for the academic school year. When the program began, the learners had already been enrolled in school for nearly six weeks and had been exposed to their classroom teacher directions to engage in a variety of homework assignments. Most of these children, however, were unable to competently accomplish
these tasks without assistance. Since these children lived in a single-parent home environment and their parent was more often engaged in providing basic necessities, the tutorial program became an ideal facility to which these children and their parents could turn.

Writing during this segment was ongoing and accompanied almost every tutorial routine. Writing was used for testing comprehension, stating answers to questions, either from textbooks or dittoed sheets prepared by school classroom teachers, and for making plans to conduct projects in science and social studies. Sometimes writing would also include supplying answers to crossword puzzles and word find games that the children's classroom teachers would add to their homework assignments to further enrich their understanding of concepts taught in language arts, social studies, and science. Even though the writing which occurred during these sessions was not graded per se by the tutors, comments were always verbally given about some aspects - accuracy, neatness, legibility, etc - of these written documents, anything to make the children think about what they were learning.

Writing Time Writing (Personal Expressive Writing) is the third category of writing in this tutorial context. Such writing occurred daily and was designed to encourage the learners to write freely and without fear of teacher evaluation. To initiate writing topics, topics would be either teacher-generated or student-generated. Teacher-generated topics were those selected by the teachers and discussed prior to drafting to motivate interest and desire. Student-generated topics came from a list of suggestions made by the students which were discussed with and saved to be used for later Writing Time Writing sessions. The stimulus and initiation for this writing was clearly derived from both tutors' attitudes that writing, beyond that done in Routine Writing, also serves...
a personal and narrative function. They wanted the children to understand that writing is an extension and alternative to speech as a means of both communication and self-expression.

An important distinction must also be made about the tutors and their approach to the teaching of the conventions of writing - i.e., the mechanics of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. While these conventions were commented upon to individual students, they were treated as skills independent of the writing which the children did which focused upon the personal expressive writing they did in Writing Time Writing. The distinction during this segment was not so much a concern with how they wrote but what they wrote.

That the tutors made a distinction between the teaching of mechanics and the writing that went on in Writing Time Writing is very important. It meant that Writing Time Writing became a nonthreatening situation and a time for free expression without constraints. The tutors approach to Writing Time Writing was to develop the children's confidence in verbalizing their deepest feelings in talk first and then later on paper. I have mentioned how both Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Allen used talk in a variety of ways. During such talk the students also became active participants in interactions with the tutors. Through such interactions the students learned that there is talk about writing is part of the writing process and that the Center a place where writing is an acceptable and desired activity. Writing Time Writing events and the talk which they caused helped the class of individuals become a community - a sharing group of writers and talkers about writing.

Writing Time Writing events showed the collaborative and social nature of writing within a supportive community. Some writers chose to share their writing as
they worked by reading their texts to others or passing their texts to peers to read and
comment upon, while others would bring their work to be read and commented upon by
the tutors.

The six children in my study had different ways of working out their rhetorical
tasks. Three of them spoke and wrote more easily than the others, two drew upon a
store of syntactical manipulations, and one displayed no such knowledge. In closely
studying each individual child over a seven-month period, the data revealed both the
children's distinctive personalities and their distinctive ways of interacting with people
and written texts. The next section of this chapter profiles the subjects over the seven
months I observed them.

The Subjects: Beginning Portraits

Gene: Struggling with Hesitation and Uncertainty

Round-faced and small for his age (10), with piercing dark eyes, Gene was a
child noticeably at odds with himself and others. Beginning with his first day of arrival
to the center, lagging behind his mother, he continued to withdraw from everyone,
refusing for several weeks afterward any invitations to join in group activities. Many
vigorous overtures from the other children were quelled by his angry retorts, “Leave me
alone!” or “Get away from me!” (Field notes, Oct. 28) Hearing this, the children would
back away, leaving him in his self-imposed isolation to struggle with his homework,
which he brought to Mrs. Gibson for review only after every other child in the group
had gone before him.

Of all six case study children, Gene was the most intriguing and challenging.
From interviews with his mother and classroom teacher, I learned that he was
considered “slow” and therefore unable to quickly master many of the basic skills
required for children at his grade level, and I was alarmed at the indifferent manner in which they described him. Years of classroom teaching experience had taught me that such labels can be devastating, and I suspected that such labeling had taken a great toll on Gene’s sense of self-worth; he believed that he would never amount to much. Angry at everyone, and himself, he withdrew into a tight little shell and lashed out at anyone who attempted to approach him. As a result, his hesitation to take risks and his uncertainty that he could do so only served to reinforce the perceptions others had about his abilities.

Writing. During Writing Time Writing Gene’s uncertainty toward his writing abilities was clearly demonstrated by his hesitancy to even begin writing. At his first session he sat for ten minutes or more, hunched over the table, chin cupped in both hands, staring gloomily at the blank sheet of paper before him. Gentle prodding from Mrs. Gibson elicited a sharp “I don’t know what to write!” retort. More prodding and he began, clearly struggling with both the awesome tasks of what to say about the topic and how to get this message into words. In producing his first text on the topic of “Holidays,” he labored over each word, finally producing the following:

“halloween. kande and it is fun go out” (Jan. 6)

In sum, Gene knew something about the topic, but he was evidently frustrated by the task of developing the topic. It was clear that a major obstacle to his success as a writer was his lack of confidence in himself and his lack of belief that he had the ability to say anything meaningful.

Jessica: Composing Amidst Social Commentary

At ten, Jessica, was a tall, rangy child with an appealing manner and ready smile. Although she freely talked about her family and her circle of close friends, she
demonstrated an inclination toward dependence upon these figures for support. This attitude may be attributed, in part, to her home environment and birth order. She is the youngest in her family and was born twelve years after her brother. In addition to this brother, she has another older brother and two older sisters. Her mother died from cancer when she was three and her father has been raising her by himself. Even though her siblings are all grown with families of their own, they have remained close to her and treat her as their special “baby of the family.” Consequently, Jessica has come to rely upon these relationships to bolster her confidence and sense of self-worth.

Even at the tutoring program she took her relationships seriously and would instantly become visibly upset at perceived injustices, such as a classmate failing to sit next to her when a vacant chair was clearly available. While she could be open and direct in her dealings with the children, it was obvious that she sought their approval and was bolstered by whatever overtures they made toward her as signs of their support. For example, during a conversation about the appearance and value of bookbags, she was quite blunt in pointing out that Wendy’s bag was “kind of tacky.” When Wendy angrily responded, “Well, what about your’s?” Jessica, stung by the suggestion that her bookbag was comparable, turned to Barbara and asked, “Mine ain’t like hers, is it?” When Barbara responded, “No, it’s not. Your’s is very nice,” Jessica sat back and smiled, clearly buoyed by what she perceived as Barbara’s affirmation of both her and her bookbag (Field notes, Feb. 10).

Writing. Talk is an important aid to Jessica’s composing strategies. She depended upon interactions with others not only to convince herself that she was on the right track but also to help her understand the task. Specifically, in eliciting teacher
interaction, she would become more direct and focused in her writing after the tutor had explained the rhetorical situation to her understanding.

Initially, during Writing Time Writing she produced texts slowly, laboring over each word, repeatedly asking for help with spelling, and rereading sentences. Such acts, however, seemed to block her from smoothly talking about the topic and led her to depend on the repetition of key words. For example, on her first piece on “Holidays” she wrote:

“Holidays are special days of celebration. We celebrate holidays because they have special meanings for us. For example, we celebrate Easter because it represent the day Christ died.” (Field notes, Jan. 6)

Despite her repeated use of familiar words, it is clear Jessica relied upon encoded information. She was able to convert the general topic of “holidays” into a message about a special time enjoyed by herself and others - “Easter” - a code she knew. As a socializer, her talk before and during writing seemed to augment the manner in which she connected her texts to her ongoing relationships with others.

Barbara: A Dynamic Personality

At ten years old, Barbara was a small, wiry child who seldom sat perfectly still. She was active and noisy, given to teasing and physical play. An enigma, she seemed confident and self-assured. She used talk voraciously and expounded on anything, credible or not. One day she bounded into the tutorial area. Unconcerned that she was tardy and that the homework assistance segment had already begun, she quickly stowed her gear and excitedly began to talk to Dominique, who was solemnly and laboriously writing a book report for her homework assignment in language arts.

Barbara: Guess what? I found out Kinisha don’t want to be your friend no more. So there!
Dominique: (her head down, mumbles) I don’t care.

Barbara: Yes, you do. You care a lot. I know you do. You do care, don’t you?

Dominique: (her head still down) No, I don’t.

Barbara: Yes, you do. Yes, you do. I know you do.

Dominique: (slamming both fists on the table) I told you I don’t. See, that’s what’s the matter with you. You don’t ever know what you’re talking about. That’s why you don’t have any friends at all. (Field notes, Mar. 13)

As this incident demonstrated, Barbara could be overbearing and dictatorial and the other children would suffer her for awhile, but inevitably someone would lose his/her patience, and then harsh words would follow. But Barbara was not so tough after all. Once chastised by her peers, she would crumple and tears would flow. The angered child, now guilty, would submissively back off and make peace.

Barbara: (weeping) That’s not true. I do have friends. I do.

Dominique: (patting Barbara’s hand) Look, I’m sorry. Okay? I didn’t mean it. I’m still your friend. (Field notes, Mar. 13)

The matter resolved, Barbara would wipe the tears away and return once again to her former self. This was one of the many incidents which demonstrated the children’s desire for harmony and of their perceptions of themselves as social beings working together in the spirit of teamwork and collegiality.

Writing. At the beginning Writing Time Writing imposed a heavy burden upon Barbara. She found it difficult to sit still and produce her texts and allow the other children the peace and quiet they needed to produce theirs, but Mrs. Gibson solved that problem by placing Barbara’s chair right next to hers. Then it only took a stern stare from Mrs. Gibson to squelch Barbara’s antics.
Barbara's texts tended to stay within the past or present moment, always portraying her desire to depict herself as an important figure in her writings. Before actual drafting she would recite aloud the things she planned to say. Then, slowly and carefully, she would write down the words. As she wrote, however, she seemed to rely more on achieving mechanical and grammatical correctness than she did with writing down her thoughts. For example, in her first piece, she wrote:

"My best friend are Revand and Giselle. They are really good friends to me. We are very smart." (Field notes, Jan. 28)

Like Jessica, Barbara clearly considered the importance of her relationships to others as a significant factor in defining her sense of self. Unlike Jessica, though, she had assumed a level of confidence that Jessica still had yet to achieve and brought this awareness of her social world to each of her texts.

Wendy: Images of Adaptability

Wendy, age twelve, had a commanding physical appearance - taller than the other children, large-boned and very solid. She had a strong social presence as well, and most often would assume the role of peace negotiator during those occasions when angry words would ensue between any two of the other children in her group. The essence of adaptability, she often initiated conversations with her female peers about her own experiences and expressed an interest in their’s.

It was through such conversation I first learned of her background and was impressed with the self-assured manner in which she portrayed herself. Responding to Jessica’s question, “Who is that?” about the young woman who had just dropped her off at the center, Wendy replied, “Oh, that’s my aunt. Her name is Samantha. She’s like my mama, ‘cause my own mama died when I was five and my Aunt Samantha is her
sister.” This information was given quickly and succinctly, as though Wendy felt the need to head off any further questioning. The tactic apparently worked because Jessica, satisfied with the response, went on to tell Wendy how nice her hair looked, which was done up that day in long, thick braids. Yet, it was not so much what Wendy said as it was how she said it. The model of decorum and “class,” she quietly told Jessica about herself, prompting my fascination at how well she had handled the situation (Field notes, Dec. 2). Later I found out why.

During a visit to Wendy’s home I had the opportunity to observe her home environment and talk to her Aunt Samantha. Living in a brick two-story townhouse that is simply and neatly furnished, Wendy and her aunt share a warm and close relationship. Samantha, her hair in braids and wearing a stylish pantsuit, cordially welcomed me into her home and patted the cushion on the couch beside her where she wanted me to sit. A college graduate and an accountant in city government, she spoke in the well-modulated tone of an intellectual. Still grappling with her memories, she spoke to me at length about the painful loss of her sister and the deathbed vow she had made to care for Wendy. Age twenty-nine when her sister died, and now age thirty-six, she noted that there is no man in her life - “There are too many perverts out there. With Wendy developing the way she is, I would probably have to kill somebody.” For now she is committed only to bringing up Wendy to be “a good person - compassionate, loving, and responsible. Above all, she will know love.” (Samantha Davis. Personal Interview, 7 April 1998) I realized then the reason for Wendy’s self-assured carriage, and concluded that Samantha had succeeded in softening for Wendy the tragic loss of her mother and Wendy has adapted well to this event.
Typical of her nature, Wendy faced the challenge of adjusting her texts to conform to the rhetorical situations. She would write quickly and at length as though it were necessary to catch all words as they spilled before they became lost. Once done, she would reread, using correction fluid to make what she considered necessary changes. Consequently, her resulting texts (as we shall see later in this chapter) evidenced the ways in which her written texts figured into her social worlds - as worlds to participate in with friends, or as worlds to be appreciated by friends.

Jackie: Composing with Words and Visuals

The tiniest child in the group, Jackie, at age nine, had a fragile, waiflike appearance. She was a sincere, sensitive, often serious child. It was Jackie, for example, who promptly responded to Barbara's query about her shoe size and who somberly discussed the difficulty in finding shoes she liked because her feet were so small. She did not like teasing, did not find teasers funny, and would say so (especially to Barbara, who considered teasing her personal domain), although she could be quite playful. Jackie sometimes giggled uncontrollably at the retelling of some funny incident, laughing as the tears flowed down her cheeks.

Writing. Jackie was often quiet during Writing Time, listening as the discussion flowed around her. But consistent with her sociable style, she seemed attentive to her peers' talk and writing. She sometimes offered unsolicited questions or comments in response to talk about their texts.

Wendy: (musing aloud) I think I'll write about Mrs. Johnson.
Jackie: Why?
Wendy: Because I like her.
Jackie: I guess that’s a good enough reason.
(Field notes, Mar. 18)

Straightforward, expressing both criticism and approval in a soft-spoken but clear manner, she took on the role of audience for other’s efforts. Yet, she seemed to be an audience for her own work as well. Ever the plodder, she would take her time as she worked through getting down what she wanted to say.

“My best friend[s] name is Heather. She is my best friend because I can trust her and I like her spirit. Nothing can keep her down. I trust her because she can keep secrets. We share secrets together. I will not tell her secrets to other people that she told me. And she will not tell my secrets that I told her. And that’s why she is my very best friend. (Field notes, Jan. 21)

As in the above example, Jackie makes a point in being very exacting in her language use and strives to say precisely what she wants the reader to know. When finished, she would take the time to add creative artwork to her work, as in the above example.

Margaret: Reasoning through Written Words

Margaret was a slender child of eleven years old with a bubbling, happy personality. She and Jackie are sisters and their mother, Mrs. Allen, is one of the center tutors. Margaret was an avid reader and, upon finding out that I also loved to read, would often engage in discussions with me about novels she had read or was currently reading. Her quick mind and intellectual prowess had led her third grade teacher to refer her to the gifted class at her school. During this research study, she was in the fifth grade and had been enrolled in the gifted program for two years. Unlike some children who could sometimes become vain about their “giftedness,” she downplayed her status and would comfortably mingle with the other children at the center who, in turn, received her as a valued chum or pal. Well-liked and respected by all the other children in her group, they would often ask her assistance with their homework whenever the
tutor was otherwise engaged in helping someone else. True to her nature, she would unhesitatingly give this assistance.

**Writing.** Margaret looked forward to Writing Time Writing, seeing it as an occasion to put into print her sense of logic about matters that were important to her. She would write quickly and quietly, solemnly focusing on the formulation of her topic. So serious was her concentration, she would frequently be unaware of all activity going on around her until she had completed her text. Then she would proudly read what she had produced to someone seated nearby.

While directed and focused in her writing, however, she would often neglect to observe the mechanics of writing. She seemed to be in a great hurry to get all of her thoughts down before they would be forgotten, thus would glide over necessities like end punctuation. Yet, she was quite adept at saying precisely what she wanted the reader to know.

In sum, Margaret's composing strategies were indicative of her high intellectual ability. Ever the questioner or inquisitor, she would concern herself primarily with conducting an analysis of "Why?" in her texts and reason through its complexities. (Text 3 above demonstrates this trait.) In this text the reader notices that she is drawn to questioning and posing critical reasoning through the question by suggesting the apparent (for her) irrationality of the notion that a birth could occur through extraordinary or abnormal means. For her, posing questions and seeking answers defines the confident self she seeks to convey in her writing.

**Discovering Writing Abilities**

One of the major aims of this study was to observe, describe, and assess the versatility of the subjects in applying syntactical skill to the structures of sentences they
produced. That the children and their sentences did mature is obvious, as the following writing samples will indicate; however, the degrees of maturity varied from child to child. In order to assess the children's writing abilities I used Moffett's standards of early-to-late developmental sequence (Moffett 1992, 49-50). Moffett's sequence, which has four levels of competency which increase in complexity, provided me with the means in using this instrument to assess the gradual progress the subjects made toward achieving sophistication in their written texts. Moffett's sequence is built upon an expansion of the repertory of clause-connecting options as follows:

1. String of separate independent clauses, each a sentence
2. Clauses conjoined by coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or) and time-space conjunctions
3. Clauses conjoined by logical subordinating conjunctions and focused by relative pronouns
4. Clauses reduced and embedded in each other

These developmental statements focus on what students can do with syntax, not on what they can name and illustrate the manner in which students can develop a rich repertoire of sentence strategies and options. With this in mind I chose to analyze these texts produced by the children which are final drafts after several sessions involving re-writing and refocusing upon ideas. When, for a variety of reasons, the Writing Time activity was sometimes shortened, the result was that the children could not devote the time they needed to think through and clarify their ideas. Those drafts were of much poorer quality than the ones I have selected here which are the result of extended processes in composition development. What follows are examples of the subjects' texts and the diversity and degree of syntactical choices they made in their work.
Text 1
“halloween. kande and it is fun go out” (Gene, Jan. 6)

Text 2
“Easter is a special holiday. Because we do lots of fun things and find eggs. Because we do great things like at Thanksgiving. We care about them but have fun.” (Jessica, Jan 13)

Text 3
“I like Christmas as the best holiday because it is amazing. It is not amazing because of gifts and when we go by our families home. But it is amazing because how could a virgin have a child without having a husband[?]” (Margaret, Jan. 6)

In each of these texts in which the writers sought to describe a special holiday, it is apparent that there are limited though varying degrees of syntactical skill. Syntactically, the first text does not approach even the first (level of Moffett’s “growth sequence”), and the writer is severely limited in his ability to produce written discourse. Clearly, his immaturity toward syntactical structure is obvious as we observe that he omitted one of the two independent clauses necessary to complete the sentence, but he did put in an “and” to connect what he thought was a pair of independent clauses. Of parallel interest too is the writer’s effort to respond to the rhetorical situation. The task called for him to write of a special holiday and tell what he liked about it. This he did. Translated, his response to what he liked about Halloween reads “candy, and it is fun [to] go out.” Notwithstanding his misuse of appropriate syntactical structure, his response is economically and implicitly stated in these seven words.

In the second text the writer attempts to use subordination as a principal strategy (level two of Moffett’s “growth sequence”), but the text technically falls just short of level one. Of particular importance is the writer’s reliance on a repeated structural pattern, almost without variation. It suggests that she is not only fearful of alternatives but also hesitant toward taking chances with unfamiliar syntax when she writes.
Text 3 does, on the other hand, achieve level three of Moffett’s “growth sequence,” although just barely. The writer is mature enough to ably join independent clauses with subordinating (adverbial) clauses. What the writer lacks, however is the sophistication needed to transform sentence three into a statement founded upon logical inquiry. A conventional structural pattern would be:

“...it is amazing because a virgin could not have a child without first having a husband.”

As is the nature of elementary school children, the six cases observed in this study tried to adhere to strict grammatical boundaries. After three months of writing instruction, there is in the three texts that follow not only a reflection of growth in syntactical maturity but also depictions of writing styles which were distinctly expressive and personal.

Text 4
“My favorite color is red because it makes me feel excited. I want to jump up and I feel like screaming. It makes me feel like running. It makes me feel like laughing loud. It makes me feel like danceing(sic).” (Wendy, Mar. 24)

Text 5
“My favorite color is blue because it is the color of my skirt. It is blue and my shorts are blue. Blue is a very pretty color to me and I like that color.” (Barbara, Mar. 24)

Text 6
“My favorite color is red. I like red because when I see red it makes me feel warm. It also makes me happy. It may be an ugly color to someone else but not to me. It makes me feel like I am beautiful, which I am. It makes me feel like I want to burst out screaming. I love red as my favorite color. There are all kinds of other colors but red is the best one I choose.” (Margaret, Mar. 24)

A case can be made that Text 4 falls somewhere between level one and two of Moffett’s “growth sequence”; yet, there is more that can be positively noted about the writer’s abilities. While the writer depends heavily upon supplying a string of
independent clauses - each a sentence - the first two suggest a bit of syntactical savvy. She has built the staccato-like syntactical structures of her later sentences upon two more complex transformations - a clause joined by an adverbial clause ("...because it makes me feel excited.") and a pair of independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction and. In addition, her use of precise descriptive words such as "excited," "screaming," "laughing," and "danceing(sic)," indicate her impulse to exert a sense of control and authority to adopt an expressive style through parallelism.

Repetition aside, Text 5 relies heavily upon coordination. Except in the first sentence in which she has supplied a joined adverbial phrase ("...because it is the color of my skirt."), each of the following instances of coordination indicate a knowledge of sentence patterns involving complements and prepositional phrases as modifiers. These applications suggest this writer has discovered the options available to her and has become sophisticated enough to enrich her message with these options.

Text 6 also shows a degree of syntactic sophistication in that writer. We see a variety of patterns including adverbial clauses ("...because when I see red it makes me feel warm."), one of which is embedded. In another instance an adjective clause ("which I am.") functions as a reduced clause (level four in Moffett’s “growth sequence”). In sum, this writer seems quite skilled at achieving syntactical control and is aware and unafraid of the options available to her.

Text 7
"My favorite teacher is fun because she is great." (Gene, Mar. 17)

I have ended this analysis with a return to a sampling of Gene’s work because his is the most compelling as a demonstration of early to later bloom in syntactical maturity. Text 1 shows his inability to achieve even the first level of Moffett’s “growth
sequence”; three months later, however, after frequent doses of positive feedback and support from his peers (especially Margaret), his confidence level had improved to the extent that he had progressed in Text 7 to writing a level three sentence. I do not mean to suggest that Gene had grown to approach a syntactical maturity anywhere near that of Jackie and Margaret, but the fact that he had grown so confident in his abilities that he could move from writing a seven-word fragmentary particle to writing a sentence that is both grammatically clear and correct is certainly laudable. Improvement in word length and syntactical maturity is evident as one can see in Table 1.

TABLE 1

INCREASE IN SYNTACTICAL MATURITY AND WORD LENGTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Syntactical Maturity</th>
<th>Word Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gene</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Level 1-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jackie</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wendy</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Barbara</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jessica</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Margaret</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Level 3-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

In this chapter I have continued the discussion of the themes that emerged from this research. Here, I have addressed the third theme - the learners emerging into literacy as members of a classroom community for writing. I have described how six students used different ways of working together and approaching rhetorical tasks. I have described how these subjects revealed themselves as a group of young writers who formed a community ethos of stimulating each other to find written voices in each other
and themselves. It is into the social dynamics of this community that writing becomes meaningful for the participants.

Given the short duration of the program and the limited days and hours of formal tutoring, the children's improvement in writing ability appears strong and impressive. As Table 2 shows, three of the children advanced by one whole grade level and the other three by something a little less than one level. There was, therefore, improvement in writing performance in all six children. The expansion of word length in the children's texts leads me to believe that in achieving an understanding of syntactic complexity they had each worked out individual methods for constructing not only longer sentences but also sentences that were understandable and grammatically appropriate. Such accomplishments with written language were fueled by the social interaction between the children that established a climate conducive to writing.

Writing enters the interaction of the class in a variety of ways. By March, the fifth month of the program, the students seemed to enjoy writing in the tutoring center's social and collaborative context. Talking and sharing ideas and reflections during writing, talking as an accompaniment to "telling about something" on paper, seemed to be an important aspect of learning to see writing as one means for self-expression and as an alternate way for saying something for self or for someone else.

The six children in this study, in a sense, began to own their writing and find their personal voices as writers working together in a supportive social context. They began to have a sense of confidence about writing and all grew to enjoy Writing Time Writing, especially. Each week they had the opportunity to write on their own student-generated topics and explore these or even teacher-generated topics minus the controlling influence of the classroom teachers' evaluative presence.
Class sharing between tutor and class and between student and student is important to the collaborative and public nature of writing but it also supports the concept of writing as a personal, private event, as students write, talk, read to each other, take their work to Mrs. Gibson or read to Mrs. Allen as she looks over their shoulders, but turn back to writing alone when they want to. In one sense the presentation of writing to the learners is like an extension of the anecdotes, monologues, and loud bantering which are part of the interactions of the class. The children write and talk, talk and write. Therefore, the class and not just the tutors becomes the potential audience for the children’s writing.

In like manner, the worship services at Calvary Baptist Church, the extension of the mission of those services into the church’s tutoring program, and the program’s supportive focus on the children’s language improvement contributed, in large measure, to that improvement. The social interaction that occurred through the conduction of the rituals during worship, the performances conducted during the opening and closing assemblies and other special events in the tutorial program and the formal writing instruction conducted during Writing Time operated as channels through which growth in language use took place for the children. Each of these speech events as seen in Table 2 illuminated the ways in which language communities work. As evident in this table, various events indicate a heuristic of rules of speaking. In addition, it shows that rules of speaking are flexible and change depending on the speech event in which members are participating.
### TABLE 2

**CODING OF SAMPLE SPEECH EVENTS IN TUTORIAL PROGRAM**

1. **Event: Opening and Closing Assembly**

   **Components:**
   - **S:** church sanctuary
   - **P:** director, pastor, tutors, students
   - **E:** to encourage patriotism and reverence for God
   - **K:** ritual seriousness
   - **I:** Standard American English (SAE), Black Vernacular English (BVE) Bible channels
   - **N:** speech = friendliness
   - **G:** recitation, singing

2. **Event: Christmas Program**

   **Components:**
   - **S:** church sanctuary
   - **P:** director, pastor, tutors, students, parents
   - **E:** to motivate performance
   - **K:** ritual seriousness
   - **I:** Standard American English (SAE), Black Vernacular English (BVE) Bible channels
   - **N:** speech = friendliness
   - **G:** recitation, singing

3. **Event: Writing Time Activity**

   **Components:**
   - **S:** tutorial classroom
   - **P:** tutors, students
   - **E:** to improve writing ability
   - **K:** teaching/learning
   - **I:** English language
   - **N:** speech, writing
   - **G:** personal expressive writing

*This “SPEAKING” framework was chosen instead of Hymes’ other “SPEAKING” model because data did not reveal any aspects in the events to accommodate the “A” Code.*

Further, we find from the table that these events offer credence to Hymes’ ascertain that the “interaction of language with social life is a matter of human action, based on knowledge...that enables persons to use language,” (p. 58).
communicative conduct displayed during these events give testimony to the speaking competence not only of the members of the speech community but also of the encounters within that community. The events thus emerge as one more example of how a speech community tailors its language use to particular situations for particular purposes and of the powerful influence of language upon all facets of human life.

The talk that accompanies the writing process is very important. Talk and sharing of the process frequently occurs without prompting. It is as if the conversations about the Christmas holiday, the characteristics of a best friend, etc., which provided the occasions for the writing, continue alongside the writing. There is an ongoing conversation which the children use as they write and this is significant in the collaborative writing process. Writing seems to coexist with the talk. Both the tutors have made use of this ongoing conversation to encourage the children to write and gradually these tutors have developed in them a confidence in writing that results in an emerging maturity and sophistication toward the production of written texts.

In sum, the many ingredients or pieces which contribute to the themes I discovered in this study are rather like the always-merging concentric circles left by a pebble tossed into a river; they flow into and out of each other. They also flow into and exist as integral to the learners' establishment of a social network that not only bound them all together as a group, but also allowed each to seek individual recognition through their written texts as competent and confident individuals. Written language became for them a social tool that helped them to connect with and yet distinguish themselves from among their peers.
CHAPTER SIX
CHILDREN'S WRITTEN LITERACY RECONSIDERED:
SOME EMERGING ISSUES

Part I

This research has explored the dimensions of literacy for African-American learners in a church-based tutorial context. This chapter is in two parts. Part I summarizes the study and suggests some of the ingredients of literacy acquisition which occurs in a tutorial setting. In Part II, I suggest possible ways to talk about children's written literacy and further research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect that a church-sponsored after-school tutorial program, had on the literacy development of six African-American elementary school children (one male and five females) within this context. The initial research question was, "What effect do African-American church-sponsored tutorial programs have upon the acquisition of literacy?" Subsumed under this question were others which emerged as the researcher, as an observer, took her place in the tutorial center. Thus, the following and other related questions were posed as part of the ongoing research process:

- What happens in a tutorial context when writing is the focus of instruction?
- What were the ingredients of written literacy in this tutorial context?
- How does writing function within the program?
- What types of writing occur?
- What makes children, especially African-American children, more successful and confident writers?
Were kinds of literacies observed influenced by the church setting, and, if so, how?

The studies of the six subjects here reveal some of the dimensions of what it means for African-American school children to become competent writers in contexts beyond their school classrooms and homes. The studies have been presented in narrative accounts, to show both common elements and components, as well as dissimilarities in the subjects' personalities and writing abilities.

African-American Children's Literacy Acquisition in a Church-Sponsored After School Writing Program

As an ethnography of communication this research has investigated literacy development of children in one place and time. It shows how these children and the African-American church speech community that surrounded them used language in particular ways for particular purposes.

First, I have suggested that the participants in a church-sponsored after-school tutorial program make deliberate choices to engage in speech acts out of a shared understanding of the function of language in specific situations. Surrounded by an array of discourses within that context the children I observed found opportunities to use language to convey their individual intentions while negotiating the intentions of others.

Further, I propose that the Black church, through its traditions and customs, exerts enormous influence upon the literacy of its members and those it connects with through outreach programs. Prominent to literacy is the practice of ritual which functions as a performed text to members. Participants enter the ritual action with a text that stipulates the sequential ordering of acts, speech, and events. With regards to ritual text and performance, observance of a particular ritual frame determines the code
structuring and language used during the event. In the tutorial setting observed here the participants engaged in the use of stock phrases and language to convey the special meaning of particular speech events and then adapted their speech to conform to the purposes and meaning of other events.

The scope of ritual performance in the Black church is such that it intrudes upon and affects, both directly and indirectly, the events that take place there. The dynamics of ritual text have as much to do with the sacred as they have to do with the secular. Participants in ritual action are involved not only with demonstrations of faith and theological doctrine, but also with developing a lived, practical consciousness. The ritual structure and practices engaged in by the congregation and pastor during worship services at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church undergirded other kinds of ritual events that took place beyond these services. Like the choir's processional to the choir loft, Reverend Sanders' use of the chant in his sermons, or the invitation to open the doors of the church (all of these actions which are bound up in the worship service each and every Sunday), so are the opening/closing assemblies, the homework and Writing Time activities practiced on a daily basis in the tutorial program. A knowledge of the history and structure of ritual in the Black tradition can help us understand the influence this practice yields to the variety of events which take place within the walls of a Church like Calvary. Each event called for the participants to use language for a special purpose and in a special way. They do what Aune (1996) calls "engaging in the process of meaning-creation" (p. 161) to use ritual to make life meaningful and livable for them.

Human beings engage in numerous events throughout their lives in an effort to construct some meaning to their existence, to make sense of it all. As they engage in ritual practices. In this sense, ritual can be seen as the instrument that directs people to
do certain things. Thus, the lively, spirited speech acts of the congregation at Calvary in response to the chanted speech acts that Reverend Sanders uttered during his sermons can be seen not only as acts inculcated upon some special meaning for the participants but also as the result of a deliberate choice to use language in a special way.

The school classroom and home are two important ones, but there are other settings which can also be seen as contexts and domains for socialization into the uses, functions and skills of literacy, of reading and writing, as a mode of communication. It is within varied contexts where children and students interact with adult language uses and with each other, as they enter into the communicative repertoire of the community. They extend their identity of themselves as members of a socio-cultural group in relation to their communicative repertoire, and to their knowledge of the forms and functions of the different modes of communication available to them. They shape different ways with words or construct different meanings based on their understanding and relation to the different discourses that surround them. Consequently, through speaking and writing, they seize opportunities to create their own voice in response to the situation in which they find themselves. At Calvary the six children in this study were surrounded by discourses both as members of the church and as participants in its tutorial program. That they managed to find ways to transform these discourses into meaningful voices of their own testifies to the viability of their community’s culture.

Part II

What are some useful ways of talking about written literacy so that the research reported here contributes to a general platform for talking about African-American learners? What effect do contexts beyond the traditional school classroom have upon
children's literacy achievement? The conclusions that follow consider these questions and suggest future research and voice some concerns.

Looking at Written Literacy

One way of talking about writing is as a particular set of interactions in literacy. By this I mean that participants use written language in particular ways. Looking at writing in these terms might allow us to reconsider the dynamics of particular settings in relation to the students and to the tasks of writing which occur there.

Clearly, an important factor in this study is the connection between orality and literacy, especially in the use of vernacular and Standard English. The use of these language forms both during worship services and in the tutorial program is an example of the many and varied ways speakers use language to convey particular meanings and functions. Reverend Sanders, the spiritual leader of Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, mixed vernacular and Standard English into the text of his sermons. Unlike his strict attention to applying the use of only Standard English in his remarks during the assemblies in the tutorial program, he used vernacular at those points in his sermons where he invoked upon his congregation guidelines for practical, daily living and when he merged into the chant to signal his approach to the end of the sermon event. Following a pattern and formula in the delivery of his sermons, he seemed to weigh the decision of just when to use vernacular, making a deliberate choice in the use of this language form at these intervals out of the belief that it would probably be well received by his Black listeners for whom vernacular speech was a way of life. His sense of rhythm and timing, however, made it possible for him to weave in and out of vernacular and Standard English without missing a beat. That his congregation elicited positive
responses to his skilled performance gives testimony to the cultural values this speech community placed on the use of particular speech acts in particular situations.

Likewise, these two language forms were used by the children in the tutorial program. And, like Reverend Sanders, their use of the two forms was probably a matter of choice and deliberation. For example, the jocular, bantering vernacular that typified the "playing the dozens" speech acts in their informal discourse was replaced with the sober, intellectual features of Standard English in their formal discourse. In contrast, the tutors, also members of the Black community and familiar with the vernacular language so identifiable with its culture, always used Standard English in their speech, again a matter of deliberate choice. This decision was perhaps founded in their belief that they must engage in speech acts which would serve as a model for the children they taught.

Accordingly, the writing events and instructions in the tutorial context operate not as aspects of the teaching and learning of writing as a subject per se, but as a shared commentary on using writing as one way of symbolizing the speaker's experience of the world. Therefore, if writing is seen as a product alone and as a set of skills to be learned or acquired alone, then the teaching and learning of writing becomes subject-oriented and limited. On the other hand, if writing is seen also as a process then the teaching and learning of writing can be described as a shared interaction in and about language in use, as a way of making our written voices respond to our world.

The role of the Black church as a mentoring agent that influences the literate practices of its members and those it connects with through outreach programs cannot be denied. An important factor is the Church's dedication to maintaining its African tradition of performance. Although the sampling was too small to draw a definitive
conclusion, I suspect that perhaps there is a connection between performance and confident writing among African-American children. The more the children were put through their paces of performing at various events, the more they became sure of themselves as able human beings. They visibly socialized themselves into higher literacies. Paradoxically, as they become more effective communicators in their groups, they also grow individually as writers. As the weeks and months wore on, the process of “defining self” as a writer, an extension of one’s capacity for using writing, continued. There, in interactions with tutors and peers, the process of becoming a more competent and confident writer occurred. Further, performing also provided the opportunity for the children to create and maintain relationships with others in a variety of ways. Faced with a variety of discourses, they found ways to create voices for themselves that were not totally like those of the church or the tutorial program in which they were enrolled, but rather discourses which revealed an effort to project an individual self. My observation makes me think that instruction in written literacy for African-American children must integrate the role of performance (in its varied implementations) into the children’s acquisition of literacy.

Implications for Future Research

It would seem reasonable to talk about writing in church-sponsored tutorial settings for children not as either process-oriented or as product-oriented but rather as interactive. The focus then would be on the writing events, the priorities given to certain kinds of writing events, and the interactions between the participants and the tutors during which the events are conducted.

Given the tradition of orality in the African-American community, the nature of performed discourse - how it is done and when - and how it is coupled to writing may
have implications for what the students learn of writing and about themselves as writers. Performance and the associated socializing it creates in relation to writing needs to be explored further in a study which carefully traces the relationship between orality in the African-American community and children's development as competent and confident writers. The six subjects I have studied here only begins this work. However, a longitudinal analysis of children's written artifacts and their relation to the writing events and interactions of the setting would need to be done. Hopefully, researchers and writing teachers will continue to explore contexts beyond the home and school in an effort to reveal how African-American school children use language in other speech communities in which they play a part.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


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Scollon, R. and Scollon S. (1979). Literacy as interethnic communication. (Ms.) Alaska Native Language Center: University of Alaska


LOUISIANA CHURCH-BASED AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORIAL PROGRAM
SITE INFORMATION FORM

CHECK ONE:
___ 5-DAY AFTER SCHOOL
___ SATURDAY ACADEMY
___ SUMMER ENRICHMENT

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

NAME OF SITE: _____________________________________________________________

PASTOR/OFFICER OF EDUCATOR: __________________________________________

PHYSICAL ADDRESS OF SITE:
STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

(REIMBURSEMENT WILL BE SENT TO MAILING ADDRESS)

TELEPHONE NUMBER OF SITE: _____ (____) ______________________________________

MINISTER'S HOME TELEPHONE NO.: _____ (____) ______________________________

MINISTER'S WORK TELEPHONE NO.: _____ (____) ______________________________

SITE COORDINATOR: _________________________________________________________

HOME ADDRESS OF SITE COORDINATOR:
STREET CITY STATE ZIP CODE

HOME TELEPHONE NO. OF COORDINATOR: _____ (____) ________________________

WORK TELEPHONE NO. OF COORDINATOR: _____ (____) ________________________

GRADES TUTORED: _________________________________________________________

LIST DAYS AND HOUR TUTORING IS HELD: ______________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: ______________________

NUMBER OF TUTORS: _________ MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 60
SUMMER ENRICHMENT: 40

NUMBER OF YEARS OPERATING PROGRAM: ____________________________
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING PROGRAM
TUTOR INFORMATION SHEET

CHECK ONE:
__ 5-DAY
__ SUMMER ENRICHMENT
__ SATURDAY ACADEMY
__ REFERRAL CENTER

DATE: ____________________________ TUTORING SITE: ________________________
PARISH: _________________________ CITY: ________________________________

I. General Information
1. Tutor's Name: _________________________________________________________
2. Tutor's Address: _______________________________________________________
3. Place of Employment: _________________________________________________
4. Years of Teaching in After-School Tutoring Program: _____________________
5. Race: ____________ Sex: ____________ Age: ____________
6. Phone: _________(_______)____________________________

II. Professional Background
1. Highest Degree Held: _______________ College Major: _______________
2. Name/Location of Conferring Institution: ________________________________

If you are a certified classroom teacher, please respond to the following:
  a. Area(s) of certification: _____________________________________________
  b. Years of teaching experience: _________________________________________
  c. Years of school administration experience: ____________________________
  d. Remedial and/or pre-vocational courses previously taught
     _________________________________________________________________

III. Reasons for Involvement in After-School Tutoring Program I want to participate in the
After-School Tutoring Program because:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

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**SCHOLASTIC RATING SHEET**

CHECK ONE:

- [ ] 5-DAY
- [ ] SUMMER ENRICHMENT
- [ ] SATURDAY ACADEMY
- [ ] REFERRAL CENTER

**DIRECTIONS:** Using student's report card, please list the student's grades for each grading period.

Student's Name: ______________________________ Grade: _______________

Tutoring Site: ________________________________ Parish: ______________

City: _______________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

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*For High School Students, please indicate the specific course, e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, English I, English II, World History, Biology, etc.
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TUTORING PROGRAMS
FISCAL OFFICER INFORMATION SHEET

CHECK ONE:
___ 5-DAY
___ SUMMER ENRICHMENT
___ SATURDAY ACADEMY
___ REFERRAL CENTER

PARISH: __________________________ PROGRAM SITE: __________________________

I. General Information
1. Fiscal Officer's Name: ______________________________________________________
2. Address: __________________________________________________________________
3. Telephone: __________________________
4. Place of Employment: ______________________________________________________
5. Years of Clerical or Fiscal Experience: __________________________

II. Professional Background
Associate or College Degree: ____________________________________________________
Year received: __________________________
Name of Conferring Institution or Vocational School
____________________________________________________________________________

III. Account Information
Name of Financial Institution where Tutorial Program's checking account is placed:
____________________________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number: __________________________
Account Number: __________________________
Official signatures authorized on each check:
Name: __________________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number: __________________________
Name: __________________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number: __________________________
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORIAL PROGRAM
SCHOLASTIC RATING SHEET

CHECK ONE:
_  5-DAY
_ SUMMER ENRICHMENT
_ SATURDAY ACADEMY
_ REFERRAL CENTER

DIRECTIONS: Using student's report card, please list the student's grades for each grading period.

Student's Name: ______________________________ Grade: ______________

Tutoring Site: ________________________________ Parish: ______________

City: _______________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

Grades

<table>
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*For High School Students, please indicate the specific course, e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, English I, English II, World History, Biology, etc.
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TUTORING PROGRAMS
FISCAL OFFICER INFORMATION SHEET

CHECK ONE:
___ 5-DAY
___ SUMMER ENRICHMENT
___ SATURDAY ACADEMY
___ REFERRAL CENTER

PARISH: _____________________________ PROGRAM SITE: ________________

I. General Information
1. Fiscal Officer's Name: ____________________________
2. Address: ____________________________________
3. Telephone: ____________________________
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_____________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number: ____________________________
Account Number: ______________________________________
Official signatures authorized on each check:
Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
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Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________
Telephone Number: ____________________________

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CHURCH-BASED AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORIAL PROGRAM

CHECK ONE:  

___ 5-DAY  
___ SUMMER ENRICHMENT  
___ SATURDAY ACADEMY  
___ REFERRAL CENTER

SITE NAME: ____________________  
CITY: _______________________

STUDENT ATTENDANCE FORM  
MAIL COPY OF FORM AT THE END OF EACH MONTH  
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
BUREAU OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION  
CHURCH-BASED TUTORIAL PROGRAM  
ATTN: DIANE LAPHAND  
P.O. BOX 94064  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA  70804-9064

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHURCH-BASED AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORIAL PROGRAM
COMPUTER USAGE INFORMATION REPORTING FORM

SITE NAME: _____________________________ ADDRESS: _____________________________ CITY/STATE/ZIP: ______

EVERYONE USING THE COMPUTER MUST SIGN-IN

AT THE END OF EACH MONTH, PLEASE MAIL THIS FORM TO:
Louisiana Department of Education
Bureau of Elementary Education
Attention: Diane LaPhand
P.O. Box 94064
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
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### Tutor Sign-In Sheet

**Louisiana State Department of Education**

**Church-Based After School Tutorial Program**

**Tutor Sign-In Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Submitted:</th>
<th>Coordinator Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Name:</td>
<td>Coordinator Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>City:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code:</td>
<td>Coordinator's Signature:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Week of ______________ Through ______________

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mon. Hours</th>
<th>Tues. Hours</th>
<th>Wed. Hours</th>
<th>Thurs. Hours</th>
<th>Fri. Hours</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
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#### Week of ______________ Through ______________

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mon. Hours</th>
<th>Tues. Hours</th>
<th>Wed. Hours</th>
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<th>Total Hours</th>
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#### Week of ______________ Through ______________

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mon. Hours</th>
<th>Tues. Hours</th>
<th>Wed. Hours</th>
<th>Thurs. Hours</th>
<th>Fri. Hours</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Dear Parents:

The Louisiana Department of Education, The Department of Social Services, local school boards, and churches throughout the state, are sponsoring a tutorial program. Program offerings include math, reading, writing, art, building self-esteem, values training, Multicultural Education and Conflict Resolution skills. This service is free to all children.

Today’s Date:

Student’s Legal Name: __________________________________________________

(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name)

Home Address: ________________________________________________________

(Street Address)

(City) (Civil Parish) (State) (Zip Code)

Mailing Address: ________________________________________________________

(Place write “SAME” if it is identical to Home Address)

Home Phone: _______________ Unlisted? _________ Yes _________ No

Student Lives with___________________________________________________

(Name(s) of Guardian - Specify the Relationship to the Student)

Sex: ________ Male ____________ Female

Race: ________

Birth Date: _____________________ Place of Birth: _____________________

(Month Day Year) (City) (State)

Student’s Social Security Number:__________________________________

Student’s Faith Denomination: _____________________________________

Church Attended:

Previous School Attended: ________________________________

How long did the student attend class at this location: ________________________________

(Please specify length of time in Years, months, weeks, days, etc.)

Present School Attending: ________________________________

How long has the student attended classes at this location: ________________________________

(Please specify length of time in Years, months, weeks, days, etc.)

Current Grade Level: ______________________________________

Birth Parents’/Guardian Marital Status: ___ Unmarried ___ Married ___ Separated

Divorced ___ Widowed

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mother’s Information</th>
<th>Father’s Information</th>
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<td>First Name, Middle Name and Maiden Name</td>
<td>First Name, Middle Name and Last Name</td>
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<td>Home Address</td>
<td>(If identical to the student’s, please write SAME)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Presently Attended Church’s Name and Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister’s Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Parent’s Names</td>
<td>STEP-MOTHER’S NAME</td>
<td>STEP-FATHER’S NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(First Name, Middle Name, and Maiden Name)</td>
<td>(First Name, Middle Name, and Last Name)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If parent’s cannot be reached, please call:

Name (1): __________________________ Relationship: ______________
Home Phone Number: __________________________ Work Phone Number: ______________
Name (2): __________________________ Relationship: ______________
Home Phone Number: __________________________ Work Phone Number: ______________

Name of Doctor: __________________________
Office Address: __________________________
Office Phone Number: __________________________

_____ YES, I want my child to attend the Tutoring Program and hereby grant permission for the Parish School System to reveal any information that would enhance the scholastic development of my child.

PARENT’S SIGNATURE
Dear Parents and Students:

Welcome to the Church-Based After School Program. We are looking forward to an exciting and successful summer. We will be focusing on Reading, Math, Writing and Enrichment activities.

We have explained the classroom policies to your child and ask that you read the following Rights and Responsibilities as they relate to your child's behavior while attending the Program.

1. Student must FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.

2. Students should enter the classroom in an orderly manner, take their seats, and begin warm-up activities.

3. Gum, sunflower seeds, candy and soda pop will not be allowed in the classroom.

4. Students must be ready to begin class at the appropriate time with necessary materials at all times.

5. Students are not to engage in excessive talking, playing, or any behavior that violates the rights of others to study.

6. Students must obtain the teacher's permission before speaking or talking.

7. Students must conduct themselves so that they can remain task-oriented and do not disrupt others.

8. Students must take care of their personal needs before class begins.

9. Students must wear casual attire. They are not to wear halter tops, bare navels, shorts, or tank tops.

10. Students must not use profane, abusive, insulting language.

11. Under no circumstances will bickering and fighting be tolerated.

12. Violation of the above is grounds for dismissal from the program.

I have read and understand the regulations, rights, and responsibilities stated above.

_________________________________________  _________________
Student                                  Date

_________________________________________  _________________
Parent                                   Date

_________________________________________  _________________
Teacher                                  Date
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRES AND FORMS USED BY RESEARCHER

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WRITING ATTITUDE SURVEY

To the Student: The following questions are designed to assess the beliefs, feelings, and values you have toward writing in general. Circle the word from columns 1, 2, or 3 which best describes your attitude. Your answers are important to this study.

1. I like to write. Always Sometimes Never
2. I think those who write well are born to do so. Always Sometimes Never
3. I discover new things about my subject as I write. Always Sometimes Never
4. I find writing to be a difficult task. Always Sometimes Never
5. I read all kinds of literature Always Sometimes Never
6. I find that reading helps me to write Always Sometimes Never
7. I start drafting as soon as I know the subject. Always Sometimes Never
8. Getting started to write is a problem. Always Sometimes Never
9. Writing opens up new discoveries for me. Always Sometimes Never
10. I hate to write. Always Sometimes Never
11. I am concerned with making mistakes when I write. Always Sometimes Never
12. I share my writings with others. Always Sometimes Never
13. I think of creative language to make my ideas clear. Always Sometimes Never
14. I keep a journal of writing ideas. Always Sometimes Never

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INTERVIEW OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF THE SUBJECTS

1. What is your name (for the record)?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How many children do you have?
4. How many live at home?
5. Do you read? How often?
6. What kinds of materials do you read?
7. Which do you like best?
8. How much reading do you do as a family?
9. Do you like to write? Why? Why not?
10. Would you describe the forms of writing that occurs between you and the children?
11. How old were you when you learned to read?
12. What was our favorite book? Reading activity?
13. What impression do you have of the tutorial program?
14. Have you observed any changes in (student’s name) reading skills? Writing skills? What are they?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF CENTER DIRECTOR

1. How long have you served as director of this program?
2. What are your official duties?
3. Do you have a role in any other educational programs at this church?
4. If yes, what are they?
5. What are your official duties in those programs?
6. How long has this program been in existence?
7. Is there a particular reason why only elementary school children participate in the program?
8. What kind of work do you do outside of this program?
9. If retired, what kind of work did you do?
10. Are you member of this church? How long?
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF CENTER STAFF

1. How would you describe the benefits of the tutorial program to the addition of the formal writing instruction activity?

2. How would you assess the program after the addition of this activity?

3. Have you observed any changes in the children's writing skills? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. If yes, what percentage of this change do you think is due to their participation in this program?

5. Given all the daily activities, do you think enough time is allowed to satisfactorily cover all of them?

6. If no, how much more time do you is needed?

7. What more do you suggest the center might do to further help the children?

8. If this means adding more time to the schedule, would you agree to that? Why/Why not?

9. (Question for the director) — Can you add more time to the schedule without state approval? Why/Why not?

10. Which child would say has demonstrated the most improvement? In what way(s)?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF VISITING PARENT

1. What is your name (for the record)?
2. Where do you live?
3. What is your occupation?
4. How many children do you have?
5. Do you and the children's father live together?
6. How did you hear about the tutorial program at this church?
7. Which of your children are enrolled in this program?
8. Why did you enroll them in this program?
9. How much education do you have?
10. Do you like to read/write? Why? Why not?
11. If yes, what kind of reading material do you like best?
12. What kind of writing do you like best to do?
13. Why do you come to the center along with your children?
14. What do you hope the center will do for your children?
15. How long have you been coming here?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OF SCHOOL CLASSROOM TEACHERS

1. What is your name (for the record)?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How long have you been a teacher?
4. How long have you worked at this school.
5. What grade do you teach?
6. Is (student’s name) in your class?
7. How would you classify (student’s name) as a student?
8. How much writing is done in your class?
9. Do you teach all subjects? If no, which ones do you teach?
10. Do you assign compositions in language class?
11. If yes, what to you look for in these compositions?
12. How do you grade them?
13. What strengths (weaknesses) do you observe in (student’s name) writing?
14. Do you know that (student’s name) has been participating in an after school tutorial program?
15. If yes, have you noticed any improvement in his/her literate abilities since he/she has been going to the tutorial program?
16. What is the most effect the tutorial program has had upon him/her?
17. What is your general philosophy of education?
VITA

Gayle Williams Duskin was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on February 20, 1937. Upon graduation as co-valedictorian from Gaudet Episcopal High School in June, 1954, she attended Dillard University. After her scholarship ran out, she left Dillard and enrolled at the YMCA School of Business, graduating from there in May, 1957. She returned to Dillard University, where she received a B.A. degree in English in 1961.

She married Richard Duskin in June, 1962 and gave birth to three children; Lisa, Richard, Jr. (deceased), and Mark. After enrollment as a part-time student, she received an M.A.T. degree in English from Tulane University in August, 1978.

Responding to an invitation from Dillard University in August, 1988 she took a leave of absence from her position in the district’s public schools to assume a position as an assistant professor of English at the university. In April, 1989 she was offered a permanent position at Dillard University and retired in June, 1989 from her employment with the New Orleans Public School system.

In January, 1990 she began work on her doctorate at Louisiana State University - Baton Rouge while she continued to teach full time at Dillard University. In 1993 and 1997 she received two grants, from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United Negro College Fund, respectively. Both of these grants gave her the opportunity to take leaves of absence to complete her doctoral course work and conduct the research for her dissertation. In September, 1998 she returned to full-time teaching at Dillard University. Her major research interests are composition and rhetorical theory.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Gayle W. Duskin

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: A Case Study of the Developing Literacy Of African-American Learners Attending a Tutoring Program at an Urban African-American Church

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

November 11, 1999