

Talking Literacy Practices and Personhood into Being in the Writing Club

Through analysis of the actions of members in three transcript segments from the third writing club meeting, I attempt here to make visible the ways in which discursive practices constructed in the writing club provided an opportunity for students to explore issues of personhood based on constructing an analysis of intertextual links between issues of culture, language and power and their personal experiences. To make visible the social positioning occurring on a line-to-line basis in the transcripts of conversations, I use three types of markings in the right hand column of the transcript chart: I have **bold-faced words** that emphasize **intertextual processes**. *Italicized words* highlight *intertextual substance*, and underlined words mark explicit dimensions of personhood and identity. Using the theoretical framework crafted for this study, my analysis illustrates how literacy practices were being socially constructed and how relationships between literacy practices and personhood were being constructed through face-to-face interactions among writing club members from the early days of the writing club. For example, there is evidence of intertextual links that Shanae makes to the questions I posed to frame the writing club project and there is evidence that Denise crafts an intertextual link to expand the focus of Shanae's topic to include her interest in issues of racial prejudice, an interest that was grounded in her experiences as a young white woman.

An analysis of the general pattern of interaction during the first two days of the writing club show that we generated, discussed and revised questions that the students wanted to pursue. The activity of choosing research topics and questions framed conversations about issues that were of critical concern to students, thus linking an academic task with personal interest. These discussions were preceded and/or followed by quiet writing time. Sometimes a student read aloud what she had written; then the other students recounted their experiences on the topic. Transcript 1 from the third day of the writing club provides a basis for examining this pattern of practice.⁸ This segment of transcript was selected because the pattern becomes visible as participants already in the group help a new member with this pattern (lines 25-26). There are four actors in this excerpt: myself, (Ann, the teacher-researcher), DeLayne (an entering member), and Shanae and Sandra (returning members). The interactions of the two groups of participants, returning and new, provide a point in time where the expectations for participating become visible as members respond to my request to "say one again." As Fairclough (1989) argues, at

such moments, members make visible to each other, and thus to observers — or in this case, readers — what is expected of participants.

Transcript 1: Excerpt from 3rd Writing Club Meeting

Three types of markings make visible the social positioning:
 ● **bold-faced words** emphasize *intertextual processes*,
 ● *italicized words* highlight *intertextual substance*, and
 ● underlined words mark *explicit discursive dimensions of personhood*.

Ln #	SPK	Descriptive Analysis	Intertextual Positioning
25.	Ann	Could you say one again,	Creates reason for repeating self
26.		for DeLayne?	Orienting new member to group literacy practices
27.	Shanae	<i>What's it like</i>	Defines self as researcher who adapts the personhood question frame "what's it like"
28.		<i>being or having two nationalities?</i>	to examine issues of multiracial identity .
29.	Ann	Mmm-hmm.	Acknowledges interest in question ; creates space for discussion of this dimension of personhood
30.	Shanae	Some people probably can't answer it 'cause —	Framing question in relation to group
31.	Sandra	<i>I could!</i>	Sandra defines self as <i>multiracial</i>
32.	DeLayne	<i>I could!</i>	DeLayne defines self as <i>multiracial</i>
33.	Shanae	—some people only probably <u>have one nationality</u>.	Shanae creates a <i>problematic space</i> , by raising issue of whether all members of the group could <i>respond to the question</i>
34.	Denise	Tomorrow —	Denise, who is European American, takes the opportunity created by Shanae to establish an angle on Shanae's topic that relates to her interest in <i>issues of race</i> .
35.		I was telling her <i>how I have a question of the day</i>	Referencing earlier conversation with me as teacher-researcher
36.		<i>or questions</i>	Establishes self as researcher with a question,
37.		which I was doing today with my <i>survey</i> .	adapting method of survey to explore peers' reactions to a set of topics

38.		Tomorrow I'm <i>going to research</i> this one.	Denise defines <i>self</i> as researcher,
39.		My question number three from yesterday,	
40.		it's <i>prejudice</i> : who does it really <i>hurt</i> ?	interested in <i>examining</i> issues of <i>race</i> ,
41.		The <i>person who's being prejudiced</i> or <i>both</i> ?	<i>from multiple perspectives</i>

In lines 25-26, Ann asks Shanae, "Could you say one again for DeLayne?" In making the request to ". . . say one again for DeLayne," I draw on members' knowledge of prior texts constructed by members and practices used to construct the texts (intertextuality, Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). The research question is based on my adaptation of ones I raised at the first club meeting: "What's it like growing up as young women in Riverside? As an African American young woman? . . ."

In sharing this question, Shanae is making an intertextual connection between the current event and an earlier one; that is, she is demonstrating to those who were present in the previous events (including me) that she recognizes the links between these events and that she is assigning social significance to both the prior event and the current one. In "saying" this question, she is also interactionally accomplishing the intertextual link and sharing the cultural knowledge with the new member.

Additionally, her next response makes visible how members can interact with the question. In this response she comments on her question (lines 30 and 33). Sandra's and DeLayne's responses to her comment overlap hers. The second part of her comment creates a problematic space by raising the issue of whether all members of the group could respond to the question. Thus, Shanae both provides an intertextual link and makes visible the literacy practice associated with posing a research question — that members can comment or respond to the research questions of others.

The interactions among members of the group illustrate how literacy practices were shaped by members. They also show how members began from early in the project to shape and reshape local views of personhood. In asking the question, "What's it like being or having two nationalities?" (lines 27-28), Shanae is raising for investigation discourse practices surrounding multiracial positioning. She later goes on to articulate this position as a subordinate position: she

and Sandra, she claims, have experienced some difficulties being accepted as Puerto Rican. Shanae asked us if she "looked Puerto Rican." In making the claim that some people cannot answer her question (line 30) because some people probably have only one nationality (line 33), she can be viewed as opening a space for considering this issue, while simultaneously suggesting the possibility that there might be some people in the group who could not answer the question (Denise and me). In this way, she opens space for considering multiracial personhood as a research issue and as one that is potentially exclusionary.

Shanae articulates this problem in a way that provides space for agreement, disagreement, renegotiation and expansion of a question by members, as they express that their relationship to her question is problematic. DeLayne and Sandra (lines 31-32) respond to Shanae, acknowledging their multiracial identities and interest in Shanae's topic. Shanae (line 33) finishes her statement of concern with a clarification about whether every member of the group had personal experiences related to her question. Denise, who is European American, takes the floor (lines 34-41) to respond to Shanae and other students, recognizing that she cannot answer the specific question but establishing a shared interest in questions about racial and ethnic relations. She creates a conversational position from which she can address the theme of power relationships regarding racial identities embedded in Shanae's question. Denise implies that she understood Shanae's question to be about racial "prejudice" and finds aspects of her personhood at issue in the conversation.

The transcript markings illustrate how shared expectations for the social construction of intertextuality were interactionally built in moment-to-moment interactions. The intertextual substance of the students' questions (issues of racial identity and racial prejudice) and intertextual processes (raising a question to research) begin to be shaped and reshaped within the discourse practices of the writing club. In this way, views of personhood (issues of acceptance as a multiracial person, issues of racial prejudice) and literacy practices (keeping a research notebook, having a research question, shaping an analysis based on personal experiences as Shanae does based on attributes of looks and language [see Transcript 2]; creating an angle to take up a co-researcher's topic of interest) were being shaped and reshaped and explored through their interactions as the students engaged in discussion about their community research projects. Students raised questions about ethnic identity and about issues of personhood associated with it (being accepted as a member of a racial or ethnic group, the emotional effect of prejudice).

Further evidence of analysis of discourse patterns associated with issues of race and racial identity as these emerged in our interactions can be seen in the next excerpt from the same meeting (Transcript 2). In their roles as researchers and in the social relationships they were constructing as writing club members, the students took up opportunities to examine attributes and attitudes about people based on race and gender, and often did so in relation to how these categories intersected in their lives. The students can be viewed as assigning intertextual significance to the questions I raised as I framed the study: "What's it like growing up as a young woman in Riverside? As an African American young woman? As a Latina? As a young white woman?" The issues associated with gender are so embedded in this particular transcript that it can be hard to see them. However, this was a multiracial group of women researchers and the experiences of issues of personhood differed among us based on our particular intersections. Transcript 2 shows traces of the way students began to take up these intersections of dimensions of personhood. We all spoke based on our experiences as women and the talk in these transcripts illustrates how issues of race and racial identity varied among us.

Transcript 2: Excerpt from 3rd Writing Club Meeting

Three types of markings make visible the social positioning:
 ● **bold-faced words** emphasize intertextual processes,
 ● *italicized words* highlight intertextual substance, and
 ● underlined words mark explicit discursive dimensions of personhood.

Ln #	SPK	Descriptive Analysis	Intertextual Positioning
54.	Ann	What do <i>you think</i> ?	I position Shanae as an <i>analyst</i>
55.	Shanae	Sometimes when you tell somebody your <i>nationality</i> ,	Shanae indicates the negotiated nature of identity
56.		it's gotta really	
57.		it's gotta really <i>show</i>	Shanae defines <u>appearance</u> as attribute for negotiation of cultural identity; Shanae identifies <u>visible inscription</u> as a basis for negotiating inclusion and/or exclusion in a group
58.		or they'll call you a " <u>wannabe</u> ."	Shanae identifies the code " <u>wannabe</u> " as how teens can respond to someone who is not viewed as <u>visibly inscribed</u> as a part of a racial/ethnic group

59.		<i>'Cause like for her,</i>	<i>Shanae uses Sandra's experience as a basis for supporting her claim</i>
60.		she's got Puerto Rican in her,	
61.		but yet it's still--	
62.		when she tells people that,	
63.		they pick on her and call her "wannabe"	<u>Shanae establishes Sandra as having difficulty being</u>
64.		cause it don't look like she's Puerto Rican.	<u>accepted as Puerto Rican because she is constructed by her peers as not "looking" Puerto Rican</u>

Transcript 2 provides further evidence of how the theme of personhood was being negotiated. In lines 55-64, Shanae describes tensions around establishing one's multiracial identity as a member of a particular community within the peer network. Shanae raises name-calling ("wannabe") as a salient linguistic practice among adolescents (lines 58 and 63). In discussing what counts to people, she argues that membership in a group is often based on appearance (line 64). Thus, appearance is described as one attribute for negotiating inclusion or exclusion of racial/ethnic group membership. The discourse practice Shanae raises has to do with inclusion or exclusion from community membership and how that has to do with who has the power to define one's racial identity.

In Transcript 3, Shanae discusses additional dimensions that people (teens) use to define members. She suggests that if you are able to talk Spanish (lines 99-102), you are accepted by peers as Puerto Rican even if you are not immediately viewed as "looking it." Thus, Shanae elaborates on language as a boundary similar to appearance in defining community membership (line 100). She compares her experiences with Sandra's (lines 101-102). Notice how Shanae argues for linguistic competence as establishing a way of negotiating community membership. She uses her personal experience (line 99) as a case and supports her claim (line 101) by presenting Sandra's experience as a counter example. Shanae is making an intertextual link as she analyzes not only her experiences as being multiracial, but compares these experiences with how her peers negotiate their multiracial or multiethnic identities.

Transcript 3: Excerpt from 3rd Writing Club Meeting

Three types of markings make visible the social positioning:

- **bold-faced words** emphasize *intertextual processes*,
- *italicized words* highlight *intertextual substance*, and
- underlined words mark *explicit discursive dimensions of personhood*.

Ln #	SPK	Descriptive Analysis	Intertextual Positioning
99.	Shanae	And I talk <i>it</i> ..	Shanae identified <i>linguistic competence as one attribute of cultural competence</i>
100.		So that's why.	Shanae established <i>talk and appearance as aspects of cultural competence</i>
101.		But see, <i>she don't talk it</i> .	Shanae makes a <i>contrastive analysis</i> between her experience and Sandra's. She indicates that Sandra's <i>lack of knowledge of Spanish</i> contributes to peers' <i>assessment</i> of Sandra as not <i>culturally Puerto Rican</i>
102.		<i>She only talks it a little bit</i> .	Shanae assessed Sandra's <i>competence as a speaker of Spanish</i>
103.	Ann	Well, I think <i>it depends on how aware you are</i> , too.	Ann established <i>cultural knowledge as basic to negotiating group membership</i>
104.		of Puerto Rican culture	Puerto Rican culture as
105.		as being a blend of European,	<i>multiracial: European,</i>
106.		of African,	<i>African established as important</i>
107.		and of Indian,	<i>Indian important part of identity</i>
108.		right?	

Transcript 3 can be understood as an example of my intertextual practice as teacher-researcher in establishing literacy practices and personhood. I (the Ann in the transcript) acknowledge the comparison Shanae has made between her experience and Sandra's by responding to the earlier discussion (lines 55- 64) of looks or visual inscription as a basis for negotiating group membership. I suggest the significance of cultural knowledge to the negotiation of community membership (lines 103-108). Having read the text of where the group's conversation is going, I confirm the level of analysis Shanae is generating as appropriate research discourse. I also keep the topic open, rather than letting it close down around traditional views.

My actions can be understood as indicating to students that no simple answer explains various points of view; that is, there is more to consider. From the perspective taken in this analysis, by making an intertextual link to the topic of bicultural competence, I position Shanae as a researcher who has taken up a topic worthy of serious academic inquiry.

One major way that the students took up the opportunities presented to them to analyze dimensions of personhood was through generation of analyses of what teenagers do in their interactions. For example, at the end of Shanae's leading the discussion about her research question, Sandra posed her research question for group discussion: "How does music affect you, and how do you affect music?" The "you" in her question refers, in particular, to young people. The excerpts from the students' writing quoted earlier in this article indicate that the audience to whom they selected to report their findings was teenagers. Analysis of the third writing club meeting indicates that this interest in issues of who has the power to define whom and as what kind of person within the peer group was evident from early in their work as researchers. The three transcripts taken from the third writing club meeting illustrate the jointly produced literacy practices of the writing club and how Shanae and Denise were positioned by me and positioned themselves and each other as researchers, group members, racialized beings, among other roles and relationships. This analysis also shows one way that the activities of the writing club can be understood as having provided the students with an opportunity to examine issues of racial identity associated with discourses about personhood.

Intertextuality as an Everyday Community-Based Literacy Practice

The writing club provided students with opportunities to meet community members who had adapted literacy for the purpose of repositioning themselves and their community in relation to the broader society regarding their racialized identities. As shown in Transcript 4, the students had an opportunity to encounter a set of community-based literacy practices as a resource for academic literacy. The literacy practices they encountered focused their attention on analyzing societal notions about particular communities and their history and culture. Literacy practices in this study came to include language practices that generate a reading of the world, in the Freirian sense (Freire & Macedo, 1995).

Ln. #	SPK	Descriptive Analysis	Intertextual Positioning
19.		as an <i>artist</i>	
20.		and as <i>an African American woman,</i>	Identifies <i>that forms of oppression can overlap</i>
21.		that is my <i>main goal:</i>	Answers question about <i>why she researches</i>
22.		<i>to use my art to eradicate racism</i>	Uses <i>personal experience to address double consciousness and overlapping forms of oppression</i>

It is important to include analysis of a community member's reasons for researching and writing about the community because the students built intertextual links to community artists' and activists' purposes for and practices of researching and writing. Ashton builds these genres through a chain of discursive actions, a model for argument. She creates a picture of intertextuality as personal and public resource: She establishes a goal (lines 1-2; 22), a position to speak from (lines 1-10), and she establishes a problem (line 11). She states that she has elected to address the problem through taking public action as an artist (line 1 & 19). These are processes that were identified and discussed in Sandra's writing earlier in this article. However, central to these intertextual processes for argument that Ashton builds is the intertextual substance of what Ashton is examining in her argument.

Ashton begins by talking about her goals as an artist in the African American and multiracial theater. In beginning this way, Ashton demonstrates for the students how literacy may be used for personal and public goals associated with personhood. The interview with Ashton was similar to other interviews in the sense that the interviewees viewed themselves as writers and researchers who use their art as a vehicle for ending racism. In lines 7-10, Ashton's comment, "What I've learned about myself and . . . how I fit into the scheme of things in America as an American citizen" is an analysis of personal experience that can be taken up by the students. This comment, paired with Ashton's remark that her goal as an artist is to give back what she has learned to her community . . . and to youth of all races (lines 1-6) opens a space for multiracial dialogue about discourses of personhood. One dimension of analyzing personal experience discussed by Ashton is looking at how forms of oppression overlap. This overlap is shown in Ashton's statement "as an African American woman" in line 20 and in her elaboration of what that means to her. Ashton

had earlier talked to the students about the current theater production in which she portrayed Ida B. Wells, whose work as a political activist and writing as a journalist explicitly and inspirationally attacked prevailing discourse practices about the personhood of African Americans (Carby, 1987; Gates & McKay, 1997).

The intertextual processes and substance involved in asserting one's identity and reconstructing discursive practices of personhood are dynamic and fluid, not stable, static or ontological (Shotter & Gergin, 1989). The ongoing struggle of redefining personhood is illustrated by Ashton in her remarks to the students about her work as an artist. The literacy practices used by Ashton oriented the students toward reconstructing discourse practices about personhood by addressing racism as a structural problem located in cultural, linguistic and historical practices. Making intertextual critical discourse analyses about what it means to be an American becomes a way of intervening to counter dominant cultural practices, given DuBois' (1969) discussion of personhood, Willis' (1995) and Street's (1993) discussions of literacy and personhood, Fairclough's (1995) discussion of critical discourse analysis, and what Freire and Macedo (1995) call dialogue: "[T]he sharing of experiences must always be understood within a social praxis that entails both reflection and political action. In short, dialogue as a process of learning and knowing must always involve a political project with the objectives of dismantling oppressive structures and mechanisms prevalent both in education and society" (p. 380).

Demonstrating a New Student Identity as Writer, Researcher, Proud Community Member: Sandra's Writing Conference with Ashton

The excerpt in Transcript 5 was chosen to provide a telling case of the students' writing conferences with Ashton, to whom they sent a book proposal and asked for help in writing their chapters. It reveals the oral production by Ashton of a text written by Sandra. The writing presented in the transcript reflects Sandra's adaptation of the community-based literacy practice of using everyday experience as a resource for reconstructing culture and cultural identity, in this case experiences of race and ethnicity. Much as Flores (1993) describes the process of coming to critical awareness that can be found in the writing of many Puerto Rican writers, there is evidence in Sandra's writing that she has learned about the potential impact of cultural music on

the process of reconstructing discourses about self and other members of the community from assimilationist ones to ones based on cultural pride and political awareness.

In the transcript, Ashton reads aloud a piece of Sandra's writing (which is italicized in the transcript). Sandra produced this piece of writing in response to a writing "exercise" Ashton had given her. In assigning the writing exercise, Ashton had said: "I want you to write your observations or an example of how music can empower people or how it can hurt people. You can use things about sexism or racism, because these can really hurt people. Well, it's a form of communication, whether it's negative or positive." Ashton then turned to me to ask for my ideas about genre. When I suggested a format of progressive disclosure in which Sandra would share her process of coming to awareness about issues of culture, language and power related to music, Ashton grimaced and said, "You mean write an essay." We continued to brainstorm ideas with Sandra about genre and decided on poetry, after considering ballad. When Sandra remarked that it would be a very long poem, Ashton laughed saying, "It's an epic." This exchange among Ashton, Sandra and myself illustrates the significance assigned to genre within the group as the students engaged in their writing processes.

After this discussion, Sandra put her head down on her notebook and wrote her thoughts in narrative form for the next ten minutes or so, while Ashton continued to conference with one individual at a time around the table. When there was a break, Sandra handed her notebook to Ashton. Referring to Sandra's draft, which she was reviewing as she spoke, Ashton said, "This certainly could empower, so you have to use this [in your book]." Sandra had written a poem about a family reunion.

She drew on her knowledge of the data she had collected and the analysis she had generated over three-and-a-half-months of research. In particular she drew from her experience attending a family reunion with Marielis. In addition, Sandra made certain informed decisions as a writer.

Transcript 5: Sandra's Conference with Ashton about Her Writing

Three types of markings make visible the social positioning:
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 ● *Italicized words* highlight *intertextual substance*, and
 ● underlined words mark explicit discursive dimensions of personhood.

Ln. #	SPK	Descriptive Analysis	Intertextual Positioning
5.	IA:	<i>No place for hate . . .</i>	Sandra defining norms for family reunion
6.	Reading	<i>Celebrate.</i>	Sandra establishes tone of event
7.		<i>The music was loud</i>	<i>Common music</i> in background
8.		<i>but no one was dancing.</i>	
9.		<i>Because they were all too busy</i>	Family members share news/stories
10.		<i>catching up on things that had happened.</i>	with <u>each other</u> .
11.		<i>Dancing.</i>	
12.		<i>Then one song came on.</i>	Change in action related to <i>change in music</i> . Foregrounds (what comes to be
13.		[long pause. Ashton points to place in text.]	recognized as) <i>cultural music</i>
14.		Sandra leans forward and marks the paper, saying:]	
15.	SV:	That's supposed to be "and."	
16.	IA:	<i>Then grandma started moving and singing along</i>	Sandra establishes grandmother as affected positively by cultural music
17.		<i>This got their attention</i>	Impact of cultural music on
18.		<i>every last one.</i>	grandmother acknowledged by
19.		<i>They all started laughing</i>	family members
20.		<i>and having a ball.</i>	
21.		<i>That's the best reunion of all.</i>	Establishes importance of cultural music in establishing tone of family solidarity
22.		<i>The song that came on</i>	
23.		<i>was from her homeland.</i>	Establishes grandmother's personal, social relationship to cultural music.
24.		<i>From when she knew the whole band.</i>	
25.		<i>She felt so happy.</i>	Establishes influence of cultural music
26.		<i>So full of life.</i>	on sustaining sense of cultural identity, sense of self.
27.		[Ashton continues reading, but in an inaudible voice.]	
28.	IA:	That's beautiful.	Ashton defines Sandra as a writer
29.	SV:	I know!	Sandra defines self as a writer
30.	IA:	See.	
31.		you did it!	Ashton establishes that Sandra took

32.		[Ashton looks over the writing again.]	up <i>community literacy practice</i> of telling a story based on <i>personal experience</i> to reconstruct, in this case, <i>cultural identity</i>
33.		You did it!	Ashton defines Sandra as successfully conveying an account about how <i>music can empower</i>
34.	DM:	It rhymes a little	<i>DeLayne evaluates the literariness</i>
35.		and it doesn't.	of the writing
36.		[DeLayne punctuates her point with her finger.]	<i>DeLayne defines Sandra as successful writer</i>
37.	IA:	Nice!	
38.	SV:	I'm putting that in my book.	<i>Sandra defines self as published writer</i>

in discussing this transcript, I provide two analyses. The first discusses Ashton and her literacy practices. The second focuses on the literacy practices Sandra used to create the text she wrote. As Ashton reads, she is doing more than performing the text. She is engaging the students in learning about genre practices. For example, Ashton puts in line breaks that were not in Sandra's text. These line breaks are represented by separate lines in the transcript. In adding these line breaks as she reads the text, Ashton makes visible the poetic literacy practice of representing the ebb and flow of poetry through the rhythm of language. In essence, Ashton transforms Sandra's narrative text to poetic form, illustrating to the students through her talk a genre form not used when Sandra wrote it.

Having discussed what Ashton was accomplishing through her performance of Sandra's text, I want to revisit Sandra's text to see what social positioning Sandra was establishing through the way she constructed her text. Sandra positions what we later come to recognize must be commercial music in the background (lines 7-8), foregrounds the tone of the event, and notes the relatives' verbal communication with each other ("they were all too busy catching up on things that had happened."). She makes a shift at the situational level of the text in line 12 ("Then one song came on."), when music becomes foregrounded as the grandmother begins to improvise and perform. Sandra creates in her text a shift in people's attention and key (line 19). She describes the song as special to the grandmother in lines 22-24 ("The song that came . . . from her homeland. From when she knew the whole band.") and situates the meaning of the music in the grandmother's personal history, prior to emigration. Sandra positions personal and social relationships as central to the interaction within the scene. For example, she implies that the

grandmother's friendship with band members (line 24) influenced the grandmother's reaction to the music. Additionally, Sandra positions the relatives' responses to the grandmother's emotional reaction to the song, to her happiness and zest (lines 25-26) through her words, "They all started laughing and having a ball" (lines 19-20). Sandra's text can be understood as highlighting the importance of the family members' interactions around the "song that came from her homeland" to the shift in tone of the event (line 21, "That's the best reunion of all."). To compose this piece, Sandra had to draw on the body of data from her fieldwork to create what VanMannen (1988) might describe as an impressionistic tale about how music can affect the way we think and feel about people. In the brief excerpt presented above, Sandra positions herself and is positioned within the group as a successful researcher and writer because she reexamined a personal experience to illustrate how music can empower someone.

Sandra's exclamation, "I'm going to put that in my book!", reveals a new-found sense of identity as a writer. She wrote in the introduction to her book chapter, "I am so excited. Who would ever think of me writing a book?" Sandra surprised herself and felt she surprised her teachers, peers and family through taking up the identity of a published writer. Ashton's "You did it!" expresses her delight that Sandra was able to write about the joyous dancing at a family reunion as an example of how cultural music can be a means to reconstruct cultural identity. However, Sandra's comment can be understood as underscoring the discourse practices of personhood associated with being a low track student ("Who would ever think of me writing a book?"). I argue that it was the shift at the level of personhood of the discursive practices established within the writing club that can be understood, from the perspective taken in this article, as accounting for the shift in students' identities as writers and as people who could talk and write about their racial and ethnic identities and related issues of culture, language and power. I also argue that, to enhance significantly the literacy learning opportunities of students of color, a shift at the level of personhood in educational discourse practices at the sociocultural level is required.

Interrelationships Among Personhood, Literacy Practices and Intertextuality

This article represents an attempt to theorize what the notions of personhood and intertextuality contribute to our conception of literacy teaching and learning. To do so, I have provided definitions of key terms and a review of related literature from literacy studies, critical discourse analysis and multicultural education. I have crafted and applied an analytical framework for understanding interrelationships among these constructs. I have illustrated how discourses about personhood were investigated, along various dimensions of history, music, racial and ethnic identity and womanhood, in the literacy practices of a school-based writing club. In the writing club, students were positioned by myself and by community members they interviewed, as having academic ability, as members of communities with linguistic and literary resources and with valued educational and literacy agendas. The analysis of student writing and transcript segments of interactions from two writing club meetings indicates ways students were socialized to investigate dominant and subordinate discourses about dimensions of personhood.

Attention to how personhood was being defined provided a means for restructuring literacy teaching and learning in ways that resulted in students gaining access to valued educational opportunities. Identities as capable writers, researchers and literacy learners were not ones the students had achieved in their regular educational experiences. The shifts in students' identities that occurred during their participation in the writing club can be understood as related to the intertextual links at the level of personhood made in the framing of the writing club and between the students' literacy agenda and those of community artists and activists. As discussed earlier, these students were assigned to the lowest academic track and had not previously had the opportunity to do elaborative writing in school. The analyses presented in this article illustrate how two students used the tasks, goals and opportunities presented to them through the writing club to construct, with me as teacher-researcher and with community members, multiple positions as writers and researchers. Denise Yothers and Sandra Verne took up the opportunity to examine definitions and assumptions of literacy practices through their inquiry into the writing and research methods and purposes of local artists and activists. In doing so, the students saw how local community members adapted literacy to their own agendas, which can be understood as involving the analysis of views of personhood. All students in the writing club also explored issues of personhood from the perspectives of race and racism, gender and sexism.

Beyond the data drawn upon in this article, a case study of each student's writing revealed unique elements related, in part, to the research question she examined. DeLayne used her writing to reform social relationships in a family that had experienced intergenerational alcoholism. As she accessed in school the linguistic and literacy practices of her home and local community, practices that are used by many African American writers (see Egan-Robertson, in press, for a detailed account), DeLayne repositioned herself as a writer across the contexts of the writing club, and her school, family and community. Marielis took up the literacy practices of the writing club to make a compelling argument to teenagers to join youth groups, like the church group she belonged to, instead of hanging out on the streets. In doing so, she used her writing to address adolescent alienation. She also positioned adults as her audience, advocating that a priority be placed on finding more jobs for youth and opening more community-based youth groups. Thus, her analysis can be understood as highlighting the need to change the sociocultural context as a requisite part of addressing adolescent alienation. Denise wrote a play that Ashton told her would be useful to include in anti-racism workshops for young people. Thus, she reconstructed her notions about issues of race and racism, analyzing several differences between these two concerns.

In this article, I have illustrated how literacy practices contributed to the construction of personhood for the students in the writing club, and that as teachers and students interacted during literacy activities, they formulated and reformulated discourses about personhood, particularly aspects related to issues of race and racism. The writing club can be understood as a site of interaction in which a critical awareness about issues of culture, language and power were explored. The analyses across time and events illustrate ways in which literacy practices and personhood were intimately related in the writing club. I briefly described a set of literacy practices in a writing club to illustrate how literacy practices can be understood as articulating ideological notions of the person and as constructing opportunities for exploring and taking up new positions as readers and writers. I have also illustrated that one way to address and transform discourse practices about personhood is through socially constructing intertextual practices. That is, as students participated in bringing texts of their lives and communities together for the purpose of examining issues of personhood that were of concern to them, they adapted literacy practices of local artists and activists and their inquiry led to new insights about themselves, their relationships to the community and society, and how culture, language and power relationships

of the wider societal context, if the kinds of opportunities afforded the students in critical literacy projects are to become widely available in schools.

While my data come from a small group of adolescent women, my theoretical point is that this process is not unique to this group. Rather, the construction of school literacy practices can be understood as always involving issues of personhood and community. Fairclough (1989) writes: "Discourses and the texts which occur within them have histories, they belong to historical series, and the interpretation of intertextual context is a matter of deciding which series a text belongs to, and therefore can be taken as common ground for participants, or presupposed" (p. 152). This quote provides an insightful frame for elaborating on the significance of the intertextual juxtapositions I made as researcher and in my role as teacher of the writing club. The elaboration of the intertextual juxtapositions I made in these multiple roles is theoretically important because it provides a "macro" explanation for the curricular and community discourses that shaped the take up of discourses within the writing club. If literary texts and the texts students compose are primarily about people, and are one key way individuals are enculturated to views about people, the language arts (across the) curriculum are an important vehicle for promoting particular discourse practices about what a person is and what attributes and rights various people are constructed as having. Thus, the decisions teachers make in regard to the intertextual juxtapositions they propose in their educational discourse are critically important.

The analytical framework presented in this article illustrates that it is important to understand how literacy develops not just in students' encounters with print but also in their interactions with others about texts, and that a key part of literacy is about personhood. The community artists and activists the students interviewed argued the need for addressing issues of race and racism associated with schooling as requisite to improving the educational outcomes for students of color. Irma Ashton shared the way she uses her art as a vehicle for "dismantling racism" and her experiences as an African American woman as a basis for deconstructing dominant discourses about personhood based on race. This study, therefore, raises a set of questions for further research. Among the questions that the construct of personhood generates for researchers and educators interested in literacy education are: How does a social institution such as a school construct discursive practices about what it means to be a person? How are competing discourses about personhood constructed through the everyday literacy practices in classrooms and schools? How can instructional practices be developed to enable students to see these

discourses as shaping their own views of self, of role, social and power relationships, of others? How can intertextual links be made between local, community-based literacy practices used by artists and activists to address issues of racism and school-based literacy teaching and learning practices? And finally, what roles do literacy practices and intertextuality play in shaping and reshaping discursive practices about personhood? These questions need to be examined in other educational contexts to develop a theoretical framework for understanding relationships among personhood, literacy practices and intertextuality.

ENDNOTES

1. I elaborate elsewhere (Egan-Robertson, in press) on the distinction among the concepts of identity, subjectivities and personhood. Briefly, the term *identity* often focuses attention on an individual's sense of self, whereas *personhood* focuses attention on the attitudes and assumptions about people embedded within the way a culture organizes itself through its discourse practices (Geertz, 1979; Shotter & Gergen, 1989), in institutions such as schools. Thus, the construct of personhood foregrounds concern with the range of possible identities available for an individual to take up. I argue that to take up a non-dominant identity involves a struggle of personhood. I use the term personhood in ways similar to some uses of the term *subjectivities* (see Luke, 1996 on subjectivities; see also Moje, in press). I prefer the term personhood/peoplehood (DuBois, 1969; West, 1995) because of its critical historical roots in the ongoing national conversation about citizenship: e.g., Who gets to count as a person with what kinds of rights in the United States in various eras and situations? The term subjectivities often implies a theoretical perspective that foregrounds attention to hegemonic discourses about personhood. My interest is on the dialectical relationship between dominant and subordinate discourses (e.g., Carby, 1987; Flores, 1994) as these relate to dialogic educational and classroom discourse practices (e.g., Freire & Macedo, 1995; Lankshear, 1997; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Walsh, 1991).
2. Nystrand, Gamoran and Carbonara (in press) provide an insightful metaphor of an ecological niche to describe the context in which students' writing develops. A niche influences the opportunities for discourse constructed in a particular classroom.
3. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that researchers need to build on the landmark work of scholars such as DuBois (1969) and use race as a theoretical lens or analytical tool in educational research. I use the term *personhood* to highlight the intersection of a myriad of complex sociological factors (e.g., race, class, gender). Ladson-Billings and Tate recognize this intersection while making a compelling argument for the development of "theoretical frameworks that allow for an expansive examination of race" (Tate, 1996). My intent in using the theoretical construct of personhood is to take up this challenge as I investigate issues of race and racism, and gender and sexism that are involved in learning to read and write in school.
4. I was interested in conducting a students-as-ethnographers project to build theoretically on the landmark work of Heath (1983) in reconceptualizing language arts teaching and learning around a base of ethnographic and sociolinguistic inquiry (cf. Heath, 1982, see also Egan-Robertson & Bloome, 1997; Fairclough, 1992; Foster, 1992; Moll, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1993; Stock, 1995). For related scholarship on engaging learners as researchers, see Freire (1972), Lee (1993) and Oldfather & Dahl (1994).

5. See Cazden, et al. (1996) on multiliteracies and literacy education; see Applebee (1996) on the influence of teachers' disciplinary roots in shaping curriculum.

6. The reader may be interested in a little more background on the formation of the writing club: The language arts teacher and I had originally hoped to engage students as researchers of culture and language in her English classes. However, my schedule permitted me to be in the school three hours/day, from 12 - 3 p.m. Given that the school schedule was built on a six day rotation, I was not able to observe in any one class often enough to establish continuity for such an instructional intervention. The teacher suggested the alternative plan of my forming a writing club during an activity period. I invited a group of 18 students (nine boys and nine girls) to join the club. Six girls accepted the offer and participated in the club during most of the spring term. The writing club began near the start of the second half of the academic year and continued through the end of the school year. Four of the girls saw the project through the publication phase. The two who left to attend to other matters in their lives came to the publication party and were cited in the book as part of the group. My sense is that no boys joined the group because they did not recognize me as a potential resource to them.

7. The names of all the adults as well as students are pseudonyms.

8. The line breaks in the transcripts were constructed based on an analysis of the contextualization cues (that is, based on pause structure, rising and falling intonation, etc.) used by various speakers. This type of descriptive analysis of a transcript is based on Green & Wallat (1984). It grows out of the sociolinguistic notion that people signal meaning through more than the words they speak.

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