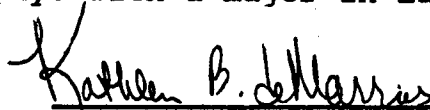
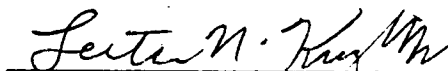


To the Graduate Council:

We are submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sally M. Oran entitled "Missed Messages: Interruptions to Instructional Concepts in a Bicultural Fifth Grade Classroom." We have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.



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MISSED MESSAGES:
INTERRUPTIONS TO INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXTS
IN A BICULTURAL FIFTH GRADE CLASSROOM

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sally M. Oran

August, 1995

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory
of my earliest language teachers, my parents

E. Ralph Massey and Hallie Bradner Massey

and

in honor of my latest language teachers,

the children of

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my friend, Sandra Thorne-Brown, for her unfailing confidence in me, her joyful friendship, and her generous insights during the course of my research. With her are teachers who have shared their friendship and encouraged me to find answers to difficulties teachers encounter in urban schools, my friends Sue Biggerstaff, Martha Cooke, Ellie Murphy-Racey, and Geraldine Taylor. I would especially like to thank Bunnie McCanelley, my interpreter in the African American community, who kept me learning and laughing when I was a new "immigrant" and totally confused. Special thanks goes to the students and interns in the Urban/Multicultural Teacher Education Program at the University of Tennessee for giving me plenty of opportunities to rethink my language development and reading education lessons so as to gently open windows in our cultural sanctuaries.

I am grateful to my doctoral committee for their assistance and encouragement in this research and in all of my studies. Many thanks to Dr. J. Estill Alexander for his efforts at the University of Tennessee Reading Center, and for his willingness to hire me to work there. Special thanks to Dr. Bethany Dumas for demonstrating what an engaged,

active learner looks like and for challenging me to continue my learning about linguistics. A sincere thank you to Dr. Lester N. Knight, who patiently answered my first questions about language variations in the classroom and encouraged me to continue my inquiry. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais for her unique support. She invited me to be a co-teacher and co-researcher with her, effectively teaching me the trust, hard work, and rewards of collaboration. She is my teacher and colleague, but best of all, she is my friend.

Finally, I want to thank my son, Thomas Ralph Evans, for his encouragement and many sacrifices during my graduate studies. Without his refreshing humor, love, and constant support, this research would have been impossible.

Abstract

Missed Messages: Interruptions to the Instructional Contexts in a Bicultural Fifth Grade Classroom

This is an ethnographic study in which I describe the communications in an urban classroom of predominantly African American students and their white female teacher. Research in urban schools, language variations and socialization, culturally congruent instruction, and minority students' academic achievement provide the framework for this study. I focused on six instructional contexts the students and teacher used to construct understanding about the curriculum. I used participant observation, audiotaping, and informal interviews during the school day to collect data about communications between the participants. The teacher encouraged the students to voice their ideas and thoughts about the curriculum in authentic, conversational language. Through an inductive analysis of the data, I found three categories of interruptions -- intrusions, distractions, and confusions -- that impact instructional contexts so that communication is halted, halted briefly, or changed. I describe the types, directions, and outcomes of these interruptions as well as their rates of occurrence in each instructional context. An analysis of the actual words which confused the participants provides data for understanding why

the students and teacher had difficulty understanding one another, or failed to communicate altogether. I also describe students who were regular interrupters and who displayed different interruption styles, and chains of interruptions that compounded the effects of single interruptions. A model is provided to illustrate the relationships between the interruptions and the instructional contexts, with particular emphasis on direct instruction and class discussion. I offer implications for classroom practice, teacher education, and research.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Nation's Changing Demographics

The painful history of desegregation in American public schools coupled with complex socioeconomic and mobility trends since the 1970's have resulted in inner city neighborhoods composed mainly of poor minority populations. Kretovics (1994) recites a litany of minority populations filling our large cities: Washington, DC, 66% black; Detroit, 76% black; Atlanta, 71%, black; New York City, 18% Hispanic, 29% black; San Antonio, 56% Hispanic, total minority, 64%; El Paso, 69% Hispanic, total minority 74%. These minority populations represent the poor in our society. As of "1990, 32% of blacks and 28% of Hispanic families lived below the poverty line, while the same was true of only 12% of Asians and 11% of Caucasian families " (Kretovics, 1994, p. 44). Termed the *underclass* by Wilson, these populations are described as "a heterogeneous grouping of inner-city families and individuals whose behavior contrasts sharply with that of mainstream America" (Wilson, 1987, p. 7). From these families stream the children who attend inner-city schools. Researchers deMarrais and LeCompte (1995) paint a somber

picture of what life is like for many school aged children in the inner-city:

Inner-city children may be even more isolated [than their suburban peers]. In the housing projects, shelters for the homeless, and blighted neighborhoods where many urban children live, a visit to friends next door or even down the hall may lead to an encounter with drug-related violence. Children may find it difficult to participate in any school related activities before or after school, since most must come and go in accordance with a parent's schedule, timing of the bus route, or car pool. This constraint further reduces the capacity of the school to be of central importance to their lives and leaves them subject to the same social isolation afflicting urban adults. Under these conditions, the peer group's attitudes and behaviors are influenced primarily by street life and the media. (p.98)

A description of the teaching force in inner-city schools is a microcosm of the sharp contrast between inner-city populations and mainstream society. Teachers everywhere are most often white, middle class females (Gay, 1993; Grant, 1994). In 1990, black teachers made up only 11% of all classroom teachers in the United States, down from 13% in 1982 (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). Other factors affect the numbers of minority teachers available for classroom positions. Black teachers lose many jobs as predominantly black schools are closed or consolidated with white schools to effect desegregation. Desegregation plans, often beginning with faculty desegregation, disperse black teachers in black urban schools to integrate white faculties in the suburbs. More lucrative job opportunities available to minorities as a result of non-discriminatory hiring practices

mean that many black educators choose fields other than education (Irvine, 1988). Consequently, faculties which are most often white deliver instruction to predominantly minority populations in urban settings. Unlike suburban or rural schools, many urban school faculties do not reflect a mix of educators who live in the neighborhood, know the families well, or invest in the community in daily transactions (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995).

Educational concerns in settings where mainstream white teachers teach in predominantly minority urban classrooms often reflect the continued issue of poor academic performance by minority students, particularly blacks, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Minority achievement has been a topic of research and national concern for decades. An important strand in this research over the years has been the concept of home to school incompatibility experienced by minority students in American schools. Cultural dissonance is often played out in the languages used by members of the school community. Extensive research about various dialects of American English (Gay and Abrahams, 1972; Heath, 1983; Labov, 1969), differences in cognitive style (Cohen, 1969; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ramirez and Castenada, 1974), and the various ways different cultures actually use language (Au and Mason, 1981; Cazden, John, and Hymes, 1972; Heath, 1983) has focused attention on home to school incompatibility and

prompted some educators to design curricula and use pedagogy in culturally sensitive ways.

This study will examine communication events in one bicultural, inner-city, fifth grade classroom and will describe how those events shape daily instruction. A review of the literature will include the most recent research about communication in such settings and will suggest implications for instruction and further research. The questions which guide the literature review and this study are:

1. What are the daily classroom expectations and how are these communicated by the teacher and understood by the students?
2. What communication patterns do students use to participate in and understand instruction?
3. What types of miscommunications occur in this classroom?
4. What is the relationship between the communication events and the classroom learning environment?

African Americans and Public Schooling

In order to understand any events in classrooms with African American students, it is necessary to review the history of desegregation in this country. It is this historical context which helps to explain the wide variations

in desegregation success between communities and the particular tensions in highly segregated urban schools. Desegregation, however, is only one component of larger societal issues dealing with the status of minority populations in America and should be viewed as such throughout this discussion.

The Supreme Court decision of 1954, in Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), brought an end to the government sanction of "separate but equal" schools. The interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, that separate facilities for blacks and whites could exist if they were equal, had been established in the Court's 1895 decision in Plessy vs. Ferguson and had held throughout the intervening years. The evidence that had moved the 1954 Court to rule against "separate but equal" was remarkable. For the first time in the Court's history, social science evidence was introduced and convinced the court that segregation caused psychological damage to blacks. Young black children demonstrated deeply ingrained feelings of inferiority as a result of a segregated society, and these feelings of inferiority affected their behaviors (Clark, footnote 11 in Brown v. Board). These behaviors, termed "self-fulfilling prophecy" by Robert K. Merton in 1948 to mean debilitating circumstances brought on by an individual's acting on a faulty definition of circumstances, made it clear to the

Court that segregated schools were inherently unequal (Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483, 1954).

School desegregation did not immediately follow the 1954 Supreme Court decision. It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that the federal government actually had an effective means for bringing about desegregation in the nation's schools. Specifically, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act stated that no person could be denied the benefits of any institution receiving federal funds. An institution denying persons those benefits on the basis of discriminatory practices would lose federal funds. Title VI empowered the Office of Education to become the watchdog of desegregation in educational institutions. All federal agencies were ordered to draw up guidelines to insure funding only to institutions which upheld nondiscriminatory practices. Extra leverage was given to encourage schools to follow those guidelines as more and more federal dollars poured from the federal treasury to implement the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was particularly significant. It provided over three fourths of the total funds first designated by the entire Act for educational programs specifically designed to meet the needs of educationally deprived children. The War on Poverty had begun and school desegregation had to follow (Spring, 1994).

Even these significant pressures on school systems were not enough to effect desegregation over the long haul. It is true that state laws prohibiting integration have been abolished. It is also true that court ordered busing effected desegregation to a greater or lesser degree in many communities, as did the establishment of magnet schools. The concept of school choice, a political hot potato for a number of years, is as yet unproved for effecting desegregation. In Des Moines, Iowa, in the early 1990s, the results of legislation to encourage school desegregation pointed up the unpredictability of outcomes when parents are given a choice as to where to send their children to school. The Iowa legislature acted in good faith that minority and poor inner-city parents would send their children to superior schools in the suburbs if given a choice. Instead, these parents did not exercise their right to choose and white parents did, resulting in an even higher concentration of minority students in inner-city schools than before the "choice" legislation (Spring, 1994).

In short, neither Supreme Court rulings nor federally funded mandates have resulted in school communities which are consistently integrated and offer equal educational opportunity to students of all races or ethnic groups. Old patterns of segregation yet remain in many urban centers. In communities where desegregation has been attempted, frustrating patterns of resegregation have occurred giving

credence to the notion that desegregation is never a once for always proposition.

Social Class and Its Relation to Urban Education

Minority communities which once offered a network of extended family members and role models all along the socioeconomic ladder have been largely abandoned by middle class blacks. In their wake are left the poorest of the poor, for whom education holds little promise. Maeroff (1994) states, "The urban public schools, bequeathed to the impoverished, have an almost eerie aura about them, as though they were situated in one of the "homelands" to which blacks in South Africa have been confined. Despair reigns supreme among the young" (in Kretovics and Nussel, 1994, p. 34). Freire and Macedo (1987) state that, in fact, an ideological Third World exists within the economically developed First World of mainstream American society. The geographical locale of this Third World is the American inner cities and impoverished rural areas (Freire and Macedo, 1987). One of the saddest consequences of the isolation experienced by many minority students is that they have no idea how far behind they actually are academically. Measuring themselves only by peers who suffer the same dire circumstances, these minority

students are likely to assess their academic achievement as about average (Maeroff, 1988, p.35).

As communities become resegregated, funding inequities at state and local levels become more and more apparent. Disparities in the tax bases for affluent communities compared with impoverished communities result in wide differences in school funding between districts even in close proximity. Coupled with the strong American tradition of support, both monetary and otherwise, for neighborhood schools, these funding inequities assure that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer (Kozol, 1991).

It is into these complex, urban settings that white, middle class teachers arrive, virtual immigrants in foreign territory. The cultural isolation of the white community from poor minority neighborhoods causes a variety of difficulties. White teachers tend to have low expectations for minority students and are often unaware of the high academic expectations of the students and their families. Administrators often place new, inexperienced teachers in minority schools (Spring, 1991). With little preparation for the cultural differences they will have to deal with white teachers are simply assigned to inner-city schools (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). At worst these circumstances evoke anger, hostility, and resistance from both the teachers and their students. At best teachers and students struggle daily to forge the understanding necessary to live with one another

in classrooms where trust is often tenuous and communication is extremely complex.

Assumptions Basic to the Study

There are several assumptions which were important to the initiation of my study. These assumptions have shaped my thinking about how to begin to look at the interactions of elementary students with their teachers. An understanding of the context of those interactions lies within the bounds of knowledge informed by sociolinguistic theory, symbolic interactionism, and the notions of cultural congruency and communicative competence in educational settings.

Sociolinguistic theory recognizes the influence of social contexts on the use of language. As the contexts and purposes for our communication change, our language varies. Every individual has a repertoire of language variations to use depending on the context in which communication occurs. Communication becomes more complex and language variations more diverse as influences on the contexts increase in complexity. The point here is that spoken language bears not only semantic information, but information about differences in the cultural background and social status of speakers. These differences affect the context of communicative acts and provide feedback for altering language usage. In fact,

two English speakers may juggle differences in social status, cultural models, role expectations, phonology, language style, and meaning as they struggle to communicate using their own variations of English. When motivation to create understanding is high, speakers vary their use of language in order to understand and be understood. With all of these influences on language use, it is easy to see how complex contexts can cause misunderstanding, frustration, and withdrawal (Trueba, 1989).

Sociolinguists have studied the language variations used by people in various speech communities and the social contexts that precipitate those variations. Speech communities are heterogeneous groups, but their members share an understanding of the form, use, and interpretation of their language variation. Such language variations are called dialects. Dialects count as languages and have been shown to possess rules which govern morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology (Trudgill, 1994).

In our country, ethnicity and social class are significant influences on the use of language variation. Of particular importance to this study is the work done by William Labov to define the characteristics of Black English or Black English Vernacular. Patterns have been identified in Black English which distinguish it from other varieties of English dialects (Bonvillain, 1993). Labov's work to understand the language usage of adolescent black males in

Harlem revealed the impact of the boys' social awareness on their use of language. Their language style and willingness to speak was influenced by how they viewed their social status in the communicative event. When interacting with their peers during typical events such as casual conversation or play, the boys liberally used their language in spontaneous and creative ways. Their responses to researchers during formal interviews however, were brief and hesitant. Labov notes that the boys employed devices in socially asymmetrical situations to avoid saying anything that might be held against them (Labov, 1972). In my study of a fifth grade classroom where most of the students used Black English Vernacular and the white teacher used virtually none, it was critical to view their communication events from this sociolinguistic perspective.

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective which focuses on the delicate construction of meaning between communicators . The constructed meaning depends on the ability of the participants to negotiate communication. With this perspective we are drawn away from the differences that the participants bring to the communication event and only acknowledge in passing the context of the communication. Instead, we look carefully at what participants actually do to accomplish shared understanding through a communicative event and thereby construct reality. The perceptions of meaning during the event and the willingness and ability of

each speaker to communicate with the other participants is of primary importance. Symbolic interactionism requires active and reflective participation and interpretation by communicators to construct meaning (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993).

Elementary classrooms are language laboratories. Students and teachers use a variety of language channels to construct meaning. Each day's construction of meaning in social contexts sets the frame for the next day's construction of meaning. Since children's language development is one of the primary concerns of elementary teachers, it is critical that we examine the ways classroom members offer their individual communication symbols to construct meaning with their teacher and with their peers. How participants negotiate or halt the negotiation of meaning in daily social interactions will shed light on whether the classroom language arena supports or discourages children's language development.

A prerequisite that can positively affect the successful negotiation of constructed meaning is the level of cultural congruency participants bring to communication events. Communicators from different cultural backgrounds often misunderstand one another and fail to communicate precisely because their efforts are governed by different cultural expectations of speech and language. People of different cultural backgrounds who are consistently required to

communicate can improve their shared construction of meaning over time. Infrequent, limited, or routinized communications between different cultural groups often lead to miscommunications, misunderstandings, and negative stereotypes (Bonvillain, 1993).

Sociolinguistic theory has been extended in the last two decades to examine the discontinuities in language socialization across cultures. These examinations have stimulated the notion of cultural congruency to support ways to bridge cultural differences in educational settings. One of the most notable examples of classroom research incorporating the idea of cultural congruency into instructional practices is the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii. Researchers specifically developed methods of teaching reading which incorporated the Native Hawaiian style of collaborative storytelling called the "talk story." Reading achievement by Hawaiian students increased when instruction incorporated this method, a culturally congruent way in which the students had been socialized to learn language (Au and Mason, 1981).

Ethnographic studies of the cultural variations in the way children may be taught to use language have informed culturally congruent instruction in other communities as well. Heath's extensive study of the differences in language socialization between three communities in the Carolina textile belt during the 1970s is particularly significant.

Heath identified differences in narrative style as well as the use of questions in two non mainstream communities. These differences directly conflicted with instructional practices in the elementary schools where mainstream language styles were used. The development of culturally congruent instructional practices which allowed non mainstream children to use their own language style and receive additional help in learning the mainstream style resulted in increased academic achievement (Heath, 1983).

Perhaps the most complex notion I had to consider as I embarked on my study was the notion of communicative competence. Hymes used the term "communicative competence" to broaden the notion of linguistic competence previously described by Chomsky. Chomsky used the term linguistic competence to mean "the ability to produce and understand phonologically, grammatically, and semantically correct sentences" (Mehan, 1979, p.130). Hymes used communicative competence to mean the general ability to speak a particular language appropriately in any variety of social situations. Communicative competence runs head on into communicative norms in elementary classrooms, particularly classrooms where students use language variations. In other words, a black student may have gained communicative competence in Black English Vernacular and be judged communicatively incompetent in classrooms where this variation is disallowed. Mehan (1979) presents the even broader notion of interactional

competence in the classroom to more fully define what communicative competence really means for students. In his words:

To be successful in the classroom, students not only must know the content of academic subjects, they must learn the appropriate form in which to cast their academic knowledge. That is, competent membership in the classroom community involves employing interactional skills and abilities in the display of academic knowledge. They must know with whom, when, and where, they can speak and act, and they must provide the speech and behavior that are appropriate for a given classroom situation. Students must also be able to relate behavior, both academic and social, to varying classroom situations by interpreting implicit classroom rules. (p. 133)

In classrooms where mainstream dialect is the standard and language variations are disallowed, misunderstood, or ignored, it becomes difficult indeed for students who use those variations to gain interactional competence in the classroom. Giroux offers the term "border pedagogy" to explain how students enable their own success in such classrooms. Border pedagogy alludes to those ways students must skillfully cross and negotiate the cultural and social boundaries erected around difference and power in our society (Giroux, 1988). For minority students who speak a nonstandard variation of English, such border crossings are not without risk. In American public schools however, academic success leaves little choice.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the contexts of daily life in a fifth grade bicultural classroom and the communications that occur there. In elementary classrooms particularly, instruction is interwoven throughout daily verbal and nonverbal interactions. Many elementary teachers work to construct environments where learning occurs naturally in everyday classroom talk. Their aim is to create spaces where students are accepted and valued as contributing members in their classroom learning communities. It is when students experience misunderstandings, miscommunications, prejudice, or rejection because of culture, language, or other perceived differences that an effective classroom environment cannot be established and the educational achievement of students is likely to suffer (Crawford, 1993; Foster 1992; Garnica 1981; Gumperz, 1981; Linney and Seidman 1989; McDermott 1974).

The literature review presented here is designed to give an overview of the research about instructional settings where minority students are taught by members of the mainstream culture. I will explore research about language

variation, language socialization, school failure in minority populations, culturally congruent instruction, and current issues in urban school environments which helps to inform this study.

Issues of academic achievement for minority populations and the problems of urban schools are central to this study. Desegregation policies as well as urban renewal and school consolidation had affected the site where I chose to do my research and standardized achievement tests scores qualified the entire school for Chapter I services. I will limit my review of the research to the decades after the Supreme Court decision of 1954 in Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) in order to focus on the context of an urban school with a majority of African American students taught by white teachers as a consequence of desegregation. I will begin with a description of the sociopolitical contexts of educational research during this time, and then examine the research of scholars from a variety of other disciplines who shed light on minority school failure and classroom communication between minority students and white teachers. Next, I will present research on culturally congruent instruction in minority classrooms and finally, I will present research which evidences success in those classrooms.

Urban schools have gained so much attention in the current media that it may be difficult to realize that urban educational environments have a history of concern that dates

to the beginning of mass public schooling in this country. Although urban centers have changed over time, concerns about adequate education for poor, minority populations and school systems responsive to their needs are issues even today. Weiner (1993) characterizes today's urban school systems as places where bureaucratic regulations and inadequate resources are constant obstacles to effective instruction and healthy relationships between teachers and students. She states that high truency and drop-out rates, overcrowded classrooms and overloaded teachers make consistent, caring instruction nearly impossible.

Research which seeks to remedy these difficulties often blurs the characteristics of school settings and the academic characteristics of the students. For this reason I will define terminology used throughout this study to describe student populations, educational sites, and academic abilities. I will clarify ways the terms apply in the research I cite and in my own study as well.

Terms Used to Describe School Populations and Sites

"Mainstream" is a term used to describe members of the dominant, European American culture. Although European Americans are commonly referred to as "white" in American culture, the term European American owns an ethnic heritage as well as a skin color. In this study, which focuses more

on ethnic minorities than European Americans, the term mainstream is used to identify the dominant or majority culture in contrast to a minority culture.

The terms "minority" and "ethnic minority" are used interchangeably in this study. Ethnic minority refers to populations with fewer numbers compared with the majority culture, and with other characteristics that differ too. In an effort to provide a useful definition for social science research, Dworkin and Dworkin list four conditions of minority statuses. These apply in the research I cite and my own study: "(a) identifiability; (b) differential power; (c) differential and perjorative treatment; and (d) group awareness " (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995, p. 224). An example of an ethnic minority central to this study is the population of African Americans or blacks. Those two terms are used synonymously in this study to identify Americans of African descent. I realize that the term African American excludes blacks of Haitian descent and therefore is a limited term. There seems to be, however, no better term currently used in American society, and the students in my study are comfortable with both African American and black, and do not identify with Haitian ancestry.

In addition to these terms describing populations, there are several terms which are used to describe school sites or places where ethnic minorities are likely to reside. One such term, "urban", simply refers to areas within city

limits. Urban areas are usually densely populated and may include apartments and high rise housing. Although urban merely denotes city as contrasted with rural or suburban, it has come to have negative connotations in some contexts. Negative connotations were first applied to the term "inner city," used to describe the innermost zone of urban dwellings and those most likely to include the oldest parts of the city. Consequently, inner city areas may be run down and in need of repair, may be the target of urban renewal programs to resettle heavily populated areas or rezone poorly maintained districts, and may also suffer from high rates of crime and unemployment.

There is another set of terms which are frequently used in research associated with ethnic minority or poor students. These are terms which have been used in educational settings to describe ethnic minority students with poor academic achievement. "Culturally deprived" was a term used in the early 1960s as federal legislation focused on remedying perceived deficits of poor minority children. As we shall see in the research presented here, this term was challenged by anthropologists and anthropologists of education. The nomenclature describing minority students who did poorly in school changed to "educationally disadvantaged", a term which placed less blame on children and more on unequal educational opportunities for them. Another term to describe these students followed in the 1980s, and labeled previously

educationally disadvantaged children as "at risk", meaning they were at risk for not acquiring the skills needed to function as working members of society. All of these terms tended to stigmatize and label students because of their differences and society's failure to provide equal educational opportunity to them.

Urban School Issues and Funding

Urban school research in the decade of the 1960s came on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s which had successfully focused attention on the educational needs of minority students. The federal government and President Lyndon B. Johnson advocated a "War on Poverty" and passed massive legislation aimed at ending poverty in this country. Lack of education was seen as one of a number of social factors which maintained a cycle of poverty. Those with little education could not qualify for jobs which paid higher wages and enabled them to acquire adequate housing, medical services, and education for their children. The War on Poverty generated a belief in a culture of poverty that could be fought against and eliminated (Spring, 1994).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) increased federal funds to local school districts for a variety of special programs to increase education among those living in poverty. Job training, minority education,

bilingual education, and many other programs were begun at this time. The 1965 ESEA also gave real leverage to the desegregation clause of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Now those school systems which did not comply with desegregation guidelines could be denied funds granted under the 1965 ESEA.

Perhaps the most significant educational program for poor minority children begun during the 1960s was the Head Start Program. Head Start, a preschool program designed to give children viewed as culturally disadvantaged with respect to learning opportunities a "head start" in school, made solid gains during the late 1960s. The program incorporated nutrition and health education for the families of the children enrolled and thus significantly decreased the incidence of infant mortality and youth malnutrition (Kozol 1994). Research showed that Head Start students demonstrated immediate positive gains on tests of intellectual ability and social competence. Unfortunately, in repeated tests of Head Start students during their first years of public schooling, researchers found the positive impact declined over time. Longitudinal studies indicated no positive effect of Head Start participation on reducing the incidence of teen pregnancies, delinquency, welfare use, or unemployment (Haskins, 1989). Arguments that the long term effects of Head Start instruction are cost beneficial are still open for debate. Those who defend Head Start and advocate additional funding say there is no way to measure long term outcomes of

the Head Start program when funding levels are inadequate and so many children who are eligible are still unenrolled..

Educational research about the interactions between teachers and students in urban settings quickly gave rise to a variety of terms to describe the students. Most of the terms laid blame for the students' poor achievement on their minority group status and the conditions that made them different from mainstream students. The students were described as "culturally deprived" and their teachers were to design curricula and implement pedagogy that would correct their perceived cultural deficits. The minority students' cultural deficits were characterized by linguistic, cognitive, and behavioral achievement viewed as far behind or below that of their mainstream peers (Gay 1993). Interactions between minority students and their teachers were ultimately influenced by this cultural deprivation theory. Nieto argues that the "theories of genetic inferiority and 'cultural deprivation' popularized during the 1960s have left their mark, particularly on the schooling of poor children and children of color (1992, p.192)."

As the decade progressed researchers from the disciplines of anthropology and those studying the anthropology of education particularly, opposed the label "culturally deprived," which denoted a disability linked to origin of birth or ethnicity. Researchers such as Courtney Cazden, Vera John, Dell Hymes, and others challenged the

"cultural deprivation" model with evidence from research which focused particularly on functions of language in the classroom (Banks, 1994; Cazden, John, and Hymes, 1972; deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). Other researchers gave evidence of the rich cultures minority students demonstrated in their language styles, communicative performances, creative and adaptive behaviors, and values (Hill, 1972; Hilliard, 1976; Labov, 1972). These researchers pointed to evidence of cultural differences and rejected the deprivation notion as ethnocentric and inaccurate. Scholars deMarrais and LeCompte state the position of anthropologists: being versed in one's native culture does not mean being deprived of another (1995).

Out of the research conducted by anthropologists, anthropologists of education, sociolinguists, and sociologists has come themes which are central to this study. The studies took a variety of approaches. Some researchers took a macro view of communities and school systems to make sense of systemic forces which worked against ethnic minority groups. Other researchers preferred a micro approach, and studied schools, neighborhood groups, and families to provide detailed, personal accounts of ethnic minority status. I will begin with research that offers a macro view of an urban, ethnic minority community and its schools.

A Community-Based Study of Minority School Failure

A closer look at ethnic minority school and community settings was afforded by what came to be known as an ecological approach to the examination of school failure. Anthropologist John Ogbu published his ethnographic study of an urban school district in Stockton, California in 1974. His purpose was to contextualize the behaviors of urban school students within their urban communities and urban school settings. Ogbu's work looked carefully at the relationships between ethnicity, social class, and academic achievement, and consequently was termed an ecological approach.

Ogbu's ethnography addresses the disparate achievement of minority adolescents in an American public high school. Using anthropological and ethnographic methodologies Ogbu explored school failure as an adaptation to education by certain minority cultures. His study over twenty-one months, focused on students who were part of a particular neighborhood, community, and town, as well as enrollees at a particular school. Ogbu described the roles, relationships, and status of each ethnic group, mainly blacks and Mexican-Americans, as well as the complex web of interrelationships that were a part of the past history and continuing experience of the entire community (1974). Ogbu's study is more than a school ethnography. Rather, his attempt to tie

behaviors and attitudes to the perceived reality of the community, and to explain student cultures as part of the construction of the neighborhood and ethnic culture within the entire community culture, has provided stimulating evidence for his cultural ecological model of minority student behavior.

Ogbu's central concern was to investigate school failure in unique minority groups. He distinguished between voluntary immigrant and involuntary immigrant or castelike minorities. Voluntary minorities are ethnic minorities who came to the United States for the same reasons as the dominant whites (or their ancestors) - for political or religious freedom and especially for economic opportunity. Voluntary minorities include Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Arabs, and other similar groups. Involuntary or castelike minorities or their ancestors, were incorporated into the United States more or less against their will, by conquest or slavery. Castelike minorities include Native Americans, Mexican-Americans (the first of whom were conquered and now maintain subordinate status with new arrivals who attach to their collective identity), and blacks. It is these castelike minorities Ogbu views as unique. The distinguishing feature between the two types of minorities is their particular adaptation to the dominant culture. Involuntary minorities, Ogbu argues in his 1974 study, have not been adequately served by the public school institution,

and experience high failure rates as an adaptation to realizing fewer post graduation opportunities than the dominant white society member with equal education. Since the carrot at the end of the stick is too often a mirage, involuntary minorities often choose to reject the means and goals of the public school system. Dominant whites, in viewing this adaptation, confirm their beliefs that castelike minorities are lazy, undisciplined, or have inferior intelligence. Ogbu states that these prejudices create obstacles of discrimination in schools which make it very difficult for subordinate minorities to achieve. These attitudes and a continuing belief among educators in the cultural deprivation theory places school personnel in the role of continually devising remedial curricula to correct students' perceived academic deficits (Ogbu, 1974).

Current research by Ogbu explores the cultural models of involuntary minorities with respect to schooling. Ogbu examines how folk theories of getting ahead in the United States, survival strategies, trust, identity, and a cultural frame of reference with respect to status and mobility influence the way involuntary minority youth behave in school. In short, the frame provided by the cultural models of involuntary minorities allows us to identify complex attitudes and behaviors that affect schooling.

For instance, Ogbu states that the folk theory of getting ahead often includes survival strategies for living

in and out of the mainstream. These survival strategies generate behaviors and attitudes which are oppositional to the cultural model of the mainstream for conducting teaching and learning. Survival strategies often include becoming competent in illegal behaviors in the community. Likewise, acquiring standard English and achieving academically may be viewed as siding with the oppressors. Clearly, the cultural models of involuntary minorities have been shaped by years of failure to acquire social status equal to that of the white majority (Ogbu, 1989).

Other research indicates that minority groups may exchange modes of individual achievement for group identity status. Fordham, a former research assistant and student of Ogbu, completed a study which described the social identity tensions of high achieving black students in an urban high school (1988). Her study came on the heels of Ogbu's ecological approach to the examination of school failure and was conducted in a high school in Washington, DC. Fordham's purpose was to detail the behaviors of black males and females who attempted to maintain a group identity with their black peers and accomplish academic achievement, a behavior characterized by them as "acting white." Fordham's research indicated that the fine line these academically capable students walked to maintain their peer group status as well as high grades took its toll in high degrees of anxiety. Black males, more than females, were victimized by the double

consciousness of their social/academic position. They exhibited behaviors which indicated they were socialized to attach to the black community more than black females, and were less willing to remain high achievers, perhaps less convinced that for black males the sacrifice was worth it. Black males as well as many black females who were individually capable of high academic achievement chose rather to sacrifice that achievement for group identity status, effectively exchanging school success for school failure. Fordham's research demonstrated political and social pressures at work within minority groups as well as in the society at large.

Ethnic minority adaptations continue to be explored by researchers wanting to know more about the disparities in academic achievement across and within minority groups. One of the social pressures that many ethnic minorities deal with which requires significant coping strategies is the issue of language. My study focused on students who use a form of Black English Vernacular, or simply black dialect, in their classroom and community conversations. Consequently, I include here important research about language variations that is still a primary source of understanding nonstandard varieties of English in minority classrooms.

Studies of Language Variation

During the time period when educators were labeling minority students as culturally deprived, Labov used sociolinguistic perspectives to study the language variations of minority groups. In several studies carried out during the mid 1960s through early 1970s, Labov identified linguistic variables which correlated with the social class of the speakers, their desire to attain prestige, and their judgment of others' speech as well. In a particularly revealing study about how speakers of nonstandard English termed Black English Vernacular adapt their language performance to social situations, Labov offered data particularly pertinent to the language performance of black students in school settings. Labov's study involved black male adolescents in Harlem. He noted that when the boys were speaking in casual settings, or felt relaxed around the co-participant interviewer in the study, they used language spontaneously, creatively, and with little restriction. Their behavior changed however, when they perceived their relationship to interviewers as asymmetrical and subordinate. In these instances talk was stifled and responses were minimal. In short, the young black males were particularly sensitive to the social contexts and power relationships of their language interactions and adjusted their participation accordingly. Labov's work confirmed the inherently variable

nature of communication and demonstrated that for some speakers of nonstandard English their perceived status in the language event had real implications for their language, style, and participation (Labov 1966, 1972).

Labov's studies further indicated a correlation between the peer group status of young speakers of Black English Vernacular and their reading failure in classrooms. Data reflected the inverse relationship between these two variables: participants enjoying the highest peer group status, most often the communicative "stars" in their peer groups, had the lowest reading achievement in their classrooms. Clearly Labov's studies presented valuable data for educators interested in exploring the interactions of minority students and their teachers and the relationship of those interactions to school settings (Labov, 1972). In 1981 Labov wrote, "(p)ractically nothing has been done in examining the vocabulary of instruction, to see where speakers of nonstandard dialects might be at a disadvantage" (p.46).

Perhaps the strongest argument against the cultural deprivation theory with respect to the language of black children was proposed by Labov in his stinging essay, "The Logic of Nonstandard English" (1972). Labov made clear the status of black dialect in these remarks:

All linguists who work with nonstandard Negro English recognize that it is a separate system, closely related to standard English, but set apart from the surrounding white dialects by a number of persistent

and systematic differences...When linguists say that NNE is a "system," we means that it differs from other dialects in regular and rule-governed ways, so that it has equivalent ways of expressing the same logical content. When we say that it is a "separate" subsystem, we mean that there are compensating sets of rules which combine in different ways to preserve the distinctions found in other dialects...There is no reason to believe that any nonstandard vernacular is in itself an obstacle to learning. The chief problem is ignorance of language on the part of all concerned. (in Stoller, 1975, pp. 125-127)

At about the same time Labov was carrying out his studies in Harlem, Bernstein was conducting research in the United Kingdom. Bernstein, a British sociologist who examined educational matters, studied language differences in children from middle class and lower working class families. Bernstein's methodology used interviewers asking children from the target populations to tell about what was going on in a short series of photographs the children were shown. The differences in language from the two groups of children were described as examples of restricted codes and elaborated codes. Lower working class children used restricted codes, characterized by short, simple sentences. These sentences were often incomplete and poor in syntax. Lower working class children were found to use conjunctions repetitively and descriptive devices rarely. Bernstein described this restricted code as generally a language filled with implicit meaning. The elaborated code used by middle class children, by contrast, was characterized by syntactically correct, complex sentences filled with linguistic devices which

embedded meaning and description. He interpreted the data from his research as evidence that language both influences and is influenced by culture. Bernstein noted that there were serious consequences for children who used the restricted code when they began formal schooling, where use of the elaborated code was expected and required (Bernstein, 1961, 1974).

Bernstein's explanation about the childrens' use of different codes reflected his thinking about how language and culture combined. He believed that the lower working class culture gave rise to a particular family structure which utilized a particular form of communication. In lower working class families family structures were more likely to be patriarchies. Close physical contact in such families necessitated little use for explicit language because assumptions about meanings were generally shared and understood. In middle class families communication was more context free, and a complex, elaborated code communicated a variety of experiences and events not necessarily shared by everyone in the family. Lower working class families used direct, authoritarian language with their children. Middle class families were more likely to use reasoning and elicit dialogue with their children, even when requesting compliance . Bernstein argued that middle class children who used the elaborated code were more advantaged in school settings where that code was recognized and used. Children from lower

working class families were disadvantaged because their code did not match the code required in instruction (Wardhaugh, 1986).

Bernstein's research has been criticized and in some cases misapplied to interpret the use of language by nonstandard speakers in this country. Although many of the criticisms regarding Bernstein's work are well taken, he did raise interesting questions regarding the use of language by children in various social class groups. We may even propose that one criticism, the fact that Bernstein's middle class researchers could not adequately interpret the meaning of children using the restricted code, is particularly relevant to educational research with minority students in this country.

The work of Labov in identifying the linguistic markers of black dialect and the relationship of social class to language variations, coupled with issues raised by Bernstein's studies of social class language variation, continue to inform current research in classrooms where students speak a nonstandard variety of English.

A Community-Based Ethnography of Language Socialization

Clearly language variations had something to do with school success. What was needed was a way to understand how children came to school with language differences in the

first place. Little was known about the ways young children of various cultures and social classes in this country learned language. Missing pieces to this puzzle were supplied in Heath's ethnographic research conducted from 1969 through 1978 in the Piedmont section of the Carolinas. The communities where she lived and worked were made up of families associated with one textile mill in the region. Heath was interested in three different communities, one she called Roadville, one she called Trackton, and one simply called Townspeople. The Roadville community was made up of working class, white, textile mill employees. Trackton residents were black, textile mill employees, and the Townspeople were both black and white, mainstream, middle class citizens employed as administrators at the textile mills, in town, or elsewhere. Heath's intimate association with these communities afforded her a unique opportunity to learn about their cultures, and particularly about the language socialization of their children.

Extensive ethnographic data revealed sharp contrasts in the ways children in each community were taught language and literacy skills in their homes and communities. The white, working class children from Roadville were not as adept as the middle class Townspeople's children in school exercises involving language. Although Roadville children were familiar with some of the initial exercises in literacy instruction their interactions with caretakers and books had

been quite different. Heath found they were unable to sustain their early readiness for school and achieve academic success. Trackton's black, working class children demonstrated language learning skills and behaviors that were quite different from the Roadville or the Town children. The sequence of Trackton children's language skills did not reflect the developmental sequence of language or literacy development in Roadville or Townspeople's homes, or in the literature about children's language development. Their language socialization did not match the developmental patterns used by school teachers who were middle class Townspeople.

Heath found that the three communities had very different ways of socializing their children in language skills. They used the elements of literacy quite differently. They read and wrote for different purposes. Even the talk interactions with small children were different in the three communities. Children in Trackton, for instance, were encouraged to verbally perform and spar from the time they began to talk. Townspeople's children and the children in Roadville on the other hand, learned intricate rituals of questions and answers with adults that were different from one another and rarely observed in Trackton. Bedtime stories, a characteristic ritual in Townspeople's homes was carried on in Roadville differently and in Trackton not at all.

Heath's research points out the differences in language learning from three very closely associated communities. She ties her findings to the historical contexts of those communities, stating that Roadville and Trackton children came to have different ways of communicating and using language because their communities had different historical contexts which shaped social interactions. Townspeople, on the other hand, did not have historical roots so closely tied to home communities and consequently were far more comfortable with the accepted mainstream communication styles (Heath, 1983).

Heath's research about marked differences in children's language socialization pointed to the dearth of knowledge available regarding language socialization in homes of different social classes and ethnicities in our country. The sharp contrast between the ways children acquired language and literacy skills, children who lived within miles of one another and who attended school together, raised important concerns about children's language development in general and language learning in school classrooms in particular.

Studies of Cultural Congruency Between Home and School

During the 1970s educational anthropologists and sociologists turned to the classroom to focus on teacher student interactions. Cazden explained their focus: "More

was known... about the structure of children's language than about how children use language in particular social settings. We believed that school problems could be better explained by differences in language use between home and school, and the need for such research became a nagging theme throughout our discussions" (Cazden in Cazden, John, and Hymes, 1972, p.vii). Cazden and Hymes were arguing then for teachers to take up the skills of ethnographers.

Many of these researchers were examining children's language styles in cultures outside of the mainstream populations. Philips began to closely examine the ways in which Native American children in classrooms at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in central Oregon participated in classroom discourse. She noted that the children experienced difficulty and discomfort when they attempted to interact with their teachers in the conventional classroom recitation style where the teacher controls who gets selected to speak and when they may do so. The Native American students did not volunteer answers to the teachers' questions and would not participate when asked to make an individual presentation of any kind before the class. Philips noted the contrasting behavior of the same students when they were allowed to work independently or in small groups and initiate their interactions with the teacher. In these types of class arrangements the students were full participants in the instruction and group interaction.

Philips identified different settings in which the teacher expected students to participate. She called these settings participant structures and developed the idea that some seemed natural for students and resulted in their willingness to cooperate, while other participant structures seemed to disallow student participation in instructional activities (Philips, 1972). For instance, a familiar participant structure in many classrooms is for the teacher to call on students who must individually respond to her questions. Philips found that this sort of conversational interaction between adults and children was dissimilar to the ways interactions occurred in the reservation community. In examining the interactions on the Warm Springs Reservation, Philips found that the Native American community encouraged individual participation by allowing individuals to choose how and when they participated, who they wanted to follow, and by modeling a community spirit of shared participation (1972).

Later studies by Philips pointed out that even the timing of teachers' questions and remarks was critical to participant structures. The critical element in classroom interaction in fact, seemed to be not just cultural differences or conflict, but the ways in which teachers wield power by requesting participant structures that reflect their own interpretive framework of how classrooms are run (Philips 1985).

Mohatt and Erickson examined the teacher student interactions in two first grade classrooms at an Odawa Native American school. One classroom was taught by an Indian teacher and the other by a non-Indian. They found marked differences in the ways the two teachers organized the social interactions in their classrooms. Although both teachers accomplished instructional tasks, they did so using markedly different participation structures. The Indian teacher made fewer movements around the room to help students and check on their progress. There were few instances of singling out students and instruction proceeded at a calm, steady pace with generous time given for responses from students. The non-Indian teacher, in contrast, exhibited control in the public arena with frequent movements around the class, calling to students across the classroom, and shorter response times for student responses. An examination of the interactions the Odawan students experienced with their families outside of school revealed that the Indian teacher clearly exhibited an instructional style very similar to those native interactions while the non-Indian teacher demonstrated adaptations to the native interaction style (Mohatt and Erickson, 1981).

Au and Jordan, in the Kamehameha Early Education Project (KEEP), built on the notion of mitigating cultural differences in classroom participant structures in their work with native Hawaiian students (1981). They incorporated a native Hawaiian narrative style called talk story, in which

participants together construct a humorous, rambling, entertaining tale of personal events, into the daily reading instruction and classroom interactions. They coupled the talk story style with changes in the social organization of kindergarten through third grade classrooms and the cognitive orientations of instruction and the achievement incentives used there. These changes in instructional design reflected the cultural styles of native Hawaiian students. Evaluative data indicated that Hawaiian students in the KEEP program significantly improved standardized achievement test scores. Au and Jordan confirmed that instruction which adapted to culturally specific participant structures could improve achievement with minority children. Their research marked the first time an anthropologist and an educator had worked together to look at culture in schools.

Current Urban School Research Perspectives

Educational anthropologists continue to look at school achievement for ethnic minority children. While much is learned from examining schools and classrooms where many minority students do poorly, some scholars have turned their attention to examining the experiences of minority students who are achieving in schools. Nieto, for example, found that focusing on successful students gave her an opportunity to explore the common threads in their vastly different

experiences that seemed to announce the ways their families, schools, and communities had provided resources for their success.

In her book Affirming Diversity (1992), Nieto presents case studies of students from a wide range of cultures who offer their reflections on school environments where they experienced discrimination for a variety of reasons, yet managed to succeed. The case studies reveal these students as critical thinkers and involved agents in the formation of their own success stories. This view of minority education, where students can collaborate with others to pursue social justice, offers a more hopeful context for minority education than many current educational reform theories.

Our challenge is to find out what works for minority students and to get on with the task of creating nurturing educational environments for all students. Nieto reviews the research on cultural incompatibilities between minority students' home culture and the culture of school. Arguing that this research powerfully targets the reasons for school failure, Nieto charges that where schools do not utilize culturally congruent instruction it is the schools themselves that function as a risk factor. Similarly, when teachers see non-English speaking students as missing a language instead of owning their first language, they perceive a language disability when there is none. "Since language ability is the primary ingredient for school success, how

schools and teachers perceive children's language is significant" (Nieto, 1992, p. 197). Nieto's research is a critical look at the "monocultural education" in American public schools and a strong argument for a "multicultural education" which is essential and central to school reform.

Ladson-Billings argues for culturally relevant instruction and presents an overview of the research in that area. Like Nieto, Ladson-Billings turns toward examining instances of success in minority classrooms, choosing to focus on the classroom practice of successful teachers of black students. She finds that these teachers share common attributes in three critical dimensions:

(a) their perceptions of themselves and their students; (b) the ways they organize social interactions in their classrooms, and (c) the ways they think about knowledge. These critical dimensions are also the dimensions of culturally relevant teaching.

Ladson-Billings characterizes successful teachers of black students as those who view teaching as an art rather than a prescriptive practice. This translates to a certain flexibility in their teaching style which enables students to join them in an expressive, and artistic performance of teaching and learning. These teachers believe every child has the power to adequately and beautifully express their thoughts and ideas. Successful teachers see themselves as part of the communities in which they teach. They see their

black students as connected to their communities and reflecting the unique needs and strengths of minority cultures which can be used in classrooms. Consequently, the social interaction in their classroom is more likely group oriented than competitive. Since instruction is a shared experience it follows that knowledge is continually undergoes change and is the result of the dynamics of community (in Grant, 1992).

Ladson-Billings warns that there is still a critical need for further research in culturally relevant instruction. This research must be based on the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of what is actually happening in successful urban classrooms and an examination of school level factors that enhance or impede instruction (Ladson-Billings, in Grant, 1992).

Language instruction is a continuing issue in school settings that serve ethnic minorities. Delpit addresses the particular challenge of instructing minority students who speak a nonstandard variety of English. She argues that the language of instruction in American public schools is a discourse of power, and privileges white, middle class students for whom it is their primary discourse. Black students, Appalachian students, and other minority groups who fill the ranks of the poor and disenfranchised in our country, struggle to learn standard English and simultaneously suffer the stigma society attaches to their

nonstandard varieties of English. It is important to realize that instructional contexts change, and language instruction in elementary classrooms today is less likely to be as explicit as it has been in the past. Many elementary teachers have adopted methods of instruction which immerse students in literature and authentic uses of literacy skills rather than direct instruction in standard English grammar. Delpit points out that many teachers who accept black dialect as an appropriate classroom discourse deny the kind of language instruction those students need to equip them with the language of power and of emancipation. Instead, teachers need to recognize an inherent racism in language instruction which continues to privilege the dominant culture and relegate minorities "to the bottom rung of the social and economic ladder" (Delpit, 1992, p. 301). Delpit continues to challenge language arts teachers, pedagogists, and literacy scholars to acknowledge the inequity of current language instruction models

Current Urban School Contexts

To assess urban schools today we must look at the whole picture of American public schools, and particularly those in urban settings. Kozol paints a devastating picture in Savage Inequalities (1992). He takes his readers on a tour of the nation's poorest school districts, many of them in

urban areas, and compares them with their wealthy counterparts just miles away. In doing so he makes a strong indictment against school funding plans in this country which depend on property tax income to fund local schools. It is a painful irony that many of the poorer school districts tax themselves at a higher rate than more affluent communities. In a vain effort to underscore their belief in education these poorer districts have little hope of ever catching up to their affluent neighbors.

Kozol's haunting images of schools in East St. Louis, Camden, New Jersey, the South side of Chicago, Brooklyn and Harlem in New York, San Antonio, Washington, D.C. and others are too numerous to ignore and their similarities too blatant to dismiss. Students here attend schools which are unsafe, overcrowded, underequipped, and dismal. These schools are not merely poor; the environments are horrifying. Many of the teachers are doing a valiant job reaching the nation's neediest children here with comfort at least where there is little educational hope. Many other teachers and administrators have given up and simply add more dead weight to school bureaucracies which cannot possibly respond to community needs so great and funding so limited.

Kozol assesses the impact these students feel when they realize their schools are so different from others in the same or neighboring districts:

The focus in this book is on inner-city schools; inevitably, therefore, I am describing classrooms in

which almost all the children are black or Latino...[U]rban systems are often just adjacent to the nation's richest districts, and this ever-present contrast adds a heightened bitterness to the experience of children. The ugliness of racial segregation adds its special injuries as well. It is this killing combination, I believe, that renders life within these schools not merely grim but also desperate and often pathological. The fact of destitution is compounded by the sense of being viewed as, somehow, morally infected. The poorest rural schools I've visited feel, simply, bleak. The segregated urban schools feel more like lazarettos. (1991, p.74)

Kozol's study presents an image of education in this decade as more segregated and less equal than in 1954.

Other researchers concur. Wang and Reynolds present this overview of the progress in minority education since the 1960s:

Disturbingly, there are disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic minority children at the margins. These disproportions extend to the arrangements made for their schooling, so much so that it seems doubtful that progress has been made since the War on Poverty of the 1960s or even since the Brown decision of 1954. African American students, for example, are labeled retarded or behaviorally disturbed and set aside from regular classrooms at rates two or three times higher than those for white students. Similarly, African American students are suspended or expelled from school much more frequently than other students. No analysis of schooling situations is complete if it does not attend to this calamitous situation for minority students. (1995, p.2)

Wang and Reynolds further declare that children in the inner cities live in "unsafe, disorderly, and decaying environments" (p.14) and their schools reflect the disarray of entrenched, ineffective bureaucratic procedures.

Current Urban School Instructional Contexts

Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1995) return us to the classroom by citing research which identifies and prioritizes variables which foster learning. At the top of the list are variables having to do with the amount of time students are actively engaged in learning and the time spent on direct instruction in reading and math. It turns out that "[t]ime is the most ubiquitous factor observed in research on learning" (1995, p.18).

Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg argue for inclusive classrooms, where children are taken out for special needs only as a last resort. Their solutions include much more direct instruction in much less interrupted classrooms. Pugach (1995) agrees, calling many special education and Chapter I students "twice victims" of school schedules. They are penalized when they must leave regular classrooms for individual instruction during a time when they miss what they can accomplish, and they are penalized when they are left in classrooms during instructional time which does not meet their needs. The issue of dedicated time to learning is severely affected by faulty scheduling for these students.

There is another issue that is pervasive in troubled urban schools which serve ethnic minority children. Urban school settings which seem to be healthy learning environments are too often just the opposite. Haberman

(1991) identifies certain instructional procedures in urban schools which have become entrenched since the late 1950s and which form the "pedagogy of poverty." The pedagogy of poverty is characterized by a mechanistic set of teacher duties, such as giving information, asking questions, giving directions, making assignments, and reviewing assignments. There are equally mechanistic procedures for homework and dealing with misbehavior. These procedures are so typical that teachers who do not demonstrate them are viewed as deviant. The procedures taken singly are relatively innocuous. It is the impact of their sum to the exclusion of other, more meaningful instructional procedures that produces a pedagogy of poverty. This pedagogy is what teachers, students, and even parents have come to expect school to be.

Haberman argues that:

the pedagogy of poverty is sufficiently powerful to undermine the implementation of any reform effort because it determines the way children spend their time, the name of the behaviors they practice, and the bases of their self-concepts as learners. Essentially, it is a pedagogy in which learners can "succeed" without becoming either involved or thoughtful. (1991, p 309)

In order to combat this pedagogy of poverty Haberman insists that the whole school faculty and community must be the unit of change, not simply the individual classroom teacher. The school faculty and community must understand the nature of teacher student interactions and come to know that a directive pedagogy elicits manipulative behavior from students who are free to comply or resist the teacher's

directives. Students would much rather hold their teachers accountable for making them learn than accept the responsibility for learning themselves. Therefore a consistent, patient application of change toward trust and a pedagogy that elicits students' responsibility for learning is needed.

Haberman would have us be savvy about resisting the status quo of pedagogy in many urban schools and inviting entire school communities to initiate instructional practices which are more effective. The instructional practices he talks about can be identified in acts which are central to the practice of exemplary urban teachers. These acts center around engaging students in issues of vital concern to them, in explanations of human differences, in major concepts and big ideas, in social justice issues and reflection on their own lives to name a few. Practices such as these, applied consistently throughout school communities can combat the pedagogy of poverty.

Summary

Over the past three decades researchers have looked at ethnic minority students and their records of poor academic achievement in our nation's schools. We have seen how political contexts have determined issues of funding, program emphases, and even the nomenclature used to describe

populations targeted for special programs. We know that the combined research efforts of anthropologists, anthropologists of education, sociologists, and linguists challenged terminology that described minority populations and turned the focus of research to issues of inequities in educational institutions and cultural differences that could be viewed as strengths instead of weaknesses. We know how some minority groups adapt to their stigmatized status and how youth construct their identity away from mainstream norms to ethnic minority peer groups. We know that the farther a group's culture and language varies from the school's culture and language, the more likely that group is to experience failure in school. We have viewed research that attempts to bridge these differences with culturally congruent instruction, and we have evidence that some of those efforts work. Moreover, we have evidence of ethnic minority students who achieve and are able to become agents of their own success in educational environments. We also have evidence of successful teachers of minority students and themes that characterize their successful instruction. The research has shown us however, that urban school bureaucracies, inadequate resources, overcrowding, and inappropriate pedagogy in many urban schools continue to impede the education of minority students.

Despite many significant advances in the research on minority students we have had little opportunity to hear

their voices or the voices of their teachers as they talk with one another in classrooms. We know little about the actual communication that occurs daily as students and teachers explain their ideas, request clarification, and merge their own experiences and understandings with the content of the curriculum. Although we know that many teachers attempt to construct learning environments where students can communicate freely, current research offers too few of those words from actual classroom interactions. The purpose of this study was to capture the voices of both students and teachers as they "do school" (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995) in an urban classroom.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to examine communication events during the course of daily instruction in a classroom population of mostly African American students taught by a white teacher. I wanted to focus on elementary students in order to gain an understanding of how communication events affect the academic achievement of young black students. I also wanted the students to be able to supply me with information about communication events that caused difficulty in classroom interactions. For this purpose I chose fifth grade students as my target population, ensuring some likelihood of their ability to articulate the meanings and intentions of communicators in their classroom.

It was imperative that the classroom have mostly African American students from a relatively isolated and contained African American population since this describes the setting where Black English Vernacular (BEV) is likely to be used in daily discourse (Bonvillain, 1993; Labov, 1982). I was specifically interested at first in how BEV was understood, accepted, and used by a white teacher in communicating daily lessons or the communication barriers BEV might cause. I

will explain how I selected and gained entry into the particular classroom where I conducted my research, the various methods I used to collect data, the types of data I was most interested in and why, and how I analyzed that data.

Gaining Entry and Selecting the Teacher

I had been a fifth grade teacher at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School (pseudonym) for four years and had designed and accomplished several research studies there while completing a Master's degree. I was aware of the academic difficulties of African American students enrolled at the school and the communication difficulties their white teachers were experiencing. As a career member of the educational community and a citizen of the larger community this elementary school was a part of, I was particularly interested in what might be done to examine, describe, and remedy the communication difficulties African American students and their white teachers were having at this school. Having shared my concerns with colleagues and with professors at the university, I was convinced that an ethnographic study of an intermediate grade classroom at the school would enable me to examine the communication events occurring daily in that classroom.

There are several phases to gaining entry to a school research site. I will explain how I planned and received

permission from the university, the school system, and the principal and how I selected the particular teacher and her classroom where I conducted my research.

Initial preparation for the study was to gain entry to Thurgood Marshall Elementary School for research purposes. I complied with the regulations for research involving human subjects at my university. These regulations included strict guidelines for research involving children who were students in school settings. Permission to conduct research had to first be approved by the supervisor of research for the school system I would enter and the principal of Thurgood Marshall Elementary School. Their permission and that of the Committee on Research Participation at the university was secured in January of 1994 by their approval of my research plans, consent forms, and data collection procedures.

The first criterion for selecting a classroom in which to conduct my research was to find an intermediate classroom where students were encouraged to use authentic language in daily classroom discourse and where the teacher was white. There were four fourth grades and four fifth grade classrooms taught by white teachers. My personal association with the teachers led me to believe that only two of those classes, one fourth grade and one fifth grade, had teachers who were willing and able to elicit authentic language from their students. I selected the fifth grade classroom because I already knew the fifth grade curriculum and because the

classroom was apart from a large and often noisy area housing other fourth and fifth grade classes. The area itself seemed to provide opportunities for frequent distractions to classes located there.

The fifth grade classroom I selected was more self-contained than the other classes, having been at one time a kindergarten class and equipped with a sink and restrooms for both boys and girls. These amenities meant that the students did not have to be escorted several times during the day to the restroom and water fountain, thus interrupting valuable instructional time.

I spoke with Sandy Frank (pseudonym), the teacher in this classroom, on two different occasions to tell her of my research plans, and immediately gained both her permission and cooperation for my research. During this time we designed a plan for me to visit the classroom regularly to conduct research and to assist with some instruction. Final steps in gaining entry to the research site were completed in the middle of January, 1994, after explaining my research to Ms. Frank's students and securing their consent to participate and the consent of their parents or guardians.

The study began in January of 1994 and included 45 separate daily visits to the classroom. These visits spanned the entire semester until school was concluded in June. A total of 230 hours of participant observation in Ms. Frank's classroom comprised the data collection phase of this study.

Data Collection

The questions I chose to guide my research and the theoretical frames I selected focus attention on the experiences of African American students in a classroom taught by a white teacher. Those experiences are evidenced in the students' daily verbal and nonverbal interactions with their teacher, the contexts of those interactions, and the degree of understanding attained by the participants during those interactions. I wanted to know not only what was said but the meanings or confusions experienced by the participants and the ways they negotiated meaning, mitigated confusion, engaged or disengaged from communicative interactions. To collect and examine these data I was present during daily classroom interactions to observe, record, and share dialogue in a variety of ways in order to understand classroom routines and the participants' contributions to it. I chose ethnographic research methods to collect data to answer these guiding questions:

1. What are the daily classroom expectations and how are these communicated by the teacher and understood by the students?
2. What communication patterns do students use to participate in and understand instruction?

3. What types of miscommunications occur in this classroom?
4. What is the relationship between the communication events and the classroom learning environment?
And academic achievement?

Both interactive and non-interactive ethnographic data collection strategies (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993) were used in this study. The interactive strategies I used include participant observation, informal interviews, and dialogue journals with students and with the teacher. Non-interactive strategies used include stream of behavior chronicles of daily classroom interactions, audiotapes of classroom interactions, a sociogram to measure social relationships, and an artifact collection of student work which included lessons, tests, creative writing, and art. An explanation of each of these interactive and non-interactive data collection strategies is provided here.

Interactive Data Collection Strategies

Participant observation.

Participant observation was the main data collection strategy used during the study. I visited the classroom on 45 different occasions over four months during the spring semester of the 1993-94 school year, logging a total of 230 hours as a participant observer. I quickly realized that

classroom instruction was interrupted by a series of program events that were planned for the whole school or for the whole fifth grade. When these events occurred, the students were out of the classroom in contexts which I could observe, but could not capture their individual communications accurately. These events included field trips, a science fair, several Black History Month programs, regular visits by a police officer to deliver a drug abuse education program, the annual standardized achievement tests, a fund raising event for the American Heart Association, and much more. It became problematic to find days in which regular daily classroom instruction wasn't totally or partially interrupted by these extracurricular or special events. Consequently, while I took field notes and audiotaped every time I observed, the data I analyzed represent days when there were the fewest school-wide or grade level events which interrupted regular classroom instructional time. On those days I recorded classroom interactions with field notes on site and those field notes were expanded with a word processor into complete and accurate transcripts using the audiotapes of classroom interactions.

As a participant observer I took field notes from a variety of positions in the classroom though most often I sat at the back of the class. During the first several days of data collection the students were interested in what I was writing and would frequently chat with me on their way to the

pencil sharpener or to the sink for a drink. A few of the students asked what I was writing and inquired whether or not I had written down what they had just done and said. My honest responses seemed to satisfy their curiosity about field notes so that after the first week I rarely was asked about the content of my field notes. The students were comfortable talking with me, carrying on their usual classroom interactions, and explaining those interactions to me when I didn't understand.

The purpose of participant observation is to understand the daily activities of the participants in a particular setting (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). However, the role of participant observer may vary in degree of participation in the site depending on factors such as the participant observer's preparation to become a member of the setting, the degree of acceptance by the members of the setting, or the "match" of the participant observer with the members of the setting. Since it is impossible to take detailed field notes for hours on end, I selected instructional interactions and various informal interactions to observe and record, then made myself available as an instructional helper for the remainder of the time I visited each day. The students were used to this kind of participation from a variety of adults and expected me to help. This degree of participation in the classroom afforded access to every interaction taking place in the classroom during the period I collected data.

I documented classroom interactions and contexts with detailed field notes. I entered the date, time, and weather, as well as noting absentees and any seating changes at the beginning of my documentation each day. New seating arrangements were quickly mapped on the facing page of my field notes and audiotaped intervals were noted with the time I recorded in the left margin of my notes. Movement by class members was mapped with simple diagrams within the text of my field notes. I also included examples of work on the chalkboard within the text of my notes or on the facing page. Classroom interactions that were problematic, causing confusion or miscommunication, were noted within the right margin of my field notes with reminders to ask certain questions of various participants who seemed to understand what had occurred. Because of the casual environment of the classroom and my role as an instructional helper, I was often invited to enter the discussion when miscommunication occurred to help clarify an interaction. Notes about the clarifications were also recorded in my field notes. The students seemed to eagerly accept the notion that communication is often difficult and always interesting, and that effective communication requires everyone's concerted effort. Ms. Frank's genuine interest in the exact meanings her students wished to convey with their own authentic language was critical to this classroom environment which encouraged us all to become researchers of our

communications. A further explanation of my field notes is provided under Non-interactive Methods - Stream of Behavior Chronicles.

Interviews.

In addition to participant observation, I used informal interviews with both the teacher and the students to understand the daily classroom interactions I was observing. These informal interviews were carried out in a variety of ways, each intended to present the least interruption in classroom activities and be consistent with the open, questioning learning environment the teacher encouraged. Informal interviews were initiated when miscommunications or confusions occurred. I would then (a) ask a series of short questions to the class in general so as to secure volunteers to explain what happened, (b) ask a series of short questions to one or two students, (c) ask a question of the teacher regarding a classroom interaction, (e) call a student to my side to quickly explain an interaction either during a class discussion or after it, or (f) speak with a student or several students about an interaction after giving them an exact script of what I had heard. Informal interviews were most often conducted with students at the back of the class and included no more than brief questions accomplished in an unobtrusive and efficient manner. These informal interviews taught me which students were most sensitive to communication

difficulties in the classroom and best able to explain what was intended or what was misunderstood. Several students became key informants for me, so skillful were they in explaining interactions. Informal interviews with the teacher occurred when students were out of the room for special classes or recess or after the school day had ended.

Other informal interviews were conducted when I wanted to secure information about what a student had written. Reviewing the students' papers was one of my daily activities as an instructional helper. Informal interviews to inquire about written work often took place at a student's desk or at the table where I sat in the back of the class. My question was always the same, "Tell me what you meant when you wrote..." I was particularly careful to frame the question with a facial expression and vocal intonation to convey that I thought my inability to understand what they had written was my own fault and not theirs. My attitude was that whatever a student had written had made sense to them when they wrote it, just as what they spoke made sense to them at the time of utterance. I deliberately repressed any notion that a student's written work was careless or merely inaccurate. The data I received when I allowed students to explain both their meanings and intentions in writing something I could not understand was always valuable and often touching. Their explanations were glimpses of their unique experiences as students in and out of the classroom.

Dialogue journals.

A third interactive method I used to collect data was written dialogue contained within dialogue journals I kept with each student and with the teacher. Dialogue journals have been used by teachers and students in virtually all grades and content areas and in post-secondary classes as well. Essentially, dialogue journals are on-going written conversations between students and their teacher. These private discussions allow students to inquire, complain, request help, and share their concerns and ideas in ways they may be unable to in face to face conversation or regular classroom interaction (Staton and Peyton, 1986).

I introduced dialogue journals to the students with the intention of co-creating a text that was personal for each student and at the same time offering an avenue for me to examine each student's written communication. It was important for me to be able to do this without the usual restrictions of topic, form, and critique present in usual classroom written assignments. In order to get maximum participation from the students, time had to be provided during class to complete the writing and a simple form provided. Students were given brightly colored folders with their names written on contrasting, brightly colored labels on the covers. Notebook paper was inserted inside with paper fasteners. I explained to the students that the journals would be a way for them to communicate their own experiences

and thoughts, and although we knew the journals would give them writing practice they would not be graded on their entries. I explained that I would write a personal note back to them about whatever they had written and that I might even ask them questions and would probably share with them a personal experience of my own. I assigned a topic for them to write about, first modeling on the chalkboard about how I might organize my thoughts to write about the topic. The first topic I assigned was "Tell me about a person who is very important to you." That topic generated various responses from the students as they wrote about people in their lives who were significant to them. Most of the students wrote from a half to a full page of text during a ten to twenty minute session during class. I took their journals home and wrote an approximately equal amount of text back to them on the back of their journal entries.

These written dialogues continued on a weekly basis during the spring semester. Each time I gave the students one or two topics they could write about or suggested that they might choose instead to respond to a question or comment I had written to them. At no time did I correct or grade their dialogue journal entries. I took particular care to write at the same developmental level they had written so I could be sure each student would be able to read my responses to their entries. In this way the students' dialogue

journals became uniquely personal texts created jointly by them and an adult who was willing to correspond with them.

I included the dialogue journals as an interactive data collection strategy because they provided a way for me to talk with the students about their written expression and their personal experiences. The topics they chose were often touching. They wrote about their dreams, their worries, and their close relationships with family members and friends. They wrote about scary times and sad times. These topics prompted the students to use very personal styles of expression and I had several opportunities to converse with students privately or through the dialogue journal about the meaning of the words and phrases they had written. Both their written texts and their oral explanations offered another means for interactive data collection about the ways they chose to communicate.

I also kept a dialogue journal with the teacher. The topics we chose to write about were (a) classroom events where I felt her interpretation of a communication or behavior was different than my own, (b) additional information about students that she could provide, and (c) her perceptions about general or specific classroom exchanges. Our journal entries were short, yet provided a focused reflection for us both and often assisted me to understand better the contexts of communications in the classroom.

Non-interactive Methods

Stream-of-behavior chronicles.

During classroom lessons, discussions, and some small group interactions I wrote stream-of-behavior chronicles (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993) in which I noted as much of the actual verbal interchange, movement, and behaviors of the students and the teacher as possible. These chronicles were recorded in a minute by minute documentation in order to capture the complete context of the words and behaviors of the participants in particular events. I gave specific attention to (a) an accurate account of the words, phrases, and sentences the participants used to explain classroom proceedings and to engage in them, (b) an exact documentation of communications that seemed to cause misunderstanding, repetitions, confusion, or disengagement from classroom proceedings by one or more participants, and (c) the nonverbal behaviors participants demonstrated in either of these instances. These stream-of-behavior chronicles provided categories of communication interchanges for me to examine as part of the data base for understanding the experience of participants in this classroom.

Audiotaping.

It became immediately apparent that audiotapes of the daily classroom interactions I was observing were necessary. Verbal interchange during lessons and normal classroom

discourse was seldom characterized by clear, individual voices. More often the voices of several participants overlapped as students joined to discuss or explain a topic. The lesson presentation style that the teacher used was conversational so students responded in a similar manner. Although Ms. Frank frequently reminded her students about the importance of being able to understand whoever was talking and of being polite and not interruptive, students typically verbalized answers and explanations in a cooperative rather than an individualistic style. These collective voices were difficult to understand and document accurately with just field notes, so I placed a PZM microphone for a microcassette audiotape recorder in various locations in the classroom in order to capture as much of the verbal interchanges as possible. This audiotape method proved to be successful although accurately transcribing miscommunications or misunderstandings was every bit as difficult as understanding them in the original classroom setting. The audiotapes provided an exact replica of the voices I had heard in the classroom, but an accurate interpretation of those voices depended on my questions to participants, documentation of nonverbal signals, interviews of key informants, and replays of the audiotapes. Most of the audiotapes were transcribed and included in the expanded field notes to provide a complete and accurate account of classroom events.

Classroom sociogram.

I designed and used a simple protocol to understand the students' social relationships in the classroom. The data from the protocol was used to map a simple sociogram showing social relationships between students. Since Ms. Frank arranged their desks in groups of four or five in order to facilitate cooperative groups, students were encouraged to form and use social relationships during instructional activities. Information from the sociogram enabled both Ms. Frank and me to understand the actual social relationships in the classroom.

Artifact collection.

Daily written lessons, tests, creative writing, and artwork provided a steady supply of artifacts I could choose to examine written classroom communication. Examples of these included:

1. language and spelling tests
2. reading logs
3. dialogue journals
4. regular journals
5. reports
6. personal time lines
7. creative writing
8. word association exercises
9. diagrams

These artifacts provided numerous examples of inventive spelling, black dialect forms, creative metaphors and expressions as well as the developmental level and writing style of each student.

Artistic expression through a variety of media allowed me glimpses of other ways students communicated, who they were, and what they were learning. While I felt competent to analyze the students' writing development and written expression I did not feel I could analyze their artistic expressions. Instead, I used their art work to stimulate additional verbal, nonverbal, and written interaction in the classroom. An accurate analysis of the students' artistic expression could provide another avenue for understanding the communicative interchanges in this classroom.

Data Analysis

I used a process of analytic induction to analyze the data I collected in the classroom. The purpose of an inductive method of analysis is to allow the inclusion of maximum data at the start, to encourage and facilitate hypothesis generation and testing throughout data collection, and to aim for the presentation of evidence to support the hypotheses at the conclusion of the research report (LeCompte and Preissle 1993). Analysis then, was not separate from

data collection, but was conducted during data collection as well as after.

I scanned the communication events and their contexts as recorded in my field notes and audiotaped transcripts for categories of events and relationships among the categories. This required multiple readings of my field notes, the audiotape transcripts, the dialogue journals, and various artifacts I collected in the classroom. I made preliminary notes of events and contexts that were repeated, and instances of communication difficulties which seemed to have similarities. In subsequent data collection I attempted to accumulate additional and precise evidence to modify, dismiss, or verify these preliminary categories. Where evidence seemed to be strong for these preliminary categories, I constructed typologies and developed hypotheses to be examined using data from continuing observations as well as informal interviews with the participants. I attempted to uncover categories that the participants themselves had identified and perhaps even named, or provide labels for those categories that the participants could recognize and verify.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe the process of data analysis as "analogous to assembling a jigsaw puzzle" (p. 237). Just as one might first assemble the corners and frame to establish the boundaries of a puzzle, I used my initial theoretical perspectives to frame the emerging

patterns my data offered. The challenge here was clear: continually contrast the emerging patterns with varied data sources and with the guiding theories in order to establish linkages and relationships between data so as to give an accurate and complete description of the culture of the classroom. My primary concern was to describe the research site and classroom culture by comparing, contrasting, aggregating, and ordering data in such a way as to thoroughly answer the question, "What's going on here?" I intended to make clear the tacit knowledge held by the participants about their communication interactions and generate hypotheses that could be tested in that site and in similar sites with similar populations.

The patterns which emerged by repeatedly scanning and coding my data sources in this way prompted a system of units of analysis. My guiding questions focused attention on the success or failure of the various types of communications between the participants in the classroom. It soon became obvious that those successes and failures were often caused by or effected a variety of interruptions in the classroom discourse. The various interruptions then became the units of analysis which made the data manageable and began to make it possible for me to describe the whole picture of the communication interactions which were occurring in the classroom.

Chapter IV

THE SETTING

The Community

Riverside is a moderate size Southeastern United States city, and the county seat of Johnson County, which numbers approximately 340,000 residents. The city is located on a river and near the junction of a two major interstate highways. Riverside has been named among the top 40 places to live in the United States during the last five years in a variety of national polls. Its expanding population, especially along its western metropolitan boundaries, is evidence that many people agree with those ratings.

Riverside is home to a large university as well as several smaller colleges. As in many cities of its size, Riverside officials and taxpayers have spent considerable effort and revenue to renovate the downtown business district, maintain a convention center and numerous historical sites, and encourage the establishment and growth of an arts community as well as a healthy tourist industry stimulated by the scenic beauty of the area.

Riverside still has what many would call the personality of a small southern town. Neighbors within the city limits and many residents living on the outskirts of town carry on

time honored, southern traditions such as maintaining close family and church ties, participating in community events, raising gardens, and pasturing cows, horses, and other farm animals. Neighborhoods are characterized by a patchwork style of large and small homes, lots, and fields near modern shopping centers and apartment complexes. These characteristics give Riverside a casual atmosphere of change.

Riverside had two school districts, a city and a county district, until consolidation of those two school districts was accomplished in the past decade. The city school district, made up of older school buildings in neighborhoods where the tax base had eroded, could no longer justify or underwrite its existence. Since counties are charged with the legal responsibility of educating school children, and Johnson County was growing and prosperous, the city school system terminated its existence and gave its properties and responsibilities over to the Johnson County government. The effect of this action focused public attention on the racially segregated school populations and other disparities. The city school district's student population and faculties were largely African American. Facilities, equipment, and materials in the city school system were inferior to similar properties in the county school system. There had been a constant change of city school zones in order to effect urban renewal and complete a modern highway system to serve downtown Riverside causing many Riverside families to move

out of the inner city. Those who were unable to move or who were committed to their neighborhoods for a variety of reasons stayed or moved eastward to adjacent neighborhoods. Many who chose to stay were African Americans, resulting in a concentration of African Americans in the inner city neighborhoods.

Today, a variety of issues challenge the Riverside community and compete for public funds and support. Vigorous residential growth on the western boundaries of metropolitan Riverside require new roads and utility installation or expansion of present services. Citizens living in less prosperous and more stable communities to the north and south of the city demand new highways to link them conveniently to the interstate system, and modern public utilities to compare with new installations in the western suburbs. The downtown area is continually a topic of economic concern and the latest plans are for commercial and scenic development along the river front in the heart of the city. Environmentalists actively lobby for more greenways and bike trails to link the downtown and river front area with scenic spots and recreational sites throughout the city and along its boundaries.

It is perhaps the neighborhoods located to the east of the downtown area however, which are most needy. Historically these neighborhoods are among the oldest in Riverside. Azalea Avenue, a main thoroughfare which runs

north eastward from the heart of downtown Riverside, was once the site of the major shopping and entertainment district outside of the downtown area. Winding near stately brick and modest clapboard residences, Azalea Avenue connected quiet neighborhoods populated with many European Americans who worked in the city's commercial and business district, or in the mills and factories near the heart of town. Families here attended the large churches lining Azalea Avenue, shopped at a variety of stores along the thoroughfare, and sent their children to neighborhood schools. Today Azalea Avenue is home to the Department of Human Services, the Urban Housing Authority, rundown motels, a bus station, and ill kept apartment buildings which house many of the city's poor. These buildings are situated between boarded up stores, fast food restaurants, thriving African American owned businesses, and all night liquor stores and social clubs.

African American families populate most of the neighborhoods near Azalea Avenue. Many care for small gardens and neat yards on side streets where sidewalks crumble or are nonexistent. Homes include large, two story brick residences converted to duplexes or triplexes, a variety of old and new apartment buildings, stately frame houses, and small cottages. Popular YMCA clubs, churches, recreation centers, and daycare establishments dot these neighborhoods near federal subsidized housing projects that are the scenes of driveby shootings and drug deals.

Community and church groups concerned with a variety of East Riverside problems work diligently to counteract the effects of this high crime area.

The School Institution

The now consolidated Johnson County Schools system serves more than 50,000 students in 88 schools located in the 528 square mile area of Johnson County. An elected school board establishes and governs the policies carried out by an elected school superintendent and an administrative bureaucracy that includes approximately seventy personnel in supervisory positions at the central office.

Since school district consolidation, the Johnson County Schools system has struggled with several large issues related to the consolidation process. One of those issues directly affected Thurgood Marshall Elementary School and three other elementary schools in inner city neighborhoods. A local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) member requested the federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR) investigate incidents of racial inequity in the newly consolidated Johnson County Schools. As a result of impending investigations by OCR, the Johnson County Schools administration mandated a plan to integrate the faculties of its schools. A lottery was devised by the school administration to transfer black teachers from four

elementary schools in the inner city whose student populations and faculties were mostly black to elementary schools with all white faculties and student populations. White teachers were then selected by lottery to take the places of the transferred black teachers in the four inner city minority classrooms. The lottery radically changed the racial makeup of the faculties of those four elementary schools. At Thurgood Marshall 10 of 18 black teachers were transferred to all white faculties. The faculty of 36 teachers at Thurgood Marshall now included just 8 black teachers. It is important to note that only 3 of the 8 black teachers who remained at Thurgood Marshall were regular classroom teachers. The other 5 were special area teachers or part-time personnel at that site. In other words, African American children now had only a one in twelve chance of having an African American classroom teacher during their enrollment at Thurgood Marshall. The result of this lottery, African American students at Thurgood Marshall now taught by white teachers, underlies the purpose of this study.

Although plans were made to repeat the lottery with other inner city faculties, those plans were soon dropped by the school system. Other issues surfaced to distract attention from the lottery. Plans for magnet schools in the inner city, a design often used to achieve racial balance in school populations, and disagreements over school zones and busing routes dominated the school board agenda and media

attention. Johnson County Schools, much like other school systems around the country today, face difficult issues such as violence in the schools, the need for a variety of intervention programs, poor academic achievement among many minority students, and the high cost of mandated, special education services.

The School Neighborhood

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, built in the late 60s, is located on River Road approximately four miles east of the downtown business district. Stately old homes on expansive lawns, several historic sites, and large churches line River Road. Most of the students who attend the school do not live on River Road, but rather live in an elongated, triangular-shaped zone marked by River Road on the south and Azalea Avenue on the north. Many students live in federal subsidized housing although none live in housing projects. The Thurgood Marshall school zone is characterized by single family dwellings, multifamily homes, and apartment complexes already described in the neighborhood around Azalea Avenue.

The school zone is in a racially segregated neighborhood of African American residents. This is reflected in the better than 90% African American student enrollment at Thurgood Marshall. White families living in the neighborhood are mostly Appalachian and poor. There are a number of

biracial families. Professional workers in the community may be black, white, or biracial. Nearly all of the African American faculty and staff live in or near the school zone. Only one of the white faculty members lives near. As in most inner city, poorer communities, there are a significant number of single parent homes. Many of the students are being cared for by grandparents, aunts, or other relatives, mostly females. Caretakers and guardians may work a variety of jobs and be enrolled in educational programs in the community, necessitating daycare for the children. Many residents of the school zone participate in school activities and functions and most recognize Thurgood Marshall as their neighborhood school. An annual fundraising carnival held each spring at Thurgood Marshall is attended by hundreds of neighborhood citizens whether they have children attending the school or not. The Spring Carnival atmosphere evidences the sense of community in the Thurgood Marshall neighborhoods.

The School Facility

Thurgood Marshall, a one story brown brick building, occupies a large campus which includes a field to the northwest and an oak grove to the northeast. Four portable classrooms which house two resource classrooms, a music classroom, and a Comprehensive Developmental Classroom for

special education students are located in back of the school and accessed by wooden decks and ramps with railings. There are playgrounds for primary children on the west and northwest sides of the school. Both of these play areas have colorful, modern equipment appropriate for young children. Intermediate students play on small yards at the northeast and southeast sides of the school located outside the 4th/5th grade classroom wing. There is no stationary playground equipment for the intermediate students. Most of the teachers provide jump ropes, utility balls, and footballs at their own expense for students' outdoor play. Staff and guests park in front of the school within a circular driveway and at each end of the building. A flagpole near an attractive brick and concrete sign stands across the circular drive from the school's entrance. Small hedges and two large, sparsely planted areas lead one across the plaza to the front doors. There are four sets of glass, double entrance doors and they flank large windows that bathe the front south hallway with sunlight.

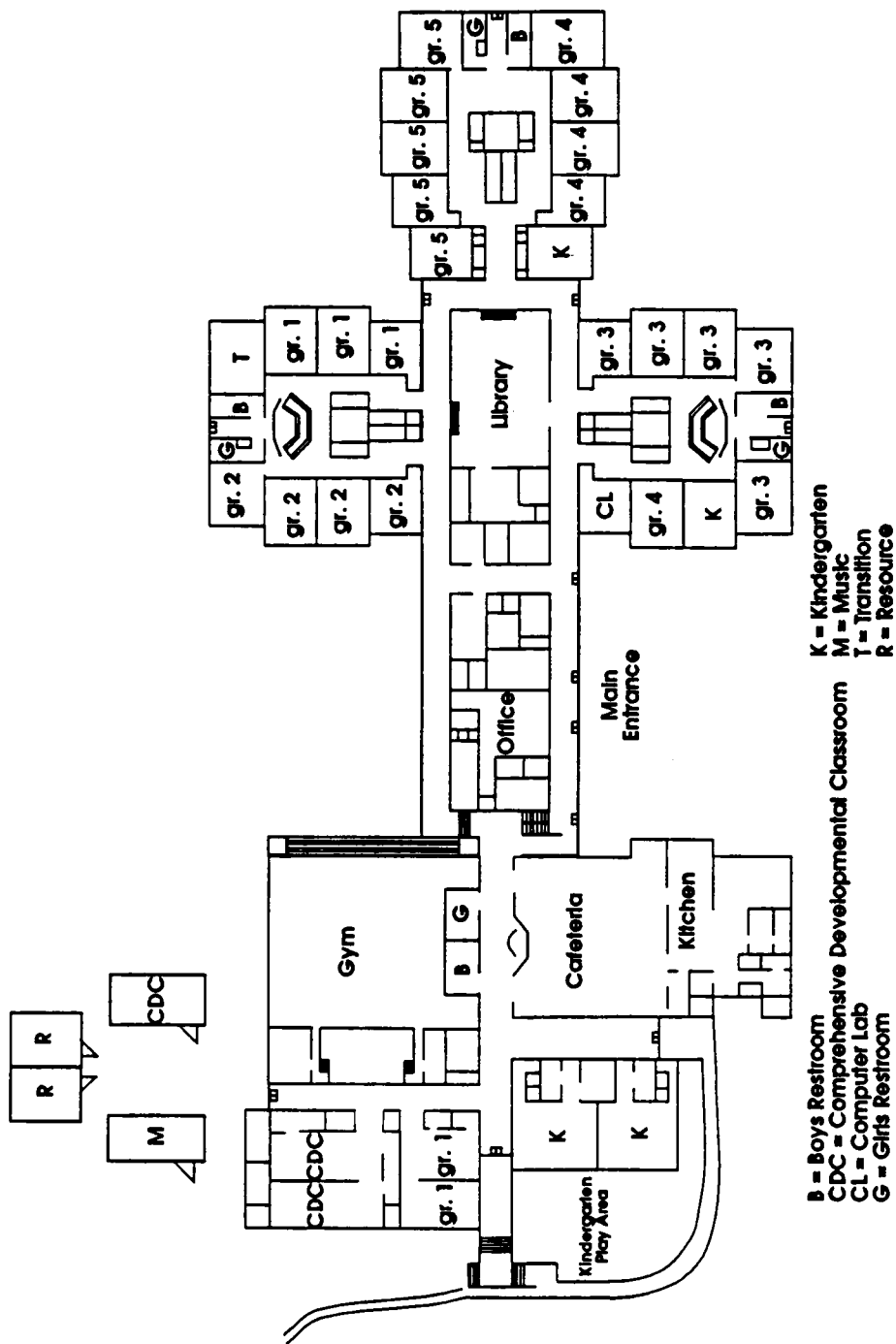
Across the hall from the center entrance doors behind large glass panels is office space for a secretary, a bookkeeper, the principal and assistant principal, various personnel who serve other schools as well, a workroom, and a small clinic, all located in the center of the building. These areas are situated between the north and south halls that connect the east and west ends of the building and can

be accessed from both hallways. Resource classrooms, the curriculum facilitator's office, staff restrooms and a lounge, as well as a small conference room and library storage area are located in a short hallway connecting the north and south hallways.

Three wings at the east end of the school, designed around a large, sunken, open library space, accommodate eight classrooms each with additional space for storage, a large meeting area for students, a teacher planning area, and one boys', one girls', and one staff restroom. The north wing houses first, transition, and second grades and is carpeted in a bright gold.. The south wing, carpeted in dark blue and equipped with a sunken stage and seating area, houses all third grades, a fourth grade, and a computer lab. The east wing, carpeted with bright orange, houses fourth and fifth grades.

Some exceptions have been made to this basic design to accommodate a growing school population. Two classrooms located just off the library space at the entrance to the east wing are currently used as one fifth grade and one kindergarten. Additional kindergartens, a special education classroom, and a first grade are located at the west end of the building beyond the cafeteria and gymnasium.(Figure 1)

The walls of the hallways and the classrooms are cinder block, painted a variety of neutral colors or are brick.



Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

Figure 1

Although student work is displayed outside of classrooms, long hallways leading to the classroom areas are mostly devoid of student work. The effect is an open, inviting, although somewhat sterile atmosphere.

Classrooms at Thurgood Marshall vary in size, are air-conditioned, carpeted, and equipped with an intercom system. Originally all classrooms were open, but walls were constructed in the last decade to enclose individual classes. Each classroom has a door that opens onto the outside yard. Windows are small and located high up on the walls of corner classrooms only. All classrooms have narrow windows in the outside doors. There are assortments of modular furniture on casters in each classroom which can be arranged in a variety of ways. New beige student desks and blue chairs were purchased for every classroom during the 1991-1992 school year. Each classroom is self-contained and its teacher is responsible for the entire curriculum for that grade. Exceptions are special classes such as music, physical education, library, and computer lab, taught by these special area teachers, enabling regular classroom teachers to have some planning time.

The Classroom

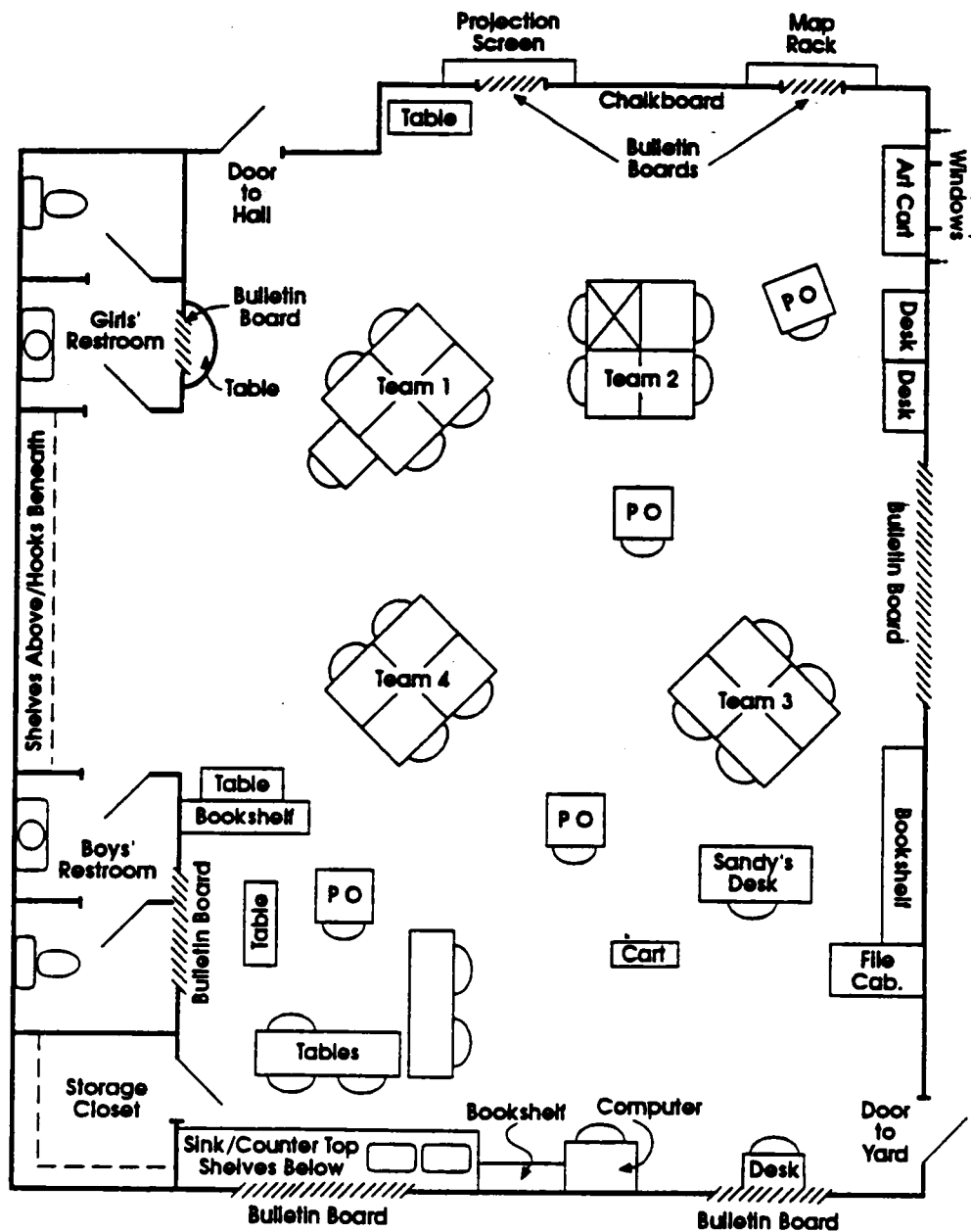
Sandy Frank's fifth grade classroom is located across from the library area on the north side of the building at

the entrance to the east pod. The room, originally built as a kindergarten classroom, has been used to accommodate various grades as student enrollment expands. It has been a fifth grade classroom for three years, but with amenities for a kindergarten classroom such as more space, a sink and countertop, separate boys and girls restrooms, a coat area, and a large storage closet, all within the classroom space. The classroom is carpeted with dark blue carpet and its cinder block walls are painted a neutral beige.

The door to Sandy's classroom has glass panels on one side. Sandy has arranged her classroom so that a green chalkboard between two small bulletin boards to the left of the door as one enters serve as the front of the class. Desks are arranged in groups of four or five touching to form cooperative group study areas. Each desk has storage space within and each chair has a rack underneath on which students place notebooks or texts. There are two teams arranged at the front of the class and two arranged behind them toward the back of the class. Sandy provides separate seating for students who are unable for a variety of reasons to work in groups during any given day. Although this seating arrangement may vary during the semester, and Sandy may assign any student separate seating, this is the general seating design of her classroom. Seating assignments in the team areas also change according to the purpose of the lesson, the behavior of the students, and the focus of the

cooperative groups. Sandy's desk, with various piles of student work stacked around her open plan book, is located at the back corner of the room, diagonal to the entrance, and near the outside door. Sandy uses an audiovisual cart on casters near her desk to hold instructional materials and move to any position as needed in the classroom. The classroom has a spacious feel to it and is, in fact, the largest fifth grade classroom at Thurgood Marshall Elementary. (Figure 2)

The walls of Sandy's classroom serve a variety of instructional purposes. A rack of maps and a projection screen which can be pulled down as needed are mounted over the chalkboard at the front of the classroom along with a colorful cursive alphabet. There is a large bulletin board and a variety of instructional charts on the north classroom wall, and storage furniture including an art cart, bookshelf, two small tables and a file cabinet positioned against this wall. The rear, east wall of the classroom holds instructional charts and a large bulletin board over a built-in sink and countertop with storage shelves underneath. A variety of science equipment, displays, art materials, and cleaning products are housed in this area as well. Bright red, paper drinking cups for each child sit atop the counter near the sink. Two large tables with mismatched chairs occupy the space in front of the sink/countertop. There is a narrow bookshelf for popular paperback books in the center of



☒ Student not included in study
 P O = Private Office

Sandy Frank's 5th Grade Classroom

Figure 2

the east wall and a computer and printer on a computer table beside this bookshelf. A walk-in storage closet with a light is located on the south wall in the east corner. It is equipped with shelves on two sides. Sandy uses these to store collections of tradebooks and other instructional materials used in the fifth grade curriculum. The closet is large enough to store a television and video cassette recorder on a mobile cart. There is a small bookshelf set perpendicular to the south wall which frames the library corner, complete with a large fabric pillow on the floor near it. Students use Sandy's collection of paperback and hardback books during free reading time. Two small tables holding additional books, dictionaries, and thesauruses are set on either side of the library shelf. The restrooms are located in a small alcove on the south wall. Between the two restrooms in the alcove is space for built-in shelves with coat hooks below. The students hang their jackets and backpacks, and store their snacks or lunches here. The small space between the alcove and the entrance door is occupied by a small, half circle table with a bulletin board mounted over it. Students deposit their homework on this table as they enter the classroom in the morning. The bulletin board is used for notes to students and various small displays.

A description of Sandy's classroom would not be complete without an explanation of what one sees when entering her classroom. Many of the displays are student work which

changes as the focus of the lessons change. Several permanent displays and charts however, indicate Sandy's personal interests and the flavor of her teaching style. Mounted on the bulletin board over the sink/countertop is a tree trunk and limbs designed of sculptured bulletin board paper. The tree covers one half of the back wall of the classroom and is easily visible from the hall outside the classroom through the glass panels at the doorway. The tree is adorned with cutouts of wild birds the students made, and a collection of wood samples underneath the tree labeled so that students can learn what various woods look like. Next to the samples there are two microscopes and a box of slides. Students are encouraged to use the microscopes and the slides to learn more about the natural world. The tables in front of the countertop are display areas for wildflowers, seeds, pods, and various nature collections the students contribute. A terrarium is available for any live and mobile specimens. Sandy frequently shares her extensive knowledge of wildlife and science study, much of which was gained as a forester before she became a teacher. Pictures of classic works of art and photographs of the natural world are hung around the room. There is a small sign mounted near the door which says: "Drawing is not a mystery. It is a learnable skill." Around the perimeter of the room, affixed to the walls at ceiling level, march the separate segments of a colorful, paper bookworm, documenting the books the students and Sandy

have read throughout the year and evidencing Sandy's interest in reading for pleasure.

The Students

In order to provide a clear picture of Sandy's students, I will describe their team arrangement on a typical day. My words, gleaned from my observational field notes, and the words Sandy has used on a variety of occasions to tell about her students, will be used to offer composite descriptions.

Team One

There are five students in group one. Their desks, arranged near the door at the front of the class, are pushed together to form a rectangle, with the fifth desk positioned at one end of the rectangle. The desks are slanted toward the chalkboard so that all five students can see the front of the class. **Rachela** sits with her back to the door. She is a biracial, ten year old female. Her smooth facial skin complements her high forehead and prominent widow's peak. She wears her thick, shoulder length medium brown hair pulled away from her face in a high ponytail at the crown of her head. Her hair is very curly from the roots to the tips and she wears gold hoop earrings and pearl studs in each ear, pale pink framed glasses, and braces on her straight teeth. She shows little facial expression during classroom

instruction other than deft grinning signals to her best friend across the room or slight sneers to herself when assignments are announced. She is generally friendly but detached from most of her classmates and her soft speech carries elements of black dialect. She recently explained to Sandy, "He go get his sister," when asked where a fellow classmate had gone at the end of the school day. Rachela is one of Sandy's most capable students, but displays a carelessness and detachment from her lessons that concerns Sandy.

On Rachela's left is **Vince**, a lean African American male who variously places one knee on his chair, stands beside it, or wiggles in it. Vince is playful and usually wears a broad grin across his face. He contributes to class lessons and is talkative, with numerous elements of black dialect sprinkled in his conversation. Vince struggles to read at a low fourth grade level and his written expression is about second grade level. He has difficulty forming cursive letters and lifts his pencil often during writing, resulting in a printed style of partially formed cursive letters joined by curved strokes. On a spelling practice home assignment, Vince's mother modeled the correct cursive forms in the margins of his paper. Vince wrote on the bottom of his paper, "I need help make curse v," to Sandy.

Reggie is seated to Vince's right and his desk is positioned against the end of the rectangle formed by the

other students' desks. He is an African American with a slight body and a tall "box" haircut, in which his wiry dark hair stands tall on the top of his head and the sides above his ears are shaved close to his scalp. Reggie's eyebrows form distinct peaks over his eyes and his narrow face ends in a pointed, slightly protruding chin. Reggie is talkative, well-liked by his classmates, and plays several roles in the classroom. He is an active student, asking questions and making frequent trips to Sandy's side to quietly ask her about his work. My field notes are generously sprinkled with descriptions of Reggie waving an arm and calling out, "Why come don't we...?" as a question or suggestion. Reggie is also an entertainer, and offers quips and stories for Sandy and the class. He delights in relaying the latest comedy routine from a popular TV show starring an African American male whose lines are delivered in black dialect. The students often allow Reggie to speak for them as in this negotiation for an early recess: "We be good!" delivered with a broad smile.

At Reggie's right and across from Vince is **Star**, a slight, African American female who rarely speaks in class. Star wears her long hair in cornrows that merge into long braids at the crown of her head. Star moves slowly, speaks softly, and assumes a low position in her seat by curving her shoulders and bending low over her work or lying with her head on an outstretched arm across her desk. When called on

to respond to a question during class discussion, Star frequently shrugs her shoulders or briefly answers in a barely audible, breathy voice. When she needs help with an assignment, she will quietly move to Sandy's side and whisper her question. During an interview in which she was to tell Sandy about a book she had read, Star answered questions Sandy posed with shrugs and shakes of her head. Star usually says she doesn't like the books she reads and of Pippi Longstocking she offered only, "It was a lotta' chapters."

Seated to Star's right is **Shyanne**, a tall, heavy African American female. Shyanne wears her medium length hair in braided sections all over her head. Her full cheeks squeeze her eyes nearly closed when she smiles and she has a pleasant, gentle demeanor. Shyanne participates willingly in class discussion when called on. She likes to write and has revealed her caring, creative, and humorous qualities through her dialogue journal entries. One entry, telling about her relationship with her grandmother and their fishing trips together offered this description, "She be the Queen of fishing."

Team Two

This group of students is positioned directly in front of the chalkboard. Each student faces the front of the room by turning slightly to the right or left. **Karla** is seated nearest the board on the right facing the chalkboard. She is

a tall, lanky, African American female and wears her medium length dark hair in two long ponytails secured to the right of her forehead and at the nape of her neck with colorful elastic wraps. Karla is talkative and social, interacting continually with her teammates and Sandy. Her voice lacks the southern sounds of her classmates, and her words are delivered in a clear, crisp style that reflects her native Michigan. Karla uses some black dialect in her speech as in "'Cause you be rushin' us," offered to Sandy as a reason for doing poorly on a social studies test. Karla's body seems to be in constant motion, as her long, thin arms reach out across the desk area to point to something a teammate has written, or wave enthusiastically to request an opportunity to speak. Karla moves from group to group to socialize and is well-liked by her classmates. On days when her juvenile diabetes causes her distress, the change in her behavior is quite noticeable. She quietly manages her condition with snacks from home and a willingness to alert Sandy as needed.

DeeDee sits at Karla's left. She is an African American with short hair that appears to have been over processed with chemical straighteners. Her facial characteristics suggest Downs Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. There is, however, nothing in her school records to indicate those disabilities. Her voice is low and has the slurred quality of a speaker with chronic sinusitis. Although DeeDee has probably not attained her full height,

her young body already displays the completed physical maturity of a young woman. DeeDee is excluded from daily social interaction by her peers, and Sandy has intervened on several occasions to encourage class members and others to be kind. DeeDee receives special education instruction during the day in a resource class apart from Sandy's room. Her effort in Sandy's class is inconsistent, and she is frequently moved apart from others to get her work completed. Her speech is characterized by black dialect and she has trouble offering alternate phrases when she is not understood. DeeDee's day to day interactions include many attempts to speak with the adults around her, as in this query from my field notes: "I help you clean these up?"

Casey sits across from DeeDee. She is small and wears her hair in a multitude of braids. Casey reads on a second to third grade level and her writing is barely beyond the developmental level of a first grader. In a mid year journal entry she wrote, " I want spring to come because For I can go swiming and ware shorts and Play go to the cente and go to sant louis ...and jump rop and ride Bikes go shoping." Casey is popular and friendly though hesitant to participate in class discussion. Although she is obedient, her actions suggest that she finds it difficult to focus during independent study. My field notes include this description of Casey as she reads a book:

Casey is grinning and mouthing words as if talking to herself. She rests her chin in her hands as she bends low over the edge of her desk where her book is placed. Her expression is animated as she looks at the bandage which covers her right knuckles, then frowns and wiggles several times in her seat. She yawns, leans back and rests her neck on the top edge of the back of her chair, looks momentarily at her book and then at the ceiling.

Team Three

The students in group three sit in front of Sandy's desk at the back and right of the classroom. There are four students in this group. **Alex** sits next to Mandi and across from LeeAnna and JaTor. Alex is a mature, quiet, African American male with close cropped dark hair. He wears fashionable, dark wire-rimmed glasses that give him a scholarly look. Alex is serious about his academic work, rarely off task, and popular with his classmates. His reading ability is at the fifth grade level and his writing, though not prolific, Sandy judges as only slightly behind grade level. Alex responds to direct questions in class and often volunteers answers, particularly in math. It is only at the end of the day, when the buses are arriving to take students home and there is casual conversation going on in the classroom, that Alex grins broadly and talks about football, his sports heroes, and the rap music he likes. His voice reflects the low tones of puberty as well as characteristics of black dialect. In a discussion of values where safety was mentioned, Alex offered, "OK, like if we call 'lice [police] on a fight or somepin', or if dey try to

say..." to explain the dilemma of maintaining safety in his neighborhood.

Next to Alex is **Mandi**, a frail looking, white female with shoulder length, dark blond hair. Mandi frequently calls out in class and responds negatively if Sandy reprimands or ignores her inappropriate behavior. Mandi frequently demonstrates that she doesn't want to follow directions. She refused to participate in a major art activity during the spring and whined that she couldn't follow directions. A field trip to a wooded, scenic area resulted in an acute case of poison ivy when Mandi deliberately picked the plant and presented it to Ms. Frank after being carefully instructed to avoid it. Mandi exhibits behaviors that appear to demonstrate her desire to connect with adults, but she sabotages that connection by repeated misbehaviors and poor attitudes. She reads only slightly below grade level but chooses books which are far too easy for her and which present little challenge. Mandi's speech is characterized by common elements in Appalachian and black dialect, and she has little trouble in making herself understood.

LeeAnna sits across from Alex. She is a tall, heavy, physically mature African American with light brown hair. LeeAnna attends resource classes and has difficulty attending to the regular classroom work Sandy provides. LeeAnna's reading and writing skills are at the first grade level. Her

math skills are at a third to fourth grade level. She avoids following instructions and often talks softly to herself or entertains herself by drawing pictures during class instruction or distracting DeeDee or Chaquira. LeeAnna doesn't seem to understand appropriate behavior for a fifth grade classroom, and will often pout when she doesn't get her way, stubbornly refuse to begin assignments while wearing a smile on her face, or engage in drawing and copying texts on her own. An example of LeeAnna's work is this entry from my fieldnotes:

LeeAnna brings Sandy her animal notebook, a collection of writing she is accomplishing outside of class. She is proud of her entry about minks. Sandy shares the entry with me. LeeAnna has titled a page "meeks" and copied an entire dictionary entry for the word "meek". She can not read what she has written."

JaTor is seated next to LeeAnna. He is an African American male with a moderate build. JaTor's hair is shoulder length and worn in dreadlocks. Wire rimmed glasses sit atop his nose and his shirts and clothes are most often colorful African prints and styles. JaTor is an eager participant in class, but his participation is hampered by a severe stutter. Sandy and JaTor's classmates are patient with JaTor's verbal explanations, but his stutters frequently render his speech unintelligible. JaTor is easily frustrated when he is not called upon in class. He waves his arms and snaps his fingers to get attention and calls out loudly. He is frequently half sitting or standing at his chair. JaTor's

written work is careless and sloppy and he disrupts independent study time with drum rhythms on his desk top or knees with his hands, a ruler, or a pencil. JaTor is generally engaged in lessons, but his behaviors disrupt his own attention and that of others. A typical response from JaTor about a sentence that students were required to correct and explain is, "It's a kind of person - hold it. It's a kind of person who comes from...It's...It's... It's...I don't know. Can I say about that o'er there?"

Team Four

This group has four students who are positioned behind group one. **Mack**, a small, African American male who wears his hair in a moderate "box" style slanted back from his high forehead, is rarely without a broad grin on his face. He is exceptionally polite and engages in class work enthusiastically. This entry in Mack's journal after a class period spent tutoring a first grader displays Mack's willingness to participate, elements of black dialect, and his lagging development in written expression:

It was fun teaching my buddy Anthony how to do math in I think he like the way I told him how to do it cause after I told him he was on a ball in plus I gave him a little test it the end to see if he now how to do it in he now how to do it."

Chantella sits next to Mack. She is African American with a solid, athletic build. She usually wears her dark

hair pulled back in a high bun or ponytail, but leaves long bangs to hang straight to her eyebrows. Chantella is a strong student, reads on the fifth grade level, and engages in independent work willingly. She contributes to class discussion when called upon, but is somewhat reticent to offer answers even when sure she is correct. Chantella's ability is seen best in written work and her journals are the writings of a young woman on the edge of maturity. She reads at the fifth grade level yet often chooses books which are more difficult. During the spring, she completed The Color Purple by Alice Walker during free reading time. Chantella's questions in class are clear and pointed. When a visiting black, female employee from a local company presented a short talk to the class about career goals and self esteem, then asked if there were any questions, Chantella responded with. "What does deviate (a word the woman had used once in her talk) mean?"

Bonita, an African American, is seated across from Chantella. She is somewhat overweight, short, and wears pale-framed glasses. Her medium brown hair is pulled high in a ponytail at the crown of her head. She loves to talk, usually wears a smile, but does careless work and spends little energy following directions. She is extremely social, preferring to talk or be with other students rather than attend to lessons, so her group placement is often problematic. Sandy often moves Bonita to a space away from

other students in order for her to get her work done. This evokes resistance from Bonita and she often pouts, argues, whines, or cries. Bonita reads clearly and with expression at a fifth grade level, but her work seldom reflects this ability. A journal entry reads: "I can tell that spring is because 1. sun 2. tree 3. ground 4. leafs 5. clouds."

Quincey is seated to the right of Bonita. He is a tall, heavy, African American with a pleasant, open facial expression. Quincey is frequently absent from school with minor illnesses but has little trouble making up his work. He is a strong, fifth grade reader and student, and demonstrates an inquisitiveness beyond that of his classmates. During a visit by one of Sandy's friends from Washington state, Quincey inquired, "Have you ever been to the Olympic Mountains?" He is accustomed to being a superior student at Thurgood Marshall, but rarely works hard to accomplish high grades. He seems to have little sense of needing to accomplish more than he does in class and is willing to gauge his achievement as better than satisfactory compared with his classmates who struggle with fifth grade material. Quincey is liked by his classmates and interacts pleasantly with others in a slow, "laid-back" manner during the school day. This belies his mother's concern that he suffers stress related symptoms. Quincey has been awarded a minority scholarship to a private school in west Riverside for the coming year.

Private Offices

Sandy has assigned several students to "private offices," spaces outside of groups, for a variety of reasons, most of them behavioral. **Chaquira** is one of these students. She sits alone at the front of the class to the right of the chalkboard. She is a tall, thin, African American with medium length, curly hair that she wears loose. Chaquira has caused frequent disruptions during class, demonstrated inappropriate behavior, and often argues with Sandy about punishments for her behavior. Chaquira's mother is concerned about her daughter's behavior which is also erratic at home, and has made visits to school to speak with Sandy. Although Chaquira is not a social isolate, she interacts mainly with other females in the class who misbehave. Chaquira reads well at a fourth grade level and seems capable of accomplishing routine assignments in Sandy's class, but is prevented from doing so by continual disruptive behaviors. Her speech includes black dialect which is usually delivered clearly. A typical remark from Chaquira is this question she asks after Sandy announced that Karla has juvenile diabetes and cannot share her snacks: "Would you get 'em (other students) if you hear 'em crack (issue insults) on her?"

Rusty, a tall, white male with straight, strawberry blond hair in long bangs over his forehead, sits at a desk placed in the center back of the room near Sandy's desk. Rusty's freckled face bends low over his work and he

repeatedly pushes his glasses back up onto the bridge of his nose with one hand while twisting his "rattail" (a thin, often braided strand of hair at the nape of his neck), with the other. Rusty is alternately engaged in completing an assignment and being altogether distracted. He is argumentative with classmates and offers quick, often insulting retorts to comments from others. He repeatedly steps to Sandy's side during the day to ask her questions about assignments, and often distracts students as he returns to his seat. Rusty is generally willing to participate in class, especially during math. His reading is at a third grade level and his writing development still displays many inventive spellings for simple words. A mid winter journal entry reads: "I know spring is coming because Ester is ollmost here. The grass is greener. The birds are sing."

Teisha is a small, wiry, African American female who is in constant motion. Her "private office" is located behind and to the left of group four. Teisha's dark curls frame her delicate face and she constantly engages those around her in conversation. She talks out at Sandy during lessons or talks in a low voice to herself about what is going on in class. I recorded these examples of self talk, which are typical, on two occasions: "I still can't get that 3 stuff (multiplication table) un'er control," and "I ain' gonna' do this," during math class. Teisha is affectionate and social. She turns in her seat to watch me watching the class, catches

my eye, and asks a question or makes a comment about what is going on. Teisha reads on a fourth grade achievement level and has little difficulty with classroom assignments except that she rarely completes them. Several classmates realize that Teisha is easily distracted and that her interruptions are often funny, so they enjoy engaging her in off task behavior which usually begins with joking and teasing and often includes mimicking Sandy's words.

Jay is an over weight, white male with bright red hair and freckles. He rarely smiles. Jay is habitually absent or late to school and is caught in a seemingly never ending cycle of trying to catch up. His energy level is low and he often sleeps in class. He listens to Sandy when she helps him privately but rarely gives her eye contact. He does not initiate conversation with his peers and responds with short comments when they speak to him. Sandy has placed Jay at a "private office" between teams two and three because she feels his attendance record prevents him from participating in group projects that require each student to contribute to a project or cooperate in order to complete a product. Jay reads on a third grade to fourth grade level but makes little progress in reading because of his absences. He has completed only a few chapters in the math text during the entire year and is unable to achieve on any grade level of cumulative skills.

The Teacher

Sandy Frank is 45 years old and a native of Utah. She has undergraduate and graduate degrees in forestry. She received her teacher certification from a large northwestern university, and taught in the same state for two years before coming to Thurgood Marshall Elementary School.

Sandy defines herself as politically liberal, a feminist, and a staunch environmentalist. She believes strongly in equitable education and opportunities for minorities, and often speaks out for these issues in school settings. Her manner is frank, matter of fact, and courteous. She is respected for her teaching ability and for the ways she honestly expresses her opinions on difficult issues. She does not, however, make every meeting a forum for her beliefs. She is very popular with several of her colleagues and liked by many others, even those who disagree with her opinions.

Summary

Sandy's students know one another: they are neighbors, many of them attend church together, they may see one another at daycare or community clubs and weekend community activities. They all belong to a community which can be described as close-knit, held together by family ties and

traditions still cherished in a small, black community. The staff members at Thurgood Marshall who are black know these students well also. They are part of the same community network that is familiar to the students. Many of the staff are friends or relatives of parents of the students. It is not unusual for black staff members to know the names of students in most of the classes at Thurgood Marshall.

These community ties give Thurgood Marshall a comfortable, family feeling for most of the students who are enrolled there. Although it is a large school, those community ties seem to reach out and encompass the entire student body.

White teachers like Sandy are not members of the community context in the same way as the students and black staff members. Most of them commute to school daily from distances which take them well out of the Thurgood Marshall neighborhood. Their willingness to demonstrate an interest in the community and the various contexts their students enjoy away from school varies from teacher to teacher.

Sandy Frank knows the school community as well as any white teacher at Thurgood Marshall. She attends community activities that are not tied to the school and maintains close relationships with friends in the community although she does not reside there. She admits that she would never want to teach anywhere else than Thurgood Marshall.

In this school setting then, we have the intersection of people from two very different worlds. As Sandy and her students work and talk together there are frequent instances which point to those differences. To get the work of school done however, there must be a common ground of communication, the ability to resolve any differences which might impede instruction, and the shared willingness to establish relationships that make effective instruction possible. Sandy and her students, and their efforts to communicate in the classroom, comprise the setting I examined for this study.

Chapter V

DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

The learning environment in Sandy Frank's fifth grade classroom at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School is shaped by certain schedules and routines. Many of these routines are typical of daily classroom life in American public elementary schools. A closer look reveals the roles Sandy and her students play to frame the instructional contexts within those routines. It is in these instructional contexts that communications between Sandy and her students occur which accomplish learning or not.

In the following pages I will present an overview of a typical school day in Sandy Frank's classroom. The purpose of this overview is to set Sandy's classroom within the larger context of Thurgood Marshall Elementary and provide glimpses of how that context affects her classroom. The school staff, school procedures, and curriculum requirements affect the learning environment in Sandy's classroom everyday. In addition, there are regular times when Sandy and her students leave the classroom and use other areas of the building for various activities. The focus, however, will be on what goes on within the walls of Sandy's classroom

from 7:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The bulk of Sandy's instructional time comes prior to lunch at 12:30, so I chose to complete my participant observations and audiotapes of classroom interactions from the time the students arrived in the classroom until lunchtime. Figure 3 offers a graphic representation of the school day and my data collection schedule.

Next, I will present six instructional contexts Sandy and her students use in the classroom within the framework of the daily schedule. The instructional contexts I focus on are those in which the bulk of the curriculum is delivered and where spoken communication occurs between Sandy and her students. I will present the roles both Sandy and her students play as they communicate within these instructional contexts. These are not the only instructional contexts in Sandy's classroom. Information identifying all contexts of instruction and activities I analyzed and those I did not are displayed in Table 1.

Finally, I will present a model and supporting data to describe how the instructional contexts are continually interrupted in Sandy's classroom. I will identify three categories of interruptions, give examples of each, and explain how the interruptions impact the instruction in Sandy's classroom.

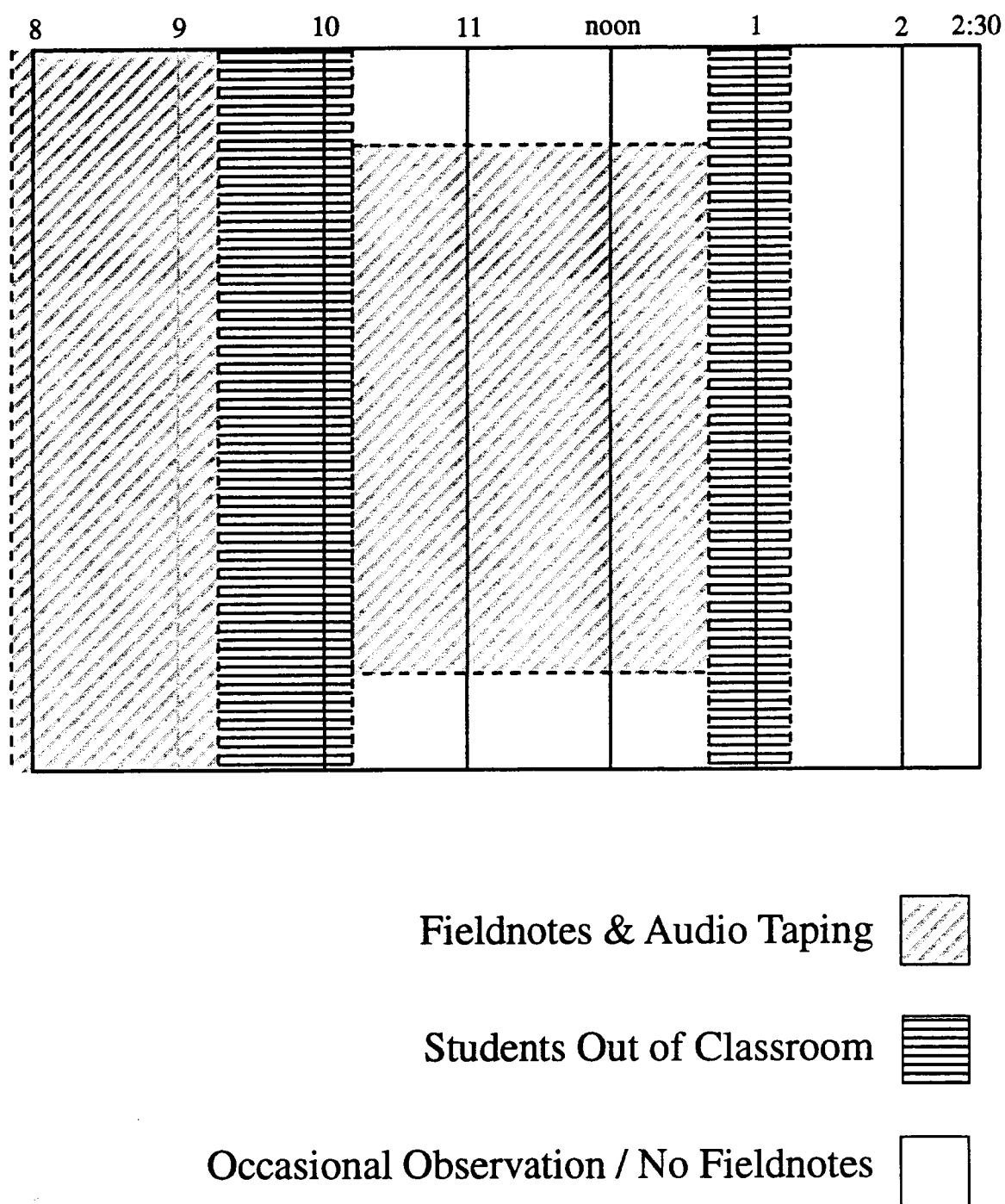


Figure 3. Graphic representation of participant observation

Table 1

Daily Contexts of Instruction and Activities

Contexts Analyzed
Class discussion
Class practice
Direct instruction
Tests
Transition
Free Reading
Contexts Not Analyzed
Silent/small group reading
Recess
Travel/transition
Other ^a
Other ^b

^a Reading aloud by Sandy, student reports, guests, art, etc.

^b Afternoon instruction in science and social studies from 1:15-2:15.

A Typical Day in Sandy Frank's 5th Grade Class

Sandy Frank arrives at her classroom by 7:15 in the morning. She places her personal belongings on a shelf in the storage closet and begins to get ready for the day. A quick glance at the plan book open on her desk reminds her of any variations in the regular schedule and she picks up a colored marker and steps to the back of the room. Here a sheet of dry erase paper is posted on the wall. She fills in the schedule for the day, noting times the students are to attend special area classes such as music, gym, library, or computer lab. Sandy may also post other reminders such as track practice or TAG (Talented and Gifted) classes which are attended by selected students. After the day's schedule is written, Sandy selects a large, soft-bound, spiral book from the cart near her desk. It is the manual of daily language exercises called Daily Oral Language. Sandy and her students refer to these exercises as DOL. Turning to the sentences she has chosen for the week, Sandy goes to the chalkboard in the front of the room and neatly writes two sentences from the book. The sentences are filled with punctuation, spelling, and usage errors which the students will correct. After glancing at the stack of atlases on the storage shelf in the front corner of the classroom, Sandy pulls down a map of the United States from the map rack hung to the right of the chalkboard. She then writes two

questions having to do with geography on the board. Sandy adds two math review problems after checking through the current chapter in her math text. See Table 2 for a sample of typical work posted in this fashion on the chalkboard.

During these preparations Sandy is interrupted by teachers and instructional assistants passing by her classroom. Most of them offer a quick morning greeting or a wave while others stop for conversation. Mrs. Trotter, an instructional assistant assigned to Sandy for about a third of the day, stops in to inquire about today's duties. These two women work well together and a lengthy explanation is rarely needed in order for Mrs. Trotter to know what to do when she enters Sandy's room at various intervals during the day. Instructional assistants for the intermediate grades are shared among the classrooms. In order for the sharing to be equitable their schedules change from day to day. Consequently, instructional assistants are frequently seen in the hallways traveling from one classroom to another and their arrival time in any classroom is dependent upon their ability to be organized and punctual. Mrs. Tatum, another instructional assistant for the fifth grade classes, enters Sandy's room and inquires about work she had not completed the day before. Since Sandy is the "team leader" for the fifth grade instructional team of four teachers, she has various

Table 2

Morning Class Practice Assigned as Board Work

Quietly correct and complete the following by 8:15.

1. coal and oil produces energy but they have some harmful effects
 2. the exhaust from cars buses and trucks pollute the air
 3. How many states border the Gulf of Mexico?
 4. On what island is the capital of Hawaii?
 5. 10 cm = ____mm
12 ft = ____yd
5 m = ____km
 6. What was Tanika's average spelling score for this grading period if her test scores were 85, 95, 95, 100, and 75?
-

duties other than just classroom teaching. One of those duties is to report regularly to the principal, Mrs. Stanza, and to serve on a school wide committee made up of all grade level team leaders. Another of her duties is to compile orders for instructional materials for the fifth grade. It is this order about which Mrs. Tatum inquires. Sandy instructs her to find time before lunch to complete the distribution of materials which have arrived in the school office.

The time is now 7:42 and several of Sandy's students who serve on the safety patrol enter the room, say hello to Sandy, and drop off their book bags before reporting to their assigned stations. Safety patrol students at Thurgood Marshall Elementary are assigned to various places within the school building to direct students to their classrooms in an orderly fashion in the morning. A few safety patrol students, usually the most reliable, are stationed on the plaza outside the front of the building to direct and assist students arriving in cars. Most of the students at Thurgood Marshall arrive by school bus at the west end of building and go directly to the cafeteria for breakfast. All students arriving or finishing breakfast before 7:45 report to the assigned area for their grade where they are monitored by teachers on "bus duty". Students are not allowed to enter classrooms before 7:45. A bell signal at that time announces

the morning procedure for students to file in orderly lines from the assigned areas to their classrooms, carefully monitored by teachers on bus duty and safety patrol students. Shortly after 7:45 Sandy's students enter their classroom.

The students enter the classroom in an orderly manner, some carrying their bookbags to the alcove where there are hooks to hang them and some going to their seats and unloading items needed for the day from their bookbags. Sandy speaks with students as she completes her preparations for the day and several of them engage her in conversations. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed. Students may talk with one another, laugh, use the restrooms, arrange materials at their desks, sharpen pencils, or hand in homework during this time. Some of the students are organized and have established a routine for beginning the school day. Others go back and forth from their seats to where they have hung their bookbags, search for materials, engage in conversations, and play with one another. Sandy monitors their activity in a friendly manner and seems to be talking with all of them at once. By approximately 7:58 she expects them to be settling in their seats so that she can speak to them when the bell rings at 8:00. This excerpt from my fieldnotes captures the minutes prior to the 8:00 bell:

Sandy: "Good morning, Rachella, Chantella. You women are looking good today."

Rachella and Chantella smile in Sandy's direction, and while Rachella digs for her homework assignment

inside her bookbag, Chantella steps to where Sandy is standing and shows her a paperback book she has been reading. Sandy nods as Chantella shows her how far she has read in it, and suggests that Chantella show it to me. Chaquira calls to Sandy at the front of the room.

Chaquira: "Ms. Frank, my momma gonna pick me up early today. She got a job interview."

Sandy softly inquires about the job interview while keeping an eye on LeAnna who is studying the behavior chart at the front of the room. LeAnna touches the piece of paper that has her name on it and realizes that it has been posted at level three, the lowest level on the behavior chart. Level three behavior indicates that a student has lost privileges, such as recess or being first in the lunch line, because of misbehavior in class. Sandy reminds LeAnna that she can look at "the book", a record of student infractions which they must sign, if she has forgotten the behavior which prompted the level three assignment. LeAnna frowns and stomps toward her desk.

Sandy: "Teisha, you're going to need to lay your flying lizard someplace else. Would you take it home tonight please?"

Sandy refers to a cutout that was part of a science lesson from yesterday afternoon. Teisha is playing with the paper model of a flying lizard to see if she can get it to fly across the room.

JaTor and Reggie are standing at the pencil sharpener near the back door, talking to one another as they slowly sharpen their pencils. Shyanna waits patiently behind them, but Bonita is complaining loudly that they are taking too long.

After the morning bell rings, Sandy greets the entire class. Most of the students are in their seats by now and Sandy has a file folder with her class roll for the month ready to check for absentees. She reminds the students that homework should have been turned in and the exercises on the chalkboard completed as quickly as possible. Bonita, Vince,

and Karla go to their bookbags, dig for their homework, and deposit it in a basket on a table near the door. Rusty and Mack ask questions about items on the board. Sandy's answers to them are brief and friendly though her tone indicates she thinks they know the answers to their simple questions. Sandy is about to give her students additional information about the day's schedule when the intercom system comes on and an instructional assistant loudly announces news for the day. These announcements typically take from 3 to 5 minutes. The volume is loud and messages from various teachers and staff are given in a haphazard, conversational manner. Most items are intended to be of interest to the students, but news for teachers is also included. Sandy and her students are quiet during the announcements, but are generally trying to get other morning tasks completed.

Sandy marks the class roll as she looks around the room, noting that several students have not yet arrived. She gathers the homework from the front basket, placing the papers in neat order and arranging them by teams so that she can check to see who is present without their homework. She takes this stack and the class roll to her desk, passing by several students and quietly offering comments about their work. The students are engaged in completing the work on the chalkboard and Sandy reminds them that it should be done by 8:20. It is now 8:11. Sandy arranges materials for the second activity for the morning at one corner of her desk and

on the table near the door while she waits for students to complete the board work. She quietly instructs DeeDee and Mandi who have stepped to her side to ask questions. While passing by Reggie's desk she asks him if he is finished since she sees a paperback book tucked halfway inside his desk and laying open on his lap. Reggie grins and puts the book away.

At 8:23 Sandy tells her students that they should be finished with the assignment on the chalkboard. She steps to the side of the class near the door, looks toward the chalkboard and asks what is wrong in the first sentence. As students raise their hands to offer answers, Sandy calls on them, asking them to tell what is wrong and how they would change it. The sentence on the board reads: "coal and oil produces energy but they have some harmful effects." A typical exchange occurs this way:

Sandy: "What do you see that needs correcting?"
Mack: "Needs to be a comma after energy."
Sandy: "Right. Why, Mack?"
Mack: "(Silent) Uh...uh...'cause..."
JaTor: (Interrupting) "'Cause...'cause you always got to put a comma before but."

There are giggles from Chaquira and Karla. Sandy glances at them while asking,

Sandy: "Why should there be a comma before the word but in this sentence? Vince?"
Vince: "'Cause you got two sentences...no, you could make 'em into two sentences."
Sandy: "That's right. We could make this one sentence into two sentences, but they're connected with the word but. That means it's a compound sentence, remember?"

Sandy and her students proceed in this way, correcting the two sentences aloud and on the chalkboard and checking their papers for needed changes.

Jay quietly enters the classroom. It is 8:27. He goes to his seat, sits down, and places his chin on his folded arms on top of the desk. Sandy goes to his side as she continues to call on students to check the board work, now asking for the answer to number three, a geography question. She calls on a student to answer while she quizzes Jay about his tardiness. Jay nods his head in answer to her questions and digs in his desk for a piece of paper to begin the board work. Sandy instructs him to copy the corrections for the first two sentences from the board. She has only half heard the answer a student has given for number three and asks for a repetition. The two geography questions are answered by students and others are asked to show the regions named on the map at the front of the room. For the final two items, Sandy calls Rachela and Star to go the board to show their answers and the math processes they used. The rest of the students watch, checking their own answers when the girls have completed the examples at the board. All six items have been accomplished. The time is 8:36.

The time from approximately 8:30 until 9:15 is used in a variety of ways. During the early Spring this time is frequently used for standardized test practice and class

discussions coupled with short art activities. The following activities are typical.

Sandy steps to the front of the class and tells the students that Mrs. Barber, a curriculum facilitator in charge of special programs at the school, has prepared another practice test for them. The test is short and is designed to get them ready to take the state achievement tests given each year. The students are eager to complete the test because they are competing with other classes at their grade level for the highest class average on the practice tests in order to win a class pizza party. Mrs. Barber compiles, distributes, grades, and averages the tests. The students excitedly ask what their class average was for the last practice test as they raise their hands to receive today's test. Sandy reminds them to read the questions before reading the short paragraph on the test sheet, and to work carefully. The students are immediately quiet as they settle down to completing the test. The test takes about 12 minutes for all students to complete, and Sandy collects them at the end of that time. Before putting them on her desk she reads the five questions about the paragraph and calls on students to give her the correct answers. Sandy freely discusses or explains answers as needed.

It is 8:55. Sandy is seated on a tall wooden stool at the front of the class and holds some paper cutouts in her hands. She begins a discussion about memories, asking the

students what they think of when they think of memories. After a variety of responses are offered, Sandy tells the students that she wants them to think of memories they have of Spring, and how they know when Spring has arrived. My fieldnotes capture the interchange:

Sandy: "How can you tell that Spring is here?"
Mack: "'Cause it gettin' warm."
Bonita: "Uh...I don' know, the flower..."
Reggie: "Like it get lighter...darker...
lighter..." (He says this in a sing-song
voice, with a slight movement of his head
from side to side, as if enjoying the
sound the words make).
Rachela: "More birds outside."

Karla is digging in her desk and has a book in her lap. Reggie asks several questions about Spring Break.

JaTor: "My cousin in Memphis got off for ice and snow and they're not getting a Spring Break."

Sandy begins to talk about the bulletin board on the wall outside their classroom. She reminds them of trees and landscape pictured there, and asks the students to tell her what the world outside the classroom is beginning to look like. One student says that the leaves on the trees will start to turn green. Sandy asks her to look outside where a large oak is standing on a hill behind the classroom.

Sandy: "Will those leaves turn green in the spring?"

The student answers yes. The students are unaware that the brown leaves on the oak tree are last year's leaves and that they will drop as new leaves begin to sprout, if not before. It takes a series of questions from Sandy to get the student who answered and others away from the notion that the brown leaves would turn back to green.

Sandy continues the discussion by telling the students she wants them to be very observant in the next few weeks and watch for signs, or harbingers, or Spring. She reminds them that harbingers is one of their spelling words for the week and invites them to draw and cut out pictures of what they see to add to the bulletin board. At this instruction she opens her hands and shows the students cutouts she has made of forsythia and dogwood blossoms. After answering several questions about how they are to do the cutouts, Sandra announces that it is time for them to go to the library. The students line up at the door, talking quietly to one another. When they are all assembled, Sandy asks the first student in line to lead the class quietly across the hall to the library.

At 10:15 the students return from the library. Sandy greets them, asking to see several of the books they have selected from the library to read during the week. She announces that it is snack time and that they can eat their snacks while they enjoy free reading time. The students unpack a variety of snacks from their bookbags, pull paperbacks from their desks, or circulate to the bookshelves in the classroom before settling down to read and eat. Sandy goes to the closet, unwraps a package of cheese crackers for herself, and brings them, along with a small thermos and large bag of pretzels to the table at the back of the class. The pretzels are available for students who didn't bring a

snack. Sandy retrieves the book she is reading, Toning the Sweep by Angela Johnson, and sits down at the back table to read and eat too. The students read and enjoy their snacks in a quiet manner. Occasionally Sandy speaks to remind students who are together at the book shelves to quickly choose a book to read.

At 10:40 Sandy calls for recess time, reminding the students who are on level three or who didn't bring in their homework to stay inside. The students exit through the back door to the yard, gathering jump ropes, balls, and a few frisbees from a cardboard box on a back shelf as they go. The back door is left wide open, and Sandy walks between the yard and the classroom to see that everyone is participating as they should. She allows one child who is staying in because of a recent asthma attack to work at the computer in the back of the room. One other fifth grade class is outside at this time and several games and social groups are quickly organized. Sandy does not stay outside the entire time if there are other teachers or instructional assistants watching the students.

At 11:05 Sandy calls the students in from the yard. They enter the classroom noisily and several go immediately to the back sink to get drinks or go to the restrooms. There is general discussion on a number of topics and Sandy uses this time to answer questions, ask them about the books they have been reading, and get some class business accomplished.

At 11:20 Sandy begins the reading lesson by instructing several students to pass out the paperback books they are all reading together. Sandy uses paperback novels, commonly referred to as tradebooks, rather than a reading textbook filled with stories, questions, and skills to teach reading. She prefers that her students work together in groups to read the novels together, assisting one another and accomplishing the skills cooperatively, rather than dividing students up according to their levels of reading achievement. Since the students who are reading on the lowest levels have qualified to receive assistance at this time in a special program, Sandy's reading lessons need only accommodate students reading at grade levels three through five. Lessons with the tradebooks are designed so that every student gets many opportunities to read aloud and to hear good readers as well as construct and write answers to questions about the story together.

The students are reading Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. Sandy has divided them into groups of three to five students each and placed them at various places around the room, some at team desk areas, others at additional tables located at the back and sides of the room. Sandy has selected the groups so as to have strong and weak readers in each group. The students know to read aloud in a round robin fashion, each student choosing to read a page or less. Because the groups are small and because there is space

between each group, students can read several times with low voices and be heard by their group members without disturbing other reading groups. Sandy assigns a reading log to each student for the duration of the book. The log requires the date, chapter read, and a summary of the chapters written by each child. Additional activities and work sheets are included in the log from time to time. The front page of the reading log includes a contract which says: "I hereby commit myself to cooperating in this group so that we can all read, work, discuss, and learn. We are no longer only learning to read, but we are reading to learn!" There is a place for a listing of the group members, the title of the book, the student's signature and date, and the teacher's signature, as well as a rectangle in which to list additional activity sheets. On this day, the students are reading chapter 8 together and constructing a summary of the chapter. At the end of the reading time, Sandy asks them to read aloud several of their summaries to the whole class. Reading time generally ends with a discussion of the events the students have read thus far, predictions for the coming chapters, and answers to questions Sandy may pose about the story or characters. Sandy completes the reading lesson with her students today at 12:25, requests that the books be collected by several of them and stored on the front table, and asks her students to prepare to leave for lunch in the cafeteria.

Lessons begin after lunch at about 1:15. On days when Sandy does not include math in the morning schedule she conducts math in the afternoon. When she is able to include math in the morning afternoons are reserved for social studies or science lessons, although from time to time these are also offered in the morning. Today's math lesson is a review of numbers that are multiples of other numbers. This excerpt from my fieldnotes describes the progression of the lesson:

Sandy: "You're going to need a piece of paper on your desks. Girls, I need it now, hurry. Hurry!"

Several students are at the back of the class to sharpen their pencils. None seem to be hurrying to get ready for the lesson.

Sandy: "I want you to help me by counting by twos. And I'm going to write down the numbers as you say them. I want you to count by twos."

Students: (In unison) "2,4,6,8,10,12,14..."

Sandy: "That's enough."

As students continue counting she completes writing two through fourteen on the chalkboard.

Sandy: "Thank you. I just really want six numbers. Let's count by threes."

Students: "3,6,9,12,15,18..."

Sandy: "Thank you. Please count by fours."

Students: "4,8,12,16,20,24..."

There is a breakdown here as one or two call twenty-four instead of twenty and then twenty-three for twenty-four.

Sandy: "Okay, we'll have five."

Students: "5,10,15,20,25,30,35,40,45,50..." (Students have picked up momentum as they have counted to 50).

Sandy: "All right. These are all multiples."
(pointing to the numbers she has written on the board).
"What do we call them? A name for them? These numbers are multiples of two, these are multiples of three, these are multiples of four, these are multiples of five. On your paper I want you to write nine times one down one column...clear down to...erase that. I want you to do one times four and do all your multiplications until you get to nine times four. Do it in a straight row, all the way down until you get to nine times four. Yes, please put the answers."
Vince: "To one times four?"
Sandy: "Yes. Now I'm going to have you do next to it, adjacent, times six...one times six all the way down to nine times six. Right next to it. On the other side. Certainly your answer's in there. In the one column you have one time four, two times four. In the other column you have one times six, two times six, so they're sitting side by side, all the way down. Okay."

Students are all quiet as they follow her instructions and neatly put both lines of multiplication problems and answers on their papers.

Sandy: "These are all multiples of four, are they not? If I ask you to count by fours, how would you do it? Begin with four, eight...(students join to count). Great. It's just multiplication, is it not? These are all multiples of six (pointing to the multiples of six on the board). Would you please count by six? (Students do so.) Great. Now I want you to circle any of the multiples that both four and six have in common. Remember we did the greatest common factor before, now we're going to be looking at common multiples...common multiples."

Sandy continues in this way, leading the students to write the multiples of pairs of numbers side by side and then circling the multiples that each of them have in common.

The math lesson today includes this presentation of common multiples and then identifying the least common multiples for pairs of numbers. The students quickly see that after they have written the multiples for a number one time they can simply reuse that list if the number is included in a pair again. The students also see that when writing the multiples for the second number in a pair they need only list multiples until they find a match or common multiple. There is a brief discussion about the relationship between the least common multiple and the greatest common factor of two numbers. Sandy concludes the math lesson by giving them a worksheet. One side is to be completed now and the other side will be done as homework. She checks the first side as they work quietly to be sure they know how to identify the least common multiple of each pair of numbers given on the worksheet.

At 2:03 Sandy allows those who have successfully completed their math worksheets to go outside on the yard in back of the classroom for a short break. She reminds them that buses will be arriving in about 20 minutes, so to be sure to have things to go home gathered before they go outside. Several of the students race out the back door. Others gather their belongings, talk to their friends, work on homework, or converse with Sandy. Just before the bus numbers are announced over the intercom, Sandy calls the students in from the yard. The remainder of the time until 2:30 Sandy spends straightening up the classroom, talking

with students, and encouraging them to help her. She frequently gets to talk with mothers who come to the classroom to pick up their children or students who drop by from other classes. The students are open in their comments to Sandy and their friends at this time and Sandy and her students often end the school day with lots of laughter.

Instructional Contexts in Sandy Frank's Classroom

Instructional interactions in Sandy Frank's classroom occur in a variety of contexts during the class day. Sandy and her students engage in (a) class discussion, (b) class practice, (c) direct instruction, (d) tests, (e) transition time, and (f) free reading in order to get each days' work accomplished. When interruptions occur in Sandy's classroom, for whatever reasons, these instructional contexts are interrupted (see Table 3).

Instructional contexts in Sandy's classroom are distinct and definable, but often merge with only a few moments of transition. Students associate the type of instructional context with the content area or its scheduled time, or simply with established routines. In other words, Sandy and her students move in and out of instructional contexts as the school day progresses,

Table 3

Instructional Time in Sandy Frank's Classroom by
Instructional Context

Instructional Context	# Minutes	% Total Time
Class discussion	472	39%
Class practice	240	20%
Direct instruction	235	20%
Tests	144	12%
Transition	56	5%
Free reading	53	4%

Note. The total time analyzed was 1200 minutes, or 20 hours of instructional time.

seldom naming the type of context being used, but simply engaging in the habits and routines already established.

It is important to know that a number of factors influence each of the instructional contexts. These factors include (a) the curriculum Sandy is required to teach, (b) the abilities, knowledge, and experiences of Sandy and her students, (c) the materials Sandy and her students use to support instruction, (d) the willingness and motivation both Sandy and her students bring to the learning context, and (e) the time allowed for the learning to be completed. The specific effects of each of these factors on instruction in Sandy's classroom is beyond the scope of this study. I will address the effects of these factors and the implications they may have for further research in elementary classrooms in my conclusions.

In the following pages, I will define each of the instructional contexts by explaining what Sandy does and what her students do. I will also present examples of the interactions between Sandy and her students to provide a sense of the communications which occur in each instructional context. Finally, I will offer a summary of how the instructional contexts and communications within those contexts shape the school day in Sandy Frank's fifth grade.

Class Discussion: Sandy's Role

Of all the instructional contexts Sandy uses in her class, discussion best characterizes the way she encourages her students to learn. A 1200 minute sample of classroom time between 7:45 and 1:00 on fourteen different days spanning three months shows that Sandy typically uses discussion 39% of the time in her classroom. Sandy may use discussion for any of the subjects she teaches and seems to prefer to simply launch into the lesson content for the day and invite her students to join her. Discussion normally begins when Sandy calls attention to the topic, often with reference to the daily schedule or a simple, "Okay class, let's begin by thinking about..."

Sandy may position herself anywhere in the class to begin the discussion. She often sits on a stool at the front of the room, but may also stand at either side of the class or near one of the teams or even in the middle of the classroom area. Sandy does not seem to be restricted by any notion that information should always be presented from the front of the class or that classroom interactions are rigid affairs. Instead, her willingness to move around the room to question, smile, position a student better, and give up a "front and center" position herself, reflects the generally democratic atmosphere Sandy fosters during class discussions.

Sandy's voice is clear and crisp and she directs it so everyone can hear her. She is not native to this southern

region of the United States and consequently speaks with few of the local or regional dialect forms. Her own dialect is fairly neutral and not characterized by forms distinctive to a particular region of the country. Overall, Sandy's voice might be characterized as pleasant, conversational, clear, and easily heard when she talks with her students. In the four months I was a participant observer in Sandy's classroom, I never heard her use her voice in a harsh or punitive manner, although I did hear her speak to her students with disappointment in her voice on a few occasions. The fieldnotes I kept on the very first day I observed in Sandy's class indicate that I quickly noticed the way Sandy uses her voice in the classroom. Here is an excerpt from the record of that day's observations:

The atmosphere in Sandy's class is friendly and the students appear to be attentive to the task of learning. Sandy's voice is modulated so as to be pleasant in tone in a matter of fact sort of way. She speaks to students in a congenial, personable manner as she circulates around the room to give help, bolster participation, ask questions, or share words of encouragement.

Although Sandy does raise her voice in emphasis from time to time or to call her students' attention to changing activities, etc., she rarely uses a formal or impersonal tone when speaking. Instead, she specifically makes use of an informal style to set a warm, relaxed, and nonthreatening classroom environment. Her personal tone is particularly

evident in this conversation as she tells her students how to be good teachers to their first grade buddies:

Sandy: "Remember, help them add the ones first and then the tens. It might help to cover up the tens column with your hand."

Sandy shows them how to do this by writing a sample problem on the chalkboard. She then continues with the problem on the board, giving them a script for teaching their first grade buddies.

Rachella: "Ms. Frank, what if they do it wrong?"

Sandy: "Don't just say, 'That's wrong,' say, 'Let's look at that again. Are you sure you added right?' Take your time. Stay calm. Remember, you're a teacher!"

Class discussion progresses as Sandy recognizes the students who wish to add to the discussion and indicate their intent with raised hands. She may call on students who do not have their hands raised by directly asking questions of them. Students generally raise their hands to be recognized, but they also know that there are a variety of acceptable ways to enter the discussion and that Sandy usually judges their participation by a willingness to be courteous and helpful. While Sandy does not demand that only one person talk at a time, she does remind her students to be attentive when others contribute to the discussion.

Sandy frequently contributes humor to the class discussions, and she seems to enjoy laughing with her students and being sure that they have something to laugh about. During a class discussion that centers on the students' corrections of several sentences on the chalkboard,

Sandy remarks about a very deliberate comma Mack inserted in the sentence he helped to correct. I made note of this remark by Sandy:

Sandy: "Mack, that's the longest comma I have ever seen!"

Sandy says this in a teasing manner, drawing out the vowel sound in the first syllable of the word longest and raising her voice slightly. The class laughs as Mack grins broadly. There are several comments from the class members who describe the huge comma Mack has inserted in the sentence.

During another class discussion, Sandy uses humor to refer to a funny incident the entire class has shared together. Sandy sits in a student's chair behind other members of the class while Shyanne has the floor to talk about her pet boa constrictor. Shyanne fields a series of questions about how big the snake is and what she feeds it. The students are already delighted to discover that Shyanne's snake weighs forty pounds. The discussion continues:

JaTor: "What do you feed it?"
Shyanne: "Two rats for breakfast, three rats for lunch!"
JaTor: "How thick and round?"
Shyanne: "Big." (She forms a circle with her fingers).
LeAnna: "Do you give the snake anything besides rats?"

Sandy now inserts, "Kittens!" into the discussion. She says this loudly with a big smile on her face. LeAnna looks at Sandy, grins, then giggles as the whole class starts to laugh. They are reminded that LeAnna and Sandy both love

kittens, but that a recent class incident involving a kitten almost got LeAnna into serious trouble. She had brought a kitten to school and hidden it under her coat. She had kept her coat on while she took the annual standardized achievement test, which was interrupted by the mewling of the kitten. Sandy made a point to attend to both the care of the kitten and a very worried Leanna instead of meting out punishment. LeAnna seems to realize on some level that Sandy's concern about kittens and students has formed a bond the whole class shares.

Class Discussion: The Students' Roles

The students in Sandy's classroom understand that Sandy expects them to participate during class discussions. Since all of the students sit at either a team area or a separated area called a private office, they must frequently turn in their chairs or reposition their seats when class discussion begins in order to see a variety of speakers. Students seem generally willing to turn so that they can see Sandy as she moves about the classroom and as others respond and contribute to the discussion. The students also seem to know that a variety of physical positions is acceptable during discussions, including kneeling in a chair, sliding a chair away from the team area so as not to have one's back toward a speaker, and pulling a chair beside a friend. Most class

discussions are characterized by both a relaxed seating arrangement and casual body postures.

Sandy's students are generally courteous to one another, although overlapping conversation may occur. Students think little of another student's eagerness to be involved or to simply assist in an explanation or answer. The students seem used to sharing in conversation which may alternately be constructed by a number of students who drop in and out to complete the telling of information. I observed no occasions when students are irritated or angry when they are interrupted by another student during a class discussion. Students may interject information as they think of it during the discussion and forget or feel little need to raise their hands. It seems that Sandy accepts this general discussion style from her students, as evidenced by this interaction during a class discussion of a worksheet on body systems:

Karla is reading aloud from her worksheet. She hesitates at several of the words in the first person description of the urinary system.

Karla: "I am made up of the kidneys and
bladder..."
Class: "Ooooooooo!"
Karla: "...waste (hesitates) products, ...
urine..."

At this last term Karletha begins to giggle softly.

Bonita: (Interjects) "Ain' that jus' pee?"
Sandy: "Right!"

Sandy's students are responsible for participating in class discussions which may center around a general topic, an

assigned topic in one of the content areas, a written assignment, or about material Sandy has presented during previous instruction. They know Sandy expects them to use any instructional materials appropriately, contribute to the discussion, and signal her or other students with questions or comments as the discussion progresses. The students accomplish these class discussions in a more or less orderly fashion that usually meets Sandy's expectations.

Class Practice: Sandy's Role

Sandy designs and uses class practice for a variety of subject areas in her classroom, but all for the same purpose -- to give students an opportunity to practice skills. Class practices take up 20% of the total instructional time sampled in Sandy's classroom and may be assigned at any time during the day. The first assignment of each day is a class practice in editing sentences and reviewing the previous day's instruction and seems to establish and reinforce procedures for class practices. An explanation of Sandy's role in this particular practice clarifies the procedure for other practices as well.

By 7:40 each morning, Sandy has posted the day's initial class practice activity on the chalkboard. There are two sentences with a number of usage or punctuation errors, two questions that are social studies or science related, and two math problems as shown in Table 1, A Typical Day in Sandy

Frank's Class. The first two sentences are always taken from Daily Oral Language, Teacher's Edition, published by McDougal, Littel and Company, a guide for weekly instruction in grammar, language usage, and punctuation instruction. Most of the classes at Thurgood Marshall Elementary are using this program of language instruction, and by the time students reach fifth grade a class practice procedure for correcting the sentences is learned. Sandy uses these sentences and the additional ones she posts to provide a routine for the beginning of class each day. There are usually no more than six class practice items in all, and Sandy may exchange any of the items numbered three through six with cloze analogies for the students to complete as a way of varying the practice. An example of a cloze analogy is, "fence : field :: perimeter : ____." Students fill in a word which completes a relationship to perimeter in the same way that field relates to fence. An acceptable answer for this cloze analogy is area.

While students complete this daily class practice, Sandy accomplishes tasks which seem to begin with the arrival of students. There are homework papers to collect and tally from the homework basket, and Sandy does this soon after 8:00 to be sure her students won't complete their homework assignments during class practice and hand them in late. Sandy checks the roll, inquiring softly about students who are absent. Sandy may use this class practice time to read

notes from parents, to keep records, or to collect forms or money students have brought from home for a variety of purposes. In general then, Sandy depends on the early morning class practice to keep the students busy and settled while she attends to these clerical type duties.

Although Sandy may use the class practice time throughout the school day to complete teacher duties or prepare for further instruction, she makes herself available to her students. She may step to their desks if they motion to her or quietly converse with them if they come to where she is in the classroom.

Sandy expects her students to complete the first class practice by about 8:15, but finds herself prodding them along with deadline warnings as that time nears. Sandy's students seem unable to complete six short items during a fifteen minute practice. Although there are a number of routine interruptions during this practice time, it often takes Sandy's students until 8:25 to complete the six items and be ready to check them during a class discussion about the answers. Other class practices during the school day indicate that the students do not always finish an activity in the time Sandy first allows. Sandy responds by extending class practices beyond the time she first announced, as in this example:

Sandy: "Do your best, but don't stay on any one problem too long."

Sandy waits for a few minutes while students work some more on their practice sheets. It is past the time she first allotted to complete it. A few students have entered the room from their special education class and Sandy knows it is time to move on.

Sandy: "I'll give you about three more minutes to finish it up the best you can, and then we're going to have to go on."

The first class practice of the day has become routinized for Sandy's class. Other practices are assigned throughout the day to practice the skills presented for a variety of instructional areas. For instance, a direct instruction math lesson may be followed by twenty minutes of class practice where students are allowed to begin on the homework assignment or practice a certain number of problems before continuing with direct instruction. This gives Sandy an opportunity to see which students may yet need help accomplishing the lesson objectives. The class practices may vary in content, but Sandy's procedure is always the same, and students know to complete the class practice assignments individually with a minimum of help from others.

Class Practice: The Students' Roles

The instructions for class practices are implicit, routinized, or available either in written form or on request. Class practice in Sandy's classroom is always a written assignment. Students use either their own notebook paper or materials Sandy provides, such as worksheets, drawing paper, construction paper, etc. Practice assignments

may be checked immediately upon completion, handed in for Sandy to check, or part of a homework or ongoing assignment.

Direct Instruction: Sandy's Role

Sandy gives direct instruction to her students about 20% of the time. She often prepares materials, such as overhead transparencies, wall charts, or maps to illustrate the information she presents. Occasionally Sandy uses a model or provides small scale models or manipulatives for her students to use during her direct instruction. When Sandy does not use these kinds of instructional materials she freely illustrates or writes on the chalkboard, a small dry erase board, or large sheets of newsprint during direct instruction. Sandy's role then, is to present information in a way which focuses the students' attention on her and the materials she is using to illustrate the information she wants them to learn. Consequently, Sandy usually stands at the front of the class where there are places for the materials to be posted or projected, and where the chalkboard is easily available for her to present written information.

Although Sandy allows time for questions during direct instruction there are different rules for how that is done which are specific to this instructional context. For instance, Sandy is careful to provide regular and frequent times during her direct instruction to ask if there are any questions. She uses these times as signals for the students

to request clarification of the information she has presented and to summarize the information thus far. Sandy finds ways to ask students questions during direct instruction so that their answers lead on to the next level of understanding about a topic. She often asks questions in such a way as to evoke a unison response from her students. For instance, in this excerpt from my fieldnotes Sandy is giving direct instruction about finding the least common multiples for pairs of numbers. Sandy and the students have already identified the common multiples for 12 and 24.

Sandy: "Now, I'm going to ask you what is the least common multiple." (Sandy says the word least loudly and slowly). "When we say least do we mean the highest number or the lowest number?"
Class: (In unison) "Lowest."
Sandy: "So when we have the least common multiple we have the smallest number that they both have in common. Which one is it, Alex?"

Sandy does not always answer students' questions during direct instruction if she sees the question as an interruption to the orderly construction of the information she is presenting. Even though she may call on students who indicate they have questions, and may allow those questions, she does not always give answers immediately. Sandy may instead tell students to save questions for a few minutes or ask them again at the end of the direct instruction period. Likewise, if Sandy sees a student has made a connection that might confuse others, she may choose to offer the student

some positive reinforcement without articulating the information. In the following example of direct instruction, Sandy has supplied her students with plastic fraction strips for them to manipulate. The lesson topic is equivalent fractions, and Rusty has made an immediate discovery about changing fractions so that they are equivalent:

Sandy: "Now I want you to take one half and lay it over to your right. Then I want you to take the fourths and lay them beside the half that you have set aside. How many fourths does it take to make a half?"

Sandy continues to give instructions so that the students are directed to move two fourths and then four eighths beside the one half so that they can see they are equivalent, or all the same size.

Rusty: "How many thirds equal one half?"

Sandy notices that Rusty has changed one of his thirds to four twelfths and is trying to make them fit with the half.

Sandy: (To Rusty) "Good! You've just jumped a whole lot of lessons!" (She continues, speaking to the whole class) "You can't cut 'em! How about sixths?" Can you find a certain number of sixths to make a half?"

By encouraging Rusty without explaining to the entire class what he did, Sandy controls the sequence and pace of the math instruction. This control is evident in all of Sandy's direct instruction lessons and she is careful to give clear, distinct instructions in simple language.

Direct Instruction: The Students' Roles

Sandy's students participate in direct instruction lessons with formal behaviors which reflect rules and expectations quite different from the casual class discussions. After turning their chairs so they can see Sandy and any instructional materials she is using, students sit in a quiet manner and know that they are not to talk with their team mates. The students understand that the focus of direct instruction lessons is on Sandy, the information she presents, and the materials she uses. Even when Sandy gives them manipulatives to use the students expect instructions from her about what they are to do with them.

The students know that Sandy typically gives them cues to ask questions, but that she may tell them to delay their questions until later in the lesson. Sandy's students also know Sandy expects them to understand and be able to recall the material she presents, and that they may be asked to recall it for a written practice, for a class discussion, for an ongoing assignment, or for a test. Consequently, students may be annoyed by distractive behaviors from peers and may remind one another to pay attention during direct instruction. The students' role then is to listen, follow directions, watch Sandy, refrain from distracting her or other students, and learn the information Sandy is presenting during direct instruction.

Tests: Sandy's Role

Sandy administers tests to assess her students' learning in reading, math, spelling, and language skills. The school administration requires Sandy to give reading tests from a basal reading program she does not use. Instead, she is expected to teach the skills those tests cover as she teaches reading using paperback novels. The reading tests are provided with the basal reading program and Sandy has copies of the tests which students in her classes use from year to year. The reading tests follow standardized test procedures, where a choice of answers is given and the students are required to darken the corresponding answer circles on their answer sheets. Reading tests are given about once every six weeks. Since students take the test that corresponds with their reading level, they may be taking a series of third, fourth, or fifth grade reading tests. It is up to Sandy to have provided the skills instruction at all of these levels for her students during reading instruction with the paperback novels. Practice tests for the annual standardized achievement tests are given every day for several weeks prior to the annual test. The tests have just 6 items and usually test only reading skills. Sandy uses copies a staff member has designed and duplicated for each grade level.

Sandy prepares math tests on copied sheets, or makes copies of the tests that come with the math texts she uses. Both types provide room to work problems and record answers.

Math tests may be given at any time during the week and are always announced ahead of time. The math tests Sandy prepares are usually administered to the entire class. For the math tests provided by the school system, which are generally administered about once a month, this procedure may change. If a student has done poorly on a test or missed taking a test, he or she may be required to successfully complete that test first. Sandy always checks her records before giving tests so that students are given the correct one.

Social studies and science skills are assessed in ongoing assignments such as reports, notebooks, and presentations. There is no time spent in testing for those content area subjects. During the class time analyzed for this study, Sandy administered tests 12% of the time. The annual standardized tests were not counted as part of this time, although the practice tests Sandy used to get her students ready for the annual tests were counted.

Spelling tests, given every Friday, require Sandy to call out words to her students, and offer a sentence for each one. She composes sentences which give a context for the meaning of each spelling word and reinforce learning in other subject areas. Sandy types language tests, copies them, and administers them on Friday, too. The language tests are the ten sentences the students learned during each morning class practice and discussion. Sandy types them, complete with

mistakes, just as they appeared on the board during the week and the students mark and make corrections on their copies. Sandy also includes a paragraph with errors for the students to copy and correct. Any misspellings are posted on the chalkboard. Sandy does not require her students to learn these words during the week, but offers them as an opportunity for the students to see and learn typical misspellings. Sandy varies the test levels for her students in some subject areas. Each Monday she assigns two separate spelling lists according to each student's ability. The "A" list is composed of words generally on a fourth to fifth grade level and the "B" list offers more challenging words. Sandy gives the same language test to all her students, expecting them to have accomplished the same level of editing skills during the week.

During any test Sandy's role is to give instructions until all students understand what they are to do, to monitor the test so that there are no distractions, and to offer any assistance that seems warranted. Sandy demands quiet during tests and encourages her students to use a blank piece of paper as a cover sheet so that teammates won't be able to see their answers.

Tests: The Students' Roles

The students may provide their own paper or use tests which Sandy distributes. In either case, they know to put

their name and the date on the test paper before they begin. Beyond this, the students' role before tests is to be sure they understand the directions and to ask questions about any procedures which puzzle them.

During the actual test time, students do not talk to one another and look only at their test papers. They follow the directions on the test paper or routine procedures already established for each subject area test. Students also use a blank piece of paper as a cover sheet over their test paper so their answers will not be visible to others. Should they have any questions during a test, students raise their hands to get Sandy's attention and then follow her instructions to request help. This can include stepping quietly to where she is and whispering their questions to her, whispering a short request while still at their seats, or even mouthing a brief question.

Transition: Sandy's Role

Transition, those times between other instructional contexts, may serve a variety of purposes yet have similarities. Sandy's role is to make transitions as smooth as possible without an undue waste of time. She accomplishes this by giving clear instructions about what she wants the students to do and often by giving them a time frame for the transition. Sometimes, the instructions are mere reminders of what time it is, or cues for the students to follow

routines already established, such as getting ready for lunch, lining up at the door to go to the library or to the gym, etc. At other times, Sandy's instructions may be very specific, as in this example from my fieldnotes:

Sandy: (To class as she stands) "If you've finished them up you should put your reading logs away. Team leaders, discussion leaders, bring me your sheets and pick up a new one again for the discussion leaders tomorrow. Now, you need nothing on your desks, not even a pencil. Real fast! Mack, do I have your discussion leader form? Who's ready to go on?"

Sandy is shuffling through math homework papers to be sure all homework papers have been handed in. She passes the homework papers to each team and then continues.

Sandy: "Okay, we're going to check factors."
(This indicates the beginning of a class discussion about the math homework).

Most transitions have become so routinized that only reminders are necessary.

I include transition as an instructional context because important classroom learning does occur during transition. Learning during transition can be characterized as reminders of lesson content already covered, instructions for organizing materials, or training in skills students need to accomplish learning in any context, such as following directions and responding appropriately to change. These transition topics apply to the general expectations for students in Sandy's class and are therefore a part of the curriculum.

Transition: The Students' Roles

The students' role during transition is to follow instructions. Most often this means attending to instructions from Sandy, but may also include instructions from others designated as team leaders or a single student Sandy has appointed to give instructions, collect finished papers, or distribute materials for the next activity. Students are responsible for storing materials used for the last lesson and readying any materials to be used for the next. Students talk to one another during transition to get these tasks accomplished and to have a brief break from instruction, but know that their main task is to be ready when Sandy announces the next lesson presentation or activity.

Free Reading: Sandy's Role

Sandy designates various times during the school day as free reading time. These times most often come mid morning just before or directly after recess. Sandy assigns free reading when she needs to get tasks accomplished which require her to be out of the room or require her to work with individual students in the room. Since instructional time seems so short and her students are the last ones scheduled for lunch in the cafeteria, Sandy allows them to eat snacks they have brought from home during free reading time.

Sandy helps students select books to read during free reading time. She has an extensive collection of paperback books on a variety of reading levels on her classroom shelves. She also has some hardback books she has collected over the years, or ones she has gathered regularly from the library. The books are stored on two sets of bookshelves and on several of the display tables around the room. Sandy talks with her students to find out about their interests and the books they have already read and enjoyed. She frequently encourages them to read several books by the same author. If students are unable to make a choice on their own, Sandy describes the events in several books she has read and enthusiastically recommends these. Sandy allows students to keep the books at their desks during free reading time and until they have completed reading them.

Sandy often chooses to read a book during free reading time too. She is an avid reader and may bring a novel or children's book from her personal collection to school to read during free reading. Sandy says that she thinks it is important for her students to see an adult enjoying a book and modeling engaged reading behavior. When Sandy is reading during free reading time, she finds a place to sit among her students and is likely to assume a comfortable position as she reads. In other words, she may have her feet propped up on another chair or she may be seated comfortably atop the stool at the front of the classroom.

Sandy expects free reading to be an important part of the reading instruction in her classroom. In order for her students to realize the importance of the free reading time, Sandy interviews her students individually about the books they have read. This gives her an opportunity to assess their interest in reading for pleasure and the reading level they choose when they read independently. Sandy provides a class project so that students can see the progress they are making in their free reading time. After she interviews students about books they have read, Sandy hands them construction paper forms to fill out with the name and author of their books and their names too. Students cut these forms to resemble the segments of a worm and then post them on the walls of the classroom at ceiling level. Sandy has already posted the head of a giant bookworm on the wall and the students extend the bookworm's body with the constructions paper forms as a record of the books they have read. Sandy adds the books she reads in this way and the students are delighted when I also add the books I read during the semester. The completed bookworm stretches all the way around the room as a visual record of the books Sandy's class read during the entire school year.

Free Reading: The Students' Roles

The students keep paperback books from the class bookshelves, books from home, or books from the library in

their desks to read during free reading time. They sit casually in their chairs or may sit on a large pillow near one bookshelf to read. The atmosphere is casual, yet focused, and all of Sandy's students read quietly to themselves, most of them eating snacks they have brought from home at the same time. Several of the students have pulled up chairs beside one another in an arrangement different than their usual team arrangement. Though they read separate books they may pause every so often to offer a comment to one another about their book, point to a picture they find amusing, or ask a question about something they have read. The students are generally engaged when Sandy is in the classroom during free reading time. When she is out of the room, however, their attention often shifts to socializing with their friends and their books are soon forgotten. I observed a nine-minute period during free reading when Sandy was out of the classroom. By the time she returned, only four of the twenty-one students in her class are engaged in free reading.

Summary

Daily instruction in Sandy Frank's classroom seems busy and orderly. Students generally follow instructions and engage in activities in a cooperative manner. In Sandy's class the rules are flexible rather than rigid and give

students opportunities to talk rather than require them to be silent. Sandy's ability and willingness to explain procedures and her expectations that students follow class procedures is evident in the flow of the day, much of which has become routine.

It is important to note here that class discussion in Sandy's classroom is nearly 40% of the total time spent in the instructional contexts I describe. This reflects Sandy's intent to have the students be participant learners and verbalize their own ideas in talk with one another and with Sandy about lessons. Sandy's students know that she is committed to eliciting their ideas, listening to them when they speak, and searching for meaning in the ideas they express. A visitor to Sandy's classroom is likely to see and hear students engage with Sandy and with one another in conversation -- much of it having to do with lesson content and much of it simply having to do with daily roles and relationships.

The relaxed framework Sandy allows during the major part of the school day sets the tone for every instructional context. While Sandy's students enjoy a relaxed, conversational atmosphere, Sandy plays the role of timekeeper or the director of the instructional schedule. It is up to her to plan the day and see that those plans are accomplished, even while inviting her students to contribute their conversations to lessons. There is a tension between

Sandy and her students because no one in the classroom is as interested in getting things done as Sandy is. The tension is particularly evident during class practice when students are essentially on their own, during class discussion when Sandy is trying to keep them on track, and during transition when Sandy is ready to move on to the next lesson and the students are not. Sandy expresses this tension openly to her students during this example of a class transition:

Sandy is circulating between teams to see how many are ready to begin. She asks that things be picked up off the floor. She notices that Teisha is still in the restroom.

Sandy: "Nothing on your desks at this point.
This group is not quite ready yet."

She speaks privately with Alex and then back to the class.

Sandy: "Still not ready...nothing in our
mouths..."

Here is another example of the tension to get things done:

Sandy is working at the overhead projector with transparent manipulatives that illustrate fractions. She is arranging them, writing with a marker beside them, and is watching her students arrange theirs. She is concerned that her students seem distracted and are not following directions quickly.

Sandy: "This is equal to four eighths." (Arranges fraction pieces and writes four eighths in fraction form with a marker).

Mack: "I'm missing a twelve..."

Sandy: "I know a lot of you are listening,
but..." (attempting to make eye contact with several students).

During this particular math lesson Sandy has given precise instructions for using the plastic fraction strips. Here are her words at the beginning of the lesson:

Sandy: These are fraction strips, and you're going to be seeing a lot of them. There is a set in each plastic bag. You have to have the exact same ones back in the bag when you're finished with them. There are some very small pieces in here. Don't drop them. Don't lose them! Don't lose them. You are responsible for giving them back to me exactly like I gave them to you. Does everyone understand?"

Class: (In unison) "Yes."

My fieldnotes indicate that at the end of this direct instruction Sandy prepares to collect the bags from each student and is told by several students that there are fraction pieces on the floor. The next fifteen minutes are spent checking every students' fraction pieces to see which students do not have a complete set, counting and collecting the bags, storing them, and handing out homework sheets. Sandy is irritated that the process of finding the missing pieces, collecting, and storing them took one third as long as the entire math lesson. The students have cheerfully engaged in the hunting, counting, and storing process. They are unconcerned about this use of time.

Sandy is aware of the tension between herself and her students about getting the academic work of the school day

accomplished. In a dialogue journal we shared, Sandra writes:

This class, much more than last year's, is into "not standing out." Even the brightest students are not willing to take a leadership or exemplary role. Sometimes I feel they're all trying to hide from me, each other, and themselves.

An entry on another day clearly notes Sandy's frustration with two of her brightest students and their attitudes toward schoolwork:

There are two girls, Rachella and Chantella, who are excellent students and normally well behaved. I believe they have developed "hormone poisoning" and are finding it "cool" to dislike school and teachers.

There is, however, more going on in Sandy's class than the relaxed, conversational, instructional contexts she intends and I expected to find. I chose Sandy's classroom for my study because I specifically wanted to examine classroom talk made up of the authentic language of African American students and their white teacher. My research questions focused on the communications and miscommunications I believed I was likely to hear in such a classroom. I chose Sandy Frank's classroom specifically because she allows students to talk, share their ideas, and work through misunderstandings and miscommunications. I knew that Sandy did not expect students to respond to her, to the instructional materials, or to one another with a rehearsed script that ignores their own thoughts and questions. I believed that she elicited student talk for all the right

reasons: to encourage language development; to promote genuine relationships; and to assess students' knowledge and needs. Consequently, I expected to find a lot of communication going on which I could capture, analyze, and present as evidence of language development events between Sandy, a white female, and her students, mostly African Americans. I expected to find numerous examples of miscommunications caused by Sandy's inability to understand her students' dialect, their world view, and their culture. I also expected to find numerous instances where they sorted through those differences and found common communication ground to teach and to learn. I clearly expected to find genuine, though often difficult yet successful, communication occurring during the instructional contexts in Sandy's classroom.

My expectations never materialized. Although Sandy provides instructional contexts to frame the communication for the school day, and her genuine invitation to participate sets the tone for communications, her efforts are mitigated by an array of interruptions which impede effective instruction. The data I collected evidence a classroom environment that is constantly bombarded with interruptions from outsiders and participants. I expected to be able to locate and examine what Vygotsky called the "zone of proximal development," where Sandy and her students labor to accomplish successful teaching and learning. Instead, I

found that Sandy and her students, despite their warm relationships and considerable effort much of the time, fail to establish those zones and are constantly interrupted. Rather than studying the complex interactions between Sandy and her students as they made sense of their miscommunications about the curricula, I found so many interruptions that the interactions could barely take place. I will present descriptions and examples of the interruptions and provide a model to illustrate the impact these interruptions have on the instructional contexts in Sandy's classroom.

Interruptions in Sandy Frank's Classroom

This study identified three categories of interruptions in Sandy Frank's classroom (a) intrusions, (b) distractions, and (c) confusions. These three categories are distinct yet form a complex and dynamic overlay of interactions which impacts the instructional contexts in Sandy's class (see Table 4). These categories of interruptions stop, or slow, or confound the communication between Sandy and her students. Interruptions also trigger other interruptions so that there are chains of interruptions which act together to compound the effects.

Table 4

Comparison of Categories of Interruptions in
Sandy Frank's Classroom

	Type of Interruption		
	Intrusion	Distraction	Confusion
What	An interruption which halts or changes the instructional context.	An interruption which halts or changes the instructional context momentarily.	An interruption halts or changes the instructional context when a spoken or written text is not understood by a listener or reader.
When	Anytime during an instructional context.	Anytime during an instructional context.	When communication is in progress (text centered).
Why	Intentional or unintentional; unexpected.	Intentional or unintentional; usually unexpected.	Seems unintentional; unexpected.
Direction	s(s) to all; S to ss staff/intercom to all.	s(s) to s(s); s(s) to S; S to s(s); staff to all.	s to S; s to s(s); S to s(s); s to all; written text to s(s).

Note. S represents Sandy, s represents students, and s(s) represents student or students.

I will define each category in relation to its general effects on the instructional contexts of a typical school day and present types and examples of the interruptions which occur in Sandy's classroom. I will also present evidence of participants who use each category to regularly interrupt. Next, I will present examples of how chains of interruptions occur in Sandy's classroom, and finally, I will summarize how instructional time is eroded and the classroom environment critically altered by the effects of these interruptions.

Intrusions

Intrusions are interruptions which halt or change an instructional context and are generally unexpected and unintentional. They are caused by people entering and exiting the class. Intrusions halt or change any interaction in progress because the students' attention and Sandy's attention is immediately focused on the intruder and the reason for the intrusion. Since the classroom door is at the front of the classroom, where students' attention is most likely to be focused during instruction, people entering the classroom are immediately seen and heard. There is no way for someone to slip into the classroom without being seen, unless all of the students have their eyes on their work during class practice, tests, or free reading -- an unlikely occurrence. Because attention diverts so easily when a person enters, it seems likely that students are both

interrupted by intruders and curious about their purposes. It is also likely that the students know that Sandy's attention will be diverted until an intruder exits the classroom. It is difficult to discern then, how much of the halt or change in the instructional context of the classroom is caused by the intruder and how much is caused by the students' willingness -- often eagerness -- to give their attention to that person.

An intercom announcement intrudes in much the same way. The difference in this type of intrusion is that everyone in the class knows to stop what they're doing so that the announcement can be heard. The announcer, unable to see what is going on in the classroom, assumes that the teacher will stop and listen to the announcement and will require her students to do likewise. The students' attention to an intercom announcement is expected, while attention to a person actually entering the classroom is hardly ever required. This study gives evidence that all types of intrusions have the same effect on the instructional contexts in Sandy's class, which is to halt or to change whatever is going on.

Outsiders are not the only intruders, however. As will be shown in the following examples, members of the class can intrude on instructional contexts when entering or exiting, or when causing a disturbance which amounts to an intrusion.

Intrusions account for 19% (46) of the total interruptions (242) during the instructional time I sampled in Sandy's classroom. Intrusions are made by:

(a) staff members entering Sandy's class, students sent as messengers, or intercom announcements; (b) the students in Sandy's class; or (c) Sandy herself. In the following pages, I will present the kinds of intrusions made by these participants and give examples of those intrusions.

Staff members and student messengers sent by staff members enter Sandy's classroom for reasons related to school business and the typical daily operation of school. Their intrusions added to the intercom announcements make up 39% of the intrusions I observed (see Table 5). An excerpt from my fieldnotes serves to illustrate the impact of one such intrusion on instruction:

Sandy and her students are engaged in a class discussion which focuses on correcting the morning class practice work posted on the chalkboard. The discussion is lively and fast paced as students eagerly raise their hands to be recognized or chosen to go to the board and make a correction. There is a lengthy discussion about the term "panhandle" and its application to the shape of some of the states. Sandy draws a pan with a handle on the board and compares its shape with several of the states she has already named which have a panhandle. Bonita still seems confused and calls out, "Lake Michigan!" then has to be reminded that the question requires the name of a state only.

There are several other suggestions being offered when the door to the classroom swings open and Ms. Gold, the school secretary, enters smiling broadly and chuckling softly. Ms. Gold calls to Sandy across the class and announces that there will be a new student in the class, then steps aside to allow Jimmy, a slender, white male with dark, wavy hair to join her in the doorway.

Table 5

Types of Intrusions, Number, and Percent of Total Intrusions

Type	#	%
Staff member, messenger enters; intercom announcement	18	39.1
Student misbehavior	12	26.0
Spontaneous intrusion by entire class	6	13.0
Students repeatedly request same information	4	8.6
Sandy makes adjustments in classroom (moves a student's seat, rearranges desks, etc.)	6	13.0

The students begin a chorus of, "Jimmy! Jimmy! Jimmy!" Their enthusiastic cheers are accompanied by spontaneous clapping and Jimmy, obviously delighted, grins shyly at them and gives a slight wave with his hand. Jimmy had withdrawn from Thurgood Marshall only six weeks ago to attend another school near where his family had found housing. While attending Thurgood Marshall before, Jimmy had lived at a homeless shelter so the move to another school also meant his family would have a home. Ms. Gold is talking quietly with Sandy at the doorway, perhaps giving her information about where Jimmy now lives. Ms. Gold gives Sandy Jimmy's readmission forms before she leaves the classroom, and then steps back in to call out the number of the bus Jimmy will ride in the afternoon.

Sandy quickly welcomes Jimmy, giving him a hug and a smile as she tells him, "I've even saved your old desk for you. It still has some things of yours in it." She ushers him across the room and pulls his old desk from the back corner of the room, looks around, then asks Jimmy where he would like to sit. Jimmy doesn't speak, he just slowly looks around the room. Sandy tries to get the students' attention back on the discussion by reading the next problem, a math problem, from the board. The students are still calling to Jimmy who stands shyly in the middle of the room. I pull Jimmy's old desk in back of Rusty's private office and ask Jimmy if that position will do. He nods shyly and takes his seat. Sandy then remembers that she has several other items she has saved for him, retrieves these from her file cabinet, grabs a few new pencils from her desk drawer, and hands all of these to Jimmy on her way back to the front of the classroom. Jimmy seems pleased, smiles, and settles into the routine. The students nearest him are smiling too while others from around the classroom are still watching him. The intrusion has lasted sixteen minutes in all.

There are few staff intrusions which are unnecessary. One staff member, Ms. Fox, intrudes to get Bonita, who has been chosen to participate in a special program Ms. Fox is directing. Bonita was chosen without Sandy's knowledge or consent and the rehearsal times for the program are erratic and lengthy. Consequently, Ms. Fox's intrusions are viewed by Sandy as particularly

annoying. Although no one staff member made more than two intrusions during the twenty hours of instruction I analyzed, it is important to note here that eight different staff members made eleven different intrusions. In general, staff intrusions are purposeful, but halt instruction for more than five minutes at a time.

Intercom announcements are counted as intrusions because, although Sandy and her students know there are announcements each morning, the morning announcement schedule is unpredictable as are urgent announcements made during the day. The students begin each day with a class practice of items posted on the chalkboard. Every morning, sometime between 8:03 and 8:26, intercom announcements interrupt this class practice. Many times the announcements intrude on the class discussion that follows the morning class practice as in this example from my fieldnotes:

It is 8:16. There have already been four interruptions in the class practice that has been going on since 8:00. Sandy walks around the room and sees that most of the students have completed their class practice activity and are ready to engage in a class discussion to check and correct it. Sandy announces to the students that she sees most of them are finished and ready to discuss the items on the chalkboard. She reads the first sentence aloud and asks for discussion about any editing corrections needed. Just as she begins to call on Star, the intercom gives off a crackly sound and the morning announcements begin. The announcements take five minutes to complete.

Although staff members and intercom announcements erode instructional time, it is the students in Sandy's class who

make the most intrusions. The most common type of student intrusion is misbehavior. Misbehaviors which count as intrusions are severe enough to halt or change the instructional context in progress. These are usually misbehaviors which by themselves call a halt to instruction, or are severe enough for Sandy to have to attend to immediately, or both. Here is an example from my fieldnotes of such an intrusion:

The students are conversing softly with one another as they get out their reading logs and change activities from a directed spelling lesson to a directed reading lesson.

Sandy: "On your desk you have your reading log...oooooh, a point for this group right here, the only group that's all ready."

A point refers to Sandy's system of awarding points to student teams who are on task, etc. There are no rewards for the points. The students just seem to enjoy amassing them.

Sandy explains to the class a new format for organizing their reading contracts. She makes several adjustments to the reading groups, switching several students to sit with other students to read. Just then Rachella grabs Reggie's book and puts it on Karla's desk. Reggie is seated at Rachella's team, but Karla's desk is at the team adjacent to theirs. A continuing heated discussion, interspersed with giggles, ensues. Reggie is doing most of the talking and is blaming Rachella. Reggie is out of his seat to get the book, snatching it from Karla who hangs on tight and gives a little yelp. Sandy tries to intervene, but the students are caught up in a tug of war with the book and are not listening to her. Sandy finally gets Reggie's attention and he lets go of the book and goes back to his seat, all the while muttering under his breath. Sandy makes several attempts to get him to answer her about what happened. He refuses to explain. After a third request with no response, Sandy tells all three students, Rachella, Reggie, and Karla, to sign "The Book." The Book is a record of misbehaviors Sandy keeps in a stenographer's

notepad. Students who misbehave must sign their names and afterwards Sandy finds time to fill in the offenses.

An interesting type of student intrusion is one in which the entire class participates in a spontaneous outburst. More often than not, the outburst is laughter, once cruelly at a classmate's error, many times sharing a comical event. The class chant and applause as Jimmy entered the classroom, related during the intrusion by Ms. Gold, is a good example of a spontaneous intrusion by the entire class. Here is another example:

Sandy has just completed a directed math lesson and her students seem to have caught on to what is required of them for the math homework. They have answered the last five questions, all about rounding numbers, in unison, and everyone seems to understand.

Sandy: "Okay. You want to take these home for homework, I mean to study?"

Some students: "Nooooooooooooo!"

Some students: "Yeeeeessssss!"

Sandy: "Let's see...(She seems undecided how to fill in the extra ten minutes they have gained because everyone understands the math lesson).

Students: (Beginning in a whisper, then gradually chanting louder) "Recess, recess, recess, recess!"

Sandy: (Smiling, in a soft voice says) "Stop."

The students stop. Everyone is smiling.

Another way students intrude on the instructional contexts of the classroom is by repeatedly requesting the same information Sandy has already explained or has just given aloud to another student. It is difficult to determine why this happens, although the most logical conclusion is

that the students do not hear Sandy's first explanation, or enough of it to understand. They may, however, have heard enough that they know what question to ask -- again! Here is an example:

A student from another class enters the classroom. He walks to where Sandy is seated on a stool in front of the class.

Messenger: "Do you got some index sheets? Ms. Rubin want some."

Sandy asks the messenger to repeat what he said several times. Sandy is confused over the term index "sheets" and quizzes the messenger, asking if Ms. Rubin wants index "cards" instead. The messenger seems confused, so Sandy tells him to return to Ms. Rubin to find out whether she wants index cards or something else. Several students listen to the whole transaction and try to help Sandy figure out what the messenger might mean. She comments to them about the difference between index cards and index dividers for notebooks. The five students in team one and the four students in team two all engage in this conversation.

Bonita: (From team three at the back of the class)
"What did he want, Ms. Frank? Index cards?"

This question from Bonita focuses the entire class's attention on the meaning of the message from Ms. Rubin, and the various interpretations are offered again.

Intrusions are not just caused by staff members, their messengers, and Sandy's students, however. Sandy herself intrudes from time to time on the instructional context of her classroom -- even on her own direct instruction. She may see the need to make adjustments in the seating arrangements of her students for a variety of reasons, and will halt

instruction, thus intruding, to make the adjustments. Here is an example of one such intrusion:

Reggie complains that Teisha is kicking his chair.

Sandy: Teisha, pull yourself back close to the table. Thank you. Have we... (tries to go on with the lesson). I'll wait." (This in response to Teisha's movement which is causing more disturbance.)

During a transition, Sandy gives out instructions for a math assignment when students will work together. She explains to them that the seating will change the team assignments and some students will have to move their chairs to allow room for others to join their team. Seeing that Mack will have to move his chair, Sandy turns her attention to him:

Sandy realized that as soon as Mack starts to move his chair and desk there is likely to be a massive spill of the materials inside his desk onto the floor. As usual, Mack's papers, books, and supplies are crammed into his desk, but overflow onto his lap.

Sandy: "Mack, see that big glob of white stuff sliding out of your desk toward the floor?"

Mack's team and students from the team behind Mack's seat look at his disorganized materials.

Sandy: "Mack, you'll need to clean that up so you can share a space at your team with another student. Get Rusty to help you."

In all, the intrusions attributable to Sandy count for about 13% of the total, while the intrusions made by students account for almost half (48%) of the total intrusions in the classroom.

Regular Intruders

There are two students in Sandy's class who intrude on instruction more than other students. **Bonita** and **Reggie** account for three intrusions each of the total of forty six intrusions analyzed. Both Bonita and Reggie intrude during three different types of instructional contexts. Bonita's first intrusion is during a language test:

Students return from the assembly program and quietly take their seats to complete their language tests. Those who completed before going to the program read quietly at their seats. Sandy sits on a stool at the front of the classroom and is monitoring the test. Bonita enters the classroom. She is heaving big sighs as if she has run all the way to the classroom. The entire class looks up as she enters and begins to clap softly. Students are smiling at Bonita and she shyly smiles back as she takes her seat. No one talks, although several students turn in their seats to watch Bonita as she crosses the classroom.

Bonita's second intrusion is during a direct instruction math lesson. Here, Bonita intrudes by asking a question out loud which interrupts instruction and requires Sandy's attention to remedy Bonita's need. Bonita, who sits at a private office at the back of the room, may not think she is allowed to simply move her seat quietly so that she can see, a solution which would have been acceptable in this context:

Bonita: "Ms. Frank, I can't see. Rachella's head..."

Sandy: "Can't see back there?"

Sandy sees that Rusty is seated so that Rachella doesn't have room to move her seat. Sandy asks Rusty to move to where Jay normally sits (he is absent today), so that Rachella can move her seat and Bonita

can see the board. Rusty doesn't seem to understand where he is to move, so Sandy steps to where he is seated, points to Jay's empty chair, and as Rusty gets up, moves his chair aside.

Bonita's third intrusion comes during a class practice. It is one of the few times when Bonita is seated with a team instead of at a private office. She is giggling at Mack and making whimpering and growling sounds under her breath. Sandy tells her to pull her desk out of the team area and make a private office for herself.

Two of Reggie's intrusions have already been presented: when he argues over a book with Rachela and Karla during a transition, and when he yells at Teisha to stop kicking the back of his chair during a class discussion. The third intrusion is a question Reggie asks aloud during a class practice exercise. The materials have to do with choosing words to name attitudes toward new experiences. Sandy is seated closest to team one, Reggie's team. He looks up at Sandy and says, "Why you absent last week?" Sandy quickly answers that she went with her husband on a business trip, but not before Reggie's question has been heard by others and triggers several distractions.

Although both Bonita and Reggie identify as students who intrude more than their classmates, each of them has only one intrusion which is overt misbehavior. Their other intrusions seem almost absent-minded or spontaneous. There is not enough evidence of intrusive behavior alone to indicate that

either Bonita or Reggie are determined intruders or deliberately intend to interrupt instruction whenever they can. Instead, their intrusions seem to reinforce the pattern of intrusions in Sandy's class. Specifically, intrusions are for the most part unintentional and unexpected.

Distractions

Distractions are interruptions which momentarily, or briefly, halt or change the instructional contexts in Sandy's classroom. Anyone or anything can distract Sandy and her students, but most of the distractions in Sandy's classroom are caused by individual students. There is an array of distractions students engage in which range from students quietly requesting help and distracting only Sandy and a few students, to students' overt misbehaviors which distract the entire class. At any rate, the ability of Sandy and her students to quickly return to the tasks at hand, whatever instructional tasks those may be, denotes the difference between distractions and intrusions. Distractions, by far, make up the bulk of the interruptions in Sandy's class. In fact, there are three times as many distractions as intrusions.

Sandy causes about 4% of the total distractions I analyzed in her classroom. Her students cause the rest, either singly, in small groups, or as a class. I will

present the types of distractions Sandy's students cause and then the types she is likely to make.

Sandy's students distract in a variety of ways. They may (a) make inappropriate comments or "blurts", (b) request help or make a comment to Sandy by going to where she is in the classroom (c) make inappropriate gestures or sounds, (d) get out of their seats, (e) enter or exit the classroom, (f) join classmates in a spontaneous outburst, or (g) engage in misbehaviors (see Table 6). While some of these behaviors may seem entirely appropriate in some contexts, such as requesting help from Sandy or getting out of one's seat, those behaviors are only counted as distractions when they actually do halt or change instruction momentarily. Since there was no way for me to know what students said or asked Sandy in private, I counted these as distractions instead of considering them confusions, the final category of interruptions.

It is interesting that Sandy does not describe her students as deliberate distractors. She seems intent only on trying to find meaning in every one of her students' contributions and ignoring inappropriate actions and gestures. Rather than being accusatory, Sandy listens, then judges a student's intent as best she can, or simply ignores the distracting behavior in order to help students refocus on the instructional task. The distractions Sandy's

Table 6

Types of Distractions, Number, and Percent of Total
Distractions

Type	#	%
Inappropriate comment or "blurt"	32	22.5
Private request for help or comment to Sandy (student goes to Sandy)	32	22.5
Inappropriate gestures or sounds	22	15.5
Student(s) out of seat(s)	20	14.0
Entrances/exits	12	8.5
Spontaneous outbursts by entire class	11	7.8
Student(s) overt misbehavior	7	5.0
Sandy comments out of context or interjects inquiry	6	4.2

students cause may be intentional or unintentional, but Sandy always treats them initially as unintentional. Inappropriate comments or "blurts" and inappropriate gestures or sounds accounted for many distractions. Here is an example of some distracting actions from a group of students and a distracting comment from a student:

Sandy begins a class discussion after handing worksheets to the students. The worksheets have diagrams and clues about body systems. Eight or nine students, after receiving their worksheets, begin to make motions with their arms as if posing as body builders. Sandy ignores their motions even though she realizes that their poses have already distracted several more students. Sandy instructs Mack to begin reading.

Mack: (Reading from the worksheet) "I break down food..."

Reggie: "If we eat just one time will we die?"

Sandy ignores Reggie's question, which has distracted Mack, and nods to Mack to continue reading. Reggie's comment seems to be related to how long people can go without food. We never find out however, because Sandy does not acknowledge his question during this portion of the discussion.

A teacher's role in every instructional context is to be sure students understand the lesson content. In Sandy's classroom questions are generally encouraged and good questions rewarded with positive comments. For questions to be really productive in an instructional context though, it is best that they be asked so as to assist in a logical construction of the body of knowledge being presented or discussed. Most teachers realize it is their responsibility to give clues to students about the kinds of questions which

are most helpful and allow regular times during lessons to ask them. When students ignore those clues or when a teacher doesn't establish routines for those clues, distractions are likely to occur. Here is a sample of questions Sandy's students ask which seem to distract attention from rather than construct information:

Sandy and the students are reading some exercises about self esteem in booklets Mr. Wright has left for them. Mr. Wright is a local businessman who contributes forty-five minutes each week to a school program entitled Black Role Models. Mr. Wright, who is white, nevertheless became interested in contributing his time at Thurgood Marshall when a colleague of his became involved in the program. Mr. Wright visits Sandy's classroom on Tuesday mornings.

Item #7 on page six in the booklets has to do with a person's response to new experiences. There is a selection of words the students can choose to describe how they respond to new experiences.

Sandy has already heard Reggie's intrusive question about her absences and thinks she has fielded that successfully with a whispered answer about a business trip. Sandy sees Reggie's raised hand and calls on him to tell the class which words he chose.

Reggie: "Where'd you go?"

Prompted by the text's words, new experiences, Reggie's question requests information about Sandy's recent absence from school. She explains that her husband had a job interview in another state. Several other students immediately ask questions aloud.

Vince: "How long did it take?"

Quincey: "Why'd you go?"

Mandi: "Why you been gone so much?"

Sandy hopes to salvage the focus of the lesson and briefly explains why she would go along with her husband on a job interview in another state. The students are no longer interested, and even though she has used the words new experiences in her

explanation the students don't seem to understand a connection to the lesson.

Thirteen percent of the distractions I analyzed in Sandy's classroom are questions or comments blurted aloud by students which Sandy is unable to weave successfully into the lesson content. Inappropriate actions, sounds, or comments by students account for 38% of the total disruptions I analyzed in Sandy's classroom.

Sandy encourages her students to ask questions, and does not discourage them from coming to her and asking questions individually. It is difficult to assess how often these individual requests are actually necessary.

Here is a typical barrage of individual requests for help that are distractions to Sandy and students near her who her who are still working on a spelling test:

Sandy has given the students instructions to complete the last five items on their spelling tests by following a routine format of providing definitions for five words of their choice in the list. Several intrusions occur as Sandy gives them time to complete their tests. Sandy begins to collect the tests of those who signal they are finished and hold their papers in the air. Casey steps to where Sandy is standing and asks if she can call her mother. Casey has lost a dollar and says her mother can bring her another. Sandy nods toward the hall pass as she takes Casey's test paper and sees that Star is waiting beside her with a question about the spelling test. JaTor gets out of his seat with his paper in hand and steps to where Sandy and Star are talking. He returns to his seat without asking Sandy anything. There are two more intrusions caused by others entering the classroom. Star is back up at Sandy's side again, and Sandy repeats the same answer she gave Star the first time she came to her, which was, "Yes, write in cursive."

Students who distract others or Sandy when they step to where Sandy is to ask a question or make a comment, account for about 23% of the total distractions in Sandy's classroom.

Getting out of one's seat is not always a distraction in Sandy's classroom. I count it as a distraction when a student seems to have little purpose for doing so or it is at an inappropriate time. Here is a brief account of student movement during seven minutes of one class practice:

Karla gets out of her seat and heads in Sandy's direction. Sandy is erasing the chalkboard and has her back toward Karla. Before Karla gets to Sandy, she stops at Star's seat and leans down to whisper something in Star's ear. Teisha, seated at a private office in the back of the room, turns in her seat and spies some spiral notebooks stacked precariously on the table behind her. She gets out of her seat and begins to restack the pile of notebooks. Bonita gets out of her seat and wanders toward the pencil sharpener at the back door of the classroom. Her movement catches the attention of Karla, who is still standing at Star's desk. Karla grins broadly toward Bonita. Someone is humming. I turn and realize it is Reggie, kneeling in his seat trying to get JaTor's attention.

About a fifth of student distractions are caused by students getting out of their seats and distracting at least several other students.

Individual students leave class and return for a variety of purposes during the school day. These movements seem to cause distractions rather than intrusions when the class understands their purpose. In other words, entrances and exits, if they are expected or routine, merely cause

distractions rather than intrusions. Special activities or instructional programs for which selected students are eligible occur throughout the day. Those students who come and go for these activities and programs only briefly distract students and Sandy. In addition, students who habitually arrive late to school may cause only a distraction rather than an intrusion when they enter the classroom, so common is their tardiness. In Sandy's class, Jay's late arrivals rarely cause more than a distraction and the students and Sandy are adept at supplying Jay with the materials he needs and "catching him up" on the lesson. Even Bonita's frequent exits and entrances for the program Ms. Fox is directing become habitual and are recorded as distractions on four different occasions rather than intrusions. These types of distractions account for almost 9% of the total distractions in Sandy's classroom.

Sometimes events occur which prompt students to act as a whole in a spontaneous distraction. One such incident occurs after Sandy comes to the close of a math lesson. She has given direct instruction for twenty-nine minutes, and engages her students during the last several minutes in class discussion about answers to some of the problems on their homework assignment.

Sandy: "Next one, Quincey. Is there any number other than ten that they'll both go into? No. Eight and ten. It's getting good now. Karla?
Karla: "Forty."

Sandy: "Is there any number that they'll both go into that is lower than forty? No. Well done. Do the next few on your own."

Sandy seems convinced that her students can confidently complete their homework assignment.

Students: (In unison) "Huh? Help us!"

Students' outbursts such as this one account for about 8% of the total distractions.

There are times when students' misbehaviors cause distractions. Whether or not a misbehavior distraction elevates to an intrusion seems to depend on Sandy's ability to handle the misbehavior or indeed, whether or not she chooses to ignore it or even sees it. Here is a recounting of distractions that occur within a six minute period while Sandy is helping an individual student and others are assigned class practice:

Alex and Rusty talk and giggle next to one another. Quincey makes faces to amuse his team members while he waves his hands in the air. Bonita giggles with Mack, then whimpers and growls softly, then giggles again.

Sandy "Bonita, sign The Book then pull yourself out (indicating she is to move her desk away from the team)."

Jay turns to Mack with a raised middle finger sign. Rachella sees it and laughs softly. Chaquira is standing at her desk directly behind Sandy who is leaning over Casey's shoulder as she helps her. Chaquira raises her hands to cup her breasts, pushes them upward, and wiggles them as she makes a face in Sandy's direction. Chaquira amuses Bonita who has pulled her desk near Chaquira's and grins at Chaquira's antics.

It is not hard to see how these distractions have briefly halted the class practice for several students. Such misbehaviors however, make up only about 5% of the total distractions in Sandy's classroom.

Sandy distracts during lessons by making comments which are out of the context of the lesson. She may remember something she forgot to tell students during a previous lesson or she may simply take care of business that is likely to interrupt anyway. Here is an example of a distraction by Sandy:

Sandy calls out the words to a spelling test. The students are quiet and engaged in their work. Sandy steps to the hallway, where she sees other students leaving their classrooms to attend a special program. Ms. Trotter, who sits at the back table grading papers, has raised her head and looks at Sandy as if ready to ask a question. Sandy, guesses what it is and speaks.

Sandy: (To Ms. Trotter) "I'll send Karla down now."

The two women nod at each other, knowing it is best to let Karla finish her test later than to risk an intrusion by someone sending a messenger to get her. Several of the students look up from their tests, and Karla's team is especially distracted as she prepares to leave the room.

Distractions Sandy makes account for about 4% of the distractions in her classroom.

Regular Distractors

There is another way to look at the distractions in Sandy's class. We can find out who is doing the distracting and what kinds of distractions they are likely to make. An

analysis of 142 distractions reveals 96% are caused by Sandy's students. Over half these are caused by only four of Sandy's students (see Table 7). These students are identified as regular distracters, each of them tallying from ten to twenty-four distractions. Unlike the stereotypical picture of the disruptive black male student, all four are African American girls. I will give examples of the kinds of distractions each student is likely to engage in and when they are likely to distract, thereby offering a "distracter profile" for each.

Karla tallied ten distractions during the time period analyzed. Half of Karla's distractions are private requests for help in which she steps to Sandy's side quietly asks a question or makes a comment. She distracts only a few students and Sandy in this way. Karla distracts three times with inappropriate actions, once by an entrance into the classroom, and once by a misbehavior. Karla's distractions involve only herself, Sandy, and a few other students on most occasions. Six of Karla's distractions are during class practice, two during free reading, one during a test, and one during a class discussion. Only the distraction during class discussion distracts more than just a few students. Karla's requests for help and distractions during class practice suggest that she may need help accomplishing independent work. Given Karla's reading level of about third grade, her requests for

Table 7

Regular Distractors in Sandy Frank's Classroom and Number of
Their Distractions by Types

Type	Student			
	Karla	Teisha	Bonita	Chaquira
Inappropriate comment or "blurt"	0	4	7	7
Private request or comment	5	6	0	1
Inappropriate action or sound	3	6	5	7
Out of seat	0	1	2	7
Entrance/exit	1	0	4	0
Overt misbehavior	1	0	0	2
total	10	17	18	24

help and her distractions during class practices are not surprising.

Teisha, who is usually assigned to a private office, distracts with inappropriate actions and sounds, which account for six of her distractions, and blurts out comments about the instruction in process, which account for nine of her distractions. Teisha also goes privately to Sandy is to make a comment or ask a question, accounting for the remainder of her seventeen distractions. Teisha distracts mainly during class practice and transition times. Her distractions seem more uncontrolled than Karla's and the majority of her distractions distract most of the class.

Bonita, like Teisha, is usually assigned to a private office and displays similar distractive behaviors. She makes inappropriate actions or sounds which account for five of her distractions, and blurts out comments and questions, which account for seven. In addition, Bonita tallies six distractions when she is entering or exiting the room or out of her seat. Twelve of Bonita's distracting behaviors are during class discussion, class practice, and direct instruction, when she blurts out comments or questions that distract most of the class. Compared with Teisha and Karla, Bonita's distractions are likely to interrupt more people during instructional contexts Sandy uses to present most of her lesson material. Neither Teisha nor Karla display any

distractive behaviors during class discussion or direct instruction.

Chaquira causes twenty-four distractions in all. She distracts by blurting out questions, which account for seven of her distractions. She does not typically go to where Sandy is in the classroom and ask privately, as Karla does. Chaquira's distractions are mostly inappropriate actions and sounds, with an occasional misbehavior. During one distraction she takes a pen from Rusty's desk when he is not looking. During another Chaquira is rattling a hand full of change while standing next to Mandi's desk and asking Mandi for a dollar. The distraction when Chaquira stands behind Sandy and makes faces and comical motions has already been presented. Chaquira's distracter profile is different because of the times she chooses to distract. The majority of her distractions are during free reading, ten in all. Most of these distractions are tallied when Sandy is out of the room, which quite possibly plays a large part in Chaquira's freedom to distract so much. Twenty-one of Chaquira's twenty-four distractions occur during free reading, transition, tests, and class practices, suggesting that Chaquira distracts more during instructional contexts in which Sandy is less directive and Chaquira is expected to work on her own. Only three of Chaquira's distractions occur during class discussion and direct instruction. If we assume that Sandy's absence from the room during free reading

influences Chaquira's distractive behaviors and discount them, Chaquira's distractions diminish to fourteen. The majority of her distractions still come within those instructional contexts which are less teacher directed, and Chaquira still distracts most of the classroom because she is out of her seat or blurting comments aloud. Chaquira's profile is different than Bonita's, but probably has the same effect. That is, both girls interrupt most of the class when they distract. It is likely that Bonita's distractions have a greater impact however, since she distracts most of the class during contexts Sandy uses to deliver curriculum. Chaquira, on the other hand, distracts most of the class during times when Sandy is out of the classroom or during a transition.

Confusions

Confusions are interruptions which halt or change instructional contexts because of failures by the students, or teacher to convey or receive meaning. Confusions occur when spoken words or written texts are not understood. For purposes of this study, confusions are only counted when someone expresses confusion. A participant who is confused may or may not express the confusion or request help in resolving it. Even when a request is made a participant's confusion may or may not be resolved so that communication is completed successfully. In other words, confusions cause

interruptions and merely talking about them does not always ensure their resolution.

Sandy expresses more confusions because of her students' words than they do because of hers. There are a variety of ways Sandy gets confused by her students and only a few ways they are confused by what she says to them. It is important to note here that Sandy expresses confusions about classroom talk more than her students do. It may be that she is actually confused more often than they are, but it may also mean that her students choose not to express their confusion. Perhaps they don't expect to understand everything that is being said in class; on the other hand, perhaps Sandy offers enough information while she is talking that students do actually understand what she says. Since Sandy's students do ask questions about instructional materials, and express these confusions more often than confusions caused by Sandy's words, we will assume for the purposes of this study that Sandy rarely confuses her students with her words.

Components of confusions.

In order to understand the confusions that occur in Sandy's class, and the impact those confusions have on instruction, it is necessary to examine the components of confusions. The first component has to do with the direction of the confusion and answers the question, Who or what caused the confusion and who gets confused? The second component is

the type of confusion and essentially answers the question, What was it about the communication that caused the confusion? The third component deals with the outcome of the confusion and answers the question, Was the confusion resolved? I will present information and examples for each of these components of confusions which occur in Sandy's classroom.

Direction of confusions.

The first component of confusions is probably the most obvious: Who is causing the confusion and who is getting confused? In Sandy's classroom there are four sources of confusions, (a) students say things that cause confusion, (b) Sandy says things that cause confusion, (c) outsiders say things that cause confusion, and (d) the instructional materials or texts cause confusion. The only ones who get confused in Sandy's classroom are the participants for this study. There were no third parties who expressed confusion over classroom interactions while I was a participant observer in Sandy's class.

What is more important than the simple direction of the confusions though, is the number of times participants give confusions and the number of times participants get confused. The direction and numbers of confusions show that Sandy is confused by her students' communications more than three times as much as they are confused by one another. In fact,

Sandy is confused by her students ten times more than she confuses them (see Table 8).

Types of confusions

The second component of confusions, the types of confusions or the ways words confuse, is more complex. My data identify eight different ways communications are likely to cause confusion. These are when a speaker (a) can't seem to express an idea or "can't seem to find words" for what they wish to say, (b) misstates a word or phrase or makes an error, (c) speaks too softly, (d) uses a nonstandard pronunciation or form, (e) offers limited contextual information, (f) responds to other input not heard or known by listener, (g) has insufficient knowledge to understand the instructional material, or (h) cannot see the instructional material. All of the confusions I analyzed in Sandy's classroom fall into one of these categories or types of confusions (see Table 9).

Students are most likely to be confused by their peers when there are wrong answers to questions, or slips of the tongue. One such misstatement is typical. While naming corrections for the language lesson, a student says, "Capitalize Monday, 'cause Monday is the name of the week." This student's peers responded with a resounding. "Huh?" The only other types of confusions likely to cause other students difficulty is when students can't seem to find

Table 8

Number of Confusions By Direction and Type

Types of Confusion									
	Can't express	Mis-states or error	Too soft	Non standard usage	Limited context	Responds to other input	Too little knowledge	Visual difficulty	
Who or what confuses ?									Who gets confused ?
s	7	2	2	6	12	2		2	S
s	1	6		1					s(s)
S		1			2				s(s)
s		1							all
written text							10		s(s)

Outcome

	resolved	not resolved	Total
resolved	1	7	19
not resolved	7	3	35

Note. S represents Sandy, s represents students, and s(s) represents student or students.

Table 9

Types of Confusions, Number, and Percent of Total Confusions

Type	#	%
Can't seem to express	8	14.8
Mis-statement or error	10	18.5
Too soft	2	3.7
Nonstandard usage	7	13.0
Limited context	14	25.9
Responds to other input	2	3.7
Too little knowledge	10	18.5
Visual difficulty	1	1.9

words to express their ideas, when a nonstandard pronunciation or form is used, or when a student stumbles over written material because they need glasses. Each of these categories account for only one confusion each, however. Interestingly, the confusion caused by a student using a nonstandard form may have caused confusion not because it wasn't understood, but because it was used on an occasion when most of the students knew the standard form was required. Here is the example from my fieldnotes:

Sandy chooses Karla's team to edit the next sentence at the board. The sentence reads: misty hold the wiggly puppy while her Mother cleens up the spilled milk. DeeDee declines to assist her team mates at the board and Quincey is absent, so it is up to Karla and Casey to make the corrections. Casey quickly capitalizes the first word and adds a fat period at the end of the sentence. Karla is corrects the spelling of the words puppy and cleans. Karla reads the sentence again as Casey goes back to her seat. Karla hesitates, then turns to Sandy.

Karla: "Is that enough?"
Sandy: "Is it?"

Sandy reads the sentence aloud, adding quick comments about the corrections the girls have made. She reads the first two words very slowly and hesitates.

Sandy "Misty hold...Is that right?"

Karla nods her head, all the while looking at the sentence on the board.

Alex: "Nah, that ain't right."
Vince: "Do that soun' right, Ms. Frank?"
Rachella" (In a stage whisper) "Holds."

It is clear to many of the students that standard usage is required for written text even though nonstandard spoken

usage is acceptable. Although Sandy talks about the acceptability of many nonstandard spoken forms with her students, I never hear her talk about when standard subject verb agreement is required.

Almost half of the times students are confused in Sandy's class are when they do not understand meanings conveyed in instructional materials (see Table 10). Their questions to Sandy may be about the meaning of a specific word, about the connotation of a word or phrase, or about instructions for completing an exercise in the text. These confusions are relatively easy for Sandy to address, though the confusions are not always resolved. Sometimes though, it is clear that students simply do not understand what the text means or what Sandy is trying to present. Here are two examples where students are confused by the meaning of text:

In a list of words having to do with personality traits, students are to pick out words they think describe themselves. DeeDee and LeAnna have already asked about the meaning of the word agressive. Several of the students lift their heads to listen to Sandy as she offers a difinition for agressive. DeeDee nods her head, she seems to understand. Sandy fields another questions about the meaning of the word agressive. It is unclear whether this student didn't hear her first explanation or is still confused. Sandy repeats her definition and then begins to read through the list of terms to give definitions for them as well. Several students call out. "What's wrong with these?" It is unclear whether or not the students are confused by the definition or by the word agressive used with personality traits that seem desirable. Perhaps they

Table 10

Examples of Confusions Caused by Instructional Materials

Whole class confused	Student(s) confused
Part of boardwork posted by Sandy for the morning routine includes sentences to be edited that are a repeat of an assignment Sandy had instructed a substitute to present to the class earlier in the week. Students continue to express confusion about whether or not Sandy wants them to repeat the assignment, even after she explains that the assignment is a mistake and posts a new one. Students express continued confusion over the word "panhandle" in the social studies question on the board. Even after Sandy draws a pan with a handle on the board and compares its shape to Oklahoma the students still seem confused. Students ask what "agressive" means on a worksheet, then continue to be confused by its use in the context of the assignment.	Student asks, "Did George Washington die on the bridge?" after seeing a picture of the George Washington Bridge in a child's storybook. Two students respond to a question on the board about <u>land area</u> with the name of an <u>island</u> near the designated land mass. Student asks Sandy, "What's wrong with these?" after reading list of words that describe character traits.

are unable to comprehend a positive connotation of the word, which after all, is not the dictionary's first meaning for it. At any rate, the instructional material causes quite a bit of confusion and a complicated discussion which is not entirely resolved.

Here is another example of a text which confuses Sandy's students:

The third item in the class practice is a social studies question. Students are encouraged to use the atlases available on the table at the side of the classroom to find the answer to "What South American country has the largest land area?" Sandy calls on Rusty to answer the question.

Rusty: "Uh, I haven't done that one yet."
Sandy: "Mack, do you have an answer?"
Mack: "I couldn't find no island."

Before Sandy can respond to Mack's confusion about the question, JaTor and Bonita both call out.

JaTor and Bonita: "Galapagos!"

Several students nod their heads in agreement. Others look questioningly at Sandy. Have several students misread the word land for island? What part of the question didn't they understand? It is difficult for me to tell, knowing that the students have learned to compute area in math class, certainly know where South America is, and should know the meaning of largest.

This example illustrates how both a written text and a wrong answer, the two categories which caused students to be confused more than any others, creates an occasion where several students are confused. Obviously, instruction stops on this occasion while Sandy sorts through the confusion.

While Sandy's students are most confused by written texts and just one type of confusion from peers, Sandy is typically confused by three types of confusions from

students. Students who are unable to find words for their thoughts cause her confusion. This example comes after Sandy substitutes the word "ideas" for JaTor's contribution to the class discussion about personal values. JaTor first offers, "How you think," then says, "like some people think, uh...uh..., they don't like people." Perhaps he intends attitudes but is unable to convey that meaning or think of that word. Sandy is also confused at times when her students use nonstandard pronunciations or nonstandard forms. Here is an example from Reggie. Sandy asks him to repeat it twice before she can repeat what she thinks he said: "Why come so' kids gota' go to li'ry (Why do some kids get to go to the library)?" Students may use too little contextual information for Sandy to understand their comments and replies, as in this confident statement from Reggie in response to "How do you know when Spring is here?": "Like it get lighter...darker...lighter..." Statements with too little context are the cause of almost 40% of Sandy's confusions. These three types of confusions, an inability to express an idea, nonstandard usage, and too little context, account for 81% of the times Sandy is confused by her students (see Table 11).

The other categories of confusions cause Sandy less difficulty. Students' soft words, misstatements, or responses to input she doesn't hear confuse her only 7% of

Table 11

Examples of Types of Confusions Which Confuse Sandy the Most

Type	Example
Can't express	In response to Sandy's question about how the dog in the story acts when found, Reggie says: "He was actin' sad. Crazy. No man. You don't know what I mean." Text uses: <u>cringed</u>, <u>groveled</u>, <u>slinked</u>. Sandy: "Can someone tell us the meaning for these two words?" The words are <u>Pope</u> and <u>Catholic</u>, two words in a sentence about the Gregorian calender. Tor, who has been struggling for recognition to answer every question, finally gets called on by Sandy. Tor: "It's a kind of person...hold it...it's a kind of person who comes from...it's,... I don't know."
Nonstandard usage	Rachella instructs Sandy where she thinks the comma should go in the sentence the class is editing. She says something that sounds like, "Yazzie", which is a proper noun in the sentence. Sandy repeats it. Rachella laughs and says, "No, comma after yes." The comma does indeed come after the word <u>yes</u> in the sentence. Sandy says to Reggie after he repeats his comment three times and she still can't understand what he is saying: "I'm sorry, I can't understand a word you're saying."
Too little context	In the middle of a class discussion about a lesson in a workbook, Chaquira calls out, "Mandi don't have one!" The discussion is about prioritizing personal values. Chaquira is talking about a page missing from Mandi's book. Reggie says, "You can get more out of them?" in response to Sandy asking, "Which of these two fractions is larger?"

the time for each category. Sandy's reaction to low volume and nonstandard usage is nearly the same, "I'm sorry, I didn't hear what you said," and "I'm sorry, didn't understand what you said." Both of these responses request a repeat of the communication, giving Sandy another opportunity to hear or understand.

Outcomes of confusions.

Only 35% of the confusions I analyzed are resolved. Misstatements or errors, the largest category of student to student confusions, get resolved 70% of the time. This category causes Sandy little difficulty, so it may be that she does the explaining to resolve these confusions for her students. When students get confused by the instructional materials, almost half the time they get explanations which resolve their confusion. Nonstandard pronunciation or forms and communications spoken too softly get explained and resolved almost half the time as well. Confusions that almost never get resolved are those characterized by the speaker's inability to express an idea or give adequate context for their words. These two categories cause more than 61% of Sandy's confusions, but only 11% of her students' confusions. Clearly then, Sandy not only gets confused more often than her students by the communications that occur in her classroom, but she stays confused more often as well.

Regular Confusers

There are four students in Sandy's class who tallied four or six confusions each. These students together account for half of the confusions where students are confused by their peers, and a little more than half of Sandy's total confusions. I will give examples of the kinds of confusions typical of these students (see Table 12) and the instructional contexts in which their confusions cause interruptions, thereby offering a "confuser profile" for each of the four students.

Reggie, a highly vocal and willing participant in all instructional contexts, causes confusions when he uses a limited context for his questions or comments. Here are some examples:

Sandy conducts a math lesson in comparing fractions. She passes out the fraction strips to each student, reminding them of the procedures for keeping their fraction pieces together. She calls out various fraction pairs and asks which is larger.

Reggie: "You can get more out of them?"

Does Reggie mean more pieces make up the fraction that is the answer? More of what out of what?

At another time:

Sandy and the students compile a list of values they hold dear. Several have been offered, such as friendship, honesty, love, family, fun, independence, clothes, education, going to church.

Reggie: "Not being stuck up on yourself."

Does Reggie mean modesty, generosity, high self esteem? Stuck up has a variety of meanings and Reggie has complicated this communication by offering a negative construction.

Table 12

Regular Confusers in Sandy Frank's Classroom and Number of
Their Confusions by Type

Type	Student			
	Reggie	Bonita	JaTor	Karla
Can't express	1	1	3	0
Misstates or error	0	1	0	1
Too soft	0	0	0	0
Nonstandard usage	3	1	0	1
Limited context	2	3	0	1
Responds to other input	0	0	1	0
Too little knowledge	0	0	0	0
Visual difficulty	0	0	0	1
total	6	6	4	4

Sandy: "Is that like respect?"

Reggie looks confused, but before anyone can help,
Bonita calls out, "Pets!"

At another time Reggie tries to communicate but can't seem to find words for what he wants to say and finally gives up. Reggie also uses nonstandard pronunciations and forms. One has already been given about students going to the library where Sandy finally understands what Reggie means. Most often though, Sandy never gets a clear meaning of Reggie's thoughts when he uses nonstandard forms which confuse her, and she is likely to simply tell him, "I can't understand what you're saying." Sandy gets confused by Reggie's communications most often during class discussion. If other students are also confused, they do not indicate it. If they are not confused they seldom help to explain what Reggie means, discussion simply continues, and Sandy remains confused.

Bonita mainly offers too little context for her communications which result in confusions. Here are three examples when Bonita offers or blurts out a reply or question that confuses Sandy:

Sandy begins a class discussion about gravity. The sentences the students have edited in the morning class practice this week are about gravity, so she begins this discussion with a quick review.

Sandy: "What is gravity? How would you describe it? Bonita?"

Bonita: "Gravity is like rocks!"

Bonita offers nothing else, so Sandy probes for further meaning.

Sandy: "Do you think gravity is heavy?"
Bonita: (No response).

Sandy, perhaps thinking that Bonita has confused the word gravity with gravel, questions her further.

Sandy: "Do you think it is like gravel?"
Bonita: (Nods in agreement).

Now there is still the question of whether Bonita means gravity is gravel or gravity is heavy like gravel. Bonita, in either case, has still not made clear whether or not she knows anything about gravity. Before Sandy can think of a better probe, Mandi blurts out.

Mandi: "It's something that holds you down."

And another example:

Sandy gives the students some general information about the odometer on a car, which she at first assumes they know about. A math problem on the chalkboard has the word odometer in it. Students are to compute distances in order to determine an odometer reading.

Bonita: "Does it matter how far you drive?"

Bonita repeats this same question several times to clarify it for Sandy, who still looks puzzled. Sandy asks her questions about what she means, but Bonita just repeats the same question.

And another:

Sandy passes out the practice tests the students took last week to get ready for the annual standardized achievement tests. Each of the practice tests has six items on it. The classrooms at Thurgood Marshall are competing for the highest average on their practice tests. Sandy calls out the names of students who got a six on the last test.

Bonita: "How come if we got a six it's still a seventy?"

Sandy looks puzzled momentarily, and then realizes that Bonita needs a reminder on how to compute averages.

Bonita's other communications result in confusions because she uses nonstandard forms, an error, and once because Bonita can't seem to find words to express her idea. The confusion which seems to be a result of a nonstandard form is interesting:

It is 8:07 and the students work quietly on the class practice posted on the chalkboard. Sandy is walking from desk to desk to monitor her students' progress. She stops at Bonita's desk.

Sandy: "Bonita, what are these numbers on your paper? What do you mean?"

Sandy is pointing to Bonita's answer to the third item on the board which says, "How many symbols for capital cities are there on the U.S. map?"

Bonita: "Ms. Frank, I was doin', I was countin' the sy'bles."

She shows Sandy by clapping as she says the state name Alabama, and then the number of syllables in that name. She has mistaken the word symbol for syllable. Nonstandard black dialect speakers may simplify consonant combinations or omit some medial consonants.

Like Reggie, most of Bonita's communications which result in confusion are during class discussion and most of them confuse Sandy.

JaTor, who has a pronounced stammer and stutter, simply has difficulty expressing his ideas. All of his communications which cause Sandy to be confused are a result

of this speech disability. Sandy finally figures out one of his communications only to realize that his response refers to an earlier question. Even the time it takes for JaTor to speak causes confusion and most of it occurs during class discussion and confuses Sandy.

Karla offers a confuser profile which is quite different than the others. She has trouble seeing text on the chalkboard and evidently needs glasses, so she says things which cause confusion because she can't read what is written. Another time she reads Roman numerals as letters, evidently because she doesn't recognize them after a person's name or in the context of a sentence. The time Karla does not correct a nonstandard usage in written work nor seem to recognize it, already presented here, is another example. All of Karla's confusions are during class practice and result in confusing her peers. There is only one occasion when Karla confuses Sandy by asking a question with too little context for Sandy to be able to understand what she means.

Chains of Interruptions

Most of the interruptions in Sandy's classroom are attended to with a minimum of fuss. Both Sandy and her students are able to deal with confusions and distractions by speaking about them, settling them, and moving on with the instructional contexts. Even intrusions are handled as a

regular part of the day, which the data show is certainly true. For the most part, Sandy and her students handle all interruptions with good humor, as evidenced by this sample of intrusions:

8:20

Sandy announces the weekly spelling test and her students get notebook paper, number the lines, and put their names and the day's date on their papers.

Sandy: "All right class, we're ready. The first word from list A is..."

The Talented and Gifted (TAG) program teacher enters from the hallway. She smiles at Sandy and asks if the TAG students are ready for a special program practice. Sandy explains that she will send the TAG students to her when they complete their spelling test. TAG teacher exits.

Sandy: "All right class, first word list A is joint. Two bones come together and form a joint. List B, calcium. Our bones need a diet rich in calcium." (After pausing for students to write) "Number two, list A, skull. The bones that protect your brain are fused and are called the skull. List B, ankle. Their are several bones which form your ankle joint." (Pauses) Number..."

The physical education teacher enters the room. She tells Sandy that the schedule for all fifth graders to attend the special program is changed. They discuss the new time and Sandy asks this teacher to tell the other fifth grade teachers of the change. Sandy is the fifth grade team leader and responsible for relaying messages having to do with all of them. The teacher exits.

Sandy: "Number three, list A,..."

The principal enters the classroom. She tells Sandy that the fifth grade classes will come to the special program at the time first announced, and explains why the second time will not work. She and Sandy converse about the changes. Sandy explains that all of the teachers have been notified of the second time, and now will have to change their scheduled plans

back for the first time. The principal laughs pleasantly while Sandy shakes her head and smiles. The principal exits.

Sandy: "Number three, list A...thigh. My thigh is shaking because I am getting pretty tired of this!"

Sandy and her students smile and chuckle in a good natured way about all of the interruptions.

Most of the interruptions seem to occur as events which are independent of other interruptions, but some occur in groups of two or three, as in the last example. That is, one interruption triggers another, which might trigger another. This is not very surprising, as communications which may be perfectly clear to the people to whom they are directed, may not be understood by others because of their proximity or inadequate attention. It is also not surprising to suspect that students use some interruptions as opportunities for others. Some interruptions trigger multiple intrusions, distractions, and confusions. My data identify five such instances, or "chains of interruptions." Two of these chains are all distractions. The other three are combinations of the other types of interruptions. Four of the interruption chains occur during class discussion. One occurs during class practice. I will present two of these interruption chains and a summary of the other four to explain the dynamics of interruption chains.

This first example of an interruption chain occurs during a class discussion. It involves seven separate

students and Sandy, as well as the class as a whole. The class is discussing personal values. Parts of this class discussion, presented here before, seem to precipitate quite a few interruptions. This interruption chain occurs near the end of the discussion time which has lasted about forty minutes. Sandy elicits ideas from her students as they construct a rank order list of words which express personal values:

Bonita: "Pets!"

Student: (Interjects sounds and words to indicate an attack dog) "Grrrrrrr, ruff, ruff, grrrrrr. Sic 'em boy, sic 'em!"

Sandy evidently hears this distraction and thinks of pets as protection.

Sandy: "Like protection? Like having a dog...the police..."

Vince: "Having a weapon."

It is unclear whether Vince is responding to protection or police. At any rate, the discussion has veered from words which clearly express personal values. Sandy thinks of a connection which might be possible. Or is she simply curious how many of her students think weapons are needed for protection?

Sandy: "Raise your hand if you think having a weapon is important to your feeling safe."

Four hands go up.

Other students begin to talk to one another or simply out loud without being called on.

Chaquira: "But before you can get a gun they can shoot you."

Sandy does not hear this and continues.

Sandy: "Feeling safe, respect people, respect people's privacy..."

Reggie seems to be responding to Chaquira's comment.

Reggie: "But they come jumpin' in on your business!"

Alex: "Okay, like if we call 'lice ona fight or sumpin', or if they try to say about me..."

Sandy calls a halt to the discussion and instructs the students to get ready for a scheduled practice test. The separate distractions here number six in all and include a student's mimicking sounds of an attack dog, Vince's comment about a weapon, Sandy's request for the students to raise their hands about weapons and safety, and Chaquira's, Reggie's, and Alex's comments to try to explain their positions without directing their comments so as to be included in the discussion.. Each of these contributions to the discussion caused other students or Sandy to be distracted. Although distractions are only momentary interruptions, it is evident that the cumulative effect of several distractions close together is similar to an intrusion.

One wonders if this interruption chain really amounts to a significant shift in the class discussion. Has there been general confusion in this particular discussion because of differences in personal values expressed by Sandy and her students? Does the issue of safety engage the students more than say, the discussion of education, or going to church? These questions, and others raised by the interruption chains

in particular, will be discussed in the conclusion statements of my study.

The second example of an interruption chain occurs during a class practice activity which has just been assigned. It includes four students, Sandy, and Ms. Trotter, an instructional assistant. It is 9:00 and students are to go to the gym at 9:15:

Sandy instructs Rusty to sign The Book because of a misbehavior I fail to see. I do, however, see Rusty flip JaTor in the head with a pencil as Rusty walks by his desk.

JaTor: (Reaching out to grab the pencil) "Rusty, gimme..."

Sandy: "JaTor, please step to the hall."

As Sandy moves to the doorway she tells Rusty to change places with Jimmy. Jimmy and Rusty are repositioning their desks as JaTor, mumbling, exits the room with Sandy. Jimmy is having difficulty moving his desk. He lets go of the desk to move his chair out from under it and the desk tips forward and crashes to the floor. Books, pencils, and Jimmy's papers from atop the desk slide across the floor. Most of the students' attention is now on Jimmy and several of them make comments aloud. Chaquira gets out of her seat and wanders to Sandy's desk where she reaches for pencils in Sandy's pencil cup and moves them around as if looking for something. Chaquira then steps to Ms. Trotter, who is helping Jimmy pick his desk up and reposition it. Chaquira taps Ms. Trotter on her elbow several times. She finally gets Ms. Trotter's attention.

Chaquira: "Have you seen my purple pen?"

This interruption chain takes about five minutes of the class practice. It is composed of distractions and intrusions, but the cumulative effect is an intrusion. One wonders if Sandy knows who is really at fault in the disagreement between

JaTor and Rusty. Chaquira, whose distraction profile has already been presented, typically takes this opportunity to get out of her seat when Sandy is out of the room. Rusty, a student who usually distracts by asking for help during class practices, distracts and intrudes now. Perhaps he is unable to engage in the practice activity because he needs help and chooses to misbehave rather than request it.

Impact of Interruptions on Instructional Contexts

The interruptions in Sandy's classroom have a significant impact on each instructional context. I will first present data to describe how the types of interruptions impact instructional contexts and then I will present a model to illustrate how the sum of the interruptions impacts each instructional context and on the class day as a whole.

Intrusions account for the lowest number of interruptions during the total class time analyzed. There are 46 intrusions, 19% of all the interruptions. About a third of the intrusions occur during class discussion, about a third occur during class practice, and a little over a sixth during transitions. The other instructional contexts, direct instruction, tests, and free reading, together suffer less than a sixth of the intrusions (see Table 13). It appears then, that class discussion and

Table 13

Number and Percent of Type of Interruption by Instructional Context

Instructional context	Type of interruption		
	Intrusion #/%	Distraction #/%	Confusion #/%
Class discussion	16/34.8	34/23.9	33/61.1
Class practice	15/32.6	42/29.6	11/20.4
Direct instruction	3/6.5	9/6.3	4/7.4
Tests	3/6.5	14/9.9	1/1.9
Transition	8/17.4	29/20.4	5/9.3
Free reading	1/2.1	14/9.9	0/0.0

equally interrupted by intrusions, events which halt or change the instructional context in the classroom. It appears that interruptions occur during transitions too, but less so.

This picture is inaccurate unless we take into account the time Sandy and her students spend in these instructional contexts each day. Given that Sandy and her students spend twice the amount of time in class discussion as they do in class practice, an equal number of intrusions during both contexts will not have the same impact. That is, a twelve-minute class practice that suffers four intrusions, is interrupted at twice the rate as a twenty-four minute class discussion in which four intrusions occur. In the same way, a rate analysis for transitions, which take up 5% of the instructional time. actually indicates an even higher rate of interruptions. A three-minute transition (5% of an hour) in which there are four intrusions is hardly an instructional context at all!

The data present a somewhat more complex picture of the way instructional contexts are affected by the 142 distractions I analyzed. These distractions make about 59% of all the interruptions in Sandy's classroom, by far the largest category. About 30% of all the distractions occurred during class practice, about 24% during class discussion, and about 20% during transition. Taking into

account the time Sandy and her students spend in each of these three instructional contexts allows us to examine the actual impact of distractions. If we divide the number of distractions by the percent of time spent in each context we are able to compare the three contexts above. Again transitions, allotted only 5% of instructional time, are bombarded by distractions at a rate that is almost three times as great as during class practice and about six times as great as class discussion. While converting to rates is helpful at this point to explain the actual comparisons in these figures, it is of little help in explaining daily occurrences. The reason for this is because distractions occur with other interruptions as well. For this reason, a comparison of rates for all interruptions together during instructional contexts will be presented after the data below pertaining to confusions.

A full 61% of the total confusions occurred during class discussion. A little over 20% of all of the confusions were tallied during class practice. Again, we compare the time allotted to these contexts to arrive at an accurate picture distractions make on them. Adjusting for time, we find that class discussions suffer only slightly more distractions than class practices. The high rate of distractions during free reading I attribute to a single free reading period when Sandy was out of the classroom and a regular distractor, Chaquira, tallied ten distractions.

There are a number of ways the data can be compared to examine which types of interruptions affect which contexts and how, but my purpose is to examine what actually occurs in Sandy's class room. One way to do this is by examining the average rates at which interruptions occur in Sandy's classroom during each instructional context. A comparison of rates for all interruptions by instructional contexts is presented in Table 14. The average rates for interruptions during each instructional context have been rounded to represent the number of minutes per interruption. This allows us to see that transition, free reading, and class practice are interrupted far more frequently than other contexts. Direct instruction suffers the fewest interruptions at one every fourteen minutes, and tests and class discussion are interrupted about every eight and six minutes, respectively. Data show then that the three contexts which Sandy uses to deliver the bulk of the curriculum, direct instruction, class discussion, and class practice, are interrupted less than tests, free reading, and transition. It is important to remember that although these figures allow us to compare how interruptions affect instructional contexts, they are computations which are average rates, not actual rates.

What is needed is a way to compare the three types of interruptions in Sandy's classroom, and how they change in relationship to each other depending upon the

Table 14

Average Rate of Interruptions Per Minute in Each
Instructional Context

Instructional context	total minutes	total interruptions	# minutes/ interruption occurrence
Class discussion	468	83	6
Class practice	240	68	4
Direct instruction	240	16	14
Tests	144	18	8
Transition	60	42	1
Free reading	48	15	3

Note. The number of minutes for each interruption occurrence has been rounded to the nearest minute.

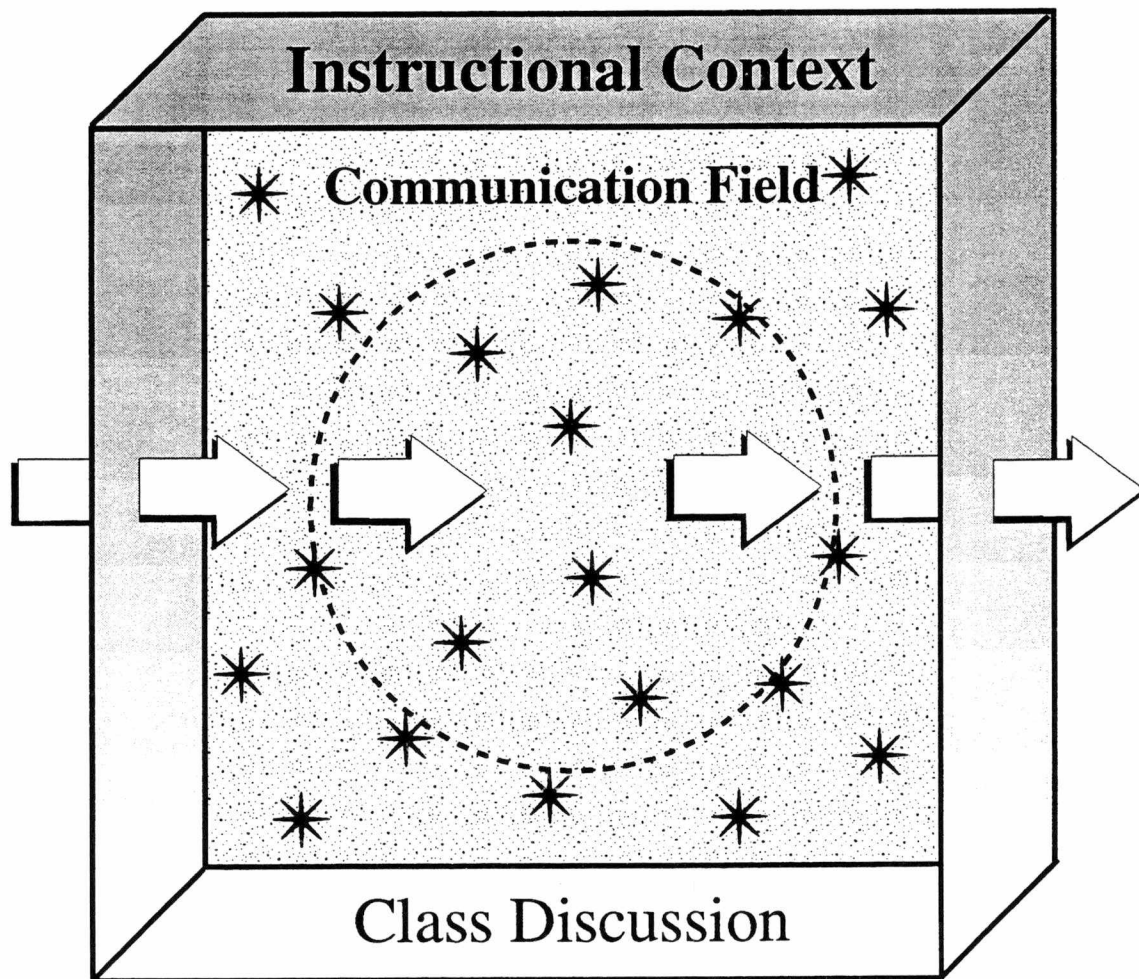
instructional context in effect. Table 13 (p. 108) indicates the numerical differences in types of interruptions within each instructional context. For instance, the data during class discussion show distractions and confusions to be about equal numerically. During class practice distractions rise to almost four times the number of confusions. During transitions there are almost six times the number of distractions as confusions and during tests fully fourteen times as many. Other patterns are evident from the table. No confusions are recorded during free reading and only one intrusion is tallied. This gives us the "feel" of free reading time, quiet and generally uninterrupted. Class practice by contrast, looks very interrupted. What is true is that the distractions during free reading are mostly responsible for boosting the rate of interruptions to be almost as high as during class practice. We might expect the classroom environment in these two contexts to be similar and uninterrupted, since the students' roles are similar -- to complete an assignment independently with little help. The data indicate that these two instructional contexts are similar because they are arenas where interruptions occur every three of four minutes (refer to Table 14).

The Interruption Model

The Interruption Model provides a way to graphically illustrate the data I collected in this study (see Figure 4). I identified six instructional contexts in which Sandy delivered the curriculum to her students. Each context can be represented by the three-dimensional box in the model. The box "contains" the communications between Sandy and her students for the instructional context. We might think of communications as all of the interactions between Sandy and her students allowed by their roles in each context. We remember that the communication between Sandy and her students during transition time is quite different than during direct instruction, for instance. The area inside of the box then, is the distinctive communication field for each instructional context.

The data evidence three types of interruptions in Sandy's classroom. These interruptions are represented with three different symbols in the model. These symbols, their relationships, and their size illustrate how instructional contexts, communications, and interruptions are interrelated in Sandy's classroom.

Intrusions are represented with large arrows progressing from left to right into the instructional context, across the entire communication field, and out of the instructional



Intrusion →
Distraction *

Confusion ○

Figure 4. The Interruption Model (Class Discussion)

context. Intrusions can come from outside of the classroom, or can originate within the classroom, thus represented by arrows which begin outside and inside the instructional context. Intrusions can originate from confusions or from distractions within the communication field, thus the use of arrows beginning from those symbols. At any rate, intrusions always halt or change the instructional context, hence the use of arrows cutting across the model at the center.

Distractions are events which momentarily halt instruction for Sandy, for a few students, or for everyone. Distractions are represented by symbols somewhat like asterisks in the model to show that distractions have little direction, may originate from and affect anyone participating in the communication field, and subtract from the instructional context. Distractions may originate from confusions or from intrusions, and these symbols can touch or overlay other symbols.

Confusions are represented by a circular area within the communication field. The circle symbol is drawn with a broken line to indicate its changing nature and its dependence on the communication field since confusions are failures to communicate. Confusions are affected by intrusions and distractions but originate from failures to interpret the meaning of spoken or written texts.

The model shows the relationships between the types of interruptions, the communication field, and the instructional

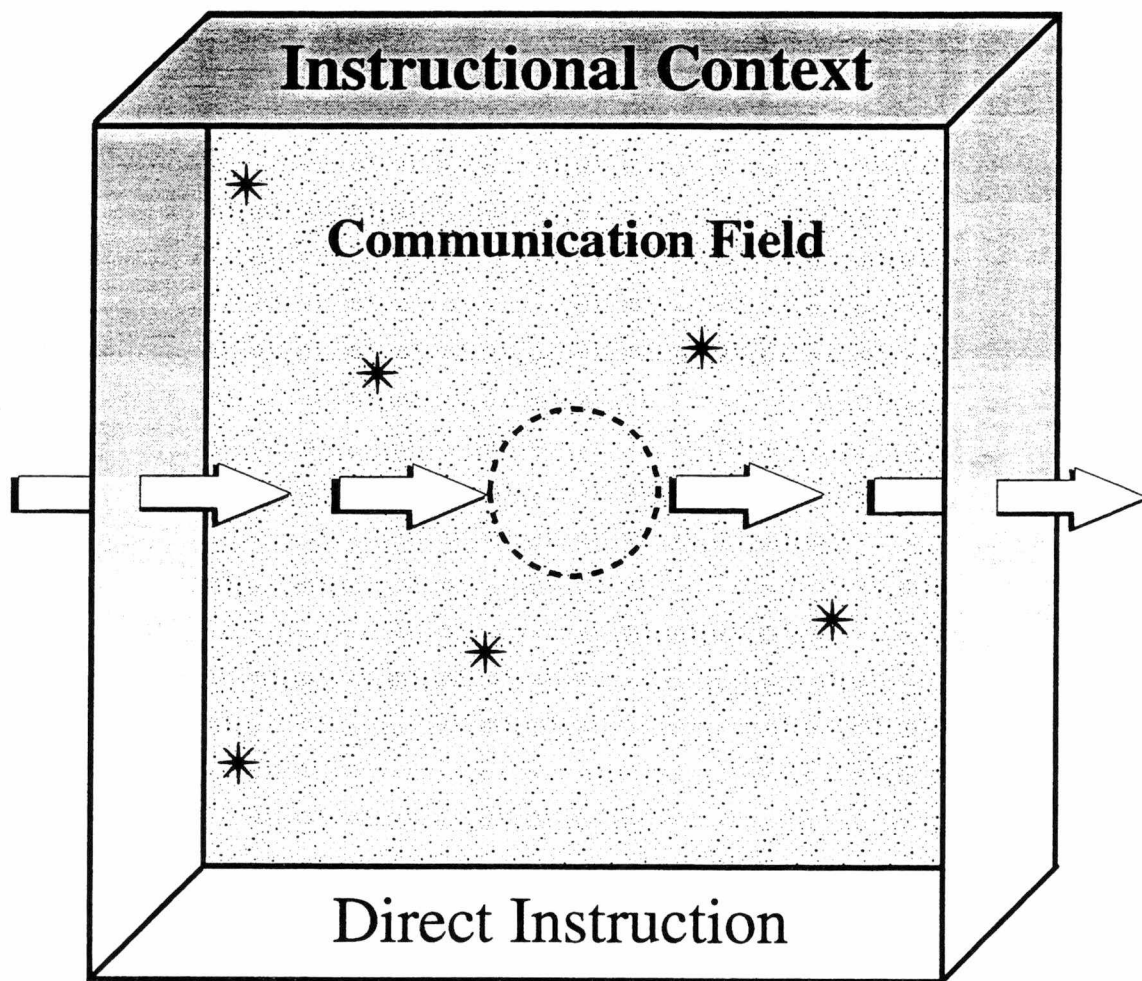
contexts in Sandy's classroom. The model can also show the differential impact of interruptions over varying contexts. By changing the size of the symbols for confusions and intrusions, and increasing or decreasing the number of symbols for distractions we can illustrate how interruptions change as instructional contexts change.

As an example, we can use the model to compare two of the instructional contexts I discussed in this study which evidence very different data for interruptions, class discussion and direct instruction. Each context can be illustrated as a separate three-dimensional box containing a communication field or area within the box. Using the data recorded in Table 13, we can use the symbols for each type of interruption to display how interruptions impact the communication fields in these two instructional contexts differently. The size of the circles representing confusions would be very different. The confusion symbol in the model for direct instruction would be much smaller than the confusion symbol in the model for class discussion. The data indicate that confusions during direct instruction are only about 7% of all the confusions recorded while confusions during class discussion amounted to 61% of the total confusions. Likewise, we could show the smaller proportion of distractions during direct instruction by including fewer distraction symbols than for the class discussion model. The data indicate that distractions during direct instruction are

only about 6% of the total distractions while distractions during class discussion rise to almost 24% of the total. To show the smaller proportion of intrusions during direct instruction we simply draw smaller arrows intersecting the model. Intrusions during direct instruction are about 7% of the total intrusions while intrusions during class discussion amount to almost 35%.

The final result is two models which use the same symbols to show how different two instructional contexts are in Sandy's classroom. The model representing class discussion (see Figure 5) compared with the model representing direct instruction (see Figure 4) shows a larger circle for confusions, larger arrows intersecting the model to represent intrusions, and more symbols to represent distractions. In other words, because the model allows us to vary the size and amount of symbols for interruptions we can compare their impact across instructional contexts.

It is this data and this model which assist us in understanding the dynamics of interruptions and instructional communication in Sandy's classroom. I will use both the data and the model to support my conclusions for this study and to assist me as I present the implications of this data for classroom practice, teacher education, and further research.



Intrusion ➡

Distraction *

Confusion ○

Figure 5. The Interruption Model (Direct Instruction)

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction of Findings

This study examined the daily communications in a fifth grade bicultural classroom of predominantly African American students taught by a white teacher. The questions which guided this study were:

1. What are the daily classroom expectations and how are these communicated by the teacher and understood by the students?
2. What communication patterns do students use to participate in and understand instruction?
3. What types of miscommunications occur in this classroom?
4. What is the relationship between the communication events and the classroom learning environment?
And academic achievement?

A summary of the findings in my ethnographic study are presented here in list form and will be expanded during the discussion section of this chapter:

1. The teacher uses a variety of instructional contexts each day to guide classroom interaction

for teaching and learning. Both she and her students have defined roles within those instructional contexts.

2. High levels of verbal interaction characterize class discussion, the instructional context used most by the teacher to deliver instruction, and influence other instructional contexts as well.
3. Class practice and direct instruction are each used half as often as class discussion to deliver the curriculum. The remaining contexts are used less often.
4. There are three categories of interruptions which impact instructional contexts: intrusions, distractions, and confusions, which vary in definitions, directions, types, and outcomes.
5. There are patterns in the occurrences of interruptions to the instructional contexts and some participants are "regular interrupters" who demonstrate personal "interruption styles." There are also students who do not interrupt or verbally participate in instructional contexts.
7. The teacher is interrupted more than her students.
8. Students' confusion are successfully resolved more often than the teacher's confusions.

9. Interruptions may occur in series, resulting in a greater impact to the instructional contexts than individual interruptions.
10. Classroom instructional contexts in which there are high levels of verbal communication are characterized by high levels of interruptions and include many confusions which don't get resolved.
11. The interruptions in this classroom negatively impact teacher student communication, instructional contexts, the classroom environment, the teacher's time and energy, and by inference negatively impact the students' academic achievement.

What the Students Tell Us

One of the purposes of ethnographic research is to hear the authentic voices of participants. My study specifically focused on the substance of verbal communications between a group of students and their teacher as they went about the daily tasks of school in their urban classroom. I believe it is appropriate to discuss the findings of my study by returning to the themes expressed by the those participants, for it is they who can tell us most clearly about their experiences. I will present a discussion first of what the

students in my study tell us about a variety of topics that relate to their classroom experience.

About Inclusive Classrooms

The students in this study tell us several important things about their daily experiences in the classroom. Generally, their classroom could be characterized as inclusive, where students with academic achievement ranging from first grade reading levels to sixth or seventh grade reading levels, and with a variety of special education certifications join in the classroom instructional contexts. First, the students tell us they are confused about instructional texts, both written and spoken. It is true that it is not the whole class always getting confused, sometimes it is individual students, several students together, or at times, the class as a whole who may not understand a meaning. When confusions occur however, others or everyone may be interrupted, thus subtracting from instructional time. Fortunately, the teacher in this study is able to resolve the confusions which result when students misunderstand or can't understand texts. Instructional time is nevertheless eroded.

The students' confusions over instructional materials demand that we look at the reasons these occur. The students do not seem to be confused by the teachers words, at least they do not repeatedly ask her what she means, so it appears

she adequately explains the curriculum content during direct instruction or class discussion. Instead, the students get confused when they have to deal with instructional materials or instructional discourse (words read aloud from instructional materials) left unexplained. A rather obvious need then, is to examine both the curriculum and the instructional materials in relation to the wide range of student achievement in this classroom.

The most obvious reason the instructional materials cause difficulty is that the students' wide range of academic achievement in every area of the curriculum makes grade level materials inappropriate for many, if not most, of the students. While it may be that some students can learn content presented two grade levels beyond their reading achievement level, it is questionable whether students who read three or more years below grade level can do so. Even if the teacher explains the texts very well and the students willingly attend to her explanations, there is the question of students continually tackling texts or instructional materials that cause frustration. Reading research (Hargis, 1987) indicates that students who read at their frustration level do not accomplish understanding or reading skill. I believe my study points out that even though the teacher explains subject matter well, and the students willingly struggle with her to understand it, many of the instructional materials are inappropriate for students in this classroom.

Research about inclusive classrooms makes a strong case for all children to be included in regular classrooms (Pugach, 1995), but merely placing students in classrooms does not get the work of education accomplished. I believe my study shows that inclusive classrooms demand school policies which realistically support effective instruction for students in those classrooms. If the teacher is spending time and energy explaining materials which cause confusions, what happens to the students who do understand the materials and may not have needed different explanations? How can a child like LeAnna, who reads meek as mink, proudly copies an entire dictionary entry for the wrong word and can read little of it, partake equally and adequately from the same instructional contexts which serve Chantella, who finishes Alice Walker's The Color Purple during the spring semester? Instructional materials, curricula, support staff, classroom space, and schedules, all beyond the responsibility of the regular classroom teacher, must match the needs of students assigned to inclusive classrooms.

About Language Instruction

The students tell us that they do not know how to help the teacher understand their meanings when she is confused by their communications. There were many instances in this study when students tried to explain what they meant by simply repeating the very words which had confused her.

While this strategy gives the teacher additional time to try to make meaning of what students said, and is appropriate if she missed their first efforts, it is ineffective if she truly heard them and still does not understand. There are many other instances when students simply give up trying to help the teacher understand what they said. These times are frequently characterized by a student's quick shrug and a soft, "Oh, ne'ermin' (Oh, nevermind)."

The students tell us that they do not understand why their teacher is confused by what they say. Students' remarks confuse her when they are couched in limited contexts. It is a typical occurrence then for the teacher to pick up a word or two of what the student says and try to elaborate or enlarge the context. Sometimes the teacher is able to guess correctly, target the student's meaning, then rephrase it so they are both sure they meant the same thing. The teacher in this study does not ridicule or punish students for remarks with limited context. It is clear, however, that the students do not understand why she does not understand them. Consequently, they can do little to help her understand them better.

Although research on language variations has been around for decades (Labov, 1972), there is very little evidence that language instruction has changed in elementary classrooms with minority students who speak those variations. The very difficulties the students in this study experience when

trying to make their teacher understand their words could provide the content of language instruction for this classroom. These students and this teacher have taken the first step, they are talking to one another and using authentic language. However, the language texts and curriculum provided by the school offer no help for their confusions, or encouragement to take a different tack when they occur. Daily oral language instruction might just have easily use examples of black dialect to convert to standard English for written discourse, or standard English to convert to black dialect to illustrate various speech registers and styles. It is possible that the curricular materials merely reflect institutional racism and a refusal to present the discourse of power (Delpit, 1992) in a way that is acceptable for nonstandard English speakers. We must equip teachers with a knowledge about the essential, dynamic nature of language, instead of merely the superficial rules of standard English structure. There are language texts available which address language variation and instruct students in the dynamic nature of the English language (Flanagan, 1995). Teachers and administrators who are informed about the needs of students who speak variations of English and who are challenged to look at how racism affects decisions about how we teach language in elementary schools can help to bring about needed change.

About Classroom Environments

Students tell us that there are two critical consequences when students are unable to communicate with their teacher. First, the student's ideas, for that topic or question or contribution to the instruction, do not get expressed. Second, the meaning they may get from such a failed communication is that it is difficult to convey their meaning to the teacher and difficult to understand why they weren't understood. In a classroom where the students believe that the teacher is interested in their words, these results are surely negative and are likely to cause the students additional confusion. Research (Crawford, 1993; Foster, 1992) describes effective elementary classroom environments as places where all students' primary or home discourse is welcome, where students' contributions are valuable, and confusions about language are prevented. Effective instruction and positive learning environments depend on a zero tolerance for noncommunication between students and their teacher. There should never be cause for a student to say, "Oh, nevermind."

About Instructional Engagement

The students speak loudly to tell us they are not engaged in instruction. Their many distractions as well as their expressions of confusion evidence very low levels of engagement. Distractions account for the highest number of

interruptions and occur during every instructional context. Even though one type of distraction is overt misbehavior, I can generally say that the misbehaviors I saw which cause distractions are not severe misbehaviors and account for only a small proportion of the distractions. The high number of distractions seem evidence instead of the students' nonengagement in instructional contexts. The evidence of interruptions which occur in series underscores the nonengagement of the students.

Hargis (1987) points out that students engage in reading when they can read. In other words, texts which are beyond the levels where students can read with some assistance from the teacher, only *disengage* students from the reading process. I believe my study shows that student distractions are the result of students being unable to engage with texts, both written and spoken, that are beyond their reading levels. Merely a few months of disengagement from reading instruction can put children below grade level norms. Several years of disengagement probably means that the students have not acquired the information they need to engage effectively in class discussion at all.

Haberman (1991) suggests that students engage in instruction which speaks to their experience and empowers them to respond. Where learning activities and instructional contexts engage and empower students, distractions are diminished. It is possible that instruction which

specifically empowers students and speaks to their life experiences can diminish the gap between reading achievement and grade level instructional materials. I believe that the teacher in this study found many opportunities to offer the kind of instruction Haberman suggests. It may be that the number of distractions reflects the remaining effect of the students' wide range of academic achievement after empowering instruction is applied!

About Time On Task

The students' voices speak loud and clear during class discussion. This instructional context, the one most commonly used in the classroom I studied, was the one in which a high level of interruptions occurred for a context used specifically to deliver the curriculum. The students actively participated in class discussion, but as they did more confusions occurred. Class discussion also generated more distractions and even more intrusions than direct instruction, which is the other instructional context dedicated to delivering most of the curriculum. We need to remember here that in an instructional context which is highly interrupted there are also more opportunities for series of interruptions, which have an even greater impact. It is clear from the students' participation in class discussion that they understand they are free to speak and that their teacher values their talk. Yet this context

invites opportunities where the students are likely to not be understood by their teacher, resulting in a negative affect. Class discussion, though it generates student participation, may be so interrupted that a net positive outcome is impossible and the instructional time that Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1995) speak of as a high priority is non-existent.

Direct instruction, on the other hand, may result in instruction which is merely thrown to the ears of students with little thought to their interests or understandings. The fact that this instructional context is so uninterrupted in my study does not guarantee the students are engaged. Although Delpit (1992) pleads for explicit language instruction, and language socialization researchers point to the directive nature of communication in ethnic minority communities (Heath, 1983), we must continue to be sure students are engaged during direct instruction contexts. It is imperative that we explore the intersections of directive pedagogies which depend on teacher talk and language development pedagogies which encourage student talk.

About Interruption Styles

Class practice, an instructional context in which students are to complete work independently and not speak also yields evidence about what the students tell us. There are more distractions during class practice than during class

discussion, and although there are fewer confusions the incidence is still high. Again we have evidence that the students are not engaged in the instructional context. In this case, their confusions are more likely to be caused by instructional materials, since they are working independently. Recalling the wide range of academic achievement in this classroom and the increased likelihood of reading frustration, the nonengagement for this context is not surprising.

There are several students who are heard repeatedly above the others. These students, referred to as regular interrupters in this study, account for many of the interruptions in this classroom. It is interesting to note that one of the students, Bonita, is a regular interrupter in all three categories of interruptions. Reggie and Karla are interrupters in two categories, and Chaquira, JaTor, and Teisha are regular interrupters in one category. It is also interesting to note that Chaquira, who causes the highest number of distractions, does not intrude nor cause confusions. There is a wealth of information in the interruption styles these six students display. For teachers who believe in searching students' actions and words for clues to their instructional needs, an examination of interruption styles holds promise. For those who believe that students' words give us clues to their dreams, an examination of instructional styles is imperative.

About Silence

I cannot leave the discussion of what the students' voices tell us without examining their silences as well. I am curious about the students whose voices I rarely hear. No doubt a reading of this study has familiarized us with Bonita, Reggie, and Teisha. But what of Shyanne and Star and Casey? What about Chantella's voice, Jay's questions, DeeDee's confusions? It is evident in this classroom that the teacher's best efforts to encourage verbal participation during instructional contexts did not elicit much participation from these students and others. Are they unengaged? Lost? Bored? There is little to help us know the answer if they don't speak. What does it tell us about classroom communication and instructional contexts when fully a third of the students rarely volunteer to participate in the most frequently used instructional context? Is their silence evidence of a response that seems compliant and successful; a response to the pedagogy of poverty Haberman (1991) warns us about? Students' silences beg to be examined as well as the voices of those who speak aloud.

What the Teacher Tells Us

The teacher in this study speaks loud and clear to tell us of her experience as an urban classroom teacher. Her good humor and genuine interest in her students are constant.

Nevertheless, her experience as a teacher of ethnic minority students at this urban school is difficult and often exhausting. Even a competent, caring teacher like Sandy Frank is frustrated in her daily attempts to deliver instruction.

About Teaching Ethnic Minority Students

The teacher's words, actions, patience, and interest in her students verbal participation evidences her respect for their ideas and voices. By using an instructional context which welcomes a high level of verbal interaction for a large part of the classroom instruction, the teacher proves that she wants her students to share their ideas with her and with one another. This interaction style, particularly in a classroom where there are differences in communication styles because of differences in culture, ethnicity, social class, and language variations, requires time, attention, and energy yet frequently yields frustration and a sense of failure. Ladson-Billings ((1992) identifies instructional styles of successful teachers of black students as a way of saying culturally congruent, effective instruction can be learned. Mohatt and Erickson's research (1981) also evidenced a teacher whose native culture did not match his students,' but who was able to adapt his instruction to be more effective. There is no talk of culturally congruent instruction in the school where I did my research. The teacher in my study

depends mostly on her instincts, good will toward minority students, and knowledge about the curriculum to deliver effective instruction. Even with these she often feels defeated.

About Teaching in an Urban School

The teacher's time, attention, and energy in instructional contexts is constantly interrupted for a myriad of reasons every day and every hour. There seems to be no way for her to avoid the interruptions caused by staff members intruding into her classroom. The culture of the school not only allows such interruptions, but demands them. This teacher's role as a grade level team leader requires her to make decisions for her team during daily instructional time, most often at the request of her supervisors or the instructional assistants whom she supervises. School procedures which are embedded in the institution, such as delivering new students to class at whatever time their admission process is complete in the office, account for many intrusions. Taken singly, the intrusions are almost inconsequential. Taken together they become overwhelming and communicate an attitude of disrespect for instructional time as well as the power of administrative decisions over the decisions of teachers. These interruptions reflect the very worst that research (Kozol, 1991) tells us about the unresponsive bureaucracies of urban schools.

The teacher tells us that teaching ethnic minority students whose culture and language is different from her own is difficult. She tells us that there are confusions generated by the very instructional contexts she uses for students to express themselves and accomplish the curriculum. A large part of her time, attention, and energy is spent explaining instructional materials or content that causes confusions. There seems to be no subject which she can introduce to her students in which these confusions don't naturally occur. Although she is quite good at preventing confusions by explaining instructional content so her students understand her, when students must deal on their own with instructional materials, textbooks, worksheets, and the like, confusions and distractions occur and students disengage from instruction.

Not only does the teacher stay busy preventing or explaining confusions to her students, she also deals with a vast array of confusions which are hers alone because she doesn't understand what her students say. The confusions in this classroom that remain unresolved are those which confound the teacher. These confusions often have a lingering result -- the teacher misses information the student is trying to convey and may have to deal with a student's negative affect as a result of not understanding a communication.

The teacher in this study does not spend a great deal of time monitoring behavior with rewards or punishments. She complies with the school wide behavior model, but does not take up instructional time reviewing the rules or the consequences of misbehavior. As I stated previously, there are few severe misbehaviors in this classroom. There are, however, several students whose regular interruptions become overwhelming from time to time. The teacher does not draw attention to these regular interrupters more than those who interrupt less often. Their regular interruptions do make a case for examining the pattern of their interruptions and devising strategies to prevent or lessen them.

The teacher tells us she is both frustrated and exhausted by the interruptions in her classrooms. In addition, she worries about the students who do not actively participate in instructional contexts enough for her to understand how best to help them. She is aware that there are students who are not challenged and students who are not reached by the instructional contexts and curriculum she provides. Her own words from our dialogue journal express the frustration and weariness she feels and are even written in a breathless, exhausted style:

I feel constantly interrupted, all day long, by announcements, teachers and students from other classrooms requiring information, etc., and by my own students who seem completely unaware that they have a task to do which they need to get on with, instead of bombarding me with requests, details. I often go home feeling I have been pulled from all directions all day

long. Everyone wants something -- now. And their teacher is so used to it all that I often don't realize how much I have been pulled at until a moment of respite happens along -- rare.

Perhaps hardest of all is sitting at home in the evening, recalling the day's events and realizing that there are those silent/needy kids in my class who didn't receive any attention from me that day. I return the next day, fully intending to give those children the attention they need and deserve, but end up, once again, directing my energies in other directions. Poo.

What the Voices From This Classroom Tell Us

I began this study thinking I would be able to examine the voices of students and their teacher as they learned together during the school day. What I found was that their voices, their conversations, and their questions are smothered by interruptions and so it is virtually impossible to trace the words and phrases that circumscribe their learning journey. This situation is debilitating in any educational setting. It is much more debilitating in school settings which serve ethnic minority students who are far behind their mainstream peers in academic achievement.

The voices from this classroom are not mute. Their frustrated interactions tell us there is much left to do in urban classrooms where white teachers instruct ethnic minority students.

I will summarize issues which need to be addressed for ethnic minority students. Next, I will summarize issues which teacher educators need to address. Finally, I will

summarize the issues this study raises for additional research.

Implications for Classroom Practice

Intrusions, distractions, and confusions overwhelm students and teachers so that instructional time is critically diminished. These categories of interruptions must be examined, remedied, and eliminated in urban classrooms. School policies must communicate a respect for students, teachers, and instructional time and eliminate all non emergency intrusions from outside the classroom. Administrators must be held responsible for repeated intrusions by personnel and for implementing procedures that protect instructional time. Distractions and confusions that are the direct result of students' nonengagement must be addressed. Teachers need instructional materials, support staff who assist without interrupting, and realistic schedules to accommodate a wide range of student achievement in inclusive classrooms. Teachers and administrators must collaborate to offer curricula which further diminish the nonengagement of ethnic minority students. In short, the school system must provide teachers and students the support they need for effective daily instruction.

Students, their teachers, and their language texts do not talk about language variations or the dynamic nature of language. Instruction about the nature of language and

dialects can broaden the understandings and diminish the confusions of students and teachers who speak different variations of English. It is time for language instruction in elementary schools to reflect language research, our knowledge of the dynamic nature of language and how issues of racism intersect language instruction. Teachers of ethnic minority students can talk with their students about the powers and prejudices language variations evoke. Students can learn that language is too often used as a measuring stick for character and intelligence instead of a skill with many variations for students to learn. Students can learn why and how we misunderstand one another when we speak and how we can all learn to communicate more effectively. Language instruction which reflects these issues is empowering, progressive, and needed.

Implications for Teacher Education

Teacher educators must design and deliver language arts methods courses which include instruction about the ways various cultures socialize their children in literacy skills. Instruction in language arts methods should include strategies for leveling the playing field in classrooms with students who speak variations of standard English. Teacher educators must confront preservice teachers with how issues of racism are pervasive in language instruction and all preservice teachers must be trained to teach ethnic minority

students who speak variations of standard English. Shirley Brice Heath's study, Ways With Words (1983) should be required reading for every preservice teacher and students should be familiar with court cases that directly address language instruction for black students (Martin Luther King Jr., Etc. v. Ann Arbor School District, 473 F. Supp.1371, 1979). Additionally, preservice teachers must be able to evaluate language programs in schools and design language arts curricula that reflect a sociolinguistic perspective.

Teacher educators must instruct so that preservice teachers are able to recognize the pedagogy of poverty and be equipped with the skills, strategies, and rationale to oppose it in school sites. This means that teacher educators must teach about the way school structures disempower ethnic minority students and privilege mainstream students: they must deliberately instruct so as to challenge the reproduction of inequities in schools. In order to do this, teacher educators must model pedagogy which enables students to create instructional goals and strategies with their professors during their preservice programs. Teacher practitioners in school sites must be invited into the conversation to construct coursework for preservice teachers. Such a collaborative team of educators will model how teachers need to collaborate in school settings to bring about change.

Implications for Research

There is a need for researchers to "unpack" the layers of interruptions in ethnic minority classrooms and examine ways in which interruptions caused by school schedules and procedures, broad inclusion in classrooms, and language and cultural variations and differences compound ineffective instruction or impact effective instruction. Research which places these issues in the larger political, social, and economic contexts of communities across our country would allow us to understand how school systems interpret and implement educational opportunity.

There is also a need to examine the emotional lives of teachers, particularly those caught in the complex array of issues affecting urban schools. Issues of anger and physical and emotional wellness, particularly in relation to women who make up the majority of elementary teachers, can no longer be ignored. Qualitative researchers must provide the authentic data to build theories about how issues affect teachers' emotions and about how emotions affect practice, classroom environments, and student achievement.

There is a need for researchers to explore the intersections of methodologies which work to evoke authentic language from students who speak a nonstandard English and methodologies which use direct instruction as the main context for teaching skill in standard English. Specifically, the language development of students who speak

a stigmatized dialect in school settings needs to be clearly understood. There is a critical need for research which examines whole language and process writing procedures in classrooms with students who speak a variation of English. Some researchers have already suggested such research (Delpit, 1992; Dyson, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1992); I feel an urgent need to get the research completed.

Summary

I conducted this study in a particular classroom at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School because I believed it provided me with the best opportunity to observe instruction by a white teacher in a minority classroom. I still believe Sandy Frank's classroom, offers the best case scenario for fifth grade instruction where a white teacher conducts instruction for black students in the East Riverside community. My study points out that her best efforts and the best efforts of her students are not enough to equip minority student with an effective education. Haberman (1991) is correct. One teacher cannot do the hard work of schooling her minority students alone. The interruptions to the instructional contexts in Sandy Frank's classroom this study revealed indicate there is a wide circle of school personnel, administrators, parents, teacher educators, and citizens who are responsible for the educational opportunity of the

students in this classroom. Much of the research to bring about educational opportunity has already been completed. That research and this study only provide data. Educators at all levels of educational institutions must use the data to effect change.

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VITA

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