

COGENERATIVE DIALOGUES AND COTEACHING AS FIELDS FOR  
TRANSFORMING URBAN TEACHING AND LEARNING

by

ED LEHNER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
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## Abstract

COGENERATIVE DIALOGUES AND COTEACHING AS FIELDS FOR  
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ED LEHNER

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In New York City, urban suspended students are being educated in settings where the teaching practices are not adequately aligned with students' lifeworlds to produce academic achievement. As a result of instructional misalignment, many students resign themselves from actively learning and, in effect, preclude themselves from further associated courses of study in institutions of higher learning. Suspended student choices to disengage from school may limit further the opportunity for higher education and future career options. Urban suspended students are often the most disadvantaged in excelling in high school because the practices, language, and traditional classroom structures used to teach are asymmetrical with their lived experiences. This research consisted of a two-year of study in a New York City Suspension Center where urban students studying social studies and biology were engaged in cogenerative dialogue with teachers to create aligned learning and teaching practices that would access their lifeworld knowledge, while covering the canonical standards of the curriculum. In spite

of all the skills the youth in this study possess, these students are greatly at-risk of dropping-out of school or being incarcerated because 1) they are suspended for a full academic year, 2) many are involved with New York City's Juvenile Justice system and are either on probation or parole, 3) most are under-credited and overage for their respective grade and 4) more than one-third are special education students. The teaching practices in this study were co-authored and co-implemented by students and teachers with the intention of accessing students' dispositions to act by rooting the discourse of the curriculum in lifeworld culture and standards based social studies or biology. During the two-years of this research, the students demonstrated their curriculum knowledge by introducing their lived experiences into the classroom curriculum. This dissertation expounds on how students' practices served as resources to support both personal and collective learning.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

That teacher totally disrespected me in front of the class and screamed on me. I don't play like that. My family don't play like that, so I push[ed] the teacher and if it wasn't for my mans [a friend of Daryl's], I would have hit him. Yo, I really don't care. Don't disrespect me cuz I ain't havin it. And if they kick me out of school and send me to some place like this suspension center, I don't care. It ain't teaching me a lesson. I am a G [gangster] first and last. Teachers need to respect me.

(Daryl, interview, 5/20/2006)

Respect is such a valuable currency in urban schools that students are willing to fight in an effort to preserve it. Such is the case with Daryl, who is a 15-year-old first-generation Jamaican student-researcher at Liberty High School Suspension Center (LSC) in New York City. Prior to coming to LSC, he was suspended after an altercation with one of his teachers in which he felt disrespected and subsequently angrily lashed out. Daryl so deeply resented being disrespected in front of his peers that he was willing to act aggressively, even if such actions held extreme social consequences.

As of this writing, Daryl is in his third month of a one-year suspension and does not regret his actions because he still perceives that his teacher threatened to diminish his sense of honor, which is elaborately fused with his core-identity. Jonathan Turner (2002) writes that individuals have *sub-*, *role-* and *core-identities* and that all three fluidly

coalesce during enactment of daily life. When a person's core-identity is threatened however, one goes to great lengths to protect it. Daryl is a case in point because he chose to endure a year's suspension to protect his core-identity. As Daryl stated, "I don't play like that. My family don't play like that, so I push[ed] the teacher." Daryl found his teacher's acts offensive primarily because they questioned central aspects of his identity.

Daryl is only one of a growing population of students who are willing to fight for respect. Played out in urban schools, students' attempts to command respect are wholly misunderstood and, as a result, many are suspended. School officials misinterpret this type of conduct as maladaptive rather than being a viable form of resistance to classroom inequities. Nationally, school districts have enacted no-tolerance policies instead of addressing the complex issues leading these students to vie for classroom respect. As a result, since 1999 New York City has initiated a program of suspending students who have had conduct difficulties. This trend is seen beyond the five boroughs and is quickly expanding into a national phenomenon (Losen, 2002). These students are nonetheless being pushed out of mainstream schooling, even though they are too young to drive a car, buy cigarettes or vote (Fine, 1991). Nation-wide, suspended students disproportionately represent African Americans, ethnic minorities, and the disabled. Researchers have shown that suspended students are likely to leave high school without their diplomas and need to struggle to find gainful employment. Particularly disturbing is that, according to Daniel Losen (2006), suspended students over time have a greater likelihood of being

incarcerated in New York's overcrowded prison system than being educated in one of its public colleges.

In the excerpt above, Daryl spoke of respect as a valuable currency in his lifeworld. He convincingly articulates his need for respect, but suggests that teachers often misunderstand such requests. Respect is often a key factor in whether social interactions are successful or unsuccessful in many urban neighborhoods. Elijah Anderson (1999) captured this complexity in his work, arguing that respect is a principal concern, akin to currency, in urban culture. He claims that respect is a form of highly-prized symbolic capital whose value underpins many aspects of social life. According to Anderson, respect is so important that people are willing to fight for it, although Daryl's quest for respect situates him far behind his peers for high school graduation.

Building on Anderson's work, Kenneth Tobin (2001) argues that respect is also central to the quality of social relationships between urban students and their teachers. In his extensive work in urban schools, Tobin expresses the importance of mutual regard in the development of a fruitful learning environment. In several studies, Tobin described this discerning reality and detailed its centrality to teaching and learning (e.g., Tobin, 2003). In urban schools, teachers often do not acknowledge how central respect is to the establishment and maintenance of effective learning environments. Accordingly, in their efforts to maintain effective control over their students, teachers overlook a potentially fruitful avenue toward higher learning as students and teachers participate in encounters and their associated capital exchange cycles without being explicitly aware that all

participants are seeking respectful acknowledgment from one another. If teachers do not recognize that their classes can become a staging ground for earning and maintaining respect, they can inadvertently truncate the potential for creating dynamic learning environments. Alternatively, if teachers and students can enact curricula in ways that afford mutual respect, they can take an important step toward creating classroom climates that embody expanded possibilities for learning.

In my experience of teaching in the suspension center setting, I have observed that few teachers fully understand the underlying importance of respect in forming productive teaching and learning relationships. Teachers do not intentionally set out to disrespect their students, but often operate without a conscious understanding of its role in the classroom. When respect needs are unmet, learning environments can be riddled with misunderstanding and miscommunication. This dissertation, then, describes how stakeholders often misconstrue classroom communication and, if unaddressed, how the sum of these misinterpretations may result in instructional misalignment. Christopher Emdin (2007) describes misaligned urban teaching as a fundamental interaction, meaning that teachers and students share the same physical space but little meaningful communication takes place in it. When the encounters of teachers and students represent only fundamental interactions, the sense of learning possibilities are abridged because none of the stakeholders seem invested in the learning process. Suspended students—indeed, any group of students—do not function well in classrooms that are devoid of

meaningful interactions. Emdin's description of fundamental interactions reflects how some teaching and learning is enacted at LSC, the study site for this dissertation.

### *Methods Employed in the Research*

My research conceptualizes learning on a continuum, starting with micro level practices and progressing to meso and macro enactments. This study specifically examined questions relevant to developing urban teaching and learning practices. In this work, I analyzed micro, meso, and macro level enactments of cultural production, both in *cogenerative dialogue* and the classroom. I employed William Sewell's (1992) conception of *agency* to examine how students access resources. Sewell understands agency as "the actor's capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array" (p. 19). This understanding of agency as a framework enables me to examine a student's inter-field agency. In addition, this perspective permits me to view a student's practices in one field with an eye to see if they are reproduced in another. Through this framework, I can study whether demonstrations of micro level culture develop into meso or macro level learning culture. My examination of these schema and practices is essential to understanding how new learning culture is created and enacted. Beyond studying patterns of coherence, this methodology enables a search for contradictions to recognize the complex factors involved in cultural enactment. By noticing these contradictions, I was equipped to better understand how practices can be changed or amended to facilitate the development of culture; for this study, I examined this phenomena in a social studies and biology

classroom. Finally, I theorize that creating aligned classroom practices as opportunities for cultural transformation that may improve the quality of teaching and learning. The practice of cogenerative dialogues provides a space for the production of new culture aligned classroom practices.

### *Understanding Micro, Meso, and Macro Enactments of Learning*

I understand learning as a leveled progression towards full engagement in the curriculum. Facets related to learning include motivation for achievement and an engaged frame of mind geared toward academic success. Micro level displays are practices that are engaged learning actions, but with little of standard based discourse. Examples of such student practices include participating in lessons, attending classes, taking notes, and affording respect to teachers and fellow students. Meso level displays are practices that not only are conducive to creating an engaging learning environment, but also demonstrate individual commitment to learning the course's discourse. Instances of meso level learning performances include student-initiated learning strategies, suggestions to improve learning and teaching, or attempts at hybridization where standard discourse is conjoined with vernacular speech. Students' micro, meso, and even macro learning displays can be described as hybridized practices since students are demonstrating learning practices or articulating concepts in their lifeworld discourse. Micro and meso forms of learning are conceptualized as essential gateways to macro level enactments of learning culture.

### *Dialectical Relationships*

This research's use of dialectical relationship is fundamental to understanding how social life is enacted in classroom. Wolff-Michael Roth (2005) uses a Sheffer stroke ("|") to denote the recursive relationships that seemingly exist between radically different entities. This notion that opposing forces should be viewed as recursively related rather than dialectical opposites equips researchers with a useful tool to make critical distinctions about the nature of urban classrooms. By employing a sense of radical doubt to the nature of social constructs, educational investigators come to see that the relationship between A or B is not a simple dichotomy of either/or, but instead a more complex interweaving of both A and B, or A|B. Understanding Roth's use of the Sheffer stroke helps conceptualize the complexity that is occurring as coteaching is enacted in social life. Unfortunately, most social actors understand life dualistically rather than recursively. The dilemma of dualism is encapsulated in the commonly accepted wisdom of either A or B, or A is not B and B is not A. Thus, I examine the enactment of social life by studying the dialectical relationships that exist between schema|practices and agency|structure within the fields of cogenerative dialogue and the classroom and also in the related fields of coteaching and cogenerative dialogues. In all cases I have a concern to understand how culture produced in one or more fields can structures social life in other salient fields. In viewing classroom control from this vantage point, practices will have patterns of thin coherence and contradictions.

### *The Use of Cogenerative Dialogue in This Research*

This research focused on how the student-researchers used cogenerative dialogue to assist in the teaching and learning of social studies and biology. This dissertation documents how four LSC students met to co-plan, co-author, and co-implement learning and teaching strategies over the course of 11 months. Because of the unique needs of Liberty High students, all course sections were capped at 15 students and many classes had less than 10 students. The classes met daily for one full semester. Each week, we institutionalized the practice of cogenerative dialogue. The research cohered with Wolff-Michael Roth and Kenneth Tobin's (2002) notion of establishing the practice of cogenerative dialogue as a way for students and teachers to talk about learning and teaching practices in classrooms.

### *The Design of This Work*

This dissertation is a result of a longitudinal critical ethnography that took place at LSC over two school years. I was concerned with the ways that students identified as, or disassociated from, being learners of social studies and biology. All of this work focused on creating a transformative learning culture so that students could use their produced culture (i.e., reproduced and transformed) to improve their educational experience. This research took place over two 20-week semester spanning 11 months, from March 2005 to January 2006. I focused on adhering to the Belmont Report's (1979) recommendations to minimize potential harms, maximize participant beneficence, and develop a sense of justice for all involved. This dissertation adhered to Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln's

(1989) *authenticity criteria*. I focused on approaches that students could use to benefit their learning. I extended invitations to all students who wished to be involved in this research and all participation was voluntary.

As mentioned, I intentionally focused on authenticity criteria in this research because I believe in its value. This belief is an epistemological supposition maintaining that if student-researchers fully understood their research efforts, they can positively structure their learning. The student-researchers here far surpassed any expectations I had and fully engaged in this work. I intentionally focused this research on encouraging participant learning of social studies and biology. The student-researchers and I attempted to build a strong sense of catalytic authenticity into our work. In this pursuit, the student-researchers were asked to find ways to make the practices of learning social studies and biology more comprehensible. In making this a goal, I exposed students to a pedagogy that focused on inclusive learning. Students, in turn, adopted the role of cultural brokers to mitigate between canonical discourse and their urban lifeworld.

In this work, the student-researchers and I also focused on educative authenticity by privileging student voice. I would often ask each of the students, “How can we describe this process so that everyone in the class could more easily understand it?” This practice promoted rich learning exchanges where student-researchers suggested new ideas. In this way, catalytic and educative authenticity were stressed by affording student-researchers the social space to create lifeworld practices that would facilitate learning for all members. The student-researchers and I analyzed normal classroom interactions and

later re-analyzed similar learning situations after we implemented the collective plan of action by using cogenerative dialogue. We deliberately endeavored to generate additional learning opportunities by encouraging all students to participate. As a result, students became engaged in the work and enacted expanded roles. The enactment of expanded roles is a marker of catalytic authenticity demonstrating that our cooperative work was a form of authentic research.

Beyond catalytic authenticity, the student-researchers and I were attentive to each aspect of authenticity criteria by implementing the practice of cogenerative dialogue. This practice is front and center to doing authentic research because it creates a social space to talk across differences and possibly build solidarity in spite of divergences in age, ethnicities, and race. Kenneth Tobin (2005) described a cogenerative dialogue as conversation participants have about a shared experience. Similar to reflective practice, cogenerative dialogue affords participants the opportunity to reflect on the common event. Yet unlike reflective practice, the major purpose of the cogenerative dialogue is for members to take collective responsibility for the results in the class. In the process of discussing ways that the group can collectively better the classroom learning, participants often discuss classroom problems and suggest ways to resolve these issues. Before ending a cogenerative dialogue, participants “co-generate” a plan of individual actions geared toward improving classroom teaching and learning.

At each stage of the research, data were collected via field notes, interviews, group discussions, and digital videotapes of the cogenerative dialogues and classes. The

chapters of this dissertation present episodes in which the student-researchers and I viewed the video in *iMovie* on a Macintosh PowerBook G4. The digital video was an important artifact as the focus for cogenerative dialogues and interviews with participants from the class.

### *Data Resources and Collection Methods*

The student-researchers and I analyzed the ways that students normally interacted with new classroom topics and re-analyzed similar learning interactions after cogenerating ways of integrating the material into their lived worlds. By attempting to create more student learning opportunities and empowering in-class learning experiences, participants in this research became engaged in many distinct roles. In all stages of the research, much of the data were collected via digital video tapings of the cogenerative dialogues and classes. Regularly student-researchers and I would view the video in *iMovie*. Additionally, student interviews, notebooks, labs and test results also were used as data resources.

Over the course of this ethnography, we examined our learning and teaching practices on the micro, meso and macro levels. Student-researchers and I examined interactions in the classrooms by manipulating time with the use of digital video software. Micro interactions were studied by using software to slow down interactions, replaying portions or speeding up the video to examine the fine points of the activity. We also looked at meso level interactions that occurred in real time and space as social life was acted out. Lastly, we examined macro level themes that we saw enacted by multiple

participants over the semester and that were evident in the videotapes, individual interviews, classroom notes, and periodic tests. Our inquiry into these distinct layers of social life sought to understand the dynamic elements of social life as they were produced.

### *Social Reproduction at Work*

My focus on authenticity criteria yielded exciting educational results. Yet, many of these student-researchers continue to be faced with difficult social hurdles in their quests for academic achievement. Far too many of the student-researchers are members of demographic groups that have high correlations with imprisoned populations. The main actors in this work—Cameron, Christine, Anthony, and Gabriel—are all bright, hard-working young adults, but nonetheless they are all suspended youth. Suspended students are faced with a litany of potential problems that often impede upon their overall academic and career trajectories. I am saddened to read that suspended students are more likely to be imprisoned than to finish high school (Nelson, Gonzalez, Epstein, & Benner, 2003). I have worked with so many intelligent and capable suspended students that I am astonished that this group does not fare better than the numbers reflect. Schooling for suspended youth seems to hold profound reproductive elements that lead them to suspension, and eventually to being pushed out of school altogether.

Suspended students are pushed out of school largely by the enactment of misaligned teaching that produces and reproduces instructional alienation. Karl Marx described alienation as a social-emotional process that separates individuals from

engaging in a practice that is naturally enjoyable (Mac Leod, 1987). Instructional alienation therefore separates urban students from the natural process of learning by institutional structures that impede learning. Paul Willis captures the essence of instructional alienation when he wrote about the “lads” who powerfully resisted the culture of their schooling by fully disengaging in the process (Mac Leod, 1987).

Schools are a fundamental support structure that furnishes a number of important resources. With the adoption of a no-tolerance policy for behavioral misconduct, many school systems have addressed student conduct problems by institutionalizing suspension policies that take students out of regular schooling. Students greatly suffer when mainstream schooling is replaced with suspensions. Once students get suspended, or are pushed out entirely, the process of producing academic underachievement is in full swing. In the American psyche, academic achievement is the supposed key to social advancement and life-long success. In fact, many view educational access as an equalizing force that has the power to halt social inequity. Yet, suspended students experience the education process from a deeply alienating perspective and may leave school entirely under-equipped to navigate the modern work place. At LSC, these students are often under-credited and over-aged, with many unlikely to finish high school. When former students return to LSC, few have completed school and some are working low-paying jobs, but most have dropped out of school and are unemployed.

Suspension centers, like the one described in this dissertation, can become fertile ground for social reproduction of the most insidious nature. Samuel Bowles and Herbert

Gintis (1987) maintain that schools play a fundamental role in perpetuating class differences. They argue that schooling reproduces disadvantage. Thus, schooling for the wealthy positions them to maintain their parents' position in social space. Conversely, schooling serves to perpetuate working-class and poor students' alienation from education, effectively precluding them from situating themselves at different points in the economy. In suspension centers, the underlying principles of Bowles and Gintis's work are at play. Most of the students at LSC are students of color and many are living in conditions of poverty. If working, their parents are often employed in low-paying jobs. LSC students powerfully resist schooling because it represents hegemony. The combination of their problematical schooling experiences and their parents' difficult work relationships positions them to throw off the structures of school that they see as a form of social domination.

However, I theorize that cultural production occurs in all encounters and is embodied in dialectical relationship in which culture is reproduced and transformed. That is, the structures of schooling are not deterministic and do not essentially reproduce disadvantage. I explore the glimmers of hope embedded in a critical pedagogy that involves identifying sources of disadvantage and creating collective plans to act against oppressive structures, thereby fueling the transformation part of the reproduction|transformation dialectic.

I have witnessed how many suspended students struggle with some of the formal structures in the classroom, and this seems to further disengage them from schooling. The

most troubling classroom structures for LCS students are teacher-centered instruction, lack of mutual respect, and no direct relation of the curriculum to the students' lifeworlds. Additionally, compulsory standardized tests and New York State Regents exams tend to further distance suspended students from attaining their educational goals. The combination of formal classroom structures and standardized testing seems to act as gatekeepers that preclude suspended students from more advanced forms of academic development. The focal point of this work maintains that suspended students can be informally pushed out of school by the dominant ideology and formality of high school education. On the most fundamental level, my research addresses the social reproduction process that seems to alienate so many suspended students by creating social spaces to analyze and address classroom cultures that are oppressive to students. Throughout this work, I use the students' learning dispositions as a foundational starting point. A lack of parallelism between teaching methods and the approaches to learning used by suspended youth raises the possibility of social reproduction. Following a similar argument to the one laid out by Bowles and Gintis (1987), I suggest that social reproduction occurs in the classroom for suspended students and is evident in signs such as students' reports of instructional estrangement. Other signs of suspended students educational estrangement are sporadic attendance at school and reduced graduation rates and under-achievement on standardized tests compared to their non-suspended peers.

Pedro Noguera (2003) had deeply examined the correlation between student suspensions and poor academic indicators, such as test scores. The complex reality is that

suspended students are far more likely to drop out of school and, late in life, be imprisoned. The success ideology personified by many non-suspended students in their belief that a better education will expand social and financial opportunities is frequently not valued among suspended youth who face many unique challenges. To many of LSC's students, higher education does not seem like a viable method to improve their lives. Suspended students often receive a sub-par education in suspension centers and this fact may likely preclude them from continuing with their education beyond high school (Noguera, 2003). Commonly challenged by the social and cultural capital required to pursue a college or vocational education, many suspended youth often struggle with applying to or succeeding in either setting. Furthermore, many suspended youth labor with navigating the structures, such as the admissions or financial aid process, which are required to gain access to college or a training program. Many suspended students are educated as members of an underclass attending segregated schools, often living in conditions of poverty, and usually under-accessing resources that would enable them to socially and economically advance. Despite years of educational reform targeted at improving academic achievement for students with behavioral problems, the efforts have met with mixed, if not failed, results.

The profound asymmetries existing between teacher and student learning approaches are central to understanding underachievement in suspension centers. The differences between teaching strategies and the learning practices of suspended youth are at the heart of this matter. This misalignment tends to produce and reproduce failed

classroom interactions with suspended youth. For example, at LSC, classroom life is front and center in the quality of education that suspended youth receive. In addition to theorizing core identity, Jonathan Turner (2002) also theorizes fundamental difference between interactions and transactions. Adopting Turner's framework, I explore how classroom encounters produce successful transactions between students and teachers, and thereby contribute positively to the quality of the learning environment. A series of successful classroom encounters may interconnect and build positive emotional energy and, later, possibly solidarity (Collins, 2004).

At LSC, classroom life is not enacted easily, and often suspension classrooms experience the negative side of interaction ritual chains. A teacher may attempt to start a lesson only to be derailed by a student who is enacting a ritual about which he or she is not even fully conscious. For example, students at LSC frequently talk over teachers, do not engage in class, and display other practices that breach efforts to teach and learn fluently. Even though suspended students attend LSC nearly everyday, what is learned can vary greatly. Some students use their suspension in ways that serve them for the rest of their lives. Other students struggle and often come to resent the whole process. Still others come to view their suspensions as wasted time and are acutely aware that being suspended does not help them in the real world.

This work asked why suspended students often do poorly in their schooling. From the perspectives of the suspended students, instructional misalignment is a key concern affecting school performance. My research found that the instructional relationships that

suspended students form often profoundly relate to the type of attitudes they have about learning. This critical ethnography followed four suspended students who learned as they engaged in cogenerative dialogue with teachers to create aligned learning and teaching practices. During the 11 months of this research, the student-researchers drew upon the depth of their lifeworld experiences to produce new learning practices. Student roles expanded and coexisted with their involvement in cogenerative dialogue. Each student assisted in constructing numerous learning practices that maintained an active classroom environment. The educational literature on suspended students details that this population is in jeopardy of not finishing school, being imprisoned, and having limited vocational opportunities. Yet this work found that suspended youth had the potential to transform their learning environment by creating ways where their lifeworld experiences served to structure and transform the urban classroom. I have found that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the learning culture that suspended students can enact. This research utilized students' strengths as a starting point and discovered that this population is filled with ideas that can potentially transform suspension education.

### *Perspectives and Theoretical Underpinnings*

This dissertation focuses on cogenerative dialogue and the coexistence of expanded student roles at LCS. Prior to starting this work in early 2005, I examined how cogenerative dialogue can create new learning culture, yet few researchers had examined how this newly created culture could be transported and reenacted in the classroom. Up to that point, cogenerative dialogue research had exclusively focused on math and science

classrooms. The theoretical framework was rich but the practice of cogenerative dialogues was under-theorized. Roth and Tobin (2004) explain how cogenerative dialogue, which they first used in 1999, came into existence and how the practice became an integral part of their research on classroom teaching. Based on Roth and Tobin's (2002) studies, other researchers examined the impact cogenerative dialogue had on science and math classrooms. Building on this previous research on cogenerative dialogue, my study reflects two years of ethnographic work and my personal growth as a researcher.

Recent studies use cogenerative dialogue as a tool for ethnographic research. As stated earlier, a cogenerative dialogue is a group discussion members share about a common experience. Reflection can be a key component of the practice, but its overriding purpose is for participants to take collective responsibility for the results in the class. Before concluding a session, participants create a plan of action aimed at improving classroom teaching and learning. Throughout this work, I refer to cogenerative dialogues and classrooms as fields where culture is enacted in the form of schema and practices. Fields are weakly bounded social spaces where participants possess and enact social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Throughout this dissertation, I view teaching as cultural enactment and learning as cultural production. I argue that cogenerative dialogues can be used to transform urban education because they allow students to produce culture that they can carry across fields. I provide evidence where students were

able to demonstrate the transformative learning potential of cogenerative dialogue by producing and reproducing culture to serve their goals.

### *Why This Work?*

Urban education surrounds me each day. I appreciate the unique perspective that being in an urban setting brings to an educational environment. I have conducted this study because I believe in the transforming power of education. When a student appreciates the power education has over him or her, education becomes real and compelling. My career as a teacher has helped me understand how education shapes a person's life. This study then is a compilation of our work with teenagers to make education relevant to their lifeworlds.

My reason for conducting this research was rooted in my belief that my students have an important contribution to make to the field of educational research. Their testimonies attest to the importance that education can have in their lives. As much as I have witnessed how classroom instruction can positively influence a student's views of education, I have also observed how urban students can become disengaged and eventually give up on school. A complex combination of social, racial, and attitudinal factors affect how classroom teaching and learning are enacted. Many suspended students did not readily embrace classroom teaching, yet, as a result of their involvement in this study, our classroom practices greatly changed.

Shortly after becoming a teacher 2002, I went to the library in search of answers to help me bridge this large gap between theory and praxis. I picked up Cornell West's

*Race Matters* (1994). Little did I know it would be my first reading of racial identity theory, a concept I would study in greater depth later at the Graduate Center, CUNY. West described African Americans' struggles against racism in present-day American society. He challenged me to fundamentally rethink the way I was approaching my work and the people with whom I was working. Before reading West, I thought that my teaching was about academic skills and that the population with whom I was working was minimally affected by race. After reading the West book, I realized that the real issues affecting these students were integrally related to race and impacted their view of schooling.

### *My Personal Story*

In addition to describing suspension centers, this work is also very personal. I share some of my personal history in New York City from the perspective of auto/biography and auto/ethnography. Using this viewpoint, I acknowledge that performing research in suspension centers is deeply personal and forever intertwined with my individual history. My telling of becoming a New Yorker sets the background to understand me as a researcher and the interconnection between individual/teacher/researcher. The following autobiography provides insights into who I am as a teacher-researcher at LSC. It also provides a broader background into who I am as a New Yorker.

*For Me, It All Began in the Bronx*

Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant shit to me, you see straight up racist  
 that sucker was simple and plain.  
 Fuck him and John Wayne. Cause I'm Black and I'm proud  
 I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped, most of my heroes don't appear on no  
 stamps.  
 Sample a look back you look and find nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you  
 check  
 "Don't Worry Be Happy" was a number one jam  
 Damn if I say it you can slap me right here. Let's get this party started right  
 Right on, c'mon what we got to say  
 Power to the people no delay to make everybody see  
 In order to fight the powers that be.

[Public Enemy, "Fight the Power," 1989]

Public Enemy's lyrics could be heard throughout the hot days and long into the restless nights during the summer of 1989. As the raps echoed off the buildings of the South Bronx into the ears of people of all races, I also heard these words but was puzzled at their meaning. It was not that I could not comprehend the words; rather, I did not identify with the rage embodied in the work. I did not understand the message of the song, although it seemed like the whole of the Bronx did. In this powerful conscious-raising, anthem, Public Enemy heatedly rapped about racism and its lasting effects on places like the Bronx. Even though I did not know it, I was stepping into the crosshairs of urban life—an environment that would profoundly change me.

I was 19 years old and had moved to New York City from Elmira, NY to work for the Salvation Army in their adult drug treatment unit. I had just finished my sophomore year in college and had moved down for a summer job. I was welcomed heartily by my co-workers and enjoyed my first apartment, which had views of the Crotona Park and

overlooked the Cross Bronx Expressway. I was surprisingly at ease in my new surroundings, given that I had never lived in an urban area before this. I had grown up in a small town in upstate New York and had lived in a working class neighborhood. I had been a ward of the State since birth (at age six, I was adopted by the same family who had raised me since birth). One experience that influenced me greatly was a high school trip to New York City that I had taken with my classmates when I was 10. I felt then back in 1979 that I would someday come here to live. Many of my high school peers still live today near my hometown, which has now lost most of the manufacturing jobs that had provided our fathers and mothers with steady employment. Going to college was an unusual choice given the surroundings from which I had come, but I felt that it would allow me to have chances in life that I might otherwise not attain.

The late 1980s was a difficult time for the Bronx. Crime was at an all-time high (Gladwell, 2000), primarily from the advent of crack cocaine. As well, many areas that were burned to the ground in the early 1970s were still undeveloped nearly 20 years later. Yet, despite these difficulties, the borough seemed to brim with hope and resilience, and I felt comfortable there. I felt a collective strength emanating from the neighborhood, and felt the pulse of life and the push of survival.

### *Get Up and Fight*

During my first three months in the Bronx, Lars and I had become close friends. Lars was a first-generation Trinidadian whose mother worked for the U.S. Post Office on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Manhattan. Lars was 17 years old, attended Brooklyn Technical High

School, and lived on Morris Avenue, just a few blocks from my apartment. I trusted and respected Lars, and I sensed the sentiments were mutual. Lars often told me to be careful as I traveled because he believed that “there are dudes that just want to mess a white boy up.” Lars’ advice was based on the realities of survival. It was as rough as hell in the Bronx and, at times, my only goals were to endure and learn how to navigate my new environment more successfully.

Unlike upstate New York, I was now living in a setting where violence was commonplace. For example, I had witnessed muggings and saw young men brandishing guns in the park. My general sense of alertness to my environment was heightened, and sometimes I was scared. Still, survival was not a conscious goal. That all changed one evening in early August when Lars and I went to play basketball at Echo Park on the corner of Webster and Tremont Avenues in the Morrisania section. Despite the hot weather, basketball seemed like a good way to spend some time. The neighborhood basketball court is both the local stage and Town Square in some areas of the Bronx. Lars and I were playing 3-on-3 within a few minutes of arriving at the park, and a few minutes later, I was in a fight.

Having always loved playing basketball, I have an aggressive, hustling style that can be interpreted as overly aggressive. My style of basketball came to bear that night after a physical exchange at the basket when I attempted to block another player’s shot. I would later learn that the person I was matched up against was named Elgin, a man from the neighborhood who had a reputation for being tough.

Elgin: Yo, white boy, you play defense on me like that again, I am knocking you out!

Lehner: You shouldn't talk junk to a man you don't know.

Elgin: Word! [And he hit me with a right cross to the temple]

Knocked to the ground, I had become a public spectacle. I had never been hit that hard before, and could feel my temple swelling as I sat on the pavement and rubbed my head. Lars yelled, "Ed, you better get up and knock this homie out." I was immediately on my feet and fighting Elgin until we were both bloody. Our melee eventually ended when fellow players separated us.

I did not knock Elgin out that night but I had unknowingly earned his respect, which afforded me a type of pass, allowing me to walk around my neighborhood in the South Bronx even though I was white. After the game, when Lars and I walked back onto Webster Avenue, he excitedly yelled, "Ed... damn. You are no joke. You held your own against Elgin. You live in the Bronx now, money! It is a damn jungle out here but at least I don't have to worry about you getting killed. You held your weight in the BX and in Echo Park at that."

### *What It Means to Become Urban*

I spent much time over the years thinking about Lars' comments from that night. In retrospect, I realize that the brawl was a big part of my being accepted into my new Bronx community. I was viewed as an outsider before the fight with Elgin; afterwards, I had become accepted and, to some, even an insider. The fight seemed to have been a type

of initiation process, which I luckily passed. As I walked home tending my wounds, I had unknowingly been recast as a Bronxite, which had triggered my process into becoming, and later being fully accepted as, a New Yorker.

New York is a densely populated city offering unique opportunities and risks. Starting that night in 1989, I began to slowly take on the identity of a New Yorker; that is, I had adopted ways of being specifically equipped for life in a large city. For example, I soon gave up the religious proverb of “turning the other cheek” when I was in harm’s way. I had become an urban resident, but not overnight—and not always of my conscious choosing. I define the process of becoming urban as the adoption of a unique ontology that is assumed both consciously and unconsciously. One should not confuse being urban with being urbane, nor are they mutually exclusive. Urban connotes a skill set needed to survive in a large metropolitan area that includes a distinct appreciation of the possible perils without viewing one’s life or neighborhood from a deficit perspective.

Years later while reading Elijah Anderson’s (1999) work, I developed a new-found appreciation for my fight with Elgin and my personal journey of becoming a New Yorker. Anderson described the process of urban life as a quest for respect and that fighting can be a way to show courage. Somewhat counter-intuitively, Anderson maintains that fighting can also be a way to garner neighborhood respect that may lead to acceptance. I did gain acceptance from some Bronx peers that night, but would only realize this in the coming week. The following Friday, when walking up Snake Hill to catch the D Express at Tremont Avenue and the Grand Concourse, I ran into a group of

five middle schoolers standing in front of the train's entry. Surprisingly, I was now greeted with some accepting nods and even a hesitant handshake. Known as Lil D, Elgin's younger brother came up to me and extended his hand.

Lil D: [Extending his hand] You the white boy who fought my brother?

Lehner: [Shaking his hand] No, Lil D, I am the white dude who fought your brother.

Lil D: You got that, my fault. The white dude from the Boogie-down. Alright, I guess you are okay. Don't embarrass us. You're representing the BX now.

I share this story about my fight in the South Bronx as a chapter of the process of my New York City maturation. I was racially different than everyone in my new neighborhood. Nonetheless, because I had proven through a fight that I deserved to be respected, it had ironically opened up a path to allow me to connect socially and live happily in my new home. I now realize that I had built a type of solidarity with my new neighbors, a solidarity constructed from a shared, unspoken esteem built upon co-respect. I felt Elgin came to respect me because we shared a common desire: a will to survive. Perhaps the whole fight on the basketball court that night was nothing more than a test to see if I would buckle under pressure. I now symbolically understand that my ability to fight was a form of cultural capital that was viewed favorably in the Bronx. Possessing this desirable attribute allowed me to navigate my new surroundings more easily. I also saw how being seen as weak was negatively constructed and, for this reason, not fighting would have diminished my claims for respect. By not fighting, others may have inscribed me as being "weak," creating a structure by which to further disrespect me. Yet, my

fighting displayed this cultural capital, and the fact that I battled well enough to survive became a resource for constructing symbolic capital which resulted in respect.

Inadvertently, I had claimed respect that night and as a result, found an extended social network.

Long before I lived in Manhattan, attended graduate school, and moved to Brooklyn, I was a teenager learning how to live in the Bronx. This experience confirms that this dissertation is as much about me as about my students. Throughout my twenties, I struggled in New York to earn respect and live successfully. My need to earn respect has shifted as I have grown older, but respect is nonetheless an abiding currency in New York City. My research at LCS is closely linked to my life experiences. I see how many of these students are also trying to garner respect and live productively. My dissertation is about my love for New York and my devotion to learning, the combination of which continues to create a passion that overflows into my teaching.

#### *Teacher and Student-Researchers*

Two years into my teaching in 2004, outfitted with formal training in various social theories and educational research classes, I entered the classroom at LCS to conduct my research. Many of the suspended students struggled to stay connected to school and acquire sufficient basic academic skills. I started my research at LSC because these students are bright and full of promise, and need to institute alternative practices to assist their learning. It is true that some of these students are at risk of dropping out of school or being imprisoned. Yet, their overall perspective is one of hope. Some students

were initially reluctant or indifferent about participating in the study and seemed to do so as a way to escape feelings of boredom. Many more volunteered when I asked them to assist me in researching ways to improve our classroom. Our work was to create a community where learning could become the primary objective of our classroom time. We decided that a fair way to meet this objective would be to have the students and instructor co-create the lessons to learn, co-select the materials used to implement the lessons, and agree upon the method of instructional delivery. Cogenerative dialogue is an active educational approach that has helped the students experience and internalize a degree of personal investment in their education. By helping to shape all these different elements of classroom instruction, and by privileging the learners' voices for the purpose of improving classroom teaching and learning, the students actively engaged in the curriculum and grew to own the responsibility of learning. Over the semester, the efforts of the students assumed a momentum of their own as their self-perceptions as learners and their relationships with school became more personally meaningful.

In my first year of action research, I witnessed its powerful ability to change the trajectory of a special needs student's life. Anthony was the first student to accept my offer to become a student-researcher. Though a naturally bright student, Anthony had done very little classroom work to pass his classes, and had come to the Suspension Center because of felony charges. During his first semester of being involved in our research, he turned from a student who was marginally engaged in class to an honor role student preparing to attend college. Anthony's change in attitude resulted from the small,

gradual steps of becoming more aware of his active role as a learner, which simultaneously empowered his sense of academic agency. His involvement in our research project was a revealing and engaging experience about how school can be a place which stimulates his innate intellectual ability, in connection with his knowledge base and lifeworld experiences. By changing the nature of the classroom structure, its delivery of knowledge, and the instructional entry points used to engage the student, a passive recipient became a more active participant. Anthony had helped transform his classroom into an environment that made it more amenable to engage him and his peers. He had co-created a powerful and essential experience of authority and motivation that many students rarely experience. By the end of the semester, Anthony and I were presenting to the school's teachers for professional development and, later, at an academic conference.

#### *Overview for the Dissertation*

This dissertation details the new culture that the student-researchers and I created in an effort to develop better teaching and learning practices in our classrooms. Each chapter records the educational journey of a student-researcher and recounts what occurred in cogenerative dialogue and the classroom. Based on the results, I expect to conclude that cogenerative dialogue can help address the instructional misalignment that occurs in suspension centers. This research also records how each student-researcher expanded his or her classroom roles while engaging in cogenerative dialogue, suggesting

that what is produced in cogenerative dialogues can be enacted in classrooms and thereby improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Chapter I introduced the reader to the problem of mutual respect and classroom miscommunication as a fundamental issue that mediates the quality of suspension center education. This chapter outlined how instructional misalignment is a major concern of suspension center education and suggested that cogenerative dialogue can be one way to mediate this issue. Lastly, I shared auto/biographical and auto/ethnographical perspectives on what encouraged me to undertake this research.

Chapter II describes how in New York City, the racial and social class divides between teachers and students can create profound cultural disconnects that manifest themselves in the misalignment of teachers' instructional methods and students' learning approaches. At times described as a problem of racial partition between white teachers and African American students, current educational research tends to simplify the matter of instructional misalignment by under-describing the racial and ethnic make-up of the participants. Set in a New York City Suspension Center, this work specifies the need to create a unique interstitial culture as a way to create a classroom learning environment that serves all stakeholders. In this research, Cameron is the student-researcher of focus and I describe how he produced relevant culture to meet his learning needs and the educational needs of his peers.

Chapter III maintains that when students and teachers can work together to develop a deep sense of partnership, creating spaces to build solidarity and trust.

Christine used these social spaces to develop strong relationships with peers and teachers to develop her science learning. Specifically, this chapter follows how Christine developed her own practices to enact science learning. She developed these practices in cogenerative dialogue and transported and enacted these practices in the classroom. Christine's notion of science learning is rooted in the idea of making the curriculum relevant to her lifeworld. This ethnography follows Christine's participation in cogenerative dialogue, where she created new classroom management practices.

Chapter IV demonstrates that when students and teacher plan together and share the control of the classroom it can result in a spirit of collaboration that assists in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Specifically, this chapter follows how Anthony, a student-researcher, developed a classroom management practice in cogenerative dialogue and transported and enacted this practice in the classroom. Anthony's notion of distributed classroom management is rooted in the idea of sharing classroom control and working from the spirit of collectivism. This ethnography follows Anthony's participation in cogenerative dialogue where he created this peer aligned classroom management.

Chapter V argues that some nuanced allowances are needed so that immigrant students can fully benefit from science instruction. In much of the educational literature, researchers make little distinction between African-American students and students of the African Diaspora who immigrated to the United States. Failing to describe these salient student differences serves to perpetuate an inaccurate view of African-American school

life. This chapter supports further investigation by the science education community to consider ways that immigrant students' lifeworld experiences can serve to structure and transform the urban science classroom.

Chapter VI provides a summary of what was achieved in this doctoral research and synthesizes what I learned while reviewing the extent to which the research met the quality benchmarks laid out in Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria. Reflecting on this work, I also look to the future of my work and project my considerations for future research. This work detailed students' positive responses to this approach. I also chronicle how students created practices that brought novel ideas and practical results to classroom instruction. I also consider the key implications for practices employed while working suspended youth. Lastly, I give updates on the lives of the students-researcher.

### *Conclusion*

Throughout this work, I focus on ways to create collaboration with students to promote academic learning while utilizing their lifeworlds. Overall, this study was designed as a longitudinal critical ethnography concerned with the ways that students identified as, or disassociated themselves from being, academic achievers. The student-researchers and I focused on creating learning opportunities intended to serve all stakeholders. As outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), my research and dissertation focused on limiting potential harms, expanding participant beneficence, and creating a sense of justice for those involved. This work attempted to adhere to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria by focusing on approaches that students could practically use

to benefit their learning. All participation in this work was voluntary and each student was extended an invitation to participate.

## CHAPTER II

### INSTRUCTIONAL MISALIGNMENT

These damn black kids! All they do is fuck and fight, and here I am trying to control the locals. They don't listen to me. They don't participate in class. They don't want to learn anything. The administration wants me to teach them something meaningful for their futures. It is a joke. Suspended kids who are in and out of jail, and I am their teacher. Shit, this is Riker's Prep.

(Lawrence Apple, 5/1/2005, personal communication)

As he reflects on his teaching and the students with whom he interacts daily, Lawrence Apple (pseudonym) expresses both frustration at his lack of classroom effectiveness and, more telling, he predicts bleak futures for his students. Given the racial connotations of the comments, one would assume a white teacher said them to describe his African American students. A Guyanese immigrant whom many people many perceive as African American, Apple's comments capture the complexity of a racialized pedagogy that frames urban youth negatively and criminalizes their problems. Apple is situated in the notion that his students are fundamentally different, even though both he and many of his students represent the African Diaspora. In short, Apple describes and

interacts with his students as if they were “the other.” Jean-Paul Sartre formulated the idea that the other represents a danger to individual freedom. French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan developed his phenomenological work based on Sartre’s idea. Lacan built a dialectic between self and other, in which each strives to be recognized by the other (Macey, 2000). Using Lacan’s framework, Christopher Emdin (2007) describes the course of action of “othering” as a procedure that negatively demarks one individual or group from another. Thus, naming his students as “the other,” Apple relinquishes any responsibility for their education; he perceives that these differences are unassailable and absolute.

The process of othering is situated in xenophobia. From this worldview, Apple views individuals and groups who are economically, socially, linguistically, or racially different as outsiders and potential enemies. Although his comments seem extreme, the underlying principle of otherness supports many informal school practices that occur between teachers and students in New York City. For example, the typical advice given to a first-year teacher by veteran instructors is rooted in an ideology of otherness. In such cases, an experienced instructor warns new teachers not to lose control of the class. The experienced teacher tells a beginning teacher to insure that the students know who is in control. This teaching advice is not spelled out in such words in any primer or the official staff handbook but it predominates as the de facto classroom management policy in many urban schools. Countless times, I have personally heard testimonies from colleagues who have been on the receiving end of this advice; I too have been admonished to keep firm

control of my class. In such scenarios involving teachers and myself, a veteran teacher voluntarily decided to stress the importance of stern control for today's schools. In New York City, this topic is perceived as so critical that conversations on attempting to control student behaviors and maintaining order in the classroom dominate much time allocated for professional development and staff meetings.

Rooted in the belief that students are "others" and therefore need to be managed, pedagogy stressing strict classroom control dictates both formal and informal teacher education practices. Upon teaching my first full day in the New York City school system, I received one unified, resoundingly clear message: classroom order and control over students are essential skills needed to teach in New York City. I also received this similar advice when I began teaching at LSC. I had arrived early and had not yet seen my students when the most senior teacher at Liberty approached me and stressed the overwhelming significance of classroom discipline for suspended students.

Forman (Pseudonym): Ed, I want you to know how hard it is to teach in this environment. The kids are suspended and tough. Not very many do well and most fail. It is discouraging. Have you ever taught suspended students before?

Lehner: No.

Forman: They're tough. You need to make sure they know that you are in control. The students are here because they have to be here because they are on probation and will get locked up if they aren't here. They don't want to learn and some of them are outright mean. Be careful and make sure they know you are in charge.

(Reconstructed from personal communication, 2/15/2005)

These initial words from senior teacher and union representative Ronald Forman made a lasting impression on me. His advice seemed to reinforce the idea that urban students needed to be managed and controlled. Interestingly, I would receive the same message from nearly all of my fellow suspension center teachers and the administration.

Virtually all high school teachers would agree that maintaining an orderly learning atmosphere is critical for developing an environment that is conducive to student learning. Yet the standard veteran counsel of “making sure the students know who is in charge” seems to transcend a simple classroom management adage. Instead it becomes a profound commentary on the philosophy informing current classroom management practices. Both administrators and practitioners tend to over focus on teacher behaviors to determine whether classroom learning is taking place; they tend to over look meaningful student enactments of content-based knowledge. With this excessive focus on teacher behaviors, learning can be inaccurately reduced to teaching practices that serve to restrain student conduct rather than promote student learning. Administrators often meld the two constructs but controlling a classroom and teaching a lesson are two different teaching skill sets. However, in a school system predicated on perceived orderliness, classroom control seems to be king. Large urban classrooms, such as those in New York City, have engendered teaching practices that exert power over the students. Such practices, however, continue to be falsely interpreted as learning even though such instruction does little to improve students’ understanding of the curriculum.

Kenneth Tobin (2005) described how such strict classroom control policies are often administrative procedures based on false understandings of how students learn. He details how in many schools, administrators hold teachers accountable for maintaining an orderly classroom based on fallacies of classroom management such as students must keep quiet and well-behaved. By default, teaching and learning in these classrooms become solely instructor-centered. Student roles in turn become so limited and proscribed that class structure instead of content becomes the unconscious focus of all in the room. A hidden curriculum can be unconsciously enacted with a narrow focus controlling the actions of the students. This hidden curriculum becomes a de facto agenda for the instructor and real teaching is minimized within the context of the course. As a classroom teacher, I have witnessed teachers enacting a neo-banking model, much like the system that Paulo Freire (1973) decried over 30 years ago. Even though students are not supported and served by their methods, administrators often praise teachers, rather than admonish them, for maintaining “control over” type environments.

*A Research Forum Misunderstands the Issues*

The profound asymmetries existing between teacher and student learning approaches are central to understanding underachievement in urban schools. The differences between teaching strategies and urban students’ learning practices are a widely misunderstood phenomenon occurring at all levels in the educational system. During my teaching career in New York City public schools, exasperated teachers regularly complain that their students are not interested in learning and that they act

disrespectfully. Conversely, students grumble that the subject lessons are uninteresting, the teaching dull, and the content matter is irrelevant to their lives.

Despite increasing research in this area, the disparity between teacher strategies to educate and student approaches to learn is still widely understudied. Echoing Wade Boykin's (1986) arguments, Lisa Delpit (1995) describes how schools often privilege white, middle-class students by reproducing a school culture that rewards demonstrations of class-based language enactment. She maintains that the teaching is geared toward high performance on standardized testing, thereby precluding students of color from doing as well as their white peers. To compensate for low performance, African American students often resort to acting-out. Rowhea Elmesky (2005) outlines how such youth often utilize play as a viable tool to shape classroom structures to enhance their learning. As Elmesky points out, however, teachers in traditional learning environments would likely interpret these dispositions of African American youth as disruptive, even detrimental, to a productive classroom. Tobin (2001) reinforces this idea by noting that teaching practices initiated by middle-class teachers are often at odds with the social and cultural capital possessed by African Americans from low-income homes.

Educational research posits a bifurcated view of schooling pitting middle class teachers against students of color. As mentioned above, Delpit's well-known work on this issue has captured some of the problems of urban school landscape. Unfortunately, her scope has been too limited to thoughtfully probe the complexity of classroom dynamics in New York City schools. Decades of immigration to New York forces researchers to

reconsider the issue of instructional misalignment beyond the scope of white and black. New York City's history, unlike other large urban settings, places immigration front and center into this debate. To further understand this misalignment, I firmly situated this issue in the complex notion of hegemony and class reproduction. For example, Lawrence Apple, a Guyanese immigrant, does not view himself as a white teacher, but he does view his students as an ethnic other and certainly as "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995).

Nested in the idea of racial and ethnic minimizing, researchers like Delpit, Elmesky, and Tobin seemingly default to understanding urban schooling as a straightforward division between black and white. Yet, the realities are far more complex. Although many of these students may dress and speak like many of their African American peers, they are members of a growing cross section of students who characterize New York immigration. Joel Spring (2004) astutely maintains that race can be construed as a political construct and American educational researchers seemed to have readily applied this notion to their work. They have described the New York school system with an all-encompassing rubric of "students of color" or "African-Americans." Instead of racializing the issue, educational researchers need to acknowledge the role of hegemony in the producing and reproducing unequal schooling.

The racial and ethnic compositions of New York City should compel researchers to consider how the unique culture of this immigrant city influences our schools. Multi-generation immigration into New York has now stretched beyond the limited view of students as the African Americans who migrated from the Southern United States after

World War II and Puerto Ricans who emigrated from their homeland into the greater New York region throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. New York is a vital hub of immigration and many immigrants flood the public school system in New York City and its environs. The suspension center as a subgroup of the system is no exception. They, in fact, are a microcosm of the larger educational world, which has spawned them. As I describe the setting it is possible to discern the nuances of school life that also run through the larger system—and the same types of problems that erupt in the classroom, only in a more intensified form in the suspension setting. The students at LSC represent an incredible mix of nations and languages. During my research, I have worked with student-researchers who are African Americans, first-and second-generation Bahamians, Belizeans, Cayman Islanders, Chileans, Costa Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Guineans, Haitians, Indians (from Southeast Asia), Jamaicans, Mexicans, Pakistanis, Panamanians, Puerto Ricans, and Trinidadians.

Current research on instructional misalignment describes the problem framing and reframing through a lens that reduces the racial and ethnic dynamics of the urban classroom. For example, Delpit describes the classroom dynamics as playing out across the bifurcated lines of black and white. This research investigates instructional misalignment by considering the complex dynamics in LSC's classrooms and I move away from the linear situating of the issue in racialized terms and consider the multifaceted instructional concerns. LSC serves a racial and ethnically diverse population that has helped me recognize how asymmetries between teaching and learning styles can

produce and reproduce scholastic underachievement. In this research, I sought to build collaborative ways for students and teachers to co-create practices to benefit all stakeholders.

*Creating New Learning Culture: Aligning the Misaligned*

In addressing the differences between teachers' instructional methodologies and students' knowledge acquisition approaches, new culture needs to be created to satisfy the needs of both stakeholders in the classroom. In order to bridge differences in age, race, culture and approach to content curriculum, teachers and students would benefit by collectively creating a common culture to address the impediments hindering classroom effectiveness. In this pursuit, cogenerative dialogue can be a helpful practice to talk across these key differences while working to tackle the impediments to classroom learning.

In my research, I use the practice of cogenerative dialogue as a way to produce new learning culture that affords teachers and students the opportunity to align teaching and learning strategies. Wolff-Michael Roth and Kenneth Tobin (2004) explain how cogenerative dialogue was conceptualized and how the practice became an integral part of their research on classroom teaching. Tobin (2005) details how cogenerative dialogue emerged by asking student-researchers, how can I better teach students like you? In time, Tobin saw the saliency of this type of student feedback and how this input could mediate classroom results. Tobin and Roth, and other researchers afterward, began to use cogenerative dialogue in their classrooms to inform how instruction was planned, delivered, and ultimately enacted in the classroom.

Often occurring between students and their classroom teachers, a cogenerative dialogue is a conversation participants have about a shared experience (Tobin, 2005). The overriding purpose of a cogenerative dialogue that takes place in a school is for members

to take collective responsibility for the results in the class. In my use of cogenerative dialogue, participants were selected to represent the differences in classroom achievement, learning style, and cultural and symbolic capital. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1989) first conceptualized this research principle of selecting participants who represent dialectical positions in social space and cogenerative dialogue uses this notion to represent the larger class.

Cogenerative dialogue's combination of reflection and collective actions allow students and teachers to structure their learning environments differently. The field, as it is enacted in cogenerative dialogues, structures participant culture, as its enactment structures the field. Hence cultural enactment in cogenerative dialogues is structured and is structuring. In other words, student or teacher actions focused on improving classroom learning change the way structure impacts learning. Since these actions are part of the field's structures, individual action can afford other students more access to resources and expanded classroom agency. It is this dialectal relationship between a field's structuring nature and an individual's opportunity to structure that makes cogenerative dialogue such an important area of research. Since a field structures individual learning as much as an individual structures the field, research may uncover unique practices to expand student agency and expand learning opportunities.

### *The Creation of New and Interstitial Culture*

Cogenerative dialogue also provides a social space where new learning culture can be produced. New culture emerges as cultural production and reproduction in cogenerative dialogue and evolves as students and teachers create and implement

practices designed to assist in classroom teaching and learning. Some of the new learning culture can be described as interstitial in that it is formed to serve a particular temporal purpose. In this research, participants would create plans of action to deal with current classroom problems. The plans of action cogenerated for this purpose were practical and participants developed new practices that were temporal and used only to attend to issues at hand. As new teaching and learning challenges arose, new interstitial culture was developed to address new concerns.

I describe the culture as interstitial because of the pragmatic role new culture plays in a classroom or cenerative dialogue. The interstitial culture's creation, enactment, and dismissal play very specific purposes before the social life of the classroom demands need culture because the structures have changed. In order for the newly produced culture to be fluently incorporated and appropriated by the students and teachers into the classroom, it must be usable in ways that are timely and appropriate in the field where (or "in which") the culture is reproduced. That is to say, interstitial culture is produced and enacted because it serves a very specific, "in the moment" purpose. After that specific purpose has been served, it is unlikely that the same culture will be needed unless it continues to be useful. In this sense, interstitial culture is singular, serves mostly utilitarian purposes, and yet its traces remain in the body's neural system—ready to come to hand when and if the structures of a field create the appropriate resonances, in which case the interstitial culture can again be produced (i.e., reproduced|transformed).

### *Focus of This Study*

I spent 4 months conducting ethnographic research with at-risk students in an urban suspension center. This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical rationale for using cogenerative dialogue as a practice to advance student learning by aligning teaching practices with it to the mutual benefit of all stakeholders OR “such that all stakeholders benefit.” As a result of the students’ involvement in this research, student roles were expanded to include becoming curriculum planners, technology assistants, cogenerative dialogue participants, and presenters at a university education conference. In this chapter, I also share how the use of cogenerative dialogues coincided with the expansion of student roles, as manifested in both classroom activities and cogenerative dialogue. Using previous research on cogenerative dialogue as a starting point, this study examined the usefulness of this approach as a field where new culture can be learned, produced, and reproduced in the classroom. If teachers and students can create new classroom culture, then aligning teacher and student classroom practices is also possible and practical.

This study considered two very specific questions about the culture produced in cogenerative dialogue and the reproduction|transformation of that culture when and if it was enacted in the classroom. First, this study examines whether a group of students and a teacher can create aligned learning practices in the cogenerative dialogue and reproduce similar alignments in the classroom. Secondly, when new culture has been produced in cogenerative dialogues, under what circumstances can the culture be reproduced and

transformed in class? As a result of these two questions, this research endeavors to detail practices enacted by students and a teacher that created new learning structures. Using ethnographic tools, I studied the new learning structures and practices that were created and I detailed how this newly created culture played-out in the classroom.

In light of these research questions, I examined the role cogenerative dialogue played in the production, reproduction and transformation of teacher and student roles in a social studies classroom. Based on Roth and Tobin's work (2002), other researchers examined how this practice coexisted with the development of new learning strategies used to improve science and math classrooms. Building on this work, I studied how initiating cogenerative dialogue often facilitated the development of new learning roles for students and expanded instructional opportunities for teachers. My research explored the complex social and cultural process involved in producing new culture and describing its replication in the classroom to create instructional alignment. This research examined an under-explored topic in the literature, in that, it traces previously undemonstrated culture first exhibited in cogenerative dialogue and the study circumstances of its reenactment in the classroom.

Although I examined roles for all students participating in the research, this chapter specifically focuses on one student Cameron, and the convergence of his expanded student roles and his participation in cogenerative dialogue over four months. I explore how Cameron's participation in cogenerative dialogue also coexisted with his manifestation of new student roles as seen in the classroom. After analyzing videotaped

cogenerative dialogues and classes, I studied Cameron's participation in classroom life and watched how his roles changed from a student who was simply part of the class to a participant who demonstrated important culture that helped to align instruction between students and me, the teacher.

We started research in March 2005 and ended in June of the same year. Our protocol was to have a cogenerative dialogue on Tuesday and record class on Thursday. Cogenerative dialogue and class ran for 40 minutes. With recorded video from the second month until the last week of class, I use this data to trace how Cameron manifested new culture in cogenerative dialogue and how similar conduct was exhibited in the classroom. Specifically, this chapter examines two vignettes taped sequentially to illustrate how cogenerative dialogue can act as a generative field to grow and produce new classroom culture. As evidenced in these scenes, cogenerative dialogue can coexist with high levels of group solidarity and joint commitment to successful classroom learning. These vignettes also demonstrate how culture learned in cogenerative dialogue can collectively produce practices bringing alignment between a teacher's pedagogical strategies and students' cultural production (i.e., reproduction|transformation).

*School Life at Liberty High School Suspension Center*

Research took place at Liberty High School Suspension Center (LSC) in New York City, and data were collected from March 2005 to June 2005. The fictitiously named LSC is located in the East New York section of Brooklyn. Organized by the Alternative Division of New York City Schools, suspension centers are small high

schools where students attend classes after receiving a suspension for committing a violent offense. Because students' suspensions preclude them from returning to their home school for an entire academic year, they are schooled in a suspension center. Although there are over 40 detention sites, New York City Department of Education has only four year-long suspension centers located throughout the City. All LSC students are non-white minorities, with an age range of 14 to 19 years old, 85% males and 15% females. LSC's roster records the student population as 60% African American, 38% Hispanic, and 2% Asian.

These figures are misleading because they tend to represent each group as a homogenous block when in fact there are many sub-groups within each category. For example, a Puerto Rican or a Dominican student may dress and speak like his peers but be bilingual, from a Latino background even though his phenotype may categorize him as African American. Cameron fits into an expanding growing group of students who straddle both demographics. Joel Spring (2004) asserts that race is a political construct in American education rather than a significant characteristic. In this chapter, I describe race and ethnicity in ways that distinguish between students who are African American and those who represent the African Diaspora in all of its manifestations. As mentioned above, this research was conducted at LSC where learners represent a wide-spectrum of the African Diaspora

The students at LSC were removed from their original school because they were implicated in level 4 or level 5 infractions according to New York City's disciplinary

code. A level 4 or 5 infraction represents various violent infringements ranging from threatening another student or teacher with violence to bringing a firearm to school. Immediately upon their removal from school, students are sent to a pre-hearing site until a New York City Department of Education official can hear the impending case. At this point in the process, the student has only received a school suspension, and a departmental official must hear the case if a full-year suspension is pursued. When the city official hears the case and agrees with the sending school's report that a serious disciplinary code violation was committed, the student is immediately suspended for a full calendar year and sent to a suspension center.

At times, because of a number of issues, classroom teaching can be difficult LSC. The complexities of the issues involved in a year-long suspension certainly affect how students approach their education. Additionally, since suspension centers have only five content area teachers, not all required classes can be offered. Often students who have completed a number of their requirements are forced to retake courses they had already finished at their home school. Beyond the many programmatic challenges of a suspension center, one chief reason that classroom teaching is so challenging is that the school has a rolling admissions policy. As detailed above, the process of suspending a student for an entire academic year is a lengthy process, which usually takes at least 4 months from beginning to end. Upon being informed of a student's full-year suspension, the City mandates that a suspension center enroll the student immediately. As a result, LSC's

rolling admissions procedure constantly affects classroom teaching because the steady influx of students arriving often disrupts classroom dynamics.

Classroom culture at LSC often differs greatly from class to class, but one consistent commonality among the classes is urban toughness. Toughness is a characteristic of many urban settings and of Brooklyn itself, but the type of conduct displayed at LSC is concentrated beyond what is seen at the local high schools in New York City. Suspended students are often removed from their schools for fights, gang activity, striking a teacher, or other actions that society-at-large deems criminal. Although a handful of students at LSC have been in prison, many of the students took on demeanors and spoke in ways that glamorized criminal life. Toughness in this setting can be seen in nearly every aspect of school culture. Students exude toughness in their walk, manner, tone of speech, and interactions. Not surprisingly, tough students jockeying for power and influence also emerges in the school. Small conflicts and strained relationships between students and teachers are daily fare in the school. In classes, a type of patterned interaction often materializes between teachers and students just as a lesson starts. A teacher will formally initiate a lesson only to be interrupted by students who do not want to start class.

Student resistance to formal lessons creates failed interactions and negative emotional energy toward the teacher (Collins, 2004). Over several months, these negative types of interactions became so pervasive that classes often needed to run informally, with teachers providing assistance only when asked. Since many classes have adopted an

informal tutoring environment, it becomes hard to gauge the extent to which classes cover the material required to equip students for the year-end New York State Regents Exams.

The rolling admission certainly affected my classes when I started teaching in February 2005. Spring semester began with only 3 students, but within 2 months the number had swollen to 20; many of the new students were not acquainted with the formalities of focused instruction in my class. In particular, the group dynamics were always affected and altered when new students arrived weekly. These new students had attended various schools, represented different parts of the city, and had been suspended for serious, although different, infractions. Like many teachers in the school, I wanted to integrate the new students into our class as quickly as possible. However, in general, when mixing new students together for the first time, a period of awkward *détente* often follows. Sometimes, new students will quietly observe their new school, seemingly observing the nuances of this unfamiliar environment. At other times, recently suspended students feel the need to prove their toughness to other students and demonstrate macho posturing and thereby earn respect.

Confounding the group dynamics, each student must continually balance the familial, academic, and social consequences of his or her suspension. Soon after I started teaching at LSC, I learned from students that many of them had only limited successful interactions with teachers and classroom learning. For LSC students, a year's suspension was often but one incident in a long history of mishaps and failures in their academic

careers. In an autobiographical assignment recounting personal history, Teron, an 18 year old senior, wrote a telling line describing the difficulties he had encountered prior to his suspension: “This year’s suspension is one stop on a long line of trouble and I hope to stop it soon” (assigned work, 2005).

After completing their suspensions, not all LSC students return to their sending schools because of requirements outlined at their suspension hearings. Since students may not return to their sending school or remain at LSC until they complete their studies, students are frequently left in a difficult position. After one year, many students have built, some perhaps for the first time, a successful social network that include both staff and students. Yet immediately upon completing their one-year suspensions, students may be sent off to a new school to start the process all over again.

Although only six weeks of formal instruction had passed, in my class, my students started to exhibit practices reflecting the school’s collective inattentive, often disruptive, conduct. The porous boundaries between my class and other classes led the students to being treating me like any other teacher, teaching any other class.

### *Emotional Energy*

Randall Collins (2004) has extensively demonstrated the role that emotions play in shaping social life. His work detailing the sociology of emotions has important ramifications for educational research. Collins maintains that small, successful personal connections work together to create larger interaction ritual chains that produce group membership, mutual trust, and bountiful enthusiasm. According to Collins’ theoretical

framework, high-quality personal interactions are usually filled with positive emotional energy and lead to beneficial outcomes for all participants. Participants are drawn to settings where emotional energy is high, and often positively charged environments strengthen each member's level of commitment to the group.

In classroom life, small successful interactions between students and teachers can constructively contribute to the quality of the learning environment. Successful classroom interactions are interconnected with a build-up of positive emotional energy and a series of consecutive, high-energy interactions, which create "pockets of solidarity" (Collins, 2004, p. 15). Over time, and as a result of successful interactions, individuals begin to feel a stronger sense of solidarity with other group members to the point of envisioning common group goals. Collins argues that once high levels of positive emotional energy are present in the group, this energy emboldens members with feelings of exhilaration, which, in turn, tend to solidify group membership and classroom identity. Soon, the group establishes a code of behavior, which becomes sacred, needing to be defended and reinforced by other members.

Collins' sociological model can be applied easily to the school culture. Students in a classroom are more prone to engage in interactions that are successful and yield positive emotional energy and interconnectedness. Successful interactions also tend to produce synchronous behaviors between students and teachers in the classroom. This was apparent in the LSC setting of this study and my work with a student-researcher named, Cameron. For instance, before one cogenerative dialogue, Cameron explained the

detailed points of the lesson from the day before as a lecture. When reviewing the video after the session, I saw how he received synchronous behaviors from both students and me in the form of head nods, smiles, and encouraging verbalized affirmations. When reviewing data, I saw synchronous behavior from the students through their expressions of diligence over completed homework, in preparing for class, and in other forms of student enacted rigor. Extended synchronous classroom behaviors led to group entrainment and eventually to group exhilaration, also called collective effervescence. Collective effervescence is essentially group euphoria experienced when individual and group achievement merges. This evolves into ever-higher levels of group solidarity and a renewed sense of collective purpose.

This research focused on the patterns of coherence in classrooms as a way to create practices to enhance teaching and learning. Yet, social life does not always play out so neatly and predictably. Often, urban classrooms experience the negative side of Collins' interaction ritual chains. In many urban schools, a teacher starting a lesson may witness many asynchronous conduct from students. For example, students may talk over the teacher, disregard and disrespect the teacher during the lesson, not participate in class discussions or activities, or exhibit countless other asynchronous practices that produce failed interactions. In time, numerous failed interactions can lead to negative emotional energy and lack of interconnectedness. In this scenario, building a collective environment for group learning to occur is difficult because the build-up of negative emotional energy impedes individual and group agency. In urban classrooms, such negatively-charged

interactions rapidly erode the members' emotional investment in the class, affecting all stakeholders and the quality of teaching and learning.

I experienced this type of contradiction with a failed interaction with Cameron one month into my research. Once we experienced this type of negative emotional energy, Cameron and I mutually decided that we needed to talk about the reasons for our failed interaction. Because we had a conversation about our exchange, we were able to continue having a relatively successful series of social interactions afterwards. Had we not discussed our failed interaction, the dynamics of the classroom would have been forever changed.

### *Describing the Research Participants*

I began teaching in February 2005 at LSC, and 2 months into the semester, I started cogenerative dialogue with just two students. As the semester progressed, and the number of students in the class grew, the cogenerative dialogue participants also grew in size to five who consistently attended meetings. Cameron and Ramel were the first two students to participate in cogenerative dialogue and they remained group members until the end of the study. Later, Lacey, Timothy, Deshawn, and Jose joined the cogenerative dialogue and the class size eventually grew to 20 students. During the research, the class videotaped cogenerative dialogues on Tuesdays of each week, and we videotaped classes on Thursdays.

Cameron is a very bright, extroverted, popular 17-year-old who describes himself as black-Puerto Rican. As of this writing, he is currently a junior at LSC. He is making

strong academic strides in his coursework and is particularly gifted in the humanities. At 5 feet 8 inches tall, Cameron is thin, has cropped hair, and light brown-colored skin that he attributes to his “dark parents.” Although both of his parents are Puerto Rican, Cameron states that he and his family are darker than other Puerto Ricans. To many Brooklynites, Cameron is perceived as being at least part African American. Raised by his mother in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, Cameron readily admits how his father’s absence has weighed upon him heavily.

My father being away from the family hurt because Bushwick is rough as hell. I didn’t know how to act like a man. I didn’t speak much English and I would get picked on in the hood and at school. That is where Ramel and his pop came in. They looked out. And Ramel’s pop kinda of took me under his wing.

(Cameron, interview, 5/21/2005)

According to Cameron, he and Ramel are like brothers because they grew up in the same neighborhood, attended the same schools, and both looked to Ramel’s father for support and guidance. When asked about his identity, Cameron states he considers himself black because of his identification with Ramel’s family and how these relationships shaped his self-view. Cameron also expresses an affinity with African Americans due to his “darker” skin. In Cameron’s self-understanding, a complex identity surfaces as a mixture of being a Puerto Rican and a black male. Often, he combines the discrete characteristics of race and ethnicity into one by including aspects of one distinct culture passed on to him by his mother and a second distinct African American culture learned from Ramel’s family and from living in Brooklyn.

Coincidentally, Cameron and Ramel attended high school together before they were both suspended because of jointly participating in a fight. New York City Department of Education policy mandates that two students involved in the same suspending incident must be separated, suspended and sent to two different sites; nonetheless, Cameron and Ramel were both sent to LSC. Given that they were both in the same grade; Cameron and Ramel were in the same U.S. Social Studies course where this research took place. It is highly unusual for two students involved in the same suspending incident to jointly attend LCS; it is a further anomaly that two close friends would both be suspended and attend the same class. Nevertheless, this was the case when the research began.

In the second week of research, the first vignette is taken from a cogenerative dialogue on a day when only Cameron and Ramel participated in this group. During this cogenerative dialogue, I asked Cameron if he would start the session. He spoke informally but covered the three basic tenets of cogenerative dialogue: 1) respect is given to all group members, 2) only one person talks at one time, and 3) the group needs to arrive at a plan to improve the class teaching and learning. From the outset Cameron and Ramel, seemed fully invested in this process and we discussed ways to develop the learning practices in our class cooperatively. Later in the week when Cameron, Ramel, and I reviewed the video, we saw evidence that their emotional energy was elevated during 22 minutes of our meeting. The empirical evidence for elevated levels of emotional energy was seen in the group's mutual focus, shared positive mood, and comprehensive focus to the task at hand. During the session, I remember feeling very

connected to the process. In particular, I thought that Cameron's input about creating classroom interest could be particularly helpful if his suggestions could be implemented in the class.

When reviewing the video a few days later, I watched this session on my Macintosh Powerbook G4 using iMovie. During my first levels of analysis as I watched the videotape in real time, I observed sustained attention and ardent interest that Cameron showed during the meeting. In terms of his nonverbal participation, Cameron's posture was upright, he leaned slightly forward, and his eyes were directly focused on each speaker. At times, Cameron's suggestions became the foci of our meeting as he took the initiative to comment on the quality of teaching and learning in our classroom. When reviewing this section of the video, I saw how he enacted a number of functions during the session that could be helpful to the classroom learning environment. For example, his attentiveness, focus, interest could all be helpful traits in the classroom. When I later shared these vignettes with Cameron, he agreed that if a high level of participant focus could be produced in the classroom, then the likelihood that students would learn would also increase. In particular, Cameron commented that if future classes could be inaugurated differently, he thought his classmates' interests would increase naturally.

Cameron: Ayo, Lehner, we need to do something about the way we teaching this stuff. Not everyone is interested and we could change that up by doing some hood stuff.

(Cameron, interview, 4/7/2005)

*Cameron's Focused Interactions Translates into Aligned Learning Culture*

Cameron became a vital agent in creating a new learning environment for our class primarily because his involvement seemed to derive directly from his ability to reproduce the culture that he enacted in cogenerative dialogue or to nuance the ideas he pulled from these sessions. For example, in both cogenerative dialogue and class, Cameron attempted to involve himself to the greatest extent possible. When reviewing any video of cogenerative dialogue or class, I would see his enthusiastic verbal interactions with all of his peers and with me during any session. Overall, one of the most important aspects of Cameron's involvement came from his input on classroom learning processes and how to implement peer learning checks. Excerpted from a cogenerative dialogue in the ninth week of research, this transcript records an exchange in which Cameron suggests a strategy to insure that his peers would stay on task and involved in the lesson.

Cameron: We need to connect what we are learning to life... to hood life...

Lehner: Okay. What should we do?

Cameron: Well, we could talk about the rap wars

Lehner: All right. How would that work?

Cameron: You know, since we are talking about war and expanding we, could relate that to rap. 50 Cent is trying to take over. Dip Set is trying to take over. We could use that and relate it to social studies. We really could use anything. It don't need to be rap. Anything could work if we all try.

As his comments reveal above, Cameron suggested developing a new approach to insure that his fellow classmates could relate to the lesson. Cameron expressed his ideas

with energy, but also with an overt concern for his peers, indicating that his suggestion was, at least in part, an act of communalism. Cameron articulated that the group could achieve more together if these peer-focused recommendations could be implemented. Ramel, in turn, excitedly resonated with Cameron's idea, showing that he also valued the importance of collective achievement.

By using cogenerative dialogue, Cameron, Ramel, and I came to discover that group orientation and collective achievement played important roles in their schooling. Once Cameron gave this type of feedback in the cogenerative dialogue group, we set about implementing practices that would mutually benefit all participants. Additionally, since I was going to plan the lesson, I used this type of response to inform my planning and implementing of new topics.

As a way of aligning classroom teaching and learning, Cameron created a peer-relevant, urban lifeworld culture to create instructional alignment. As he stated earlier, Cameron recognized how implementing student suggestions and squaring them with curriculum standards could heighten peer interest. Cogenerative dialogue provided this field of possibility since Cameron, Ramel, and I were functioning outside the normal parameters of classroom life and could rethink our current practices and roles. In this type of field where rules and goals were not pre-structured, Cameron brought to the group's collective understanding the need to insure peer learning. When the group collectively implemented a practice to follow up on Cameron's suggestion, possibilities for alignment began occurring in real-time by the actors within that field. Cogenerative dialogue thus

allowed for a social space where the roles of teacher and student were suspended to collaboratively restructure their learning environment.

### *Group Interaction Rituals and Interstitial Culture*

In addition to his contribution of alignment that was created in cogenerative dialogue, I also studied Cameron's expanded student roles and the coexistence of our small group session. Micro analysis of the cogenerative dialogue showed that it had produced for Cameron the needed ritual ingredients to build the positive emotional energy seen in ritual outcomes. To a great degree, the ritual ingredients had entrained Cameron and so his mutual focus, animated involvement, and elevated mood are results of this process. Additionally, the ritual process also coincided with Cameron's increased sense of group membership and higher degrees of solidarity with Ramel and me.

The ritual ingredients started to come together when our group assembled at the same table and our mutual focus was shared by discussing how to improve the learning in our class. In time, Cameron, Ramel, and I began to share a common passion to change the outcomes in our class. As well, Cameron's suggestion to keep peers on task and involved in the class follow not only a pattern of collective dispositions, but also a micro demonstration of his merging individual goals with greater group goals.

Finally, in terms of ritual responses, Cameron's suggestions for how to keep students involved were a precursor to more action on his part. In that moment, although he was only producing culture in cogenerative dialogue, Cameron was actually envisioning what it would be like to keep his classmates engaged in the lesson. Here,

Cameron was beginning to create the temporal cultural needed to connect students and lifeworlds to the curriculum. Sensing perhaps that the suggestion to use rap, music or Brooklyn street life were only temporal practices needed to garner interest, Cameron stated “Really anything can work.” This statement elucidated the nature of interstitial culture as being created solely for functional reasons. Cameron suggested that he was willing to try anything to involve his peers in a functional learning environment (because different ideas were necessary for different purposes).

#### *The Classroom*

At LSC, students can behave very well and, frequently within minutes, very badly. Simultaneously exhibiting seriously maladaptive conduct in some classes, these same students were often very attentive and respectful of their peers and certain teachers in other classes. These behaviors represented a serious contradiction between interaction styles. Often, when students were with their peers and select teachers, they could be very respectful and only infrequently required supervision. Conversely, these same students could demonstrate substantively different, even maladaptive behaviors when interacting with teachers or school administrators

Cameron seemed to personify this type of contradiction. In my class, he could be the model student, bringing in his homework on time and actively participating in all aspects of the class. In other classes (and in one instance, in my class too), Cameron was often at odds with his teachers. This contradiction, living itself out in Cameron’s school

life, seemed to highlight the asymmetries in many other students' learning styles and teachers' approaches to classroom instruction.

My sudden awareness of the serious misalignment between teachers and students came from a highly negative interaction with Cameron. Classes had been going well for more than a month; no sooner had I thought the class was developing on track than four new students were placed in my class. I distinctly recall this one short negative interaction with Cameron in the computer room. As we reviewed classroom material that was posted on a website, I asked Cameron to focus on his work. Uproar ensued.

Who the hell are you son? I don't know you. You are there barking orders. Don't bark on me. You talking to the wrong dude. I don't know you so let's keep it that way. Ya heard.

(Cameron, 4/19/2005, reconstructed from personal communication)

Although I felt deeply disrespected, I knew that a verbal altercation in front of the students would only set Cameron into a deeper defensive posture. Not wanting to be disrespected in front of the students more than had already occurred, I left the situation alone. After walking away from Cameron, I went to help another student and continued on with the lesson as planned, even at times including Cameron.

As class ended and the students left, I quietly motioned to Cameron that I wanted to talk. Cameron looked at me, seemed to sigh in disbelief, and slowly walked over to me.

Cameron: "Hey...Mr. L. sorry. We still cool?" [he reached out his balled fist]

Lehner: [I extended my balled fist and we touched knuckles] Yeah, you and I are still cool. Can you tell me what happened today?"

Cameron: I don't know. Just got tight when you picked on me.

Lehner: Okay, I won't single you out anymore.

Cameron: [he turned away briefly and then turn to me]: "Alright...cool. Plus, there are so many new heads. Damn, it's a dudefest up in here."

(Reconstructed from personal communication, 6/15/2005)

Looking back on the significance of this event, I realized that Cameron did not want to be singled out mainly because no structure had existed for his participation and the new students had altered the class dynamics. Practices needed to be created to help structure the learning. From this incident, I also saw how the production of temporal culture could be enacted in ways to posture toughness. After some time had passed, I suggested to Cameron that he acted so tough only mainly to make an impression on the new students. At this comment, he smiled and said, "This is Brooklyn, son. Don't let your guard down."

### *Transporting Culture from the Cogenerative Dialogue*

As part of the research, I started to study interactions Cameron had with his peers while he attempted to infuse ideas appropriated from cogenerative dialogue into class. At the time I analyzed this vignette above, Cameron's enactments of his new roles were so new that I was uncertain of the degree to which he would carry his new behaviors into the classroom. In fact, Cameron might not even try to enact any new behaviors so that the

cogenerative dialogue would have simply been an exercise in possibility. However, as evidenced in the larger class, Cameron did attempt to enact multiple behaviors in which he also engaged during cogenerative dialogue.

The first class vignette examined in this section took place two days after the cogenerative dialogue. Prior to ending this cogenerative dialogue, Cameron, Ramel, and I decided to divide specific parts of the class lesson among us. Our lesson had been focused on 20<sup>th</sup> century American social reformers who had dramatically influenced the world during their lives. In terms of our responsibilities, Cameron would assist me in introducing the aim of the lesson on social reformers as soon as class started, and my role was to facilitate the class and try to involve as many students as possible.

As soon as class started, Cameron fulfilled his responsibility of first orienting the students to the start of the class by telling them to take their seats so that class could begin. Then, he helped me introduce the lesson by answering its focusing question. By this time, ten minutes had elapsed and I quickly inaugurated the main part of the lesson. After the class, I wrote “things went smoothly, better than I thought” (personal communication, 2005); later I performed an in-depth video analysis of the class.

Specifically, in Cameron’s classroom role as introducer, he oriented the class by using peer terminology to describe the topics to be covered. Cameron willingly accepted the role of cultural broker, attempting to bridge the generational, cultural, and racial differences that may impede the lesson’s effectiveness. The following transcript records

how Cameron skillfully translated the aim and reiterated it back to his peers in simpler terminology.

Lehner: Today's lesson is on reform. With that said, can you think of someone who changed history? Can we think of anyone like that?

Cameron: Rodney King.

Lehner: Rodney King. Okay, how did he change things?

Cameron: Well, when he got knocked\*[arrested] and the riots happened, everyone asked why this happened. He changed things because people, black people started to ask..."what's up?"

Lehner: Okay, I can see that and a lot of people would agree with you.

Cameron's attempt to integrate the day's topic of "reform" with Rodney King is a clear example of his support of the lesson, but also of his desire to make the lesson accessible to his peers. Many educators may focus on the inaccuracy of his example of Rodney King as a reformer or dismiss the chronology of the Los Angeles riots, but such decisions would miss the greater pedagogical issue. Cameron changed his position in social space from student to classroom advisor, and sincerely desired to assist in the lesson. Only two days removed from our cogenerative dialogue, Cameron saw himself as equally responsible for the results of the lesson and took action on this belief.

Beyond his sense of joint responsibility for the outcome of the class, Cameron also attempted to align the question addressed in the aim, with an example that reflected the black experience. By raising the social issue of racism, he mediated between the aim of the lesson and ideas he thought his peers would more readily understand. His use of

urban analogies (Seiler, 2002) provided a structure for his peers by expanding the context of their traditional understanding of *reformer* to include Rodney King. When Cameron cited such a recent infamous event, his urban peers were able to situate the canonical definition of *reform* and juxtapose it to their experience of racism. By providing this analogy, Cameron intervened by supplying a type of scaffolding by which his peers could more easily become central participants in the lesson.

Cameron's expansion of *reformer* broadened the scope of conversation from social issues that existed only in textbooks to the real-life issue of racism. Thinking that his peers would understand the grossly unfair and dehumanizing treatment experienced by Rodney King solely based on his race, Cameron gave his example and found that students immediately began to build on his illustration. Within a few seconds, Ramel added to Cameron's input by saying that Johnnie Cochran, who had just died, was another example of a black reformer. Vargas then added that P. Diddy Combs was another example of a black reformer who changed the rap industry.

Although my initial query for a reformer had changed slightly to now include music industry innovators, Cameron had provided an appropriate context to start the conversation. With the classroom practice gradually more aligned, I continued to build on Cameron's example. Additionally, with an avid learning environment set, I could introduce material that would enhance the students' understandings of what a reformer is, contrasting the word's referent with that of *entrepreneur*. By comparing and contrasting the words and then relating these examples back to the lesson, students began to

participate more actively and share their ideas more freely. Soon, the entire class was using urban analogies to illustrate their examples, and the concept of social reformers and society's need for them was fully clear. By connecting the lesson to the students' lifeworlds, Cameron had assisted the lesson more than he had initially realized.

Beyond his contribution of starting the class, Cameron also exhibited a number of other practices, which helped structure in-class learning. Upon close examination of the video, I saw evidence of Cameron's ability to transport culture learned from cogenerative dialogue and reenact these practices in the classroom. His classroom interactions demonstrated signs of mutual respect, interactions that seemed to build small levels of solidarity. Cameron also exhibited the same high emotional energy interactions in the classroom that were witnessed two days earlier in our cogenerative dialogue. Before class began, Cameron was shaking hands with fellow classmates and seemed to enjoy a good rapport with many of his peers. Later, when I questioned him about these behaviors, Cameron articulated that he saw himself as a type of intermediary between our small cogenerative dialogue group and the larger class.

As the class transitioned from the initial aim to the body of the lesson, Cameron was actively engaged and visibly supportive of my role as teacher. He demonstrated this support by maintaining active eye contact with group members and responding to questions asked of the class. Upon close analysis, I could see symmetry between his alert, slightly leaning-forward posture evident during cogenerative dialogue and his engaged pose seen during class. In fact, within a few minutes of starting this class, many students

had also adopted a forward-leaning posture much like Cameron's. Even Ramel, who two days earlier, would not face the group, was now sitting upright, facing me and making eye contact during the lesson. Cameron had set the tone that this class was important and worthy of his attention, and he reinforced this decision by his attentiveness. Cameron's alertness coexisted with his peers' attention and focus.

Cameron announced his group membership and solidarity by affording me a high level of respect and paying me undivided attention during the lesson. In turn, his attentiveness structured the group and set the stage for larger successful interaction ritual chains (Collins, 2004). In time, this type of attentiveness would become a mainstay in our classroom, but its roots can be traced back to Cameron's initial practices, first revealed in cogenerative dialogue. Thus, as a result of our cogenerative dialogue, Cameron now had higher expectations of himself and his peers. As he expressed in the smaller group two days earlier, Cameron envisioned our class as a space where collective learning would take place and success would be shared as a group. This attitude was clearly expressed in his conduct throughout the class. Although this analysis only focused on his body posture and non-verbal responses, they were significant enough to confirm his role as an involved participant. In comparing both tapes of Cameron, it became apparent that he was looking for ways to contribute more dynamically to classroom activities. Cameron was an important participant; cogenerative dialogue simply created opportunities for him to focus on these new roles. When I invited him into the group, he was ready for new roles and pursued them.

For Cameron, learning social studies was an intellectually rigorous and intensely social event in which he interacted with the curriculum, classmates, and the teacher. Cameron expanded his responsibilities as a student and now adopted multiple, more complex roles, and enacted them fluently. Although his pre-existing verbal skills may have set the stage for his participation, Cameron also interacted effectively and effortlessly in these roles because cogenerative dialogue had afforded the social space to discover his new classroom positions and the time to rehearse his new functions.

*A Field to Create Adaptive Practices*

For Cameron, cogenerative dialogue also became a field in which he could practice forms of conduct that would aid the class in learning. Earlier in this chapter, I provided a transcript where Cameron suggested a strategy to help keep his peers interested in the lesson. In the cogenerative dialogue exchange, Cameron suggested that we could collectively keep the class on track by encouraging off-task students to focus. The suggestion was entirely unprompted, and Cameron thought this approach would be both respectful of his peers and helpful to group learning. Below is a portion of that transcript:

Cameron: We got to get everyone involved. Most of these dudes want to play ball all day here cause nothing is going on in class. We should do something. I know we can do this.

(Cameron, cogenerative dialogue, 4/4/2005)

As seen above, Cameron had reflected on how important it was for his peers to be active participants in class. In this transcript excerpt, Cameron practiced his peer tutoring

behavior during cogenerative dialogue by engaging Ramel in the process. Ramel was fully convinced Cameron's intervention would work in class. Our cogenerative dialogue allowed Cameron to visualize what would happen when he enacted this practice in class.

I learned though this study that opportunity to enact new roles must be provided to students in order for them to learn how to interact effectively in any class. Since students must either know or learn culture that is specific to their classes, cogenerative dialogue affords a social space for rehearsal. Responding to a peer's comment, answering a teacher's question, or articulating the salient issues in a lesson are all aspects cultural production. Developing learning culture entails practices that include micro level acts that lead to the participation in central aspects of the culture. These micro level acts are numerous and include, but are not limited to, showing interest in the class, affording peers and teacher a level of respect, attending class, following the details of the lesson, and responding appropriately to peers and the teacher.

By the second month of the study, Cameron started showing signs of being comfortable with the group and demonstrating micro level enactments of social studies knowledge. His participation in cogenerative dialogue meetings and his interactions with group members at lunch, morning greetings, and in gym class allowed him to have some, but limited, successful interactions with his social studies peers. As Cameron gradually gained group acceptance, he started to participate in cogenerative dialogue by sitting upright, paying attention to group member's comments, making eye contact and other micro behaviors of social studies knowledge. Micro practices that encouraged learning

are also demonstrated during this period by Cameron's participation in group discussion. Although the duration of his speech is short, his speaking demonstrated his move toward more macro-level enactments of social studies knowledge.

Cameron was able to replicate a similar learning tone seen in cogenerative dialogue and recreate this manner in the classroom. Although it is difficult to gauge the extent and type of influence he had on his peers. One way to align the culture of teaching and learning is for teachers and students to mutually create their own exciting culture. One way we created our own culture during this research was by our participation in cogenerative dialogue. During group sessions, emotional energy would first be fixed on the content matter to be covered during class. We would collectively talk about social studies practices and how we could better align them in order that everyone in the class could better learn. After these discussions, which usually lasted about 30 minutes, the group spontaneously started to rap. Only upon close analysis and reflection, did I realize that I had created a new ritual chain, which in effect celebrated our newfound social studies practices. The very practices developed in cogenerative dialogue created a social space, allowing the enactment of new student roles to open up students to the classroom possibilities that exist but often we not explored in the classroom.

### CHAPTER III

#### MICRO, MESO, AND MACRO ENACTMENTS OF BIOLOGY

In the summer of 1988, Tracy Chapman's debut album held listeners spellbound with her folksy songs about heartbreak and broken dreams. This self-titled album presented a contemplative song entitled "Revolution," in which Chapman weaves a story about the disenfranchised poor resisting their economic oppression. Chapman wistfully croons, "*Don't you know, they're talkin' about a revolution...it sounds like a whisper.*" The melancholic irony of her words describing the sounds of a raucous revolution as a whisper intentionally ring hollow since her audience understands there can be no "whispered revolution." Instead, Chapman subtly presents a world where the economic and social structures are so strong that people cannot resist or change them. "Revolution" depicts people as powerless pawns whose lives are predestined by powerful structures over which they have no control.

It may be hard to imagine how a folk singer's lyrics can overlap with the state of educational research, but coincidentally, both can articulate a compellingly deterministic view of social life. In such a strongly proscribed world, individuals have little effect on the regulatory structures that shape their existence. Artists are not the only ones who

employ an overarching social theory of structures that control the future; indeed, it is a philosophical position that dictates the focus of much of the current educational research. This educational research is often informed by the theoretical underpinnings of structuralism. From within this framework, people are not in control of their lives but are, instead, firmly shaped by political, linguistic and psychological forces in society. Rooted in the Russian school of formalism and French semiotics (Macey, 2000), structuralism sought to unify the social sciences by applying a single methodology to understand social life and its tenets that economic, political, and social forces shape every aspect of a person's life. In a philosophical understanding of structuralism, these forces are so influential that people can exert little power to determine their life direction; individuals are predetermined to live according to the roles of society's forces. Personal efforts have little bearing on outcomes because the social and political configurations outweigh individual choices.

Applying these structural tenets to current educational research, students are viewed as powerless and precluded from making decisions that can affect the quality of their learning. Current educational policy researcher Jean Anyon (1995) typifies a generation of educational researchers who have been deeply affected by determinism; she brings this deficit perspective of African Americans' lifeworlds to her work. According to Anyon, educators and government bureaucrats must eliminate racial disenfranchisement and ghetto culture in order to eradicate problems in the schools. In her article "Race, social class and educational reform in the inner-city school," Anyon

(1995) metaphorically throws her hands up in the air, and leaves the solution for urban schooling problems to the school boards, governments or even a higher power:

Thus, I think the only solution to educational resignation and failure in the inner city is the ultimate elimination of poverty and racial degradation. The solution to educational failure in the ghetto is elimination of the ghetto. This prescription seems extremely difficult to implement. (p. 21)

Most of Anyon's research was set in predominantly African American schools in Newark, New Jersey, and the above quote encapsulates the thinking of a cohort of educational researchers who view urban students as less empowered and less capable than their suburban peers. Anyon, and others like her, view African American students as possessing little self-determination and too few academic skills to advance their learning and their futures. From Anyon's perspectives, the way to make change is to first destroy the ghetto so that "true reform" can emerge. This elitist understanding of the urban world starkly contrasts with that of rapper Tupac Shakur's conception of the African American ghetto. At the height of his fame in 1995, Shakur, also known as 2Pac, sang, "*I wonder if heaven's got a ghetto.*" To Shakur, the ghetto is not a toxic slum that drains its inhabitants, but rather a dynamic environment that possesses collective agency and massive power. Shakur's ghetto exudes a strength-focused perspective that is vibrant and hopeful, and radiates towards a positive vision despite the overwhelming injustices experienced by urban minority communities.

Reflecting on Anyon's phrase "elimination of the ghetto," I am reminded of how many students in this research take pride in where they are from and what their neighborhoods mean to them. However, in the context of talking about urban schools that

service urban students of color, Anyon's phrase is accepted, embraced and even valued by teachers and administrators as reflecting a real goal—to eliminate the ghetto. The notion that predominantly African American schools are ghettos with no real social value has somehow become fused with many researchers' general perceptions of urban schools. This perspective is rooted in a socially constructed biased/deficit view of African American students. Peers, colleagues, and media sources have represented these general assumptions about the “negative” dispositions of African Americans repetitively that such deficits views have saturated the popular imagination. In particular reference to science education, these assumptions contribute to the growing belief that the underachievement of African American students in science can only be addressed by advocating for more standards-based interventions instead of a more personally-relevant approach.

#### *New Iterations of an Old Framework*

By employing decade-old theoretical constructions, Roland Fryer (2005) captured the attention of the educational research community by widely publishing his conception of why some African Americans perform poorly in schools. Although he is a relatively new educational researcher, Fryer seems to be operating from a similar theoretical perspective as posed by Anyon, that is, using an overarching social theory to explain why African Americans struggle in formal schooling. Eclectically fusing economic, scientific, and social theory, Fryer is attempting to build a unified theory of blackness by utilizing frameworks that in many ways have been discredited for their determinist and deficit

understandings. Fryer, who built primarily on John Ogbu's (1991) work, argues that many African American students are concerned about fully applying themselves in the classroom for fear of "acting white." While this type of exaggeration draws attention, Fryer has no empirical evidence to support such claims. Instead, the present study presses researchers like Fryer to argue for a more nuanced understanding of social life.

Anyon and Fryer are two examples of a research establishment that often thrives on the deficit viewpoints of urban youth. Unlike futures chapters where I discuss students of the African Diaspora who are often generically categorized as African American, this chapter focuses exclusively on strengths of a student who describes herself as African American and the learning practices she created to be successful in science.

### *Moving away from the Deficit Model*

In the often deficit-focused world of educational research—a world in which researchers often claim that African Americans are rendered powerless by macro structures, urban students are believed to lack resilience. Some researchers readily argue that student agency and enacted curricula have little power to improve learning because political structures and racial injustices overwhelmingly truncate any student, teacher or community agency. According to this deficit perspective, policies and social powers always trump individual or collective action. As in Tracy Chapman's song, the social and economic powers are far too entrenched for agency to have a meaningful impact.

This deficit perspective exhibited by both Anyon and Fryer, which almost solely focuses on the weakness of African American students, has become standard practice in

some circles of educational research. Long before current researchers articulated this scarcity-centered understanding of urban students, the annals recording the history of the American school system tell a similar story. Concentrating on students' weaknesses and perceived inabilities, the history of the American school is filled with racism, hubris, and a narrow understanding of African American students' needs (Tyack & Cuban, 2001). Now, over 50 years after the implementation of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, American schools and American educational researchers are still struggling with how to interpret African American students and their home life from the standpoint of strengths rather than deficits.

The ideological underpinnings of the deficit perspective need be exposed and challenged in a new generation of educational research. Thus, this chapter addresses this scarcity perspective by utilizing a strengths-based approach to understand the complex factors that influence the quality of learning and teaching in urban high schools. By focusing on student strengths, this work challenges researchers like Anyon and Fryer and disputes the type of research which perpetuates a highly deterministic, inaccurate view of urban students, and, with it, produces/reproduces educational disadvantage.

Researchers focusing on the insufficiencies of urban students and schools often create more problems than they solve. For example, the insufficiency perception stunts the growth of professional development by misleading teacher education practices and in-field teacher education. This misinformation leaves educators improperly prepared for the realities of urban education where, despite its difficulties, teachers can have a tangible

impact on schooling. In addition to misinforming in-field practices, this deficit-centered research paralyzes teachers by advancing a “macro-solution” that will supposedly remedy all the ills of the education system. The macro explanation aligns with tenets of structuralism (Macey, 2000); whether the solution encourages government control or more rigorous testing standards, this type of large-scale solution rarely addresses problems within of the classroom. Contrasted with a comprehensive systemic solution, the work of most classroom teachers, and specifically science teachers in this study, is on a relatively small scale. A teacher’s work involves developing a small class for a specific academic period, and encouraging these students to become co-workers in the classroom’s teaching and learning.

*Why African American and Not Students of the African Diaspora?*

Often New York City’s racial and ethnic make-up compels researchers to consider how the unique culture of this immigrant city influences its schools. In this work, however, I focus on an African American student whose family emigrated from the Southern United States after World War II. In particular, Christine’s grandparents came to New York during the late 1950s from South Carolina, settling in the East New York section of Brooklyn. According to Christine, her grandmother came to East New York and lived there for nearly thirty years before moving to the Bushwick section of Brooklyn in the early 1990s.

I raise Christine’s background insofar as it provides a backdrop for understanding the nuances of her school. During my research at LSC, I have worked with student-

researchers who represent the wide range of the African Diaspora, but this chapter describes the collaborations built specifically with an African American student. Aaron Gresson (2004) argues that slavery inflicted a type of racial pain that is historically constituted, and this pain mitigates many of the interactions between European Americans and African Americans. Although this work was not the focus of my research, historical manifestations of racism saturate social life in the United States, and hence it is critical to distinguish between African Americans in our learning community and students with other heritages.

*Mind the Gap: Focusing on Deficits as Leading to Invisibility*

Canonical-based standards cannot be the only evidence of science learning because it may not account for the social capital of many urban students. Addressing this point by coining the phrase “discourse of invisibility,” Alberto Rodriguez (1997) wrote that the National Research Council’s science education standards do not explicitly address issues of ethnicity, race, gender, socio-economic status, or the fact that every group has unique needs in the learning of science. In fact, urban students’ deficits have become the focus of much of the research pertaining to African Americans.

*Perspectives*

This research focuses on cogenerative dialogue as a way to build cooperative responsibility in the classroom. Collective action demarcates cogenerative dialogue from reflective practice. Instead of simply reflecting on a previous class, students in

cogenerative dialogue actively engage in changing the existing structures of that field in relation to what should happen in the classroom. This occurs, in part, by enacting a set of practices aimed at enhancing classroom learning. Before ending a cogenerative dialogue, participants “cogenerate” a plan of individual actions geared toward improving classroom teaching and learning. Students and teachers collectively change the input and outcomes of the classes by implementing cogenerative dialogue.

The practice of cogenerative dialogue fosters reflection and communal action and when institutionalized this practice can help students and teachers create new structures to support classroom learning. Participants involved in cogenerative dialogue and the classroom are confined by the structures as much as they concurrently structure both fields. When students or teachers act to develop classroom learning and teaching practices they contribute to the dynamically changing structures of the fields in which they act. Thus, all action affects the fields’ structures affording or confining other students’ access to resources. A dialectical agency|structure relationship mediates between the fields’ structuring nature and participants’ opportunities to act.

In this research, cogenerative dialogue and the biology classroom are conceptualized as fields. A field is a weakly bounded social space where culture is enacted in the form of schema and practices. In this study, culture is defined as demonstrations of biological knowledge, manifested in micro, meso or macro enactments. Like William Sewell’s (1992) notion of the forces, which comprise culture, classroom biology learning culture is also enacted in the form of schema and practices.

Fields such as cogenerative dialogue or the classroom are also weakly bounded social spaces in which participants possess and enact social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Their use of social, cultural or symbolic capital dynamically structures the classroom and its practices. Finally, given the porous nature of a field's boundaries, culture enacted in one field can be enacted in another field, thereby allowing for the dissemination of culture across an individual's lifeworld. Through such a process of diffusion, cogenerative dialogue is a field that possesses the potential to create and transform culture, not simply reproduce it.

In this study, I conceptualize the teaching of biology as cultural enactment and therefore examine the dialectical relationship between practices and schemas (Sewell, 1999). In viewing teaching from this vantage point, teaching practices will have patterns of thin coherence and contradictions. Studying the practices and schemas, which afford coherence, is essential in examining teaching practices. Beyond studying patterns of coherence, I search for contradictions recognizing the complex factors involved in cultural enactment (Tobin, 2005). Researchers who notice these contradictions will be better equipped to understand how practices can be changed or amended to facilitate learning.

With the lens of viewing teaching as cultural enactment, learning biology then is conceived of as an example of cultural production. In biology class, students are expected to produce the culture of science by demonstrating practices and schema, which connote understanding. As mentioned above, these actions can be seen as micro, meso, or macro

enactments of culture. Equally important to understanding how students learn biology is the agency|structure dialectic. In this dialectic, students' power to act is reliant on their ability to appropriate latent capital. This ability to appropriate this capital and effectively use it determines how successful the students will be in the field. Wolf-Michael Roth (2005) uses a Sheffer stroke (“|”) to denote the recursive relationships that seemingly exists between radically different entities. This notion that opposing forces should be viewed as recursively related rather than dialectical opposites provides a useful research tool to make critical distinctions about the nature of coteaching partnerships. By employing a sense of radical doubt to the nature of social constructs, educational investigators can see that the relationship between A or B as not a simple either/or dichotomy; rather, it is a more complex interweaving of both A and B, or A |B. Understanding Roth's use of the Sheffer stroke helps conceptualize the complexity that is occurring as teaching is enacted in social life. Unfortunately, most social actors understand life dualistically rather than recursively. The dilemma of dualism is encapsulated in the commonly accepted “wisdom” of either A or B, or A is not B and B is not A.

*Learning Conceptualized: Micro and Meso Demonstrations*

Beyond cultural production, learning is also conceptualized on a continuum, starting with behaviors that are not fluent biology and, in time, progressing to behaviors precise in biological understanding. Kwame Appiah's (2006) notion of interstitial culture provides a lens with which to view some of the learning enactments that occurred during

this study. In learning biology, many of our students created a temporal culture for the specific purpose of furthering their practical goal of understanding the curriculum. For example, Christine was not involved in the lesson on food chains, but created a personal connection to the unit on the cardiovascular system by talking about how her late grandfather had suffered a heart attack. In describing her grandfather, Christine created interstitial culture that connected her to the content of the lesson and allowed her to participate more fully. Christine created temporal, practical strategies that would prove fruitful when covering new units. She used cogenerative dialogue as a social field to discuss, develop, and plan uses for interstitial culture.

#### *Data Sources and Evidence*

In this critical ethnography, a number of data collection resources were used. Data resources included video and audio digital recordings, interviews, and student-shot videotapes. These resources were used to understand the complex factors associated with science learning.

#### *Research Focuses*

This study examined whether cogenerative dialogue can be used to impact the quality of learning in an urban science class. As suggested in previous chapters, cogenerative dialogues can greatly affect the quality of teaching and learning. This study intends to expand the practice into the field of biology teaching. Also I explore if students who produce new culture in the cogenerative dialogue field can reproduce similar forms

of culture in another field. A student's ability to reproduce learned culture from the cogenerative dialogue in the classroom may depend on her ability to access the resources available in the classroom. Since this may be the case, considerable attention was given to this issue in both video and personal interviews. Also, I found that cogenerative dialogue often supported a student's agency in accessing classroom resources, allowing Christine to reproduce learned culture in both fields. In addition, my research established that Christine could reproduce the learned culture across field boundaries.

#### *Cogenerative Dialogue and Producing New Culture*

I was never any good in science. Never! And this class gave me a chance to try it one more time. I mean, I have always been in science class but I have not been learning anything. At least in this class, we tried to use science as a way to talk about our daily lives. It's a start. (Christine, interview, 5/15/2006)

In this interview, Christine reflected on the ways that cogenerative dialogue and our class sessions afforded her opportunities to learn science. Christine was the sole student-researcher who openly described herself as African American and the only student whose parents were born in the United States. Of all eight student-researchers, only Christine verbalized her intention to apply herself purposefully in our biology class. This resolution to do well in the class was typical of how Christine usually approached her schoolwork. As seen in this biology class and from progress reports in her other classes, Christine was a good student who diligently studied and was serious about her academic progress. She was also very popular with her peers and very skilled socially. Her social dexterity manifested itself at school in many productive ways, including

positive social relationships with her teachers, constructive peer-to-peer connections, and productive engagement in extracurricular activities. For instance, Christine was energetically involved in many aspects of LSC community activities, including acting in the school play, reciting poetry during “Black History Month,” and winning a dance competition when the school attended the Hip Hop Television show *106<sup>th</sup> and Park*®.

I enumerate Christine’s accomplishments because they highlight her as a young woman who was not accustomed to accepting setbacks or failures. In nearly every aspect of her life, much less science, Christine overcame difficulty through persistence and hard work. However, as many of her peers at LSC, Christine consistently struggled in the science classroom. Even before this research began, she seemed to have resigned herself to failing in science. While she publicly proclaimed her desire to academically excel, Christine repeatedly appeared withdrawn in many aspects of classroom activities. At the outset of the course, her lack of action was striking. In retrospect, now recognizing the strength of her character, Christine’s preparedness to accept failure was in fact contrary to every strategy she employed to cope with difficulties in her life.

In the first few weeks of research, Christine acted as if she could not learn the biology content matter and frequently described herself as “not being good in science.” She admittedly disliked the sciences and self-reported that she had always performed poorly in them. In the classroom, she showed visible discomfort with the language of biology and spoke openly about her previous difficulties. During the initial stages of the research, Christine seemed to have difficulty finding her social place in cogenerative

dialogue and the class. She admitted being ill at ease with the fact that she was central to a biology learning community but simultaneously uncomfortable with science.

*A Developing Science Learner Transforms the Classroom*

Concurrent with her difficulty to learn biology, Christine's questions, comments, and suggestions often structured the classroom with multiple learning opportunities for herself and others. Both during cogenerative dialogue and class, Christine would suggest alternative, often peer-led, ways to teach the biology curriculum. In doing so, Christine not only challenged the teachers to change their instructional deliveries but her interactions also allowed her peers a structure from which they could ask questions or suggest new practices.

In ways that are parallel to the aforementioned notion of citizen science, Christine took on the role of citizen science in our classroom by fully engaging her efforts in the classroom. As she interacted with the biology curriculum, Christine constructed ways to connect with science. While she was not fluent in much of the biology terminology, she did comfortably interact in all classroom activities to the extent that she was able. Noting her efforts, I sought to legitimize her participation as a genuine act of scientific engagement. Rooting our practice in the conception of a community of practice, Christine's comments were momentous demonstrations of her burgeoning scientific identity. Although her comments could be construed as micro learning community enactments of science knowledge, Christine self-reported that she had never been so

engaged in school science. Her in-class demonstrations indicated an important step toward joining in structured science learning.

For example, during one cogenerative dialogue session, Christine recommended that our class introduce a procedure to allow students who missed classroom lessons to make-up. By giving absent students this alternative, Christine thought, they could become as interested in learning as she was. In this vignette, Christine assumed the responsibilities of a classroom leader as she suggested ways to introduce a lesson on locomotion. Cogenerative dialogue became a field in which Christine could manufacture new facets of her science identity. As well, Christine here produced and reproduced her roles within the biology learning community (the classroom) and her position as citizen scientist. Thus, this episode captured Christine's recently produced notion of being a science learner. She then fused this new identity as science learner with her ability to produce the culture of science verbally to herself and others.

Christine: We are talking about what?

Lehner: Locomotion. That's the topic. And how does a living organism benefit from locomotion?

Christine: Moving right? Locomotion is movement? Like an animal or a person can getting (sic) food, that is locomotion. Right?

Lehner: Yes, getting food is one. What else?

Christine: Yeah, it is like we were talking about earlier, a person can run. If I was in danger, I could run.

Lehner: Anything else?

Christine: Yes, there is more. Clive, you should know about this one!

Clive: Know about what?

Christine: When a person is in danger, they don't have to run. They could fight too. Ain't you a fighter, Clive?

Clive: I don't know about that.

Christine: Anyway, we could teach the lesson like that. We could introduce locomotion that way.

Lehner: What do you mean?

Christine: We could play like that. Like talking about locomotion being a way to get food, run or fight.

Situating herself in these group settings both as an active learning community member and a science learner, Christine demonstrated aspects of an emerging scientific identity by actively using her beginner's understanding of locomotion to commence a lesson. During this session, Christine seemed comfortable in cogenerative dialogue and handled the role with ease. As an active community member, she was entitled to comment on classroom activities. However, she actively chose to go beyond being a mere participant and instead suggested ways to jointly teach the curriculum. Rather than removing herself from an active role because she was only a novice biology student, Christine used her flexible social skills and humor to involve her peers. Christine's convincing naturalness with her new functions was evident throughout and convincingly seen in the transcript, as she seemed to embrace the role of a full-fledged community participant. Even from her first turn, Christine eagerly asked, "So what are we talking

about?” seeking involvement and understanding of the situation. This led her to enthusiastically and willingly participate in the cogenerative dialogue. In response to my question during her second turn, Christine defined the term “locomotion” and provided an example. By her third and fourth turns, Christine engaged Clive in the conversation with a joke, and suggested a fun peer approach to inaugurating a lesson on the topic.

Arguably, Christine did not display much scientific fluency in this scenario, but her willingness to extend herself defined a vital role in classroom learning. Similar to Appiah’s (2006) concept of interstitial culture, Christine became actively engaged in learning science and created her own practices that served this end.

*Cogenerative dialogue can be a fertile field for the production of new culture*

Christine’s eagerness to fully assume an active role in the cogenerative dialogue was surprising. The expanded roles she took on could have been daunting, yet Christine not only handled the role with ease but also employed the language of the curriculum to prove her point. Thus, one unique aspect of cogenerative dialogue was how it provided a willing student with a field for cultural production. Both the cognitive and kinesthetic aspects of cogenerative dialogue allowed Christine to consider her responsibilities on her own and conceptualize how she would handle her roles in class. In her fourth turn, perhaps sensing that Clive was now fully engaged in the conversation, Christine asserted her role as a learning community member and tapped into new opportunities. By stating “Clive, you should know about this one!” Christine used her intuitive social dexterity to playfully involve him. Her exchange set everyone back on task, and even suggested new

classroom approaches. This exchange again offers evidence that cogenerative dialogue can supply a new science learner with a field in which to produce and, when necessary, reproduce and change her scientific identity.

*Cogenerative Dialogue Allows Christine to Structure the Unstructured*

Because it occurs separate from the classroom, cogenerative dialogue temporarily suspended the formal roles of teacher and student to let these stakeholders collaboratively restructure the biology learning environment. Christine initially, and later in conjunction with Clive, produced and reproduced identity markers of citizen scientists. Granted, one might critique Christine's actions as not formally demonstrating any canonical science knowledge. Yet such criticism overlooks the crucial role that Christine played within our community of practice and her investment in learning biology. In addition to the energy and focus she introduced to the group, Christine's comments ordered our learning environment as structures that her peers or teachers could build upon. This in turn, supports the idea that cogenerative dialogue facilitates the production of new learning culture. Research and theory have postulated that classroom culture is comprised of recursively-positioned practices and schemas. As Christine's actions demonstrated, she used the structure of cogenerative dialogue to initiate new practices and embrace her new role as citizen scientist.

Christine's ability to enact a newly produced culture addresses the dialectical nature of structure|agency. Swartz (1997) explains how organizational structures and individual agency can interplay. He critiques, but also relies on the work of Pierre

Bourdieu, maintaining the interconnected nature of societal structures and personal actions. Swartz's explanation delineates how personal agency can be both structured and simultaneously structuring. In our classroom, when Christine resolved to take action, she created unique in-field structures that afforded her more agency and often benefited her peers. At the beginning of the semester, Christine's successful experiences worked cyclically to bolster her individual resourcefulness. Instead of remaining in her self-described state of "not being good in science," Christine became determined to act in all aspects of the class, thereby creating unique learning opportunities for her and others. Christine's actions also established a culture of open dialogue and inquisitive questioning in our classroom.

#### *Taking Steps to Employ Agency*

Although it was not the case with Christine, or any of the students in our study, the employment of agency is voluntary. At any time, Christine could have chosen not to act. In doing so, she may have quickly viewed herself as lacking the resources or the intelligence to affect the field's structures. Unavoidably, her inaction united with a volitional unfamiliarity of the field's structures could have weakened her capacity to act effectively. Choosing not to act is a form of agency yet that course of action would have done little to serve her goal. Christine's aim was to develop more understanding of science and as a means to meet that goal she took action. Fortunately for all involved in our biology learning community, Christine decided to employ her wealth of personal skills and her agency to learn science. In effect, then, by using her capacity to act, she

changed the way our class learned. Christine's actions expound on how agency can be both structured and structuring following the theoretical foundation of relationship between agency|structure previously discussed. Agency, the capacity for a person to act, is contingent upon and different from the structures that afford such individual actions. Whether, material or schematic, the field's structures can configure individual agency by either allowing such actions or precluding them. However, the degree to which a social actor employs agency is both defined and redefined by the actor's relationship to the field's structures. As Christine continued to creatively and persistently use her agency, she more readily navigated even more challenging structural obstacles.

In terms of Christine's ability to transform her scientific identity, cogenerative dialogue visibly provided the social field for her to produce these new leadership and learner roles and thereby dramatically alter previous identities. The changes in Christine's scientific identity did not follow a simple process. Rather, scientific identity change for Christine required great effort on her part because she needed to forge the learning structures that allowed her to produce this new role. Because social life is filled with patterns of coherence and contradiction, it is important to trace how Christine arrived at such a state of empowered agency. Although the next example does not contradict Christine's agency, it nevertheless underscores the dynamic process required to produce new scientific identity. In the production of new science learning roles, Christine undergoes a period of development in which she wrestles with her representation of citizen science and her active membership in a biology learning community.

*Struggling to Produce Science*

At times in the cogenerative dialogues, Christine seems to struggle physically with her new roles in the science classroom. Whether it was articulating the need for classroom or instructional change or simply commenting on daily practices, Christine seemed perplexed about what actions to take next. As a fully vested learning community member, her attendance and avid participation entitled her to suggest and implement different approaches to biology learning, but Christine needed to exert more effort to enact these roles. Throughout the research, it seemed that the role of citizen scientist was so new to Christine that she continually grasped at figuring out ways to enact her latest responsibilities.

Cogenerative dialogue became an invaluable resource for Christine because she could produce the needed culture through which she navigated the learning structures of the classroom. Christine's actions highlight how cogenerative dialogue can become a safe social space where students can grapple with integrating aspects of their newly acquired scientific identity into larger interstitial identities—a social space where identity production can be forged, formed, and reformed. In Christine's case, this process was difficult because she saw herself as lacking science skills. However, cogenerative dialogue also allowed her the space in which to enact these roles, despite the complexity of the process for her. In fact, Christine's effort emphasizes that consistent effort and wide margins of latitude for failure are essential. If aspects of a student's scientific identity are allowed to merge authentically, the process can result in the transformation of

a scientific identity. If this allowance for failure is not present, a student's scientific identity may more likely remain fixed.

For instance, during a cogenerative dialogue eight weeks into our research, Christine showed evidence that her new roles were challenging for her to enact. The transcript below records how Christine was grasping to express the need for better in-class teaching and learning resources. The video for this vignette was recorded directly after a quiz when Christine was reeling emotionally because she had performed poorly but had expected to do well. In this session, Christine mentioned particular teaching issues that could positively impact student performance. The digital video, photographs, and transcript corroborate to show Christine's difficulty in manufacturing new science identity markers. As seen in her face and gestures, the pictures and transcript suggest that Christine was truly struggling to enact her new roles.

Lehner: Christine you wanted to say something?

Christine: Um. Yes. Yeah, the vocabulary was... complicated. I could not answer the way I wanted to. And if that was a test, like the Regents, I would have failed.

Lehner: Was it because you didn't know the concepts or the vocabulary was preventing you from answering the questions?

Christine: Like oxygen, if I didn't know the definition of oxygen... Let me put it like this: If I put air or something instead of oxygen, I would have gotten that question wrong. They put the questions into some scientific way. You know... the vocabulary.

Lehner: I think what was revealed today is that we need to do more work in terms of the vocabulary. It is a technical language and how do we increase the understanding of this technical language. What did you think, Clive?

Clive: Umm. How can I say it? Umm.

Christine: For me seeing a word that I was not familiar with made me think of something else. Instead of being able to write what I know, that language was too much. We should do something about that.

Here, Christine expressed the multifaceted aspects of changing her conception of her own science abilities in order to participate fully in the class. During the cogenerative dialogue, Christine was describing her inability to grasp the material sufficiently. Additionally, she alludes to inadequacies of the classroom environment in preparing for the rigors of the New York State Regents.

As described by Wolf-Michael Roth (2007), the diasporic identity is the process that students undergo as a process of cultural bricolage. In redefining her scientific identity, Christine's attempts to transform herself are mitigated by race, culture, and previously formed identity markers. Throughout this scenario, Christine seems to be challenging her own understanding of her science identity markers in order to summon change. As she hybridizes her science learning practices, Christine is piecing together aspects of her home environment, neighborhood culture, and positive science learning experiences in order to fashion a new vision of herself as a science learner. Christine needs to constantly produce, and often reproduce, a constructive mental image of her learning science, which may explain her need to constantly hybridize her learning strategies.

Again, cogenerative dialogue affords a social space in which Christine can integrate both her identity and her own hybridized enactments with her newly-produced

aspects of her scientific identity. Despite her admitted history of difficulty learning science, Christine became a model student in the class. Not only did she perform well on in-class tests, Christine also passed the New York State Living Environment Regents, demonstrating her ability to transport learned science culture to standard measures of such knowledge. During our research, she enacted a number of essential roles that aided learning for the class. Lastly, the dual role of biology student and classroom stakeholder allowed her to manufacture and remanufacture new scientific identity markers.

*What Christine demonstrated about agency*

A socio-cultural understanding of the classroom informs this research. As Christine's actions illustrate she was able to adequately reproduce the culture of science but often benefited from the in-field structures. She progressed adequately in her coursework but had difficulty with science and benefited from classrooms informed by cogenerative dialogue because it structured instruction.

Cogenerative dialogue can be a particularly valuable practice for African American students because it allows for the merging of interstitial and scientific identities. The practice of cogenerative dialogue was valuable for Christine. As her example depicts, the new role of citizen scientist and reproducing the culture of science were difficult for her. To understand citizen science and new science-like roles as cultural enactments, one should view Christine's actions as demonstrations of cultural production and transformation that can be replicated in other urban schools to transform science learning. Christine's experiences demonstrate that cogenerative dialogue can serve as a

field to produce and reproduce culture to transform classroom learning structures.

Christine clearly utilized cogenerative dialogue to first produce learning practices that she later reproduced in her classroom to other students.

*Urban youth and agency*

At the end of this chapter, I am inclined to return to Tracy Chapman's concept of a "whisper revolution." In a field where many educational researchers subscribe to the doctrines of devious but invisible structural forces controlling the universe, teachers know better and this research supports teacher and student agency. Most high school teachers realize the sheer intellectual curiosities and abilities of their students. And given the proclivities of this generation, if any revolution was to occur, it would probably occur on a reality television show and not as a "whisper revolution." Yet, researchers often confine and define the problems of educational research by attributing macro status and macro solutions to schooling problems. With such macro diagnosis, ghettos get destroyed, student abilities get overlooked, and lifeworld knowledge gets ignored (and hence disrespected).

And in this light, structuralism is deterministic and in effect can impair student progress and development. Determinism is a dangerous, often unconscious, theoretical foundation that has great bearing on the direction of educational research. Educational researchers are often strongly influenced by deterministic philosophical and epistemological understandings of cities and urban students. Determinism and negative understandings of the urban world harmfully converge to persuade many educational

researchers to bring a deficit perspective to their studies of urban education. Researchers combating this negative understanding of urban schooling are greatly needed.

In this work, via student/teacher research collaboration, Christine and I take aim at determinism and the deficit lens brought to urban education research. By actively examining what urban students can do, Christine fully participated not only in this research but also in learning in class and extending herself so that her peers would also learn.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISTRIBUTED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

If I am talking and all of you all are doing your work and I am in my own world. And it is like, time for the Regents and we have to start preparing; it is prep time, you all could be like this [tapping Keon on the shoulder]. And say ‘come on son, it is time to do your work. And I will be good to go.’

(Anthony, Cogenerative dialogue, 5/1/2005)

In their respective analyses of school life, Linda McNeil (1983) and Lisa Delpit (1995) both describe classrooms where teacher-centered practices control students, and consequently preempt the goal of public schools to provide quality instruction for all students. Teacher-centered practices can reinforce stereotypical perspectives of urban students of color as unruly and in need of institutionally imposed management. In American urban schools where large minority populations are enrolled, the philosophical suppositions that inform pedagogy mirror the observations of McNeil and Delpit that teachers employ strict classroom control as the preferred method of management.

As teachers engage in practices supporting strict control, the underlying social and emotional assumptions that accompany these perspectives often go unquestioned.

Creating classroom environments that appear conducive to educating youth in reality often subvert learning and inquiry by limiting opportunities that foster critical questioning and a fluid exchange of ideas. The points articulated in both researchers' writings are consistent with classroom management practices in many schools because these environments often operate from an ideology of control. The type of instruction that results from a teacher-centered/student-controlled pedagogy frequently stifles learners who may perform best with learning approaches that welcome pedagogy fostering student inclusion. Urban students may be especially disadvantaged if a teacher creates a classroom culture where Eurocentric, middle-class language and learning assumptions are imposed without considering students' needs and dispositions. The themes permeating the present research call for more inclusive and multiple perspectives in order to understand how classroom management is enacted. Additionally this research highlights the need to transcend the confines of current classroom management structures that are deeply ingrained in institutional methods that are accepted without reproach. Kenneth Tobin's (1999) research has questioned this basis assumption by arguing that classrooms cannot be managed using a referent of teachers having control over students, but instead students and teachers should jointly construct how management processes should be enacted. Many in public schools do not share Tobin's perspectives where teachers continually conceptualize managing classrooms in terms of teachers attempting to control the behaviors of their students. Like Tobin's work, this research challenges this basic

assumption about classroom management and offers collaborative alternatives that allow instructional alignment and the development of group solidarity.

Yet many teachers are invested in the notion of classroom control. An interesting aspect is that many teachers believe that enacting a top-down control model of classroom management is in the students' best interests. At times, this perception of the students as in "need of discipline" is firmly grounded in a teacher's perception that s/he is an ethical person. The comfort a teacher has in his definition of self as fair, ethical, and good often does not allow him to consider that the practices being enacted are antithetical to what those affected by such practices regard as fair, ethical, and good. Teachers have waxed poetic about their love for teaching while in their next breath decry their students as animals needing to be trained, disciplined, or jailed. One could contest whether or not a teacher making such a statement has a genuine desire to teach urban students. However, more often than not, the teacher often unconsciously assumes a control-oriented and deficit-laden approach to teaching. The same teacher may in fact believe that enacting such a controlling management model is in the best interests of the students. Jerry Clarke (pseudonym), a teacher at Liberty High School Suspension Center (LSC), illustrated this point when questioned about his classroom management model and how he interacts with his students. Clarke stated, "The students need somebody to be in charge and tell them what to do" (personal communication, 10/4/2005).

If the word "students" in Clarke's comment were replaced with "women," "African Americans," or "Latinos," the teacher uttering this statement would be rightfully

chastised and perceived as sexist or racist. However, in schools servicing urban areas, this statement is accepted, embraced, and endorsed by teachers and administrators as a criterion indicating the attributes of a good teacher. Being control-oriented and embodying the hyper-disciplinarian character of the supposed “good educator” is a mental and philosophical construct that has been formed and reformed by both teacher education programs and the teaching profession and has gained acceptance by many practitioners. This perspective is so deeply rooted in a socially constructed biased or deficit view of African American students that it has been repetitively reinforced by peers, colleagues and media sources to the point of being fused with general assumptions about the dispositions of urban students. Yet, the caveat is that many of these students are not African Americans, rather students of the African Diaspora that represent the newest wave of immigration in the New York City. Students of the African Diaspora are often lumped together as African Americans by teachers and educational researchers. By doing so, neither teachers nor researchers are able to focus on the unique culture that students bring to the classrooms.

While few teachers purposefully set out to dominate their respective classrooms, teacher-centered approaches are often implemented by default as a result of various mitigating factors. Teachers’ perceptions of the benefit of control methods meld with their perceptions of what a classroom should “look” like. Teachers hold fast to control methods because of the veneer of security that such manners seem to provide even when they apparently yield little classroom order.

At this point, it is important to describe the mitigating factors that help to construct and reaffirm traditional classroom management. Expounding on the implications of enacting of these factors requires an explanation of the multi-layered nature of how this study analyzes how they structure urban classrooms. First, teacher directed methods learned during training leave many teachers feeling they have little pedagogical choice other than the instructor-directed classroom. Second, a teacher controlled discipline model is supported and maintained by school policies and provides teachers with a sense of comfort even though top down approaches essentially disadvantage students. Third, despite the ardent desire to manage their classes ethically and help students advance academically, many teachers perceive that the security of controlling their classrooms is too alluring to give up.

Given that these factors are in place and directly affect teachers in urban schools, it is important to realize that in the enactment of every day life. There is an amalgamation of the above three factors that results in the teacher being both constrained by the confluence of administrative pressure to exhibit classroom management skills and comforted by its support of their existent practice. As a result, teachers form an allegiance to the perpetuation of a teacher controlled classroom management model. This, of course, occurs concurrently with the prevalent concern of the previous chapter, the overarching sociocultural misalignment between many white, suburban, middle-class teachers and the learning needs of urban, largely African-American students.

### *The Focus of this Study*

This study contextualizes the problems of classroom management by describing how they have played out in two different inner-city schools. First appraised is the current literature related to urban students of color and issues of the disproportional rates of special education placements, suspensions and expulsions. Next, a socio-cultural lens is applied to an analysis of these issues and the examination of the difficulties students and teachers have to negotiate the existing classroom control model. This study took place at LSC and this research explores how distributive classroom management can be an alternative to teacher-centered models and the implications of enacting change that included expanded roles for students in managing the classroom.

This analysis of distributive classroom management was spurred by the enactment of this approach by a stakeholder in a LSC classroom. This student started to demonstrate distributed classroom management actions that fostered improved classroom conduct and expressions of group solidarity. Anthony initiated these practices at LSC and he exerted tremendous effort to maintain a fertile learning environment in the social studies classroom by proposing distributive management practices in cogenerative dialogue and then enacting similar practices in the classroom. Anthony's effort to assist in classroom management makes a case for the establishment of a distributed control model as a means to improve urban classrooms. This case study examined how cogenerative dialogues can provide stakeholders with a field in which to generate distributed classroom management by creating an alignment of student and teacher needs. Particularly, in this chapter I

examine the capital production cycle that occurs in cogenerative dialogue and later is enacted in classrooms. I study how Anthony produces culture and, according to a dialectical relationship between reproduction and transformation, produces similar forms of culture in the field of the classroom.

Through the use of cogenerative dialogues, I examine the fusion of students' cogenerated ideas and how these ideas materialize into ways to manage a classroom effectively. This fusion of student ideas and classroom management issues may be the means by which alternative ways of conceptualizing and enacting classroom culture can develop to allow both students and teachers to co-manage the class. Analysis charts the growth of new culture from its emergence as cultural production (i.e., reproduction|transformation) in cogenerative dialogues to its evolution into the student-created and implemented practices, here referred to as distributed classroom management, in the classroom.

This investigation intends to provide a research-base to support the uses of distributed classroom management. The study shows that by incorporating both the needs of urban teachers and inner city students learning environments can be created to support effective learning. As cooperatively created new practices build classroom solidarity, many of the practices that often lead teachers to discipline students can be avoided. This is evident in a lower incidence of asynchrony among participants in the classroom. The findings of this study suggest that teachers and students can align routine classroom

management rules into transformative stakeholder-directed practices that benefit all participants.

*Researcher and Student Understandings of Classroom Management*

In comparison to their white peers, African American students are more likely to be placed in special education, suspended or expelled from school. The research has not been conducted to see if students of the African Diaspora are also disproportionately placed in special education. Researchers who have written on this topic in an attempt to clarify and comprehend these data have provided rationales that vary in their philosophical and epistemological understandings. Daniel Losen and Gary Orfield (2002) explain that the disproportionate number of black youth serving suspension is related to their resistance to white-controlled educational structures. In these findings, Losen and Gary Orfield (2002) suggest that law enforcement and the legal/justice system unfairly target these teenagers, possibly contributing to the high number of suspensions among students. George Farkas, Christy Lleras and Steve Maczuga (2002) argue that there is no “problem” of oppositional behaviors among African American youth. Common threads that these perspectives share are that African American students are given few opportunities to voice their problems in educational settings, and not enough attention is given to possible ways to ameliorate such inequities.

At LSC, the participants in this study often conceptualized the reasons for their problems in school in terms of an overall lack of respect shown them by teachers,

administrators, and at times, their peers. In one interview, Daryl, a bright, well-dressed 11<sup>th</sup> grader, spoke about the reason for his suspension along these lines:

The teacher totally disrespected me in front of the class and screamed on me...I don't play like that. My family don't play like that... so I push[ed] the teacher and if it wasn't for my mans\*[a friend of Daryl's], I would have hit him.

Unfortunately, Daryl's story is not uncommon. In fact, many students at LSC related normal day-to-day classroom interactions with teachers that got out of hand over the struggle for classroom control.

These verbal misconceptions between teachers and students can subsequently escalate to miscommunication on many levels in the classroom. As a result of failed communication, many suspensions are regularly metered out in the New York City public school system. Students resist teachers' comments or actions perceived as disrespectful or controlling. These instances usually trigger and fuel confrontational interactions, which, if not wisely handled, can spiral out of control. Such resistance occurs because students view teachers as seeking to exercise control over classrooms without affording students a level of respect. Thus, the results of teachers' efforts to exert control often backfire and create classroom tensions that force students to analyze teachers in terms of a rival's street credibility rather than as a possible educational ally. Students often misconstrue a teacher's behavior as personal disrespect and thereby enact mechanisms that have worked to challenge disrespect outside of the classroom (i.e., in the street). Thus, a student may trivialize a teacher's attempt at control by ignoring specific actions, or in extreme cases, for long periods totally shut down to anything going on in the classroom. This was

evident in a discussion in which Chris described being kicked out of a LSC math class after an argument with a teacher: “He can’t talk to me like that, I’m looking at him like please, you’re nobody, you’re a teacher.”

As an illustration of how control-oriented teachers are perceived by students, Eric, a student at LSC, spoke of the incessant demands placed upon him in his classes when his teachers began to demonstrate their authority. He animatedly pounded his hand into his fist as he spoke “They’re all like, first you got to do this! Then you got to do that, then do this, and do that! Basically all these teachers need to just breathe a little bit.”

Occasionally, situations can escalate into physical altercations and such is the case with many students at LSC. Students raise this perceived disrespect shown to them by the teachers to another level: they initiated an actual physical altercation, which resulted in a yearlong suspension. In discussing his suspension, LaQuan articulates a commonly heard theme.

Son...I don’t give a damn about that teacher. He got in my grill [face].... ‘I was like naaw [no] son, you gansta [gangster]? Let’s see if you can keep your G-up\*?’ [\* *G* is short for gangster; the phrase *G-up* refers to gangster credibility]. And I pushed him into the blackboard.

(LaQuan, interview, 6/24/2006)

The students’ statements highlight how their responses to the teacher’s classroom control models can vary from dismissing the teachers’ incessant orders or invoking a physical altercation. Both reactions define the need to create mechanisms for restructuring the existing model of classroom management.

*Teacher Views of Classroom Management Problems*

While students view strong instructor-focused methods as an affront, teachers by contrast often consider their control-center pedagogy the means to better classroom instruction. “If one student gets out of hand, then the whole class gets crazy,” said Kevin Capinzano (pseudonym), a tenured New York City teacher who has taught at LSC for five years. “I want them to know up-front, I am the teacher and you are the student. If the student knows that, we can get along.” Kevin’s view of classroom control reflects the views of many other teachers who believe that their ability to maintain control over the students is the key ingredient for successful teaching. In LSC, Janine Howard (pseudonym), a first year teacher who was hired mainly because of her exhibition of classroom management when she substituted at the school, often says, “I am in charge of my class, the only person in charge. My kids know that.”

Teachers are often taught in teacher education programs that control over their classrooms and attempting to contain students’ behavioral outbursts are the preferred methods of classroom management. Instead of collectively building trust and distributing the management to all stakeholders, teachers usually think of classroom management as their responsibility. In fact, teachers and administrators rarely discuss or conceptualize alternative methods of management. In instances where educators believe that teachers can and should demonstrate a classroom control model that values students, controlling pedagogy seems at best hard to implement and, at worst, impossible to execute if students themselves do not collaborate in such practices. Additionally, the philosophical

assumptions behind the model do not adequately replicate democratic methods and do little to enhance autonomous student enactments of leadership.

In terms of classroom teaching and learning, the intense diametrically opposed perspectives held by students and teachers seem irreconcilable. Moreover, when such conflicts arise, teachers can be faced with untenable management issues unless the situations are astutely and sensitively addressed. Many teachers gravitate toward classroom practices predicated on control given their pre-training and later reinforcement to do so by school administrators. Conversely, as described in Elijah Anderson's work (1999), students adhere to an urban code where respect for them is king and any indication of disrespect is generally met with immediate resistance. In many schools, this disconnect is exacerbated when simple classroom management issues are handled in terms of "crime and punishment" and students are severely disciplined for their classroom practices. The implementation of the crime-and-punishment model parallels the practice of the legal/justice system, thereby compounding the issues of power and control in the classroom by mirroring an already-dysfunctional relationship between inner-city youth and the justice system. This justice system model of classroom/school control then is enacted by New York City's Department of Education to varying degrees, ranging from school-based disciplinary measures to full-year suspensions at the city's suspension centers.

*Perspectives on Classroom Control*

In urban schools such as those in New York City, both administrators and teachers are often overly focused on specific classroom management behaviors to determine whether a teacher is performing well and if learning is taking place in the classroom. This focus on classroom management seems to substitute for attention to meaningful student enactments of content-based or curricular knowledge. By excessively focusing on teacher management, “classroom control” is often reduced to teaching practices that seem to restrain “negative” student practices. These negative practices are often ingrained in students’ ways of knowing that can be utilized as tools for transformative learning experiences. The dispositions of urban students require nuanced perspectives from teachers, allowing a sense of co-creation of their learning environments. This attunement to students’ needs can strongly attribute to whether a class will be successful. The misalignment occurring between students’ dispositions and classroom goals are in actuality not a variance from these vital goals as they are a departure from a Eurocentric, linear, control-oriented pedagogy. This pedagogy and the practices supporting its manifestation are frequently at odds with urban minorities’ dispositions to learn. Wade Boykin’s (1986) work highlights that middle class learning structures can especially disadvantage African American students. Rowhea Elmesky and Gale Seiler (2007) build on Boykin’s work by arguing how African American students’ practices are often unaccounted for in schooling. Elmesky and Seiler’s research

particularly focuses on communalism as a practice of African American can utilize to assist them in navigating the structures of schooling.

This parallels Boykin's (1986) argument that black students are faced with potent hegemonic forces in American schools that inhibit their individual approaches to learning in the core curriculum. Additionally, Boykin points out that schooling in America is rooted in Euro American values and culture, with which African Americans frequently struggle because their cultural experiences differ from those of their white peers.

This lack of parallelism between teaching methods and student learning approaches often create profound disconnects in urban schools, manifested in poor attendance, reduced graduation rates, and underachievement on standardized tests, compared with peers from more advantaged settings. As Jay MacLeod (1987) describes, the success ideology personified in the middle-class belief that a better education will expand social and financial opportunities is not valued by students who do not see schooling as a viable alternative to self-improvement. Additionally, numerous studies show that urban students from low-income homes are more likely to leave school without a diploma than their white suburban peers (Losen, 2004). Even more disturbing is that a number of longitudinal studies indicate that many of New York City's urban students have a greater likelihood of being incarcerated in New York State's expanding prison system than attending college at public universities.

In light of such disheartening statistics detailing the dilemma of urban youth as well as research literature that seems to offer few viable pedagogical alternatives, this

research chose to examine urban students' perspectives on implementing and maintaining classroom control in their high schools. One of the underlying beliefs that guided this study was that addressing the issue of control and its repercussions in the classroom may open avenues for new pedagogical approaches that support the success of urban youth.

### *Theoretical Understandings*

Learning distributed classroom management is conceptualized on a continuum that starts with developing learning culture, such as those exhibited in cogenerative dialogues, and progresses to enactments in the classroom. In time, macro-level expressions of distributed management that can be central to a transformative learning community become established. Working with this premise, this study posed three specific research questions that are relevant to developing a classroom culture that supports a transformative learning community. First, what does distributed classroom management look like? Second, can distributive management culture, learned as a schema or practice in cogenerative dialogue, be reproduced in another field? And third, does enacted distributive classroom management follow a certain pattern or ritualized process of enactment?

By considering these perspectives, this study analyzed cultural production of both micro and macro level enactments of distributed classroom control. William Sewell's (1992) concept of agency is a useful understanding by which to examine how students appropriate resources. Sewell understands agency as "The actor's capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that

initially constituted the array (1992, p. 19).” This understanding furnishes a way to examine students’ demonstrations of agency. Such a perspective affords a fuller assessment of students’ practices and whether they are produced and reproduced in an additional field. With such an understanding, I studied how peers enacted with each other and studied micro level enactments. Some of the practices were coded as forms of distributed classroom management culture. I also studied whether these practices could lead to meso or macro-level demonstrations of distributive management. My examination of practices and schema affording me the opportunity to search for coherent patterned action as a marker of enacted distributed classroom management. My methodology also searches for contradictions to the study’s hypothesis in order to acknowledge the complex factors involved in cultural enactment (Tobin, 2005). By identifying contradictions, practitioners and researchers are better equipped to understand how practices can be changed or amended to facilitate distributed classroom management.

In this chapter, I trace the production of distributed management culture and the reproduction of the same culture in another field. I also argue how these practices should be viewed I conceptualize the enactment of distributed management can be a way that aligns the needs of teachers and students in urban classrooms. Stakeholders can produce new culture in cogenerative dialogue as one way to align the needs of teachers and students.

In this work, I have used the concept of zooming and focusing as an interpretive lens to understand social life. Wolff-Michael Roth (2006) utilized this approach as an

analytic tool to recognize patterns in social life. My research examines the enactment of practices that are coded as distributed classroom management and I then analyzed how these exchanges transpired in the classroom. I zoomed and focused on salient vignettes that occurred in cogenerative dialogue and the classroom searching for coherence and contradictions. Employing this approach, I was able to illuminate patterns that are both logical and contradictory to my thesis. In this work, I share Anthony's story by highlighting his practices that were coded as distributed classroom management. I frequently held member-checking meetings with all student-researchers as a way to ground my theory.

#### *A Case Study*

This research initially questioned how, when, and to what extent teachers and students create aligned classroom management practices that mutually respect all participants and foster academic discourse and standards-based learning. Do such practices exhibit patterns of coherence in their creation and implementation? The following sections present a narrative documenting the enactment of distributed classroom management by one particular student, Anthony, a senior, at LSC. In a cogenerative dialogue session, Anthony and his peer Keon were involved in a conversation about the ways in which the class could collectively improve its learning. Numerous ideas were shared and group members started to create and co-create possible strategies. Their emotional energy remained high throughout the 16 minutes of the

meeting, as evidenced by the group's mutual focus, shared mood, and detailed attention to the topic at hand.

When reviewing the video a few days later, the student-researchers and I watched this session on a Macintosh Powerbook G4 using *iMovie*. Anthony, Keon, and I first watched the videotape in real time and noted the mutual focus and keen attention Anthony afforded to the issues covered in the meeting. Anthony's attentiveness can be characterized as micro demonstrations of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning. At first, we hesitated to call Anthony's actions distributed classroom management because no class was present and his actions only occurred in cogenerative dialogue. In terms of his nonverbal participation, Anthony's posture was upright; he leaned slightly forward and focused his eyes directly on the speaker. Such attentive practices possibly signal that he was very vested in the process of developing more effective ways to manage the classroom. Furthermore, both Anthony's enthusiastic attentiveness and the way he seemed to devote his mental energy to the task at hand revealed his ability to demonstrate key, albeit secondary, enactments of cogenerative leadership and learning. In a member checking session, Anthony admitted that he was fully concentrating during the cogenerative dialogue because the topic was so important to him.

Beyond his nonverbal actions, these enactments occurred once Anthony became one of the main speakers of the meeting and took over the initiative to comment on raised topics and introduce new ones. Close review of the session indicates that his enactment of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning knowledge coexisted with the group's high

emotional energy and extended mutual focus. This knowledge included his adopting the roles of peer adviser, imparting important feedback on classroom practices, and of learning adviser, detailing how future classes could run. As we replayed the video at normal speed, we were impressed by the fluency of his leadership skills and his effortless transition into and between the roles of student and cogenerative dialogue adviser.

#### *Microanalysis of Anthony's Non-verbal and Verbal Actions*

Using Macintosh's iMovie, I reduced the speed of the video to perform a microanalysis of Anthony's non-verbal behaviors. From the video, we noticed that Anthony rarely fidgeted and that his eyes remained focused on the speaker throughout the meeting. From multiple viewings of this vignette, we realized that Anthony not only focused his eyes directly on the speaker, but he also maintained eye contact as he synchronously nodded in approval of comments by Keon or the teacher. Anthony was also incredibly alert and followed the shifting directions of the conversation by laughing appropriately or responding verbally. Anthony's actions are important because it demonstrated a sense of fluency as he interacted with group members. His interactions were timely and appropriate, including laughing and body positioning when others spoke. Upon close second-by-second micro-examinations, it is evident that Anthony made eye contact, wrote notes and talked throughout the duration of the 16-minute meeting.

#### *Possible Meanings*

In terms of responses, Anthony was avidly involved in the nonverbal aspects of the meeting. An examination of the videotape reveals how enthusiastically he interacted

verbally with Keon and the teacher during the entire session. Even during member checking sessions, Anthony agreed that Keon and my hypotheses about his involvement were accurate. In short, Anthony actively participated in all aspects of this cogenerative dialogue. During many sections of the meeting, he was also the main speaker and often directed the flow of conversation by introducing new yet related issues. He responded effortlessly to questions asked of him in a timely and appropriate way that anticipated the topic of conversation (Tobin, 2005).

Anthony, Keon, and I continued to analyze this cogenerative dialogue by timing Anthony's talk-times throughout the session. Anthony talked for a total of 6 out of the 16 minutes of the session—over one-third of the meeting. In that time, he suggested new classroom practices, an approach toward peer tutoring, and feedback for the teacher. Additionally, he initiated new topics of conversation and took part in planning for the next class.

### *Student Practices*

In addition to the energy and focus he brought to the group, Anthony also demonstrated central aspects of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning by providing valuable feedback on classroom learning processes and by implementing practices for peer-learning checks. He took on leadership roles without monopolizing the group's time. The transcript below presents an exchange in which Anthony suggested a strategy to insure that his peers would stay on-task and involved in the lesson.

Anthony: I think...I need to be more focused ... ya know, I need more focus.

Lehner: Is there anything we can do as a class to help that?

Anthony: Well, um, when one of the students is not like as focused as the rest of the classmates, like, should like, we should pull him to the side. And we should tell him, like, “you have to get this, you know, like finished, everyone else is done.”

Lehner: Okay. So you mean someone who is not focused. You want someone to pull him to the side?

Anthony: Like-

Lehner:[Motioning to Anthony] Go ahead....

Anthony: I am saying like, say I am talking and all you all is like doin your work, and I am in my own world, and it is like time for the Regents and we have to start prep, it is prep time, you all could be like this [tapping Keon on the shoulder]. And say “come on son, it is time to do your work. [Motioning with his hands]

Lehner: Okay, so kind of a way to get him focused.

Anthony: Yeah, without disturbing the other students. Ya-all can get be back on track and ready for the test.

(Cogenerative dialogue, 4/1/2005)

Anthony suggested in his comments a peer-implemented approach to insure that his fellow classmates would collectively succeed. Paralleling Boykin’s (1986) outlined dimensions of black culture, Anthony expressed his ideas with verve but also with an overt concern for his peers, indicating that his suggestion was at least in part an act of communalism. Anthony expressed how the group could achieve together and recommended a method in order to achieve this goal. In turn, Keon excitedly resonated with Anthony’s idea, showing that he also valued the importance of collective

achievement. By using cogenerative dialogue, we were able to discover Anthony's and Keon's group orientation and the importance that collective achievement played in their schooling. Once this type of feedback was given in the cogenerative dialogue group, Anthony and Keon moved to implement practices that would mutually benefit all participants. Since Anthony, Keon, and I would be planning the lesson, collectively we could use this type of response to inform the planning and implementing of new topics.

In addressing the need to align classroom teaching and learning, major steps could have been taken by simply implementing Anthony's suggestions and squaring the need for classroom control. In this case, cogenerative dialogue provided a field of possibility in which Anthony and Keon were functioning outside the normal parameters of classroom life and were allowed to rethink their current practices and roles. In this type of field where rules and goals were not pre-structured, Anthony brought to the group's collective understanding the need to insure peer learning. When the group collective considered how to implement such a practice to follow-up on Anthony's suggestions, possibilities for alignment began to occur in real-time by the actors within the field.

Cogenerative dialogue allowed for a social space in which the traditional roles of teacher and student were suspended to collaboratively restructure the learning environment. In terms of classroom management, we saw the potential for participant-implemented alignment to triumph over any other outside influences for classroom change. In our session where the social actors were actively involved and vested with the necessary power to suggest and implement change, the stakeholders needed only very

little time to think of aligned methods. While we did not implement the practices at that moment, it was apparent that alignment could become a real practice despite the serious differences in race, age, and individual positions in the school culture.

### *Group Interactions*

Beyond the potential alignment created in cogenerative dialogue, we also studied Anthony's expanded student roles and the coexistence of our small group session. Close microanalysis showed that the cogenerative dialogue had produced, for Anthony, ritual ingredients to build the positive emotional energy seen in ritual outcomes. To a great degree, the ritual ingredients had entrained Anthony and, consequently, the process resulted in his mutual focus, animated involvement, and elevated mood. Additionally, the ritual process also coincided with Anthony's increased sense of group membership and greater degrees of solidarity with Keon.

The ritual ingredients started to coalesce when our group gathered at the same table and shared our mutual focus by discussing how to improve the learning in our class. In time, Anthony, Keon, and the teacher seemed to share a greater collective sense of purpose and common focus on improving the learning outcomes. As Boykin (1986) described, Anthony's suggestion to keep peers on task and involved in the class followed not only a pattern of collective dispositions but also a micro-demonstration of his individual goals merging with greater group goals.

Finally, in terms of ritual responses, Anthony's demonstration of keeping students involved was a precursor to more action on his part. In that moment, although he was

only showing what he meant, Anthony had started to envision what it would be like to keep his classmates engaged in the lesson. Anthony initiated “member checking” rituals to keep group members on task and focused on group tasks. I later saw him enact this practice on a much larger scale in the classroom.

### *Anthony’s Enactment of Distributed Management*

In class two days after this cogenerative dialogue session, it was evident that both Keon and Anthony were highly alert and vested in the results of our lesson. The high degree of verbal participation, their attentiveness, and their manner of assisting peers who seemed to have trouble with the lesson were concrete manifestations of the dialogue’s effects. In particular, Anthony seemed especially interested in whether or not his peers were learning the material. Less than three minutes into class, Savier, Anthony’s peer, was off-task and signing gang-related descriptors into the camera. Anthony noticed what Savier was doing and immediately intervened by tapping him on the shoulder, alerting him to focus back on the lesson. Particularly fascinating about this vignette was the peer symmetry that Anthony used to stop Savier’s off-task behavior while also wisely maneuvering to keep the group’s emotional energy high and solidarity intact. In fact, Anthony’s intervention is so effective that both he and Savier shared a laugh before they mutually refocused on the lesson. Anthony had reproduced the culture he manifested in cogenerative dialogue, but nuanced his initial idea and transformed it into an opportunity to connect with Savier. In this vignette, Anthony also demonstrated mainstream

enactments of distributed classroom management by his ability to recognize his peer's needs and simultaneously created an aligned practice in order to intervene.

As Anthony's interactions with Savier suggest, some students could benefit from peer-initiated classroom management actions. For some urban students, classroom behaviors such as paying attention and remaining on-task are important learning actions, which situate them centrally in the learning environment. When students are on-task in class, as Savier later became, they find it easier to produce content-related skills as more class time is spent on curriculum-related material.

#### *Moving Away from Control*

Teachers often presuppose that controlling methods of management will serve the needs of their students. Frequently administrators dictate to teachers that they should control disruptive practices in the classroom. Yet, teachers are reliant on their students to co-implement practices, including management practices. For students, practices that promote a sense of collective classroom management are difficult to conceptualize and implement. To enact distributed management practices, students must either know or learn a distributive classroom management culture that is specific to the classroom. Anthony's involvement established that students could produce micro and macro manifestations of distributive classroom management. Anthony demonstrated how to naturally respond to a peer's comment, answer a teacher's question, and suggest classroom policies to redirect peers or filter out physical and socio-emotional distractions, which are all central aspects of distributed classroom management culture.

*What Was Learned*

This research is rooted in a socio-cultural understanding of the classroom where practices and schema were enacted as culture. Anthony's actions, both in cogenerative dialogue and the classroom, produced a culture in one field and reproduced the same culture in another field. By understanding culture in this manner it is possible to see how Anthony's actions demonstrate that cogenerative dialogue can serve as a field where culture is produced, and if necessary, also transported to other fields. In this example, Anthony's creation of classroom culture was a function of the skills and resources he brought to the classroom.

By considering cogenerative dialogue as a field separate from the classroom, it is possible to uncover how the emergence of distributed control, and its consequent permanence as a functional element of the cogenerative dialogue culture, could be transferred into the classroom field. The porous nature of the fields' boundaries seems to facilitate this culture transfer. Thus, we sought to identify how a specific culture enacted in one field can be enacted in another field. By placing particular responsibility on the potential of cogenerative dialogue to create and transform culture, we saw that these porous boundaries, coupled with the cultural productive/transformational nature of cogenerative dialogues, planted seeds for the development of distributed control in the cogenerative dialogue field. In turn, these seeds thrived to produce new forms of distributed control unique to the classroom field. Situating this study in the enactment of teacher-controlled management in this suspension schools helped to illustrate how this

practice could assist learning in New York City schools. This research supports creating opportunities for student development and implementing classroom management results in more effective teaching and learning in urban schools. Anthony interactions were peer-initiated classroom management practices that could benefit the class if their enactment is in-line with the collective motives. Anthony's actions should be seen as concrete demonstrations of cultural production and transformation that can be replicated in other urban schools to transform existing classroom management models for the benefit of all stakeholders.

## CHAPTER V

## MICRO AND MESO ENACTMENTS OF BIOLOGY

If Biggie or Jay-Z were rapping about environmental science or biology, me and my peers would be geniuses...I'd be good. Now, I know it's important to learn but it ain't the type of "know" that gets me up to study. Instead my world- the black/Latino world- and hip-hop culture is focused on the things that are going-on in the hood. And science, well, it don't even involve me. I ain't much concerned with it and science don't seem to notice me neither.

(Gabriel, interview, 5/15/2006)

This quote captures Gabriel's indifference to the state of his science learning. A 17 year-old who describes himself as black-Panamanian, Gabriel is presently a junior at Liberty High School Suspension Center (LSC) in Brooklyn. He is making strong educational progress in his courses and is actively involved with the school's student government and other extracurricular activities. He readily divulges that he was intellectually stimulated from a young age in his bilingual Panamanian-American home in East New York, Brooklyn where he lives with his parents and three younger brothers. His high grades on his academic transcript and his teachers' complimentary reports attest to his intellectual capabilities. According to all relevant academic indicators, Gabriel is an intelligent, college-bound student with a natural inclination for learning and language. Nevertheless, Gabriel self-reports as underperforming in science, maintaining a grade that is 15 points lower in his biology course than his overall academic average. In an

interview, Gabriel stated, “I’ve always had problems with science. You know, the way it’s taught. The language, those labs, the rules. It’s all too formal.” What Gabriel cannot articulate is the extent to which he can fully access the consequences of his decision not to exert himself in learning science and what that might mean for his future academic and career choices. Commenting on his future in science, Gabriel said, “If science happens for me then good. If not, I’ll find something to study and do as a job.”

This chapter builds on the previous four chapters by explaining how the students’ lifeworlds can benefit classroom teaching and learning. As seen in earlier chapters, I am exploring how students’ emotional and communal investments in developing teaching and learning practices can coexist with their involvement with cogenerative dialogue. In this chapter, I investigate how Gabriel uses his role in cogenerative dialogue to both navigate the biology curriculum and also explore aspects of his emerging identity as a science learner.

#### *Why Students of the African Diaspora and not African-American?*

Gabriel typifies an entire population of students who are unaccounted for in most education literature. Although he may dress and speak like the majority of his African American peers, Gabriel is a member of a growing group of students who characterize the diverse incarnations of the African Diaspora. Joel Spring (2004) contends that race is often a political construct in American education rather than a meaningful descriptor reflecting the complexity of a group. Rather than describing race in this political way, educational researchers should distinguish between students who are African American

and those who represent the African Diaspora in all of its manifestations. In the research I conducted in NYC public schools, science learners represent a wide-spectrum of the African Diaspora, including first- and second-generation Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Panamanians, Puerto Ricans, Trinidadians, and Cayman Islanders. Some aspects of the unique cultures possessed by each group can be difficult to describe in its totality because students who represent the African Diaspora are simultaneously assimilating into the larger urban African American and white cultures.

This issue is vital to this discussion because much literature on urban science education approaches the topic of race from a narrow, primarily bifurcated perspective, in that students are either African-American or white. While educational researchers still describe the world in this outdated fashion, large metropolitan areas are being transformed by immigration that must redefine this perspective. Only a small percentage of current scholarship describes the urban reality of the African Diaspora as lived out in major cities like New York. Instead, much of the literature still portrays African-American students in urban science classrooms as American-born students who primarily live in conditions of poverty. In addition to not accounting for the large number of African-Americans who are gainfully employed, these portraits also fail to report the growing number of students from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa who are in American urban schools. Moreover, a large percentage of this research does not mention the familial histories of students of the African Diaspora and how their homeland cultures can assist in their learning of science.

I encountered this complex issue while trying to describe the students involved in this research. The apparently straightforward category of “African-American” did not reflect the rich diversity of the students of African heritage represented in New York City and specifically those involved in this research. Of LSC’s 100 pupils, the school’s official roster records the demographic population as 70% African-American, 36% Latino/Latina and 4% Asian. Of the 70% described as African-American, many of these same students in one-on-one conversations openly spoke of their immigrant heritage that represents both the historical and present-day Diaspora of African migration.

The problem of accurately portraying the participants in this study became clearer when I spoke with them about race and ethnicity. Only a few of the student-researchers described themselves as African-Americans. Most were hesitant to use the term “African-American” because in their respective neighborhoods, their distinguishing ancestry was often highlighted. Distinct from the traditional view of African-Americans, students of the African Diaspora are often ethnic “others” in New York City. After one discussion about race, for example, Clive said, “I am still that Haitian dude. I live in Bushwick. I grew up here. But I am still the Haitian.” To white America, Clive is African-American, but in his own neighborhood, he is considered ethnically different from his African-American peers. Clive does not describe himself as African-American because he sees and appreciates the unique aspects of his Haitian background. Unfortunately, many researchers fail to acknowledge the distinct aspects of students of the African Diaspora

and continue to categorize students like Clive under the simpler, African-American rubric.

*The Biology Class and Our Use of Cogenerative Dialogue*

This research focuses on Gabriel and his biology learning and the larger context of this study that took place at LSC. This research documents the teaching and learning of biology and the use of cogenerative dialogue in a required New York State high school class. Seven LSC students, including two special education learners and two teachers, met to co-plan, co-author, and co-implement learning and teaching strategies over one semester. The class was organized under the inclusion/special education model, where students with learning disabilities are integrated into a mainstream class. The group included four males and three female students and two teachers. In terms of teachers, Larry Seeram is a certified New York State science teacher and he was our biology content area expert during the research. Certified in Special Education, English and Social Studies, I served in the capacity of the special educator in this class, providing inclusion services to our special education population and coteaching the biology curriculum. Because of the unique behavioral and emotional needs of LSC students, all course sections were capped at 15 students and many classes had less than 10 students.

Our biology class met daily for one full semester. Each week, we institutionalized the practice of cogenerative dialogue at the end of Wednesday's class. As seen in previous chapters, we cohered to Wolf-Michael Roth and Kenneth Tobin's (2002) notion

of establishing the practice of cogenerative dialogue as a way for students and teachers to talk about the learning and teaching practices in science classrooms.

### *The Design of the Study*

This study was designed as a longitudinal critical ethnography concerned with the ways that students identified as, or disassociated themselves from, being learners of biology. In particular, this study focused on creating transformative learning opportunities that could mediate students' learning and positively affect their identities. The students took part in this research over a 20-week semester spanning five months, from September 2005 to January 2006. As outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), this research focused on minimizing potential harms, maximizing participant beneficence, and creating a sense of justice for all those involved. Additionally, this work adhered to Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria by focusing on the approaches students could use to benefit their science learning. All involvement in this study was voluntary and invitations were extended to all students who wished to participate.

Of all of our outcomes, Larry and I intentionally focused on catalytic authenticity because we believed that if the student-researchers practically understood that their research efforts could positively influence their learning, they would become more fully engaged. By turning our research attention to promoting participant learning and acquiring useful science skills, we attempted to build a strong sense of catalytic authenticity into our work. To this end, the student-researchers were encouraged to think

about ways to make the practices of biology more inclusive and the everyday learning practices more accessible. By doing so, students were exposed to an idea of pedagogy that focused on science inclusion, and acted as cultural brokers mitigating between canonical science and their urban lifeworld. In cogenerative dialogue and in the classroom, teacher-researchers would often ask participants, “How would you retell/re-describe this process so that your peers could more easily understand this?” In promoting these types of exchanges, student-researchers often expressed that they felt comfortable suggesting new ideas. In this way, catalytic authenticity was stressed by allowing the student-researchers to promote lifeworld practices that would facilitate learning for all members and help them meet the science learning standards simultaneously.

The student-researchers and teacher-researchers analyzed the ways students normally interacted with new biology material and re-analyzed similar learning interactions after cogenerating ways of integrating the material into their lifeworlds. In attempting to create more student learning opportunities and empowering their in-class science experiences, the participants became engaged in many distinct roles. For example, students served in the capacity of biology learners, lab participants/peer lab consultants, cogenerative dialogue members, curriculum advisors, and colleagues/stakeholders. While engaged in these varied roles, students were concurrently learning biology in a class required for graduation.

In all stages of the research, much of the data were collected via digital videotapes of the cogenerative dialogues and classes. As seen in other chapters in this dissertation,

student-researchers and teacher-researchers would view the video in *iMovie* on a Macintosh PowerBook G4.

### *Dispositions and Hybridized Identities*

Throughout the research, Clive continued to negotiate and renegotiate his understanding of both his cultural and scientific identities. In his work on cultural identity and the African Diaspora, Stuart Hall (1990) argues for viewing cultural identity as being in a constant state of production rather than being fixed. Hall's conception of cultural identity as produced was particularly salient for many of our students who were grappling with the sense of their cultural and scientific identities. For example, Clive's comments spoke to his perceptions of his changing cultural identity; thus, in his lifeworld, he continually attempts to find strategies and practices to hybridize his Haitian ways of being into the larger urban culture.

Using Wade Boykin's (1986) dimensions of black culture, recent science education scholarship describes African-American learners as prone to enact specific cultural dispositions while learning science. This framework repositions the issue of urban science learning from a deficit perspective, but at times, this construction remains too narrow to capture the complexity of classroom learning as enacted by students who represent the array of cultures representing the African Diaspora.

Boykin's research has significant theoretical value and his work has provided a powerful lens from which to understand social life. A caveat is that dispositions of black culture is a good place to start, but the framework does not capture the complexity of

classroom life and seems to only illuminate those elements of youth culture that are positive. Students of the African Diaspora may enact many of these dispositions and in so doing enact culture that is not well explained through this theoretical framework.

Building on Boykin's pioneering work, I have found it useful to adopt a number of theoretical frameworks to understand social life as it occurs in urban schools. As seen in Wolf-Michael Roth and Kenneth Tobin's (2002) work, researchers can usefully acknowledge and utilize the contradictions that occur in research, not minimize or explain them away, but to expand insights into what is happening and why it is happening. I have used Boykin's framework as a starting point on which to build a theoretical framework that addresses many of the issues that are salient to educating urban youth. A more robust, theoretically nuanced lens frames cultural production as a dialectical relationship between transformation and reproduction. Also, I employ theories from cultural sociology (e.g. Turner, 2002) to account for the emotional aspects of learning being included in capital production that leads to learning and the emergence of solidarity.

*Moving Away from Dispositions: Toward Hybridized Identity and Creolized Practices*

Employing an approach that is grounded in daily research and teaching at LSC, I recognize that students of the African Diaspora tend to act inline with Boykin's dimensions of black culture. Acknowledging the dispositions of black culture, I utilize Roth's (in press) conception of hybridized identity to elucidate the motives inherent in students' actions because it more closely reflects the enactment of school life.

Understanding that urban students are continually searching for ways to interact with the science curriculum and the larger society, Roth (in press) writes that the hybridized identity is one way that students of the Diaspora attempt to find a “home” away from home. Noting that forced or volitional emigration from Africa as Diaspora, and the cultural process of finding a home-away-from-home as the hybridization process, Roth describes hybridized identity as a way that students of African heritage deal with hegemony.

When a person is physically removed from her ancestral homeland, she is subsequently engaged, often unconsciously, in developing a hybridized identity as he attempts to assimilate into mainstream culture without losing the distinctive aspects of his native culture. Whether hybridized identities are formed over a course of centuries, as is the case with African-Americans, or over a few years, as with Gabriel, the hallmark of these identities is the sophisticated amalgamated practices utilized to interact with hegemony.

For Gabriel, the development of his hybridized identity required that he straddle between his parents’ Panamanian culture and his new life in Brooklyn’s East New York. During an interview, Gabriel alluded to facets of his hybridized identity when he described the complex ontologies that he employed at home and in his neighborhood. In Gabriel’s case, the process of hybridization served social and familial purposes. For instance, while growing up, Gabriel pointed out that he wanted to fit in and be accepted by his peers, but this often meant hiding aspects of his background.

Like, I learned quick not to talk with a Spanish accent. My family still speaks Spanish at home and so do I. But in my neighborhood I spoke straight hood from day one. A lot of my crew still don't know that I am Panamanian.

(Gabriel, interview, 10/1/2005)

Gabriel illustrates in this quote the need he felt to adapt his speech according to whether he was at home or with his peers. The hegemony of Brooklyn's neighborhood life has encouraged Gabriel to incorporate more localized ways of speaking that differ radically from his home culture. Gabriel's experiences demonstrate the progression of hybridization where he engages in a complicated process to navigate hegemony. Incorporating aspects of both Panamanian and Brooklyn life, Gabriel produces a Creolized ontology through the hybridization process. For both African-Americans and African Diaspora students, the hybridization process continually generates new forms of Creolized culture.

*Hybridization Yields Hybridized Identity and Creolized Practice*

The issue of hybridized identities and hybrid practices were at the center of my research because our students were relentlessly using supplies of knowledge acquired from their native countries, their parents' homes, and local neighborhoods, to make sense of the curriculum. While struggling to learn biology and excel academically, our students engaged in a hybridized form of learning science. Roth (in press) describes hybridized identity as the process of integrating local approaches of learning and speaking with canonical discourse. Due to ongoing globalization, Roth argues that many immigrant students are faced with a need to create hybrid practices in order to learn science. To

communicate, these immigrant students utilize various languages and skills for the practical purpose of interacting with the science curriculum. Faced with the often-hegemonic structures of learning science and immersed in urban culture, our students often used metaphors, similes, and manufactured Creoles to make meaning of the biology curriculum.

Building on Roth's writing on hybridized identity, I describe the fusing of racial and ethnic characteristics as representations of the hybridized identity, and not as cultural identity or dispositions of black culture. Hall's and Boykin's conceptions of cultural identity and dispositions are also helpful notions, but neither capture the complex enacted culture in today's large urban centers. For instance, in addressing Hall's conception of cultural identity, the students of the African Diaspora in this study mostly shared a common component of being different from African-Americans rather than sharing a universal Caribbean identity. Boykin's work is too closely tied to tendencies to enact proscribed culture and so such conceptions are unable to describe students' needs to Creolize and adapt practices to benefit their learning.

#### *Hybridization and Hybridized Understandings of Identity*

Representing different home countries and familial histories, the conception of hybridized identity captures the complex experiences these students face in learning science in an American urban school. Although these students would not typically describe themselves in hybridized terms, their conceptions of their own individual racial identities are consistently being defined by their differences, rather than by a shared

cultural identity. For example, when I asked Hamilton if he were African-American, he said playfully, “Why son? Don’t I look black to ya?” After sharing a moment of laughter, more with his peers than me, Hamilton continued:

Naw, Mr. Lehner, I am just playin. Can’t you tell? I am a “blacktino.” Latino! Latino baby!!! I speak Spanish...I eat rice and beans. I love Latin honeys. But I am black. My pops is black. We all Dominican. And, I rep myself like I am black. I can bang [an expression for fighting] son! Hold my weight [a phrase meaning that he is tough]. Damn it! I don’t play. Ya got to have a rep in the hood and I got that.

(Hamilton, cogenerative dialogue, 10/10/2005)

Hamilton described himself based on his difference compared to the larger African-American community. In Hamilton’s understanding of himself, a dual identity emerged both as a Latino, specifically Dominican, and as a black male. He fused the distinct characteristics of race and ethnicity into one hybridized identity, merging aspects of the distinct culture passed on to him from his parents and their homeland and his new home in Brooklyn. In the excerpt above, Hamilton first identified with his family, his language, and representations of his culture. He also understood himself as black because of his skin color and the fact that he can “bang” or fight. Being a young man who grew up in a rough neighborhood, Hamilton resonated with the need for street credibility and toughness. He also represented this aspect of street credibility by saying, “I rep black,” where he referred to his self-representation as black, rather than other ethnic ties.

As for being identified as an African-American, Hamilton never mentioned the term unless I first used it. During group and one-on-one interviews, the students rarely employed the phrase “African-American” as a self-descriptor. The student-researchers

first spoke of themselves as black, even if they were born abroad, and then addressed their ethnicity. As seen above, Hamilton uses “blacktino” both as a racial and a cultural descriptor. Because of cultural “otherness” in New York City, many of our students situated their hybridized identities in African-American youth culture, but showed reluctance to solely identify themselves as such.

I noticed many similarities in the lives of Gabriel, Clive, and Hamilton. However, important differences can also be found among their family histories and countries of origin that require detailing. For instance, Hamilton is a third-generation Dominican-American, whereas Gabriel is a first-generation Panamanian presently studying to become a United States citizen. In detailing the racial and ethnic richness of the students who participated in this study, the descriptions more accurately captured a racial and ethnic scope that is often omitted when students of the Diaspora are described simply as African-American. These distinctions, however, better define the complexity reflected in New York City’s schools. They help elucidate important aspects of these students, such as where their educational strengths lie and in what ways educators can possibly build upon their natural abilities to facilitate science learning. Rather than describing African-Americans as a group in hegemonic, opaque, universal ways, I attempted here to specify the unique blending of varied cultures that exhibit the African Diaspora and how the dispositions of members of these different groups were enacted in the science classroom. Acknowledging the different descriptions of this migration, I explain here that students of the African Diaspora represent both historical ancestors and present-day African

immigrants. For instance, while I detail the particulars of a student-researcher's background, I describe both Clive (a second-generation American from Haiti) and Akeem (a new immigrant from Kenya) as students of the African Diaspora.

Such vivid and fuller descriptions are needed to depict our student-researchers accurately. Like Clive and Hamilton, all but one of our student-researchers' parents were born and raised outside of the United States. Six of our seven students' families represented countries with languages other than English, diverse histories, and distinct ways of being in the world. Our students often spoke fondly about their parents' homeland and at times described in detail their visits to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, and Panama. Of our seven student-researchers, four were actually born in one of the countries mentioned above.

### *Creating Ways to Include All Students in Science Instruction*

Often, the most pressing problem in teaching science in urban areas is making the curriculum and the associated practices accessible to all learners. Sonya Martin (2006) writes that in many public schools, daily science education persists to accommodate only a small group of students who may, in fact, already have some natural aptitude in the related scientific disciplines. This form of teaching frequently excludes the majority of school learners from meaningful instruction and may do more to alienate students from engaging in the learning of science. Martin's point builds on Angela Calabrese Barton's (1998) notion of a "science for all" where egalitarian learning and teaching practices can create spaces for more students to enjoy and benefit from the related disciplines.

However, in much public school instruction, an antithesis of “science for all” dwells in the curriculum and frequently estranges students from science at a young age.

Furthermore, and perhaps more important, students frequently do not learn science in unrestricted ways because many learners already think of themselves as non-achievers; thus, this perception becomes perpetuated and solidified as their unique scientific identities.

While comparing the science education literature with my classroom experiences, I found the common element that students, almost always at early ages, conclude that science is “not for them.” When Larry and I started our project, we began with the idea that science is for everyone; we embraced the thought that science was for Gabriel and for all of the students in our classroom. For many science teachers, students like Gabriel and science achievement are mutually exclusive. So thought one of Liberty High’s biology teachers, Ray Foreman (a pseudonym), who readily acknowledged Gabriel’s intelligence but attributed his indifference to biology to a lack of enthusiasm and previous knowledge of the subject matter. In fact, Foreman taught Gabriel’s biology class in the semester before our research. In conversation, Foreman readily expressed his opinion that Gabriel was unable to learn the content. At times, many science teachers sharing Foreman’s appraisal may underestimate student strengths and capabilities. Foreman’s assessment does not address why so many students, especially in large urban areas, are disinterested and disengaged in their respective science curriculums; yet many of these

same students achieve on grade level in their other courses. Gabriel was such an example since in all other subject areas, except science, he achieved on grade level.

Unaddressed learning needs is one salient reason why students like Gabriel can sustain a 90 average in most of his coursework but maintain only minimal passing grades in science. Coining this phrase “discourse of invisibility,” Alberto Rodriguez (1997) wrote that the National Research Council’s science education standards do not explicitly address issues of ethnicity, race, gender or socio-economic status, or the fact that each respective group has unique needs in learning science. In fact, students like Gabriel are most fully disadvantaged because they operate under the assumption that they are following all the rules and are underachieving because of lack of effort. While it may be true that Gabriel is underachieving because he often does only the minimum amount required, no explicit school discussion has centered on his need to learn and thrive in science courses. Gabriel functioned under the belief that all potential professions, science careers included, were open to him and that all he needed to do was fully apply himself. Unbeknownst to him, due to his poor science-related attainment, Gabriel may be precluded from upper-level high school courses, college preparation tracks and, inevitably, a science-related career. By contrast his peers in New York City, the United States, and around the world are already preparing and acquiring the needed skill sets, basic science understandings, and rudimentary coursework to groom them for futures in science.

*Understanding Micro, Meso, and Macro Enactments of Biology*

With micro, meso, and macro enactments of biological learning, I saw a leveled progression towards fully engaging in science. These actions included a motivation for achievement and forms of engagement focused on academic success. Micro level biological conduct consists of synchronous practices that contain little explicit evidence of science. Examples of such conduct include participating in lessons, attending classes, taking notes, and affording respect to teachers and fellow students. Meso level biological displays include forms of conduct that are conducive to creating an engaging learning environment, but also demonstrate individual | collective commitment to learning the biological discourse. Instances of meso level biological learning performances include student initiated learning strategies, suggestions to improve learning and teaching, or attempts at Creolization where standard science discourse is conjoined with vernacular speech. Students' micro, meso, and even macro science displays can be described as Creolized science since they are demonstrating learning behaviors or articulating science concepts in their lifeworld discourse. Micro and meso forms of Creolized science are conceptualized as essential gateways to macro level enactments of science.

Drawing from Hall's (1990) and Roth's (in press) ideas on Creoles, I used their theoretical perspectives in my analysis of the data from this study. The student-researchers and I closely examined classroom behaviors and coded them as micro, meso, or macro level science demonstrations. In my analysis, I exclusively detail Gabriel's progression from micro to meso forms of science discourse. Using Roth's (2005)

conception of zooming and focusing, I found patterns of coherence where Gabriel displayed micro and meso level demonstrations of biological knowledge. I zoomed in on Gabriel's learning practices over the course of a five-month study and described some of the salient findings in this work. As the study evolved, Gabriel went from demonstrating micro level science learning practices to fully exhibiting meso level enactments. Even though he struggled with articulating science concepts fluently, Gabriel's efforts were a big step toward addressing the discourse of invisibility (Rodriguez, 1997). By sanctioning his Creolized forms of science, Gabriel concurrently advanced from micro to meso science demonstrations.

#### *Gabriel's Demonstrations of Micro and Meso Science*

The first vignette is taken from a cogenerative dialogue taped early in the research. I started the session by formally stating the rules of cogenerative dialogue: 1) show respect to other group members, 2) one person speaks at a time, and 3) we must "cogenerate" something that we collectively bring to the class to improve learning. During this session, Gabriel and Clive were very engaged as we started to talk about the ways we could collectively improve the learning in our class. The emotional energy was high throughout the 24 minutes of our meeting as evidenced in the students' mutual focus, shared mood, and detailed attention to the topic at hand. I remember thinking that the meeting had gone well when we finished taping and noting that Gabriel's input could be particularly helpful.

In this session, Gabriel suggested implementing peer learning strategies as a way to develop classroom learning. Below, the transcript captures a conversation in which Gabriel recommended an approach that could assist his peers in classroom learning.

Gabriel: Yo, we have got to learn more in this class and sometimes other students buggin out stops that. If a dude is buggin, I am goin be like “chill son.” Let’s do this science thing.

Clive: Do you think that is going to help?

Lehner: Yeah, Gabriel. What do you mean?

Gabriel: Like, if someone is not into the lesson, I could see if I could help him.

Lehner: Okay, it is a start. What do you think Clive?

Clive: My son, Gabriel knows what’s up. If our classes works together and learns together, it helps all of us. It is not only me, but the whole crew learning.

(Cogenerative dialogue, 10/15/2005)

As evidenced from these remarks, Gabriel envisioned a peer-executed plan to assist his fellow classmates in helping them meet academic goals. Much like some of the ideas presented in earlier chapters, Gabriel’s idea broaches the concept of collective success by thinking about achievement outside of the normal parameters of individual success.

Much like the ideas that Hall (1990) outlined in his work on the dimensions of hybridized culture, Gabriel communicated his proposal couched in his lifeworld discourse. He starts his comments by stating what could be done instead of stating that the students needed to pay attention more readily. Gabriel’s comments showed his

interest in how biology class was conducted. Gabriel's conversation never directly addresses science but it does acknowledge how lessons often get derailed. In this vignette, Gabriel's comments refer to wanting to keep the class on task. His micro level conduct and meso level proposals were the beginning point for new instructional approaches and as a result Gabriel became a more firmly invested member in our learning community.

By creating a social space outside of the classroom, cogenerative dialogue offered a field of opportunity where Gabriel could produce micro and meso level demonstrations of science. And when he prompted me to align classroom teaching and learning, I too wanted to make strides that would focus our students on biology learning. In this setting, Gabriel was able to produce this culture because we purposefully suspended the standard classroom rules and goals. In doing so, it allowed for meaningful conversation around learning practices. When Gabriel broached the need to employ collective measures to insure peer learning, his idea immediately garnered support from Clive.

The day following the cogenerative dialogue session, Gabriel immediately employed the ideas from our meeting. After asking for some index cards, he wrote down the definitions the class had covered in our previous meeting. Gabriel stated that he intended to commit some of the definitions to memory so that he could more fully participate in class. Below, the transcript records an interaction he had with one of his peers, Christine, as they discussed the contents of the index cards.

Gabriel: All right, Christine, lets get this done.

Christine: Ready.

Gabriel: Ready? Name the three types of muscles.

Christine: Okay, I know this.

Gabriel: All right, tell then.

Christine: Don't rush me now. Well, there is skeletal. And, heart muscle. Right?

Gabriel: Yeah, you right. But is there a name for that? The heart one.

Christine: Yes, there is. It is cardiac. Cardiac muscle! And the last one is smooth.

Gabriel: All right Christine. Keep working with me and you goin be alright.

(Recorded from class, 10/26/2005)

In applying his ideas from the cogenerative dialogue immediately, Gabriel helped to structure biology learning not only for himself but for his classmates as well. He also took on the new role of peer tutor, as seen in the transcript above. This new role mirrored the one Gabriel spoke of during the cogenerative dialogue. He was creating an environment where science was being cotaught and co-constructed in the students' lifeworlds. Just as he had proposed during our cogenerative dialogue, Gabriel was enacting practices to align with his stated vision.

### *Hybridization: A Process to Effectively Learn Science*

Language can be a commanding resource to scaffold biology learning for students who do not normally excel in this area. During our study, when students were exposed to new information, Larry and I encouraged them to construct meaning using their abundant

lifeworld capital. In doing so, many students created exciting and original learning opportunities and frequently shared their insights with fellow students. We tried to make use of the student capital interconnect with the biology curriculum. Although the scientific definitions were often imprecise, youth language, which is often saturated with local and hip-hop colloquialisms, became a way for students to talk around scientific meaning. Students produced this process of talking about biology as more precise measures of scientific fluency. Since a classroom is a structured field, a teacher can limit or provide the structures to facilitate a student's ability to produce new science learning culture.

For example, in our eighth week of class, we were three days into a new unit that focused on energy flow through the ecosystem. In this ecosystem lesson, the students were having difficulty comprehending the new material. Specifically, the class started a lesson that placed living organisms into the categories of producer, consumer, and decomposer based on their role within the bionetwork. Even though Larry and I attempted to use previously covered material to inaugurate the lesson, the students were having conceptual difficulty grasping the idea of energy transferring from a producer to a consumer.

In the transcript below, Gabriel drew heavily upon his lifeworld language structures while, in tandem; he integrated the concepts presented in the class. In the process of trying to learn biology, Gabriel produced a science Creole while attempting to describe the ecosystem. Employing his present language schemas and biology

vocabulary, Gabriel's development of a science Creole based on his own discursive resources furthered his participation in science. Although linguists may formally describe his comments as pidgin because they utilize English grammar, pronunciations, and non-standard phrases, Gabriel's speech was a science Creole because he merged his lifeworld speech with the language of high school biology. During the process of hybridization, Gabriel manufactured his own science Creole created to serve his science learning needs.

Gabriel: So peep [a phrase meaning get this] it. Peep this....

Lehner: Okay, I'll "peep it."

Gabriel: Wait. I just had it. Damn....

Lehner: Go ahead.

Gabriel: Naw... I lost it. Man, I just had it. I knew exactly what I was goin say but I lost it.

Seeram: Gabriel you sure.

Gabriel: Proceed; proceed. Go ahead, it will come back to me.

Lehner: Okay. Yesterday, we were talking about this in relation to different food chains. Remember this Hamilton-

Gabriel: Oh...oh. I got it now. If it was a little bit of grass and the cricket ate all the grass. Right? Then there would not be enough energy for the mouse and the hawk and everything would die.

Lehner: Yes, you wouldn't be able to support all the levels of the food chain.

Gabriel: [Tapping his hand on the table] Wait. What is that animal? [Pointing to the board] I don't get that!

(Recorded from class, 11/14/05)

As he produced and reproduced biology, Gabriel did not always transform classroom learning. Instead, he often misunderstood concepts or poorly rearticulated the presented classroom material. The transcript above is evidence of the arduous process required to manufacture the culture of science. At the end of the transcript, after attentively working in class, Gabriel tapped his hand on the table and sighed, “I don’t get that.” Even after working hard during the class, he still needed more time and attention to fully understand the material. In fact, Gabriel attempted not only to present the information to the class but also to make sense of the material himself. This interaction also showed that despite Gabriel’s hard work, he struggled for proficiency. Yet, when allowed a field where he could attempt scientific production, Gabriel demonstrated that he could reproduce key ideas, albeit imprecisely. Gradually, Gabriel reproduced and transformed his learning practices and in doing so, he engaged in demonstrating meso level exhibits of biology knowledge. This scenario also demonstrates the slow, at times arduous process that is entailed in moving from meso to macro enactments of biology. Rather than perfectly articulating important curricular ideas, in a way that is reminiscent of Swidler’s (1986) cultural lag, Gabriel instead exhibited the difficult production elements required to move to macro enactments of science (i.e., enacting science across numerous fields in his lifeworld).

In Gabriel’s attempt to speak biology, he shuffled between understanding the concepts and “losing” them. In the scenario above, Gabriel employed the colloquial “So peep it. Peep this,” as a way to capture the class’s attention. By using this local form of

interaction style, Gabriel was engaged in the process of hybridization, which resulted in the previously mentioned science Creoles. He prefaced his meso biology talk learning with speech that was both natural to him and familiar to his peers. Once he garnered the attention of the class, Gabriel then had difficulty articulating his biology ideas in the same way that a person using two different languages might fumble when trying to merge distinct languages. The phrase “Naw... I lost it,” expressed his disappointment over having understood the material, even momentarily, only to lose his conceptual understanding of it again.

Directly after this class, during cogenerative dialogue, Gabriel could more clearly articulate the roles of consumers and producers in a food chain. I showed him the video from the class, using *iMovie* by connecting the camera to the Macintosh G4. As he watched himself engaged in the lesson, Gabriel seemed to understand the lesson better.

Gabriel: “I could say that a lot better now.”

Lehner: So we were talking about food chains today. Can you tell me more about what you were learning?

Gabriel: Yeah, we were talking about food chains and how they work together. Like in the class, I was sayin that if there is not enough grass things don't go right.

Lehner: Okay, you said grass. Why are talking about grass? Does it have a role?

Gabriel: Like, grass is a producer. I was trying to say in class if there is too many consumers feigning for the same stuff things go crazy.

Lehner: Can you give me an example?

Gabriel: In class, I was saying if there was not enough grass things could bug-out. I meant like, grass eaters, if there are too many grass eaters and no grass. Well, things ain't right. And there are a whole bunch of grass eaters...mice, grasshoppers, crickets.... You know, grass eaters.

Lehner: Is there a specific name for the grass eaters?

Gabriel: Herbivores... they only eat grass and stuff. Then there are omnivores... we are omnivores. And, carnivores. Like, lions are carnivores.

(Recorded from class, 11/21/2005)

Once Gabriel viewed himself during the day's lesson, he quickly remembered more of the biology content, indicating that he was experiencing the phenomenon of cultural lag. First described by Ann Swidler (1986), cultural lag is the delay people experience when applying material they have previously learned. In this instance, Gabriel showed evidence during class that he was starting to understand the roles of consumers and producers, yet he could not precisely explain this material. Evidence of cultural lag was present in the transcript captured during a one-on-one conversation with Gabriel after class.

Attempting to connect his own experiences with the formal language of biology, Gabriel created a hybrid practice as a gateway to larger understandings. By using his local speech as a way to connect to the material, Gabriel used his lifeworld discourse as an in-field structure to facilitate his attempts at macro level biological expressions.

Gabriel appropriated the new biology language and attempted to employ them immediately. This Creolization process was fused with hybrid practices in which Gabriel appropriates the biology terms but stumbles in their use. The Creolized introduction of

“So peep this,” and “Oh...oh. I got it now,” are examples of lifeworld cultural production that he uses to aid his science learning. He continually hybridizes his speech and practices in an attempt to gain competence. As a result, Gabriel slips into and out of proficiency as a natural process of the cultural transformation and reproduction cycle.

This hybridization progression should be viewed as a normal strategy that nearly every student employs to gain competency. The primary issue is not that students hybridize practices, but that teachers sanction them. In their hybridization production cycles, students of the African Diaspora may often Creolize science as a way to incorporate new material into their lifeworlds. Students will benefit significantly when teachers officially sanction these forms of knowledge as the authentic science demonstrations they are.

*Not Acting White: The Strong Academic Identity of a Brooklyn Black-Panamanian*

During 5 months of research, Gabriel’s fully engaged manner exposed the stereotyping around much of the current educational research on African-American underachievement in schools. Recently, Roland Fryer (2006) captured the attention of the educational research community by widely publishing his conception of why some African-Americans perform poorly in schools. Fryer argues that many African-American students are concerned about fully applying themselves in the classroom for fear of “acting white.” While this type of hyperbole draws attention, I found that nearly all of the student-researchers conducted themselves in ways contradictory to Fryer’s assertions. I strongly contest Fryer’s arguments as being inapplicable to the majority of students of the

African Diaspora at LSC. The students involved in this study so fully connected to their homeland's cultural identity that Fryer's global assessment seems inapplicable to learning science in our school and probably throughout New York City.

Gabriel clearly saw his learning identity through the lens of Panamanian culture. While there may be settings where Fryer's theory plays out clearly, Gabriel supports an assertion that arduously attempting to learn science was an important aspect of his identity. Gabriel's interest in learning science seemed to increase, as he grew more involved in this research. During an interview while we were watching a videotaped class, I asked Gabriel why he was exerting so much effort in the class. Gabriel paused and looked at the computer screen, seemingly gathering his thoughts.

If my father saw this video, he would think I wasn't trying enough. To him, I got to learn. That's the reason I am here in this country, to do good in school. To him, and I guess me to, if you learn, you rep [represent] the country right. To learn is Panamanian. To learn is black.

(Gabriel, interview, 6/1/2006)

Gabriel's comments encapsulated why he continually applied himself in the biology class. Rather than simply representing himself in the class, Gabriel was trying to embody the heritage of his ancestry. His success in school was the best way he had to make his family proud and to represent his native country. Gabriel also expressed facets of his hybridized identity by appropriating the distinctive characteristics of being a diligent learner because that too was an aspect of being Panamanian.

*What can be learned from Gabriel?*

Through Gabriel's example, this research was viewed through a sociocultural lens that illuminated differences and similarities that exist between students of the African Diaspora and African-Americans. Gabriel is only one example of the thousands of students who are learning in urban schools and experiencing the cultural hybridization process. Firmly rooted in his Panamanian and urban identities, Gabriel united his lifeworld experiences and biology learning and created science Creoles. Gabriel produced micro and meso demonstrations of biology learning that are rooted in his hybridized identities. As seen in the scenarios, Gabriel struggled to produce macro levels of science knowledge, yet his involvement in micro and meso enactments seemed to connect him more fully to the learning process. As he demonstrated in cogenerative dialogue, Gabriel fully involved himself in the conceptualization and planning of an improved learning environment.

Cogenerative dialogue may improve the quality of teaching and learning in a biology class with seriously at-risk students of the African Diaspora. This research examined whether cogenerative dialogue can catalyze successful learning of biology concepts, starting with micro and meso demonstrations and leading to full-fledged macro enactments. Gabriel took part in producing many favorable learning practices, which greatly helped to structure the classroom for successful outcomes. Despite his science struggles, cogenerative dialogue seemed to furnish Gabriel with a fertile environment to experience new participant roles. Gabriel's involvement with cogenerative dialogue also

seemed to expand his repertoire of practices to enact in the science classroom. In these expanded roles, Gabriel accessed classroom structures differently, affording him more agency and changing the entire class's learning environment. In a suspension center where many of the students struggle academically, have poor attendance and achievement records, and relate to adults in limited ways, cogenerative dialogue can connect students more fully to the curriculum. As Gabriel so vividly demonstrated, cogenerative dialogue can provide a rich field for the production of micro and meso level demonstrations of science knowledge.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Suspended youth are a growing population in New York City and across the nation. Kim Fries and Todd Demitchell (2007) explore the national “no tolerance policies” that have resulted in increased suspension and the criminalization of youth conduct. As a result, more students are being suspended in American than at any other time in the history of school; this increase is also evident in the New York City Department of Education, which suspended more students from 2000-2006 than at any other time in its history (Losen, 2006). In the opening chapter, I broached how recent educational research has shown a powerful correlation between suspensions and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school or being imprisoned.

The result of these policies has resulted in the suspensions of the student-researchers in this dissertation. Liberty High School Suspension Center (LSC) and its students are a reflection of enacted no tolerance policies. Suspensions, however, are not the last stop for these students who then have to continue to navigate their academic and personal worlds. Students struggle when they are removed from the structures that regular schooling provides, but many also possess resilience and agency. Many of LSC

students are bright and are very willing to work hard in order to academically succeed. This research was based on the exploration of these students while in the suspension center, and through the nature of being in alliance with these students in building a classroom community, many good relationships were developed between me and the students where I am now mentoring them as they continue their schooling.

This research also explored some of the unique teaching and learning concerns in a New York City suspension center. This work described how urban suspended students may struggle with classroom learning because there can be misalignments between the teacher's culture and the learning practices of these youth. A number of researchers have broached the topic of misalignment, and given the racial and ethnic make-up of New York, this topic will continue to be important for years to come for this geographic portion of the United States. This was one of the first dissertations studying a NYC suspension center, but I doubt it will be the last. Suspension centers are a growing form of alternative education. Although this study was based specifically on the experiences of NYC urban suspended youth, given the demographic shifts of many of the large US cities whose educational systems are experiencing the challenges of working with youth who have immigrated, the findings from this study may be of germane to many educators who work with this population.

This research endeavored to attend to the instructional misalignments with action research. Student-researchers and I created practices and structures so that required social studies and biology learning could more readily relate the world outside of the classroom.

In addition to addressing instructional misalignment, through the use of critical ethnography my study endeavored to explore the social forces that are associated with the social reproduction of academic underachievement. However, educational research does not need another dissertation chronicling the forces of social reproduction of poor academic outcomes, and which is too easily lumped together with terms like urban, people of color, and minorities. Academic underachievement occurs to real students and normally has detrimental long-term outcomes for them. If we, as a society, hope to develop and allow a fuller range of the populace to participate and succeed, then a wider conceptualization of *curriculum development* has to be considered in order to reach those students whom we currently have failed. I grew as a researcher during this experience because I came to accept the collective nature of teaching. Personally, this process involved an acknowledgment that it is not the students only who fail—when they fail, I fail too. In schools, when students fail teachers and researchers do not consider the extent to which the structures of schooling may have afforded the outcome. Often, in their failure, it is apparent we did not give students control over their own learning to the extent they are able to accept it. More should be done to create structures to expand the agency of youth and allow them to assume co-responsibility for enacting success-oriented curricula.

In my study, the student-researchers and I attempted to do something about poor grades and misaligned instruction. We worked with a common goal, and often co-created a number of exciting new practices, which collectively achieved significant results.

Though not all co-created practices were successful in terms of the curriculum, even those proved to be fruitful in that they were efforts co-created by students who were willing to invest in themselves and in their peers.

### *New Research for Emerging Needs*

In educational research, an approach called emergent design is used to establish research questions based on the participants and the research context. Few questions emerged from our research design but an important research objective surfaced. Through this study, it became clear that my research needed to adhere to the authenticity criteria outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1989). I became especially alert to whether this research benefited the participants as I grew to know my students and learned about their dreams and goals. Often, participants in academic research give something to the researcher, but normally do not gain anything tangible from their participation. I wished for a more mutual interaction from my data collecting endeavors, and so participant beneficence was a key theme in my work. I did this so that the student-participants would also benefit significantly.

This data for this ethnography were collected at LSC over two school years, but I have seen that the effects of the research are still emerging in the lifeworlds of the participants. My initial research question became less important and I became increasingly attentive to the concerns of the student-researchers. Our research created new culture and the students used their new practices and schema to transform their lives. I am not claiming that the research caused student changes; rather that the research and

transformation were symbiotic and emerged together. Adherence to The Belmont Report (1979) guided our research. The student researchers and I embraced its recommendations. We sought to minimize potential harms, maximize participant beneficence, and develop a sense of justice for all those involved. We held fast to Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria by paying attention to approaches that could advantage students. The end result was beneficence for all involved.

### *Revisiting the Work*

In this section, I briefly review the work that my student-researchers and I did together, and also provide an update of what these student-researchers are presently doing. Given that so much was learned about them, a follow up of them would undoubtedly be of interest.

In chapter one, I established how mutual respect and classroom miscommunication often influence the quality of education at LSC. I also delineated that instructional misalignment could possibly be addressed by using cogenerative dialogue.. Reflecting on my time in NYC, I learned what it means to be a member of a large urban community and this has equipped me to teach in urban schools. I also learned much from the students who shared their stories and this work with me. My perspective on teaching changed, as did my ontology.

*I Was Changed*

On reflection, I now realize that I am the study's first participant because this work changed me deeply. The weekly meeting with the student-researchers started a series of important individual changes that afforded changes in my teaching. For example, I became more aware of my impulse to attempt to manage the classroom and all of its interactions. If students were out of their chairs, or talking to one another, I felt an urge to "get the class under control." I reflected on cogenerative dialogues where Anthony shared how many teachers start-off the class by announcing that they are in-charge. Anthony stating that many teachers when attempting to take control of the class did more to disrupt the flow of learning than anything else. I realized that I needed to control my desire to give orders and started to implement an approach based on collaboration.

My attempts at collaboration did not always work and, at times, I still found myself wanting to control the class. Yet, my ontology has changed in ways that I was no longer disassociating my emotions from the enactment of teaching. To me, teaching was centered on organizing and taking control of a class in order to achieve a learning goal. In the process, I often found myself disconnected from my feelings in ways that did not serve my students or me. I remember one cogenerative dialogue where Ramel encouraged me to be more real when teaching class instead of "acting like a teacher all the time." This interaction encouraged me to be more authentic—that is, more like myself. In the process of being more genuine, I realize that relaxing allowed me to access

more of my cultural resources while teaching (e.g., emotions, concepts, schema, values, interests). As a result, I altered my teaching practices to create opportunities for students to learn from what I enacted in class.

*Chapter two: Cameron the College Man*

Chapter two discusses how the racial and social class divides between teachers and students can create profound cultural disconnects that manifest themselves in the misalignment of teachers' instructional methods and students' learning approaches. At times described as a problem of racial partition between white teachers and African American students, current educational research tends to simplify the matter of instructional misalignment by under-describing the racial and ethnic make-up of the participants. Set in a New York City Suspension Center, this work specifies the need to create unique interstitial culture as a way to create a classroom learning environment that serves all stakeholders. I focus on the experiences of Cameron and his close friend Ramel. In this chapter, I described how Cameron produced relevant culture to meet his learning needs and the educational needs of his peers.

In September of 2005, Cameron and Ramel returned to their sending high school. They both graduated from the same Brooklyn high school the following June. Cameron invited me to the graduation and the subsequent party at his grandmother's house in Flatbush, Brooklyn. At this party in June of 2006, Cameron, Ramel, and I reminisced on our research together and talk about their goals for the future. They are both still in close contact, attending the same two-year in college in New York City. Cameron reports that

he and Ramel are still together all the time and they are even enrolled in two classes together the spring of 2007. In a recent phone conversation, Cameron stated that he has good working relationships with his professors. He received a 2.9 GPA his first term and has taken 3 classes in history over two semesters. He said that his current career goals are to become a history teacher. Ramel still emails me from the account that we set-up as a way for student-researchers to be in touch with me back in 2005. He usually reports that “everything cool,” but doesn’t share too many details. Back in January, I was happy to receive an e-card announcing that he earned a 4.0 for the Fall 2006 semester.

*Chapter three: Class president and college applicant*

Chapter three shows how Christine and her teachers worked together create science learning opportunities. This chapter followed how Christine initiated her own practices to enact science learning and transported these practices from cogenerative dialogue to the classroom. She conceptualized science learning as relevant to her daily life.

Today, Christine is senior at a specialized high school in East New York, Brooklyn. In the fall of 2006, she served on a panel that presented to the Gates Foundation’s new school initiative. Also in the fall of 2006, she was elected class president. Christine continues to work hard at science although she admits she is not always successful in her new chemistry class. During the April 2007 vacation, Christine emailed me asking if I would write recommendation letters for her college applications.

Christine plans to attend school locally because she does not want to be separated from friends and family in Brooklyn.

*Chapter four: Out of Brooklyn but Up on Life*

Chapter four supports the idea that when students and teacher share control of the classroom, a spirit of collaboration emerges which assists in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Specifically, this chapter follows how Anthony, a student-researcher, developed a classroom management practice in cogenerative dialogue and transported and enacted this practice in the classroom. Anthony's notion of distributed classroom management is rooted in the idea of sharing classroom control and working from the spirit of collectivism. This ethnography follows Anthony's participation in cogenerative dialogue where he created this peer aligned classroom management.

Anthony successfully completed his suspension in December of 2005 and was ready to return to his sending school. But during the winter break, Anthony was nearly hit during a neighborhood shooting. His older brother, Darren, who was visiting from Maine was nearly shot too. Darren persuaded Anthony to leave Brooklyn and he reluctantly agreed. Since he moved to Maine in January 2006, I do not have much contact with him. Another teacher recently shared an email from Anthony where he said that he now has a girlfriend and works a construction job. The email also stated that he enjoys the type of life he has in Maine and likes his new surroundings. The email mentions he is considering attending college, but currently does not have specific plans regarding the furthering of his education.

*Chapter five: Gabriel and More Time Out of Mainstream Schooling*

Chapter five purports that some nuanced allowances need to be made for immigrant students to fully benefit from science instruction. We looked at Gabriel's initial resignation toward science learning, which had by design reduced his future career opportunities from jobs related to science. Gabriel examined his hybridized cultural identity and utilized it as a way to exhibit modest but concrete demonstrations of science learning. He used cogenerative dialogue as a way to create better alignment between learning and teaching practices. He also devised several classroom practices that encouraged others to learn.

To date, I have not only been in limited contact with Gabriel. He and I spent a good deal of time working together on this research. After he finished the school year at LSC, Gabriel was transitioned to another suspension site because of a fight and was suspended for another year. Now at age 18, he may not finish school with his peers and his new suspension center does not offer all the courses he needs for graduation. I feel badly that I have not remained in contact after he was removed from our site. I recently tried to call him, only to find that his phone had been disconnected.

*The Future Looks Cautiously Bright*

I find many reasons to be cautiously optimistic. I am in contact with many of our student-researchers who are experiencing success in academic and personal areas of their lives. Cameron, Christine, and Anthony are doing well and certainly faring much better than the research prognosis for suspended students would have projected for individuals with

their backgrounds. I am troubled when thinking about Gabriel, and the circumstances that persuaded Anthony to move so far away.

My summary of doctoral research has no clear-cut answers for the complex problems facing these students. This work has convinced me that too few suspended students are involved with the type of learning where they are participants in their own curriculum development. I learned through this research that student roles often expand as a result of engaging in this work. I finish this dissertation realizing that so much work is still undone. As I write, more urban students are being suspended from schools and they too will need to navigate the complexities of suspension centers. I am pleased that Cameron, Ramel, Anthony, and Christine all seem to be doing well and rejoice in their successes. They are all full-fledged adults now dealing with mature responsibilities so well. Simply looking at the lives of these four, I find it hard to believe that any of them was suspended at all. Beyond the small achievements of this work, I am also concerned about my research's inability to bring to an end to the social reproduction of more suspensions. I am worried that far too many urban suspended students could face futures like Gabriel's. Being suspended often leads to more suspensions and even worse—to incarceration.

As I mention earlier, this may be some of the first work researching social life in a suspension center, but it will not be the last. I plan to continue to research this context. My priorities for future research are to consider the key implications for practice, teaching, and learning in suspension centers. I also plan to share my results as a way to

expand teacher education approaches and broaden the methods used to prepare teachers for urban schools. Lastly, I will focus my work on ways to help create effective policy and administrative procedures for suspended youth.

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