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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Teresa L. McCarty 4/18/02

Dissertation Director
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ABSTRACT

This study is a form of professional explanation about language and the political dimensions of education reform, examined through sociocognitive orientations to individual and collective identity. Common signifiers among modes and content of literacy explanations were distilled from media and statistic texts, especially the Los Angeles Times' *Reading by 9* and *Reading* series, and 12 educator and six journalist semi-structured interviews. Classrooms and newsrooms were seen as political spaces in terms of identities and beliefs "underpin[ning] fundamental social institutions" through "cultural conceptions about language attitudes, standards, [and] hegemony."

Participant literacy explanations developed three linchpins, or "feature clusters," recursively signifying orientations to particular sets of social relations. All six journalists concurred with the Los Angeles Times' proposition that reading by age nine in English leads to "success." Seven educators expressed "counter hegemony" comprising the status possibilities arising from student access to critical (powerful) literacy.

Increasingly complex relationships among cognition and speech were entailed in the second and third linchpins. Six journalists and nine of twelve educators constructed a naturalized social/educational order where the privileged retain and pass on their status through "the freedom" to speak only English, the freedom to associate with those having similar test scores, and the freedom of the press to promote a semi-religious crusade. Language and culture minority participants' (three educators and one journalist) discourse implicated
subaltern language-sensitive social/educational identity constructions as the third linchpin.

From powerful cognitive mechanisms as feature clustering language itself was turned into a battlefield. Tolerance for a demonized Other was paradoxically advocated while advancing educational policies and processes that marginalized educator and parent attempts to question. Los Angeles Times' reading reform texts conflating social pathologies with literacy in crisis masked reproduction of stratified literacy in which only the "winners" in the economy have the right to critique.

To transform increasingly narrow constructions of educators' and others' intellectual and material freedom, recommendations focus on continuing and expanding a principled, critical approach for 1) disengaging literacy from stratified status and paternalistic nationhood 2) re-engaging literacy with autonomous personhood and agency.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Overview

This study is a form of professional explanation about language and the political dimensions of education reform. I set out to examine sociocognitive orientations to individual and collective identity, distilled from media and statist texts, and from 12 educator and six journalist semi-structured interviews. It is necessarily a partial view of materialist and ideological associations of literacy with language, class or sectional interests, race/ethnicity, the economy, and demographics (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Mehan, 1997; Philips, 1998; Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard, 1989, 1998). I demonstrate Silverstein’s (1981) point that “speech is effective social action” through triangulations of related scholarship to sociolinguistic analyses of literacy viewpoints, and historical precedent (Bars of the Mind, 1998, Nov. 8; California Initiative 187, 1994; California Initiative 227, 1998; Donald, 1991; Mehan, 1997; Public Education..., 1998; Sahagun, 1998; Silverstein, 1981).

If individuals co-construct their worlds in characteristic ways based on shared and/or negotiated meaning-making, then public discourses may be characteristically related and patterned.¹ I identified and examined the extent to

¹ To discourse is to express oneself; a discourse may be a conversation, or “extended expression of thought on a subject” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 1998). My use of the term sociocognitive in relation to discourse indexes an interest-laden, non-neutral connotation of discourse, as used throughout this dissertation.
which apparent patterns among individuals' speech and public texts discursively reproduce or contest asymmetrical power relationships around the subject of literacy, illustrating ideological "directive force" (Quinn & Holland, 1993, p. 13).

I chose the approach of asking educator and journalist participants to reflect on their "literacy histories" to penetrate conscious and unconscious literacy formulations. Participant reflections served as windows on self and collective identity, relating values and status to explanations of Others. I situate the various discursive representations of literacy in several ways, building upon reciprocal relationships of dominant discourse with dominant literacy. According to Gee's (1991) discussion and definitions, literacy in its most (though never entirely) neutral formulation is "control of secondary uses of language," or relative competence with habituated routines of language outside family or other intimate domains (p. 8). Among participants, and in public texts, literacy was not formulated as neutral. The sociocognitive possibilities of literacy were essentialized in terms of dominant literacy, or recursively as literacy that is a materially and symbolically effective social resource (Gee, 1991, pp. 5, 8). When dominant discourse, or discourse with a capital 'D', "leading to social goods in society," is acquired at home by some students and reinforced in the language routines of schooling, dominant literacy usually results (Gee, 1991, p. 5). If students are not exposed to dominant discourse in the home, dominant literacy is not acquired, but learned, if at all, with great difficulty, and with significant implications for education practice and for social opportunity. In recognition of the effects and processes of dominant discourses and dominant literacy proposed
by Gee (1991), and rendered in text formulations of literacy in crisis and language as a problem in the Los Angeles Times and other public arena, I asked how such formulations might be related to immigrant and non-standard language-speaking students' access to dominant, and especially to powerful literacies.²

Media and interview explanatory forms helped to explicate "naturalized" unequal literacy - that is, literacy organized to inherently correspond to inequalities in multiple social domains, so as "to go without saying" (Bourdieu, 1997). Cognitive/linguistic connections to individual and collective identit(ies), through language conventions, narrative explanations of personal and professional processes, or other rationales, authorized or legitimated the attempts to naturalize (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Gramsci, 1997; Irvine & Gal, 1996; Linde, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993; Philips, 1998; Woolard, 1998; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Naturalizing constructions were often observable in the extent to which explanatory discourse was explicitly or implicitly restrictive, screening for characteristics of class, race, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, or intelligence (e.g., a culture-based measure), and other attributes not related to general human potential. The Los Angeles Times' texts about the "literacy crisis" carried such screens, as did California statute propositions relating to immigration and language education, Republican platform language, and participants' literacy history narratives or reflections on the ostensible literacy crisis throughout the 1990s.

² A powerful literacy is one which requires a meta-level awareness of one's own and others' discourses, and which usually must be specifically taught. (Gee, 1991, pp. 5, 8.)
Politicized views of the significance of changing human populations, related to analyses of production and consumption of goods and services, demand that the data about such realities do double duty. It is not enough to explain that all previous immigrants to the U.S. emigrated to where there was work, or to where they believed their families would prosper. It is not enough to explain that equilibrium between immigrants and the social and economic life in the new environment is always obtained over time (Martin and Midgley, 1994). Human response to socio-ecological pressures (particularly Latino immigration to U.S.) was ascribed special significance in participant and public texts. Latino immigrants were cast as threats to the nation-state and to individual and collective identities — with literacy associations serving as iconic herald of hierarchical (that is, unequal) personhood, implicating the mythic proportions of social domination through education (Irvine & Gal, 1996; Williams, 1977, in Woolard, 1998; Woolard, 1989).

Communication is not unique to humans, but as far as we know, an individual's culture-based construction of meaning in words and sentences is unique. Explanation, as one multipurpose form of communication, or language convention, may be the lynchpin between cognition and the actions that produce culture and its various artifacts. Explanation is strategic, constructed in certain ways to accomplish certain goals. Kinds of explanations may be specific to culture, social group, and/or historical time; types of explanations are also subject to negotiation between and among individuals, social groups and cultures.
"Explaining" comes in many guises. Children and adults make excuses or rationalize their own and others' behaviors, or interpret motivation and determine courses of action. Authors plan and narrate plots, while you and I may narrate the day's events. Prosecutors indict, plaintiffs are defended, and judges and juries decide. In varied roles, police, parents, business people, legislators and scientists, among others, assess problems and solve them. Consciously or not, people make theories about what is effective speech and then act on those theories in order to answer, report, and teach, as either private individuals (in inner speech and in written and spoken dialogue) and as professionals. Each are ways that individuals and groups say why an event or events occurred, why I acted in a certain way, why you should do something and not something else, why the sky is blue and the grass is green. "Why" explanations are always composed of one or more of the components who, what, when, where and how, even if the components are not spoken aloud.

The meanings that educators and journalists made in speech and (particular to this study, among journalists) in writing were enactments of the kinds of literacy acquired and/or learned by each. Journalists at a print media giant such as the Los Angeles Times employed both dominant and "powerful literacy" (Gee, 1991). Implicit in these definitions is that social and cultural context(s), and relative opportunities for exposure to and familiarity with diverse discourse resources is an ideological matter – in several senses, addressed more fully in this and later chapters.

I propose that people who are explaining in personal experience narratives or in professional roles such as teaching or reporting, tap cultural
models to intentionally organize their own social histories, using shared image
and reasoning strategies as ways to make sense to real or imagined listeners. To
make sense, speakers assume some kinds of mutual experience, understanding
or interests (hence the possibility of a like-minded imagined listener),
assumptions that are seldom if ever neutral, either overtly or covertly under
negotiation depending upon the social and power roles of the speakers
(reporters, teachers, principles), listeners or readers.

Since this is an introduction to a study that employs textual analysis of
transcribed speech and of public writing about literacy, it is worth noting that
our understanding of the constituents of speech have followed the development
of writing rather than the reverse. The earliest writing systems were originally
created to communicate information, not to represent language (Olson, 1993). I
stress the pragmatic origins of writing because this has meaning for my
discussion of literacy in the modern world. It points up that all writing systems
were cultural creations for heuristic purposes; this supports the idea that the
learning and doing of reading and writing today, in the past and in the future,
and how we talk about it, are culturally embedded and circumscribed.

Four sections follow this overview. The next section introduces the
research assumptions and the interview questions I used among educators and
journalists, and my approach to media and political representations of literacy.
As well, there is a summary presentation of participant profiles and the research
timeline; profiles are addressed more fully in the data chapters, and the timeline
is addressed in more detail in chapter two. The third section of this chapter
discusses the historical, sociolinguistic and education contextual frames I applied
for understanding what the study participants are saying and why, and what the media and political texts are saying, and why. This section is in two parts. One part contains a brief summary of literacy as a concept in an historical context. The next part introduces my understanding of the relevance of cognitive and linguistic anthropology approaches to this study. My analytical methods related to these approaches are addressed in chapter two. Through examining discourse forms and elements, I review how participants formed the what of their narratives and explanations in an attempt to discern the connections of their speech to their perceptions of self. An examination of discourse forms and elements is also used to penetrate the discourses used in the media and political writing about literacy connected to one or more social contexts. The last section of the chapter provides chapter organization and summarizes the findings of the study.

Research Design Overview
Assumptions and Interview Questions

Student reading competence and education reform were recently the subjects of a highly visible debate in California political, educational, and media forums, entering my awareness about May of 1998 through the Los Angeles Times' reporting and editorial pages. The Times' special report "Public Education: California's Perilous Slide" (1998, May 17, 18, 19) advanced the ideas that reading and writing proficiencies among California school children were in crisis, and that language and culture, school "accountability," and reading instruction methods explained the crisis. The series Reading by 9 or "The ABC's of helping children achieve literacy, the first skill [by age 9]", was subsequently
initiated in Fall, 1998. The explanatory themes in the special report, "Public Education" were retained and elaborated in *Reading by 9* writing, detailed in chapters seven and eight (e.g. Bars of the Mind, 1998; Sahagun, 1998). The elements of language and culture, school accountability, and/or reading instruction methods were also used to explain implied or stipulated crisis in at least two California political initiatives, and in language used in statewide election campaigns in 1998.

Enacted in 1994, California Initiative Statute Proposition 187, the “Save Our State” (or SOS) initiative, attempted to eliminate services (including education) to “illegal” children in southern California – “No public elementary or secondary school shall admit or permit the attendance of ...” the children of undocumented immigrants – most of whom speak Spanish, are of Mexican descent, and are poor. In a kind of disease-epidemic metaphor, the language of Proposition 187 connected the idea of social crisis with the notion that certain people were carriers of economic hardship and threats to safety. “The people of California ... have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens” and “... have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens.” Most of the provisions of Proposition 187 were ultimately overturned as unconstitutional.

California Initiative Statute Proposition 227, which proposed the dismantling of bilingual education, was enacted in 1998. The language of Proposition 227 connected the ideas of morality, the constitution, and productive membership in society with speaking English. “Whereas, the government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty
to provide ... the skills necessary to become productive members of society [through] literacy in the English language." The language of Proposition 227 also advanced what critics have called an unproven connection between, and unproven accuracy of high dropout rates among Latino students, "low English literacy levels," and "experimental language programs" in public schools (Hakuta 1998a; Krashen 1999a). Bilingual education programs have since been virtually eliminated in California public schools.

Phonics is generally accepted as one of many reading instruction components in a well-constructed reading curriculum. Phonics, however, was proposed as a virtually single curricular solution to California students' purported reading problems in sources as diverse as the California Department of Education mandates to public schools, the Republican national committee (RNC) platform in 1996 and 2000, and in the California Republican platform in 2000 (California Reading Initiative, 1999; California Republican Platform, 2000; Krashen, 1996b; RNC, 1996, 2000).

The shared thematic content in the examples noted above seemed significant in at least two ways: in both images and causal propositions, the discourse was apocalyptic and absolutist. Second, contesting voices were virtually unrepresented in the media accounts of the literacy crisis (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; McQuillan, 1998). I determined to explore the proposition of crisis, and its solutions, through semi-structured interviews among educators and journalists. I was aware that my own perceptions about what I had read were conditioned by my experiences, my social position, and by my perceptions of what historical and other forces help constitute our realities (Mason, 1996;
Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). I therefore chose in the interviews to ask open-ended questions (see Figures 1.1, teacher interview; 1.2, principal interview; and 1.3, journalist interview formats) focusing on how an educator or a journalist used language to make sense of personal experiences, professional practices, literacy, and the purported literacy crisis. Not all follow-up questions suggested by an individual’s responses are contained in Figures 1.1 through 1.3.

My purpose has been to try to understand what cultural knowledge (from experience, observation, or expert explanations) about the relationship of literacy and social life was widely, or more narrowly shared among educators and journalists. How did participants conceive of the ways they learned to read and write? Did they perceive their social contexts and schooling processes to be related to subsequent school achievement, or to later life choices? Did having a primary language other than English, or was being exposed to a particular reading method meaningful to their later lives, as proposed in representations made in the public texts cited above? I was also interested in participants’ use of more or less shared knowledge. For example, did participants use the notion of parents as role models to extend prior experience in order to comprehend or to

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The original “literacy crisis” question (quoted here) was not asked of all participants because it appeared to cause confusion in the early interviews. If clarification or prompting was required for participants to reflect on what media characterized as a literacy crisis, I read: “There are many correlations advanced about literacy and illiteracy. Literacy is related to books in homes, early reading experiences, teacher training, types of reading programs or curricula, poverty of parents, poorly funded schools (w/lack of books, large class sizes, etc.), lack of teacher, principal, or school accountability, non-English speaking parents, dropping out, crime, welfare, etc. Literacy is also related to problems with getting a job, and/or the nation’s ability to be competitive in the world. It’s a little difficult to sort through which of these correlations are implicated as causes or effects, or perhaps neither. What do you think about this?”
master new information? What forms of explanation or language conventions helped them account for the significance of parents who do not read, or do not read to their children at home (Quinn and Holland, 1993)?

In the context of literacy as culturally and socially acquired or learned set(s) of cognitive, language and physical routines, I sought to ascertain how participants constructed themselves collectively, and as individuals – through the cultural content of their literacy histories, and through causal models and reasoning strategies. The penultimate object of the analysis method was to add to a greater common understanding of the ways language about education (and language generally) is goal-driven, used to illuminate and/or to distort. My ultimate objective was suggest strategies for how to exercise intellectual and social discretion regarding the influence of our own or others’ discourse(s), especially regarding education.

Profile and Timeline Summaries

Eighteen subjects participated in this study: six elementary grade teachers, six elementary school principals, and six education journalists. I sought varied personal backgrounds among participants, but some consistency in professional experiences. I looked for teachers who were experienced teaching in the primary grades, and principals presently working at elementary schools, with prior teaching experience in the primary grades preferred. Teachers and
Figure 1.1 - Teacher Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1</td>
<td>We will focus on your experiences from throughout your life; please try to tell me about events, people, places, times and your thoughts and feelings associated with whatever you think of as literacy, starting with your earliest memories. Try not to analyse too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later.(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>How is your own literacy background reflected in your work (refer to earlier comments about personal experiences, training, work, etc.)? (If not addressed, ask): Q.2a How did you get into teaching? and. How did you decide to teach primary rather than another grade level?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3</td>
<td>Tell me about teaching? (If not addressed, ask): Q.3a What's your experience and or training on how people/children learn? And/or, What role does a person's social experiences play in formal learning? Q.3b How do you get to know your students? What role does this knowledge play in teaching each one? Q.3c Why do you do this work? or, What have you learned? And/or, What is most rewarding about your work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.4</td>
<td>Is there a literacy crisis? (If participant asks for clarification, ask): Q.4b Are there major hurdles to helping your students? If so, what are they? Or, What does the &quot;literacy crisis&quot; have to do with the correlations among (state examples) cited in (state examples from Times' coverage)? What do you think about these public discussions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.5</td>
<td>Do you speak a language other than English? Are you literate in that language?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Questions used to advance 'literacy history narrative' if needed: what experiences have you had in school, at home, among friends, in the community, on the job, that may have something to do with being literate or having literacy, as you see it (for instance, reading, knowledge, speaking, writing, thinking, social functioning, values/beliefs, multiple languages, etc.)?
Figure 1.2 - Principal Interview Questions

(Begin taping.) Thank you for your time and help. Introduction/restatement of purpose, method and confidentiality. "Any questions before we start?"

Personal literacy history narrative:
Q.1 We will focus on your experiences from throughout your life; please try to tell me about events, people, places, times and your thoughts and feelings associated with whatever you think of as literacy, starting with your earliest memories. Try not to analyse too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later.

The questions I'm going to ask you now will give you an opportunity to reflect on what you have told me up to this point:

Q.2 (open-ended): How is your own literacy background reflected in your work (refer to earlier comments about personal experiences, training, work, etc.)?

(If not addressed, ask):
Q.2a How did you get into teaching/administration? and, How did you decide to teach/be an elementary school principal?

Q.3 Tell me about your work?

(If not addressed, ask):
Q.3a What's your experience and or training on how people/children learn? And/or, What role does a person's social experiences play in formal learning?

Q.3b How do you approach reading instruction (prompts if necessary: assessment, teacher preparedness, policies, curricula, state requirements, testing, etc.)?

Q.3c Why do you do this work? or, What have you learned? And/or, What is most rewarding about your work?

Q.4 Is there a literacy crisis?

(If participant asks for clarification, ask):
Q.4b Are there major hurdles to helping your students? If so, what are they?
OR What does the "literacy crisis" have to do with the correlations among (state examples) cited in (state examples from Times' coverage)? What do you think about these public discussions?

Q.5 Do you speak a language other than English? Are you literate in that language?
Figure 1.3 - Journalist Interview Questions

(Begin taping.) Thank for time and help. Introduction/restatement of purpose, method and confidentiality. "Any questions before we start?"

Personal literacy history narrative:
Q.1 We will focus on your experiences from throughout your life; please try to tell me about events, people, places, times and your thoughts and feelings associated with whatever you think of as literacy, starting with your earliest memories. Try not to analyse too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later.

The questions I'm going to ask you now will give you an opportunity to reflect on what you have told me up to this point:

Q.2 (open-ended): How is your own literacy background reflected in your work (refer to earlier comments about personal experiences, training, work, etc.)?

(If not addressed, ask):

Q.2a How did you come to be a journalist? And, How did you come to write about education? Or, Be an education writer?

Q.3 Tell me about your work?

(If not addressed, ask):

Q.3a Why do you do this work? or, What have you learned? And/or, What is most rewarding about your work?

Q.3b "What are the factors you consider as you frame a (story, article, editorial)? And, How do you explain your own framing process? Or, How did you decide to lead your story with [state example]? And/or, Do you conduct your own research or is there a department which provides information to you?

Q.4 Is there a literacy crisis?

(If participant asks for clarification, ask):

Q.4a What does the literacy crisis have to do with the correlations among (state examples cited in the Times' coverage)? And, How can literacy be in crisis? Or, What does your work have to do with what the Times' calls the literacy crisis?

Q.5 What do you think about the education reforms the Times writes about?

Q.6 Do you speak a language other than English? Are you literate in that language?
principals working in the Los Angeles Unified School District were targeted, but did not ultimately form the majority of educators interviewed. Journalists who wrote about or were somehow connected to education coverage at the Los Angeles Times newspaper were preferred due to the portion of this study which analyzes the Times' education coverage (from May 1998 to Spring 2000). The interview period was scheduled to be complete within about six months from the starting date in late July 1999, but given some turndowns or delays to my requests for interviews, the interview period lasted into early April 2000. Some details in participant profiles have been changed to protect their identities.

Teachers' experience levels ranged from three to 30 years, with four of the six having over five years experience (Table 1.1). Three teachers are women, and three are men. One female teacher is African-American, one male is Mexican-American, one female is of Persian descent (a self-identifying label she used consistently), and one male teacher is Filipino-American. The Mexican-American and Filipino-American teachers are fully bilingual, continuing to use their first languages (Spanish and Tagalog, respectively) among family, and in the case of the Mexican-American teacher, in his formal teaching role. The Persian-American teacher characterized her bilingualism in terms of "understanding what I hear" when "Persian" is spoken in her presence. Five of the six teachers have master's degrees and all are credentialed. All six teachers presently teach from first through fourth grades. One teacher works with physically and developmentally disabled students.

All six principals (Table 1.2) are experienced in elementary school administration, and previously as elementary grade teachers. Their current
elementary school administrative experience levels range from five to 10 or more years, with some having worked as assistant principals. All of the women have worked in elementary school teaching and administration for over 15 years; at least one person has more than 30 years experience. All six principals are women, of Euro-American background, with at least Master’s degrees. Two of the six are functionally bilingual in Spanish. Three of the six principals work at schools in the Los Angeles area. The remaining three principals work at schools in Orange County, California, a contiguous county to the south of Los Angeles County along the Pacific coast.

Journalists’ experiences writing about education-related topics ranged from about one year to about fifteen years, with most in the range of three to four years. Total years in journalism are shown in Table 1.3 below. One journalist, a female, is African American; five others are of Euro-American background. Two of the journalists are women; four are men. All six journalists have attended college; some have undergraduate degrees, primarily in the liberal arts. At least one journalist has a master’s degree. Four of the six journalists write specifically about some aspect of Los Angeles/southern California education. One journalist has experience as an editor for education-related coverage, and one is an editorial writer.
## Table 1.1

### Teacher Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Locations</th>
<th>School Demographics</th>
<th>Teacher Gender</th>
<th>Teacher Language &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>Teacher Experience/ Grade Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAUSD</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; some working-class African-American &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English/Ebonics; African-American</td>
<td>30 years; currently teaches third grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; English; Mexican-American</td>
<td>7 years; currently teaches third and fourth grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tagalog &amp; English; Filipino- American</td>
<td>7 years; currently teaches mixed grades / disabled students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>Five years; currently teaches third and fourth grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles</td>
<td>Middle-class; Euro-and Korean-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>10 years; has taught primarily first grade and K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westside</td>
<td>Middle and upper class Euro-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English and Persian; Middle-eastern-American</td>
<td>3 years; currently teaches third grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2
Principal Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Locations</th>
<th>School Demographics</th>
<th>Principals' Genders</th>
<th>Principals' Language &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>Principals' Experience/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAUSD</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; some working-class African-American &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English/; Euro-American</td>
<td>10+ years as principal, including; 4 years as assistant. Taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English &amp; Spanish; Euro-American</td>
<td>10+ years as principal; taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bay</td>
<td>Middle &amp; upper class Euro-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>7+ years as principal including several years as assistant. Taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County</td>
<td>Working- and middle-class Euro- and Latino-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English &amp; Spanish; Euro-American</td>
<td>5 to 7 years as principal; taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County</td>
<td>Working- and middle-class Euro- and Latino-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>10+ years as principal; taught for 20+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County</td>
<td>Working- and middle-class Euro- and Latino-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>10 years as principal; taught 20+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.3

Journalist Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Site</th>
<th>Professional Duties</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Journalist Language &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15-20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>7+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English, French; Euro-American</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Editorial Writer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; African-American</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five school districts and eight elementary schools are represented in this study. Four of the districts and five of the schools are in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and one district and three schools are in Orange County. The school districts will not be named in order to ensure confidentiality of sources, with the exception of the very large Los Angeles Unified. One principal and one teacher represent a school in south-central Los Angeles. One principal and four teachers represent a school district (two school sites) north of Los Angeles. One teacher represents a small, wealthy school district west of downtown Los Angeles. One principal represents a small, wealthy school district in the south-bay area of Los Angeles County. Three principals represent three schools in a
mixed socioeconomic level beach community in Orange County. Two of the eight schools have 50-75% of students receiving free or reduced cost lunches (a common indicator of parents' socioeconomic level); two schools have 40-50% of students receiving free or reduced cost lunches; the remainder have less than 30% of students receiving free or reduced cost lunches. Four of the eight schools have from 40% to nearly 100% of their populations composed of minority (primarily Latino, African-American, Filipino, Armenian, Korean, or Vietnamese) students.

I chose the Los Angeles Times education writing as a data source for this study because of the Times' self-declared commitment to the importance of "literacy" and education related to an ostensible literacy crisis. The Times has enacted their commitment in a community volunteer reading tutor project and in heavy emphasis on reporting, special series, and editorial writing about student reading competence and education reform.

Contextual Frames

I applied three contextual frames to this study – historical, sociolinguistic and educational – as foundations for creating the research purpose, design and analysis methods. Researchers find that interest and value-laden language are the consistent elements which permeate the history of education, and the education of history; the development of awareness and the sharing of beliefs; the structures of social life, and social interactions within family, religious, work and political structures. I have been drawn to the study of the ways in which
individuals use language to create meanings about education and social life from reflecting on my own background and experiences. My curiosity about human behavior variation, sense of history, and awareness of the significance of language to social symmetries and asymmetries derives from three sources. I was raised by (northern European) immigrant grandparents, and was exposed to several languages, cultures and “class” experiences in my childhood. I also observed the expression of opposing and critical values systems within my extended family. I have refined my thinking through reflecting on personal choices and in observations of the social scene, and more recently through guided reviews of anthropological, linguistic, and educational scholarship.

We use language in diverse ways to make sense of what goes on around us. What constitutes that diversity? Our perceptions of ourselves as individuals and of our various roles as members of groups are historically contingent, and influenced by our social and language experience, including our education experience. We shape and are shaped by what moral or political interests are expressed in the tensions produced through two kinds of language-dependent interactions. One consists of interactions within and between our awareness of self and others, and our self-talk and reading, writing, and speech with others. The second type of language-dependent interactions is within and between our self-awareness and self-talk, or awareness of others and reading, writing and speech with others.

Historical, sociolinguistic and educational scholarship drives my understanding of what the study participants say and why. This is especially important to the ways in which speakers and writers make connections from the
salience of reading and writing to the development of this nation-state, social (home, work, political) lives, and the evolution of educational theories and approaches.

**Literacy as an Historical Concept**

Among historical document analyses of diaries, newspaper writing, and political pamphlets from Spain, England and the U.S., are illustrations of social, political and economic characterizations of "uneducated classes" linked to calls for surveillance and control (Donald, 1991). Uneducated classes were sometimes defined as such even when they were literate (Illich, 1983). The "wrong kind" of reading (literacy as a problem) was considered to be a dangerous development in times of political or economic upheaval or power consolidation (Donald, 1991; Ruiz, 1984).

The notion of literacy as a problem was implicitly reversed in calls for common schooling in the U.S. beginning in the early 1800s. But the part of the notion that considered the wrong kind of reading and writing (e.g. in languages other than English) to be dangerous to the welfare of the nation was retained and emphasized (Heath and Mandabach, 1983). The ideas that there are kinds or levels of literacy (basic or developed), was sometimes explicitly, but often implicitly rationalized or exemplified by notions of civilization levels, race, national origin, economic or social status, or first languages other than English beginning with the earliest writings about education from the 13 colonies, and in education writing and practices subsequent to the revolution (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1978; Ronda, 1977; Szasz, 1988; Vaughan, 1965).
Whether illiteracy was the problem, or the wrong kind of literacy was made into a problem in colonial England and Spain or in our emerging nation-state, reading and writing was on its way to becoming a highly potent and complex symbol of individual and group identity. In the historical analyses of writings about literacy are also the origins of present-day constructions (or the symbolic content) of literacy suggested by the data from the present study. Literacy was characterized as a vehicle to "the good life," naturally acquired from parents or gained from their sacrifice, with the caveat that for some, such literacy was simply "not affordable." In this study, speakers' commentaries on appropriate, naturalized social, economic and political behaviors relationally ordered connections among parents' backgrounds, actions and kinds of reading and writing to a pre-ordained quality of life.

The potency of linked notions about literacy or illiteracy as problems, the right or wrong kinds of reading and writing, and modes of acquiring literacy or learning (inherited/privileged or expensive) have had profound influence on public education (Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983). Language and culture repression was and is significant philosophy and practice in the U.S. education system. With roots in notions about civilized versus savage, the innate superiority of English-speaking educated classes, and the manifest destiny of those classes, such repression has resulted in profoundly negative consequences for those on the wrong side of such dichotomies (DeJong, 1993; Fishman, 1991,1996; Szasz, 1977; Vaughan, 1965). Ideas about appropriate kinds of literacy were and are linked to testing and tracking. Quality of public school literacy remains tied to the income levels of taxpayers within school district boundaries,
affecting teacher pay, number and quality of teachers, quality of physical plant, quality and quantity of books and other teaching materials, and in-service training for teachers.

The Relevance of Cognitive and Linguistic Approaches to Literacy Representations

The study design and data analyses were defined through a scholarly approach which stipulates that human cognition is habituated by and habituates language, social experience, social structures and processes, as in relationships of awareness and understanding to action (Bourdieu, 1997; Philips, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Two forms of somewhat overlapping approaches, cognitive anthropology and linguistic anthropology, were used to inform the data gathering and assessment. Both specialize in the way talk is related to social life. Cognitive anthropologists propose that social life is generated through the ways that language both structures and mediates cognition (awareness and understanding) of cultural models, providing a window on how human agency is actuated yet also constrained. Cognitive anthropologists ask how meaning systems are organized, how individuals master and extend cultural knowledge in order to comprehend new experiences (Quinn and Holland, 1993, pp. 5-6).

The idea of cultural models is central to the linkages of cognition, language, and social life. Cultural models are generally shortcuts to (learned, shared, and applied) cultural knowledge (Quinn and Holland, 1993). Some models are formulaic (e.g. a proverb, "do unto others..." or an adage, "the rich get richer"), carrying cultural wisdom for today because they are stated in the
present tense and without caveats (White, 1993). Some models are only available in example(s), such as when a speaker or writer is trying to make a point and finds that the only satisfactory way to do so is to refer to an experience to flesh out the descriptive intent. Examples may be highly persuasive and even "directive," despite some cobbled together explanations being logically inadequate (e.g. competing cultural models are referenced but inconsistencies are not recognized or explained) (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Strauss, 1990). The persuasive or directive force of examples may arise from being invested with authority and expertise in the form of borrowed elements of expert systems, references to an expert system (e.g. "research says"), or cultural wisdom in the form of proverbs, sayings, etc. (D'Andrade, 1993). As is suggested by the phrase borrowed elements, cultural models may interpenetrate one another to create simplified worlds in the form of prototypical event sequences that seem to naturalize and make necessary (in proposition) the example offered.

Linguistic anthropologists also focus on the linkages of awareness, speech and social life, but express the relationships more in terms of collective identity formation than do cognitive anthropologists. Language ideologies are enacted through language conventions, to achieve social ends, to define and differentiate self and others, or attributes of groups, and appropriate social roles and relationships between individuals and groups. A language ideology is morally and politically loaded. For example, "Whereas, the government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide ... the skills necessary to become productive members of society [through] literacy in the English language" (California Proposition 227; Heath
and Mandabach, 1983). Individuals and groups express language ideologies through choices of language strategies (e.g., explanations), and in the cultural content, or cultural models of language. Language ideologies are historically contingent, and responsive to social structures and experiences of a particular social position. Researchers must therefore question how this is done, or how “communication works as a social process, and to what [specific] purpose” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55).

The overlap among the cognitive and linguistic theoretical approaches is in conceptions about meaning systems. Cognitive anthropology methods seek understanding of meaning systems in the way language is used by individuals to construct meaning, often in natural settings in dialogue with known people or in semi-structured dialogue with researchers. The focus is on human agency (making meaning) through language. Linguistic anthropologists’ conceptions about language ideology focus on the functions of language as it is used to structure power relations, in speech, in writing, and in the symbolism and concrete operations of a wide array of cultural artifacts, especially institutions. The focus is on how language is variously used to naturalize privilege yet constrain human agency. The two approaches as used here are complementary.

In this study, participants’ speech about literacy, related to schooling, work, and society was wholly or partially constructed of culturally-informed models about how the world is (supposed to be) structured and (should) work, even if their own experiences were inconsistent with the ideals (Linde, 1993; Strauss, 1990). Participants integrated their experience and understanding in language through metaphors, sayings, common-sense views of expert models,
precepts, and/or prototypical images, often illustrated with examples. They reasoned about, and/or legitimated their own and others' identit(ies) and group membership(s), and they rationalized their own and others' actions as related to particular social positions.

But cultural models are not only carried in precepts or prototypes. There are other significant and sometimes more subtle means for making meaning. One way is through the logic of grammars; one example of this is that, in the grammatical structure of English, what is said or written after derives from or is caused by what is said or written before, or post-hoc, ergo propter hoc (Linde, 1993). Another way meanings are made is through the social functions of speech, such as speech associated with traditional roles, institutional or other power relationships. And cultural models are sometimes expressions of (as schemas) perceptions about some parts of the physical world and experience, related to cultural systems, processes and institutions.

"Schemas are cultural models reconceptualized to achieve cognitive purposes" (Holland and Quinn, 1993). Two types are image schemas and proposition schemas (D'Andrade, 1993; Quinn and Holland 1993; White 1993). Proposition schemas are structures that state or assume relationships between linked concepts (D’Andrade, 1993; Linde, 1993; White, 1993). California Proposition 227 (1998) is one example of a proposition schema, also the foundation of a language ideology, that links morality, the constitution, and productive membership in society with literacy in English.

In contrast to proposition schemas, image schemas are "more like gestalts" than pictures, and may be kinesthetic in the form of the physics
underlying a familiar example presented in metaphor or other language
convention (Lakoff and Kovecses, 1993). Another way of conceptualizing image
schemas is in the form of "feature clusters," such that invocation of one feature
in the cluster denotes all others (Woolard, 1998). Image schemas are used to
persuade or otherwise communicate with purpose, but less in the form of cause
and effect than an image of "what goes with what" (Strauss, 1988 in Strauss,
1990, p. 314). An example from the literacy history portion of the data, offered
by several of the participants, was the idea that literacy "opens new worlds" or
"carries you down the road to success." We "reason with image schemas when
the logic is in spatial terms" (Quinn and Holland, 1993, p. 27).

Metaphors such as literacy is like a voyage of discovery, or like owning an
especially powerful vehicle, are "used to map proposition and image schemas in
given (source) domains onto corresponding structures in other (target)
domains" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 in Quinn and Holland, 1993, p. 28). The
cultural definition in physical space of the source domain is what is most
important. Image schemas and the metaphors often used to help illustrate them
are powerful because we can quickly perceive multiple levels of relationship. For
example, a ship or automobile (e.g. a physical source domain) makes possible the
contained, directed movement toward desired, if unknown, goals (e.g. target
domains such as discovering new worlds and achieving success).

Analogies also may be vigorous forms of familiar image schemas that
suggest or even predict how something unfamiliar works in the real world in
order to comprehend or explain it (Collins & Gentner, 1993, pp. 243, 248).
Speakers may represent parts of one analogous system as an image schema, link
that to image schemas based on parts of other analogous systems, in order to create a more complete explanation. This may result in an especially coherent and robust explanation, or a fragmented, less convincing explanation (Collins & Gentner, 1993, p. 248). In this study, one somewhat fragmented and less convincing series of images comprised one participant’s attempt to make analogous the situations of a movie mogul with a single mom and another person who worked two jobs to support his family. He explained the home situations of these three exemplars to be “the same” in relation to a child’s struggle to read.

“But if you don’t have parents at home that are there to really help you, then you will probably, often times, you will struggle. And that’s not whether you are poor or you are rich. And some of these kids come from very wealthy homes, and yet they struggle because, you know, Dad’s out because he’s the movie mogul, and he’s never around. So, little Joey flounders. He’s got no one at home to set boundaries and to help. That’s just the same thing as the guy who works two jobs and is never home because he is supporting his family. Or the single Mom.” (Italics added.)

The image of a child sitting home alone without parental attention or supervision is socially powerful. Such an image evokes three critical linkages, two stated and one unstated, directed to the ideal of a two-parent family with parents who can and do help their children with homework. The first linkage is between reading problems and lack of parental help, a single factor of relatively low correlation to reading problems compared to quality of teaching, or the number of students in the classroom, among other factors (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; McQuillan, 1998). The second linkage equates the choice of the wealthy man to be out in the evening as “just the same thing” as implied choices that resulted in the necessity of another man, or a single mom, having to work two
jobs to support their children. The unstated element has to do with the word “boundaries,” a metonymic pop-culture ideal which, in the present example is used as a metaphor for being socially uncontrolled, and which sub-references parents who cannot afford to be at home in the evening.\(^5\)

Metonymy is a similar concept to analogy, and important for understanding how cultural models in thought and language may be doctrinal,\(^6\) yet structured, or populated by quite diverse images. Metonymy “structures a domain in terms of one of its elements;” an element can be a typical example, social stereotype, salient example, or ideal (Lakoff, 1984 in Quinn and Holland, 1993, p. 30-31). Metonymy is used for an immediate communicative purpose because it is “easier to understand, process or recognize” (Quinn and Holland, 1993, p. 30). Different metonymic models “can stand in causal relations to each other, creating complex causal chain of event sequences which are characteristic of cultural models.”

We can understand the relevance of language to our awareness by recognizing how we use language conventions such as metaphor or metonymy to “envision and enact links to group and personal identity; to aesthetics, morality and epistemology” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56). This methodological approach also provides a way to view how our identities and

\(^5\) See also Quinn and Holland (1993, p. 30) regarding the entailed (two or more elements from the same schema) and constrained (related to an underlying cultural model which resonates with the speaker) use of schema elements.

\(^6\) The word doctrine is usually associated with a taught dogma or tenet. Consistent with Bourdieu's ideas about doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, I suggest that doctrines live in individual’s associations among experiences and beliefs (Bourdieu, 1997).
beliefs "underpin fundamental social institutions" through "cultural conceptions about language attitudes, standards, hegemony" (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Yet, as Silverstein (1981) suggests, our awareness of the social and physical world we inhabit is inherently limited. We may not realize we have made contradictory statements of conviction (e.g., "the rich get richer" and "what you believe you can achieve" from the same person) because we so often speak in the "voices" of others to make a point quickly and in a culturally familiar way (Strauss, 1990). Nevertheless, such limits on our awareness are the source of distortions reproduced in purposive, self-interested activities, which help to structure not only our personal relations, but also institutions, and which can result in policies that serve the interests of some while ignoring or peripheralizing the interests of others.

It is fair to ask how language ideologies can be conceived of as contributing to a social mystification and domination that reproduce inequities if we are all subject to limited awareness, and if the language ideolog(ies) which help to structure social life and institutions are "unconscious" or "pre-reflective" (Bourdieu, 1997; Heath & Mandabach, 1983 in Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994; Silverstein, 1981). The answer to this may seem obvious; limited awareness may result in ideational distortions (e.g. the ability to hold contradictory views), which influence the extent to which discourses may be open or closed to contestation, or more uniquely, to self-critique (Bourdieu, 1997; Silverstein, 1981; Strauss, 1990). But the propensity of those whose self-interests are not served by doing so, who nevertheless self-define by borrowing parts of privileged and/or
dominant discourse(s), is not entirely explained by ignorance or unwillingness to reconcile our own competing views.\(^7\)

Language is subject to historical and present day constituents. Although we may all be bound, to one extent or another, to simplify in order comprehend the complexities of our lives, and to maintain what conditions appear to be to our advantage, negotiating such conditions is always a matter of real or symbolic power. For the present study, one way I understood Gee's (1991) definition of literacy as control of the secondary uses of language was to identify in what ways complex personal interactions seemed to be shaped through dominant discourse(s), and/or to shape dominant or powerful literacies.\(^8\)

Whether in intimate relationships, or in the relationship between a teacher and a principal, a teacher and a student, a journalist and a reader, what may be unconscious is propelled into consciousness where choices are made about what to say, when, how, to whom, where, and to what purpose. Individuals often construct self- or collective interest(s) in the form of contrasts or dichotomies.

\(^7\) See Levinson, Foley & Holland (1996) for multiple examples of education-related effects of such ideational distortions on action.

\(^8\) Gee (1991) suggests that literacy is the "control of secondary uses of language", or relative competence with habituated routines of language outside family or other intimate domains. Literacy as control of the secondary uses of language helps to explicate the connection of "dominant discourses", or "discourses that lead to social goods in society" with "dominant literacy" or literacy that is a materially and symbolically effective social resource. When dominant discourse, or discourse with a capital 'D', is acquired at home by some students and reinforced in the language routines of schooling, dominant literacy usually results. If students are not exposed to dominant discourse in the home, dominant literacy is not acquired, but learned, if at all, with great difficulty. A powerful literacy is one which requires a meta-level awareness of one's own and others' discourses, and which usually must be specifically taught. (Gee, 1991, pp. 5, 8.)
The "facts" in a newspaper series may contrast a connection between English and reading achievement to a connection between lack of English and low reading achievement, despite little evidence to support such a dichotomy (Hakuta, 1998a, 1998b; Krashen, 1998a; Macedo, 2000). A teacher may choose to develop the individual talents of language minority children in a different way than those who speak her or his language (See an example from the data, chapter four). Or an English-speaking, non-Latino voter majority may decide to vote against primary language education for Latino students, despite a majority of Latino parents (63%) voting to retain primary language education (Mehan, 1997).

As noted earlier, in recognition of the effects and processes of dominant discourses and dominant literacy, this analysis seeks to understand the variations in and uses to which speakers put their ideas about literacy, (Bourdieu, 1997; Gee, 1991). It seems especially important to address how the idea of "literacy crisis" in public texts and in interview texts codes threats to English speakers and their way of life, and how such coding transforms into institutionalized limitations on non-mainstream students' access to dominant, and especially powerful literacies (Gee, 1991; Irvine and Gal, 1996; Public Education, 1998, May 17, 18, 19; Sahagun, 1998, November 1).

The next section briefly summarizes the findings from this study. Here, I speak to participants' use of language conventions, themes and forms, and the ways in which each speaker reasoned about literacy through language choices. I also considered the same components and processes in newspaper and other
public writing. Significant differences between individuals were apparent, but many commonalities emerged, suggesting the sharedness of cultural models and reasoning approaches which tended to habituate conformity, yet sometimes permitted or even facilitated openings to radical change.

Chapter Organization and Summaries

This chapter has presented an overview of my reasons for conducting this research, focusing on the public discourse(s) of crisis in the Los Angeles area in 1998 and 1999, in explanations relating crisis to language, culture and class. I presented the semi-structured research questions used among educators and journalists, and the historical, educational and sociolinguistic frames I applied to help me interpret participants' responses and the education-related writing. A brief summary of findings in the previous section provides an introduction to chapter content.

The next chapter presents in greater detail the goals and methods of this study, addressing research assumptions regarding the nature of the reality being investigated in terms of three principles (Mason, 1997). The first is that human beings co-construct the world through language and other actions; and the second is that textual evaluations of speech and writing provide a window on the rules and operations of that construction. The third principle is that careful design of the research is crucial to meaningful conclusions about the operations and consequences of "interest and value-laden" language. Design considerations addressed in chapter two include congruence of theory and method; obtaining approvals and support; maintaining consistency in method; ensuring informed
consent and confidentiality of sources; ensuring adequate scope and depth of data; and achieving the research objectives, including effectively communicating data analyses and conclusions. The ultimate significance of this study, to influence public discussions about social and educational policy and practice, is noted and developed further in Chapter Ten – conclusions, implications and recommendations.

**Literacy Histories**

Chapter three contains the analysis of 18 interviewees’ (six teachers, six principals, and six journalists) literacy history narratives, as well as the ways in which they related their literacy history experiences to choices of profession. Interviewees responded to the first three questions of the semi-structured interviews shown in Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 earlier in this chapter. Participants created particular forms of coherence in reflecting on their literacy histories, and in talking about later life choices. The ontological significance of family (inherent to particular family attributes) was related to diversely developed metaphors of literacy through the unique lenses of gender, class, generation, and/or language and culture experiences. Despite being presented with the same (first three) questions in the same order, there were important differences in their construction of identity. Some portrayed their own literacy as being virtually an inherited phenotypic attribute (Gee, 1991; Heath, 1982). Among others, literacy was something that was attained through sacrifice – one’s parents or one’s own – as a response to social conditions (Gee, 1991; Keesing, 1993). The divergence was most prominent in that language of instruction went unmentioned in the
constructions of a literate self among 13 participants, while language of instruction was central to constructions of self among the remaining five participants.

Teachers and Principals Talk About Being Educators

Chapter four inquired into educators' constructions of the significance of reading and writing to their professional lives. Chapter four contains educators' responses to questions about why they chose teaching and why elementary grade teaching, and reflections on and rationalizations about their teaching practices and the nature of learning in diverse ways. Educators extended the family-significant explanatory system, and/or one of the two forms of literacy metaphor (inherited versus attained through sacrifice) in responses to later interview questions. Several of the principals, who are also older females, reflected briefly on parents' or societal expectations that they would become educators, a reference to perceptions of women's social roles. Teaching was not the first choice of profession for two of the three men, both of whom have a primary language other than English. Each portrayed their decisions to become educators as a kind of Hobson's choice, related to social circumstances outside their control. Several women of Euro-American background described themselves as either a natural teacher, a born teacher, or ascribed their professional choice as "inherited" (a reference to educator-parents). Several women also pointed to the importance of educators being nurturers, but not necessarily the same ones who suggested their choice of teaching was natural or inherited. An African-American teacher described herself as being "called" to be
a teacher because of being treated differently in school due to her poverty and race.

Journalists Talk About Being Education Writers

In chapter five, journalists spoke to why or how they came to their profession, and addressed the contexts and decision processes related to their writing. They rationalized decision processes regarding the depth or complexity of education-related topics such as bilingual education, or standardized testing, in terms of writing “craft” or “formula.” Journalists responded to questions about researching and writing stories, having topics assigned or choosing to pursue “leads,” and about “framing,” by developing the theme that professional writing has an objective reality that depends more on “facts” than on their construction of facts, or on their impressions and assumptions. Each developed a kind of distance between themselves as individuals and their writing – words and phrases such as collaboration, formula, the facts, data, and so on were decontextualized and cast as verities without agents. All but one of the journalists suggested that their education writing was one stop among many in careers that were bound to take them elsewhere. Some nevertheless rationalized their own merit as education writers with references to family history, to raising children, and/or to the “importance” of education, as distinguished from it being a “hot” beat or a good career move.

One journalist offered the idea that journalism is similar to history, “at root a narrative art.” Other journalists proposed in effect that “we may get it wrong” but that was the nature of journalism; misunderstandings of reality would be corrected (in implicit relation to some absolute standard) in later
coverage. Direct references to competing notions of class, race, gender and language as signifiers of their own lives, and the lives of their presumptive audiences in contrast to the Other about whom they often wrote were nominal. On direct questioning, few were troubled about the prospect that their writing might influence policy despite being a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the complexity of the topics covered.

**Educators and Journalists Talk About the “Literacy Crisis”**

Chapter six contains analyses of educators’ discussions of the literacy crisis as it was defined in public discourses. No educator fully embraced the idea of a literacy crisis. There was – sometimes from the same person – both critique of discrete elements of the public discourses that advanced the notion of crisis, and reflection of experiences and opinions similar to salient examples from the literacy crisis model espoused in public discourse(s) such as the *Reading by 9* series. Alternative explanations for why there was or may not be a literacy crisis, were related to the earliest (literacy history) metaphors contrasting literacy as inherent in and inherited from middle class, English speaking parents versus literacy as hard-won through one’s own or one’s parents’ sacrifices. Most notably, one teacher developed a relatively well-integrated critique of education related responses to Latino immigrants.

Principals more often invoked expert (sociological) models, describing programs targeted to grouped family inadequacies (such as poverty or language differences). Teachers more frequently assumed the ontological significance of family, offering descriptions of individual student or family situations as
prototypical sources of learning problems or the general difficulty of teaching "in
today's world" which nevertheless indexed historically contingent perceptions of
people who are different.

No educator however directly critiqued the systemic inequities that result
in certain stark contrasts in school. Virtually unconfonted were contrasts such
as 3-400 student schools in wealthier areas versus 2500 student elementary
schools in poor areas, with 40 or more students in fourth and fifth grade
classrooms, and 24 or more students in Kindergarten through third grade
classrooms (mandated to have 20 or less). Language, culture and class became
markers of "reading readiness" in some explanations, expressed as problems to be overcome, or among some speakers, problems that could not be overcome (Ruiz, 1984). Educators concerned with child readiness took either a teacher-centered approach (i.e. diversit[ies] of language, culture or class treated as hurdles) or a student-centered approach (i.e. diversit[ies] of language, culture or class treated as resources). Among those who expressed concern about (not enough) time to teach all that was expected, the focus was upon the amount of content to be imparted and standards achieved with little mention of time for getting to know students' strengths and interests.

Chapter seven contains journalists' discussions of the literacy crisis. Most concurred with the premise of crisis, but represented the idea of crisis differently than educators. Although no journalist attempted to define literacy per se, their simplified visualizations of schooling discursively mapped their dominant, privileged conceptions onto education reform propositions. In propositional models or "feature clusters" elaborated with personal and professional
examples, statistics, and "expert" references were connections of the crisis to uneducated, poor, non-English speaking (illegal immigrant) parents, and/or to bilingual education or the "whole language" instructional methods, said to disproportionately disadvantaged learners who came from such backgrounds.

Language Politics and Inception of Reading by 9

Chapter eight addresses the inception of Los Angeles Times' series Reading by 9, framed historically and contextualized in relation to educational and political discourses in southern California in the 1990s. This discussion addressed the historical, social and educational frames spoken of earlier in this chapter to provide context for my analysis of the development of the Los Angeles Times' series Reading by 9. Historical precedent for ideological connections among literacy and power, literacy and the nation-state, literacy and social control, and literacy and mother-tongue were introduced and examined through examples of language from recent California state statutes, education policy, political platforms, and Los Angeles Times' education texts. In particular, language conventions and propositional themes used in the Times' writing to support their Reading by 9 initiative were consistent with historical "voices" demonizing the poor, and those who did not speak English, or the right kind of English. The Times' approaches to and uses of the convention of crisis reinforced language in certain California statutes, education policy and political platforms.
Chapter nine assesses the Reading by 9 series content from May 1998 to Spring 2000 according to the historical framing and public discourses discussed in the previous chapter, as well as in terms of the personal discourses of journalists and educators regarding the so-called literacy crisis. The trope of casting the Other as an enemy to universally accepted values and behaviors was thematically carried through much of the Reading by 9 texts implicitly and sometimes explicitly, expressed via devices of iconicity, recursiveness and erasure – with implications addressed in Chapter 10 (Irvine and Gal, 1996). The analysis of the series writing followed introductory articles and editorials, series’ format choices, feature content, use of ideologically comfortable “experts,” headlines, photo composition and other elements of Reading by 9 to illustrate ideology. The two Reading by 9 chapter analyses, taken together with participants’ literacy history narratives and responses to other questions, suggested shared images and notions of cause and effect between individual and public discourses.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Chapter ten contains my conclusions regarding the significance of various literacy explanation forms to identity, with implications for California’s pluralistic classrooms. I address the literacy discourses in this study as having self-referential components in which material and ideological production are one, construing a naturalized order in which the privileged retain and pass on status through “the freedom” to speak English only, the freedom to associate
with those having similar test scores, the freedom of the press to promote personal ideologies as religious crusades, and the freedom of the State to deny educators' professional autonomy (Philips, 1998). Iconic language and culture conformity form a foundation for discursive maintenance and reproduction of unequal relationships – through the belief that such relationships are natural, right, and unassailable (Bourdieu, 1997). Social conscience and democratic values schemas were disingenuously appropriated, belied by singular, rigid, and authoritarian approaches to school curricula and pedagogy (Donald, 1991).

I recommend continuing and expanding the critical project of disengaging literacy from status and nationhood through reengaging literacy with autonomous personhood, and disengaging literacy from control through reengagement with agency. Principled praxis is the exercise of intellectual and social discretion regarding the influences of one's own or others' discourse(s), i.e., patterns of thought, speech, social action and systemic structures and processes that tend to reproduce, in fact naturalize, inequality for the "less competent" (Woolard, 1989, p. 275).
CHAPTER TWO
DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS METHODS

Introduction

My methodological approach helped me discern how journalists and education professionals deployed language strategies to integrate cultural models and experiences in order to structure literacy ideologies (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). I asked journalists, principals and teachers about self-defined literacy experiences through questions about “earliest memories,” “how is your literacy background related to your work,” and “how did you come to be a teacher, education journalist, or principal” (Linde, 1993). These open-ended ‘reminiscence’ questions were followed by more direct questions about how each person did her/his job, and requests for participants to discuss what has been called a literacy crisis in schools. The texts of interview questions were presented in chapter one, and the responses are discussed in chapters three through seven (Keesing, 1993; Seidman, 1991, pp. 1-3, 10-13; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994.) Textual analyses of Los Angeles Times’ writing about literacy and education reform in California are presented in chapters eight and nine.

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9 I use the word ideology in this case to mean a body of ideas characteristic of an individual. This definition is similar to the notion of worldview because it is not necessarily a consciously held set of ideas (as in “I believe...”) but is accessible in dialogue from the verge of consciousness. At other sites in the data presentation and analysis, the word ideology may be used to mean a body of ideas characteristic of a group or culture.
My research goal was to assess how the educators and journalists made literacy conceptions meaningful. I asked how participants seemed to conceive of themselves as "shaping and shaped by" personal and professional reading and writing experiences, and habituated ways of talking and thinking (Keesing, 1993; Linde, 1993). One object of this form of analysis was to discover whether individuals' meaning systems were also present in the formation of media and statist public debates about education reform – as these seemed to relate to the reproduction of asymmetrical education (Collins and Gentner, 1993; Keesing 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993). To this end, it was important to me to understand the way speakers and writers perceived of and used literacy as a symbol of class and/or ethnicity, citizenship, character, or a naturalized social structure. I wanted to understand whether and how this symbolism penetrated education reform discourses (Mehan, 1997; Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard, 1989; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

I expected to conduct this research in two phases: a pilot project to interview one or two teachers, principals and journalists (a total of three to six individuals) in order to test my research assumptions and interview questions. Because of the approximately two month time period to receive research approval from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), my planned pilot project consisted of the first three people who agreed to be interviewed (two journalists and one principal from an alternate school district). The expanded project built upon lessons I learned from these initial interviews. The
specific research questions directed to print journalists (6), school principals (6),
and elementary school teachers (6) generated oral accounts of lived literacy
experiences which illustrated congruence or diversity in thematic and reasoning
content. A second level of this research analyzed the extent to which educators' and
journalists' discourses or discourse elements present in the oral narratives were used to rationalize professional practice(s). The original research plan was to use these analyses to inform the development of questions for a "reading" teacher focus group. Because of the difficulty in obtaining teachers' interest in being interviewed (my access to teachers was controlled by their principals), this was not feasible; I therefore used a similar interview process (individual semi-structured interviews) with teachers as with principals and journalists.

The significance of this research is its implication for public discussions about social and educational policy and practice. My aims were two-fold. One was to examine the ways in which language, in the private or public spheres, may be used to minimize, exaggerate, divert or distort perception about education reform. The second was to suggest means for journalists and education practitioners to recognize and avoid the tendencies of ideology in language to reproduce unequal education (Bennett, 1991; Cobarrubias, 1983; Gee, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983; Levinson and Holland, 1996; McCarty, 1993a & b; Moll and Dworin, 1997; Ruíz, 1984).
General Design Considerations

Important general considerations in this study included ensuring congruence of theory and method and receiving required approvals and support. Other general considerations included maintaining consistency in method; ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of sources; ensuring adequate scope and depth of data; and achieving the research objectives, including effectively communicating data analysis and conclusions (Mason, 1997; Seidman, 1991).

Congruence of Theory and Method

This is a qualitative sociolinguistic analysis of distributed and variable knowledge using semi-structured interviews (Keesing, 1993; Mason, 1997; Seidman, 1991). The data gathering was based on three principals. One was that human beings co-construct their cultural worlds via shared representations (models) of the whys and wherefores of action and experience (Keesing, 1993; Linde, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993). A second principal was that the structures of these models, how much they may be shared, and in what ways they may vary and why, are accessible to analysts in textual evaluations of speech and writing (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Strauss, 1990; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). The third principle was that the evaluations must be carefully constructed to minimize the researcher’s biases in order to produce reasonable conclusions about the intent and symbolism of others’ language. One key
element of the construction included the researcher’s reasoning regarding the nature of the research questions and analytical methods. Other key elements included the bases of the sampling, the research objectives, and the interactional and situational contexts between researcher and subjects, to ensure congruence of data gathering and analysis with prior, peer reviewed research (Mason, 1997).

Theoretical explanations of cultural models (also called cognitive models, with subcategories of folk models, commonsense models, scientific or expert models, among other labels) were introduced in chapter one and elaborated in the data analyses chapters. The second principle above, or the accessibility of the models through text analysis, was also introduced in chapter one, and is related to the care with which research must be constructed and evaluated (principle three), including the logic underlying the sampling approach. The remainder of this chapter addresses concerns inherent in these two principles and their applications.

**Required Approvals and Support**

Two levels of review were required prior to starting this research. University of Arizona, College of Education, Department of Language, Reading and Culture dissertation committee approval of the proposal for this research was obtained July, 1999 (Appendix A). Exemption from the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee was also received July, 1999 (Appendix B). One of the four school districts in which this research was conducted required an
internal committee approval, received September, 1999 (Appendix C).

Designated representatives from two of the remaining three districts reviewed and approved my dissertation proposal (Appendices D & E). The remaining school district left the decision to participate up to each school principal; and the Los Angeles Times also left the participation decision up to individual journalists.

Financial support was primarily from personal resources. One University of Arizona Graduate College Grant to compensate for actual research expenses (auto expenses; transcribing machine and audiotapes; etc.) in the amount of $1,342.00 was approved in October 1999 and received January, 2000.

Another source of support was obtained with the help of my committee members from certain reviewers with specialized knowledge. These included Kathryn Woolard and Hugh Mehan (University of California San Diego) for their expertise in the politics of representation in journalistic discourse analyses (Mehan, 1997; Woolard, 1989), and James Crawford, for his experience as a journalist and knowledge of the journalism about language education (Crawford, 1992). I also asked for comments from Stephen Krashen (University of Southern California) based upon his extensive research and writing about language education (Krashen, 1998a, 1998b). Krashen referred me to Jeffrey McQuillan's (Arizona State University) meta-analysis of educational research in California, some of which has been used to support the contention of a "literacy crisis" in
news reporting, and to the research and writings of Kenji Hakuta at Stanford University, accessed primarily on-line (McQuillan, 1998).

Three types of experiences prepared me for this project. Most recently, I conducted a substantial number of face-to-face interviews and several focus groups as part of the data gathering for my thesis in socio-cultural anthropology (Cain, 1997). In 1993 I conducted in-depth (two to four hours each) interviews with 10 school principals regarding their personal and professional "diversity experience histories," and presented the analysis at the 1994 Society for Applied Anthropology Conference (Cain, 1994). Another form of experience derives from my roles as manager and executive for Citicorp, which, over 17 years of diverse project management, included innumerable one-on-one and focus group interviews to define and resolve problems through policy, process and training improvements.

Preliminary Research – Lessons Learned

A two-part research design was used to help ensure consistency in the interview structure and for the subsequent analysis (see Maintaining Consistency of Interview Methods – Data analysis, below). The main point of the pilot study (interviews with two journalists and one principal in August and September 1999) was to test my interview questions for clarity, and the willingness of interviewees to talk at some length. I was also interested in whether the time frame I had allotted (one and one-half to two hours per person) was adequate to
cover all questions, and that my explanations of purpose and other rapport-
building generated open and detailed responses and minimized guardedness.
Given delays in access to LAUSD educators, I chose to abbreviate the pilot
process. Instead of conducting full interviews, I discussed my goals and
objectives, the contact letter and interview format with two journalists referred to
me by dissertation committee members\(^\text{10}\), and conducted one full interview with
a principal at another Los Angeles area school district.

There were several lessons learned from the pilot research. The first and
biggest hurdle (on top of delays in LAUSD approval) was participants, especially
educators, willingness to participate. I attempted to contact several elementary
school principals in school districts other than the LAUSD without success. The
two journalists referred by committee members were instrumental in helping me
change the tone of my contact letter (more conversational and with less jargon)
and suggested a simplified approach to my question(s) about literacy (see
chapter one). While I contacted other journalists at least twice by mail, I gained
access only after I changed my letter based on suggestions for improvement
(Appendix F, with appropriate changes, was used with journalists, principals
and teachers).

\(^{10}\) One of the journalists was Jim Crawford, mentioned earlier as an expert
on the relationship of language and education. I promised source-confidentiality
to the other journalist, a long-time resident and published observer of inter-
cultural relations in southern California.
The pilot study interview with a school principal also resulted from a dissertation committee member recommendation to a school district administrative colleague in the Los Angeles area (not the LAUSD). My proposal was approved, and I was provided with the names of elementary school principals, one of whom agreed to be interviewed. I used my original interview format (without the suggested changes) for the interviews, conducted as a two-part interview over a two-week period, finding that the literacy crisis question(s) did require a substantial amount of clarification. This reinforced the two journalists' ideas for change. My experiences with these two individuals satisfied my need to test my questions and approach with journalists, and the principal's interview provided important insights about the process, and about the education context in southern California. But gaining access to educators remained problematic.

I found that the amount of time allotted for interview(s) with each subject (one and a half to two hours total) in the pilot study was generally adequate for my purposes over the course of the full study (Figure 2.1 below). Responses were generally thoughtful and detailed, or my prepared follow-up prompts, often used in conjunction with the participant's own comments, induced further reflection. Asking people to choose the sites and times for the interviews helped me to gain the commitment of interviewees in the pilot and during the full study. The familiarity of their surroundings seemed to add to their comfort and willingness to be open about personal experiences and private thoughts.
I responded to these experiences in three ways. One way was to temper my persistence with flexibility. Three of the six planned principal interviews were ultimately conducted in Orange County instead of Los Angeles County, in a community with demographics consistent with parts of Los Angeles. I met with some principals two to three times in order to complete the interview questions, and with some teachers two to four times. With one exception, the journalists’ interviews were completed face to face in one sitting. Another of my responses was to remain open to whatever opportunities were presented for obtaining teacher interviews. Only two of the six teacher interviews resulted from introductions by their principals. I asked two teachers with whom I had worked in an internship project to recommend me to other teachers; this resulted in the remaining four teacher interviews. Nevertheless, the delays in meeting with principals and teachers wreaked havoc with my research schedule, prolonging the completion of interviews by three months. My third response was to forgive myself for not completing my research on schedule in order to focus constructively on the process instead of on what was not working.

I continued to look for problems with interview questions after the suggestions to change the format of the questions in the last part of the interview. I found that asking questions worded too generally, or worded in academic code (e.g. using phrases like “the social context of literacy,” or “the social causes of” versus “the correlations with illiteracy” in news writing) were confusing. Follow-up questions included open-ended “tell me more” or “what do you mean
by that, etc., as well as references to specific articles written by the journalist, or comments made previously by journalists and educators in the course of talking about their work.

I originally wanted to test my assumptions about transcription time and data analysis methods (discussed under general research below). I chose to defer evaluation of these matters until later, for two reasons. Due to the timing of the grant I received, I did not buy a transcribing machine until mid-Fall, 1999. Therefore, transcribing time prior to purchasing the machine was six to eight hours per interview compared to three to four hours after purchasing the machine. As well, I began an internship in August 1999 that demanded substantial time. These events contributed to the difficulty of completing the transcriptions in sufficient time to conduct the analyses prior to starting the general research.

Another goal of the pilot research was to review and analyze the language used in California Initiative Statute texts such as Propositions 187 and 227. This was also deferred because of inadequate access to the internet from my home, and heavy fall 1999 schedule – composed of interviewing for the dissertation, transcribing, and participating in an internship project. Subsequent improvement of my home internet access in early 2000 solved this problem.

Given these constraints, the general research process scheduled to begin July 1999 and end by January 2000 was started in earnest in September, 1999 and ended in early April, 2000 (Figure 2.1 Research Timeline).
In the interest of space and readability, follow-up tasks, on-going interview transcriptions, days and hours spent evaluating transcripts and other texts, and time spent on internship and teaching are not detailed here.
## Figure 2.1 Research Timeline, continued

General study, continued

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<tr>
<th>Oct. 26; 27; 31</th>
<th>Nov. 2</th>
<th>Nov. 17</th>
<th>Nov. 18; 19; 20</th>
<th>Dec. 3</th>
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<td>• 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; principal intv. - 1.75 hrs.</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 'Times' journalist - 1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Begin weekly reading tutor's /1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; graders</td>
<td>AAA Confrnc. present (Re-) Writing Ineq. paper</td>
<td>• 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; 'Times' journ./3 of 3</td>
<td>• Submit report</td>
<td>• 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; principal @1.MU - 1 hour</td>
<td>• 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; principal intv. - 1.5 hrs.</td>
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<td>• 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; principal intv. (LAUSD) - 2 hrs.</td>
<td>• Letters to two new 'Times' journalists</td>
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<td>• 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; principal intv. - 1.25 hrs.</td>
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<td>• 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; journalist intv. (2 of 3 - 1.5 hrs.)</td>
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<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview - 1.5 hrs.</td>
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<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview 2/3-30 min.</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview 3/3-30 min.</td>
<td>• 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview 1/2 - 40 min.</td>
<td>• 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview 2/2 -45 min.</td>
<td>• 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; teacher interview 1/2-45 min.</td>
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1 Third district: district superintendent's office delegated interview approval to educators' discretion.

2 Fourth district: sent proposal to district superintendent's office early Jan., 2000. Written approval received immediately.
Maintaining Consistency of Interview Methods

Sites and sources-interviews.
Elementary schools and print media are the two categories of interview sites and sources for this research. The general reasons for this were addressed in Chapter One. Without knowing who might be willing to talk to me, I nevertheless attempted to focus on the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and The Los Angeles Times newspaper (Times or LAT). The goal was to interview principals and teachers who work in elementary schools with varied socioeconomic levels, ethnicities, languages, national origins, and so on, either within or between schools. This is important because these variations are experientially real to individuals and in the social makeup of the southern California population. These variations are historically and symbolically important in the ways people reason about and represent social life, and are frequently invoked in both scholarly research and in news writing regarding schooling and academic performance. One design assumption was that educators' talking and reasoning about their teaching and administrative experiences among students of diverse backgrounds would reference that diversity in complex ways, helping to test my idea that asymmetrical education is (re)produced through language as a medium for creating and sustaining identities.

The Los Angeles Times was chosen because of its frequent front page (page A-1), front page section (section A), editorial, and special series coverage of
education in the Los Angeles area and California. The nature of this coverage, which frequently characterizes demographic changes and student diversity as a problem-to-be-solved was also a factor. A phone call to the Times' Public Affairs Office confirmed that the paper has many journalists defined as education reporters, with several staff writers having special "beats" with bylines. Often two or more reporters will share assignments on topics regarding Los Angeles schools, K-12 schools, reading, state-level education matters, and higher education, among others. Editorial staff members also frequently specialize in certain topics, with only one or two usually writing about education. I tried to contact by letter and telephone a total of twelve Times' employees, including journalists, editors, editorial writers, and management staff. Six staff members who at the time specialized in education ultimately agreed to talk to me. Two reporters, an editorial writer, two managing editors, and Mark Willes (Chairman, President and CEO) refused to be interviewed for this research.¹¹

The access problems noted in the pilot research section above influenced my original intention to interview only in the LAUSD. I received help instead from several alternate contacts. One person was a project approval coordinator who approved me for an unpaid internship at a school district in one of the Los

¹¹ Willes was cited by several journalist-interviewees as the person responsible for initiating the series Reading by 9. Willes' former experience was as a top executive in several businesses other than newspaper publishing or the media. The series "Public Education: California's Perilous Slide" (1998) was also published while he was Times' publisher/CEO. He left the newspaper in late 1999 or early 2000.
Angeles suburbs. This work led to interviews with one principal and five teachers (three teachers at one school, and one teacher who moved to a different school district during the process). In these cases, demographic diversity within and between the schools was substantially similar to the LAUSD, with wide disparities in socioeconomic levels, ethnicity, national origin and fluency in English. I obtained interviews with a principal and teacher at only one LAUSD school in south-central Los Angeles. Another principal in a district located in small, wealthy suburb on the west side of Los Angeles County also agreed to be interviewed. This principal had many years of experience in rural California schools. As the result of a personal introduction, I conducted the remaining three principal interviews in one working class to middle-class school district in western Orange County (the next county south of Los Angeles County). Two of the three Orange County schools had substantial numbers of students eligible for free or reduced lunches, and students had quite varied ethnic and language backgrounds.

Sites and sources—written texts.

The second primary category of data are texts of articles, editorials and series writing about education in the Los Angeles Times, and texts of California legislative initiatives affecting education. Two such initiatives were California Proposition 187, the “Save Our State” initiative calling for identification and deportation of “illegal” immigrants, including school children (approved in
1994), and Proposition 227 calling for an end to bilingual education (approved in November 1998). Other sources used for this analysis included demographic and educational data for the Los Angeles area, and scholarly responses to education news retrieved from special topic internet listserves.

**Informed consent and confidentiality of sources.**

Informed consent and maintaining confidentiality of sources' identities was required for this research. This was assured in several ways. Institutions (school districts; media corporations) often have protocols which must be followed before research may be undertaken among their employees. As noted earlier in this chapter, these requirements were followed in each case. Any official approvals were referenced in my contacts with each potential interviewee (in the initial contact letter, then in the follow-up phone call). When the decision to allow interviewing was left up to the individual, this was also noted along with the person or department where this information was obtained. If another interviewee referred a potential participant, that person was only mentioned by name if s/he had authorized me to do so. My intention to keep all source identities confidential was stressed in contact letters, in phone conversations, and in initial meetings.

Informed consent was further assured by a brief description of my research goals and methods in the initial contact letter, along with provision of the telephone number of University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee.
Participants were subsequently asked if they had any questions before the interviews began; as adults, their oral consent to be interviewed and their participation in the interview process was taken, as approved by the Human Subjects Committee, to be de facto acknowledgement of having made an informed decision.

Finally, as a courtesy and as a token of thanks, I asked teachers if they would like to be compensated for their time, and I asked teachers, principals and journalists if they would like to see “the finished product.” No teachers accepted my offer of monetary compensation; many expressed interest in reading the dissertation. I expect this to be one way to satisfy my intention to effectively communicate the results of this study and the analysis.

Data Gathering

The data gathering process consisted of preparing the interview questions and sequence, conducting interviews, and transcribing the interviews from audiotapes and notes taken during the interview. Three matters were crucial in addition to the interviewing concerns raised during the pilot process and in lessons learned from the pilot process. One was to ensure consistency of the pivotal interview questions and the sequence of questions in each encounter, and the second was to minimize my presence (e.g. not asking leading questions, interposing my opinion, or directly revealing my own biases) during each encounter. To ensure consistency of pivotal questions, I told subjects that I
would read the questions, which I did. To ensure the sameness of sequence, I printed the set of questions and took them to each interview. In two cases where my printer was not working, I took an interview form from a previous interview and read the questions from that.

Minimizing my presence was more difficult. At the outset of each interview, my reading the first question and then staying quiet (except with comments like “uh huh”, “tell me more”, etc., or body language such as nodding) seemed to encourage participants to respond freely.

Q.1 We will focus on your experiences from throughout your life; please try to tell me about events, people, places, times and your thoughts and feelings associated with whatever you think of as literacy, starting with your earliest memories. Try not to analyze too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later

Some participants however, required more encouragement. In one of these early cases, I said “You could talk about the influence of a teacher …” but realized after transcribing this that I was leading the speaker. In later cases I changed the encouragement to “what about school experiences?” or “some other people have talked about their school experiences.” In these cases, I used the prompt(s), excerpted below from the interview form, as needed to encourage each participant’s reflection.

Questions to advance ‘literacy history narrative’ if needed: what experiences have you had, with whom, in school, at home, among friends, in the community, on the job that may have something to do with being literate or having literacy, as you see it (e.g. reading, knowledge, speaking, writing, thinking, social functioning, values/beliefs, multiple languages, etc.)?
In some cases, an educator or journalist would pause after only a few sentences, and I perceived that a more specific encouragement was needed. One person paused completely after stating “It’s just that my main hobby outside of school was reading. And then, you know, I became a writer.” In order to encourage more detail about the possible reasoning behind the juxtaposition of the two sentences, I asked “And when did that start?” This question did result in more information regarding the speaker’s writing experiences, and confirmed the speaker’s semantic linkage of childhood reading habits to a facility with writing as a hobby and as a profession. This example illustrates one way in which I addressed depth, the third crucial factor in the interviewing process.

I defined the depth of the responses to be measured by the details of experience which may suggest how speakers structure cause and effect in their assumptions about the role(s) of literacy in social life. I sought these details, as in the example above, or by asking “Tell me what you mean by that?” or “Can you say how that relates to what you said [cite example] earlier?” I asked journalists to state how specific examples from their writing (examples they could choose, or examples I cited) related to their explanations for how they performed their jobs, or framed an article, or chose whom to interview as an expert, etc. I asked teachers and principals to state how specific examples from their experience related to their explanations for how they performed their jobs, made choices, set up lessons, developed programs, etc. The wide variety of interviewees’ experiences generated the details and complexity necessary to authentically
represent each speaker as unique, and also generated certain consistent patterns of language and thought. Discussion of the data analysis below further illustrates this.

Analytical Considerations

Maintaining Consistency of Data Analysis Methods

Theoretical considerations.

The theories underlying the data analyses are of two types. One is cognitive anthropology-based, from which notions have been developed and tested about how cultural knowledge is organized, shared, and learned (Quinn and Holland, 1993). From small groups of subjects in a variety of life situations, researchers have discerned conventional ways of speaking from observations of natural language interactions, and from narrative responses to queries that are amenable to analysis (Linde, 1993).

This research is a study of narrative responses to queries. The possible analytical units are many, but as defined in chapter one, the first focus was on the presence of, and underlying reasoning in and between cultural models, image and propositional schemas, and themes expressed in the spoken and written data sources. This sort of analysis may either be descriptive, or as chosen by this researcher, consequential, in which case the analytical units are first identified and then critically contextualized to the larger social scene in which they take place.
My critical analytical stance draws on linguistic anthropology, as the second theoretical type, and asks "how communication works as a social process, and to what purpose" (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55). This approach posits that language forms, whether conscious or unconscious, are purposive and have "directive force" to reproduce themselves through certain models well integrated with social structures. The language forms occur in speech and writing, linking actions with social structures (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Silverstein, 1975 in Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

Steps in data analysis.

The first steps in the data analysis were to transcribe and review each interview set. First impressions, as in data Sample 1 below (a partial response to the initial literacy history question by a male teacher), were recorded in the margins from colored highlighting of data segments. The highlighting is shown here as shading of isolated words and phrases that are referred to in my comment notes, shown in italics in the margins.

Sample 1

"Um, a couple of teachers. Mrs. F., my third grade teacher, uh she was a wonderful woman. It was just after I moved back from overseas, where my Dad was stationed. We moved to southern California, and my third grade teacher was just a wonderful woman who had a lot of great ideas. She challenged us. Uh, was very nurturing, very caring about us. So when we were making mistakes, uh, I remember always feeling like it was okay. And uh even now when we are reading here in my class, there's times when I can see a boy or girl
that's really struggling with their work and I try to remember back to how I was feeling when I was in that situation where I was having to struggle along reading that book, and knowing that my teacher was going to be okay with the fact that I made a mistake. So I try to keep that in mind now.

Um, once I got into junior high and high school, at that point I was really into my written expression. I was in the AP classes, well, I was in gifted coming through elementary school and then into junior high, uh, but then once I got into high school, I was in the AP classes, so we were doing a lot of analysis of Shakespeare and things like that. Uh, the classical, the more classic, you know, the classics, were very attractive to me because these were things that had been around for so long and appreciated by so many different people, and it still had a meaning now, you know, even at the present time. So that was a big interest, and it still is.”

Sometimes the “first impressions” review of the data revealed a missed follow-up opportunity that might provide details important to support an inference or interpretation. When this occurred, I asked for clarification either in the next interview, or I made a follow-up call to the participant and (with permission) audio-recorded her/his responses.

The next level of data analysis identified models and schemas. Sample I above yielded several. Marked with shading, the elements of a cultural model of the learning process are articulated in such examples as: actions (the teacher's) are louder than words; mistakes are part of learning, or, try, try again; and the teacher's attributes (great ideas, nurturing, challenging) encouraged the

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12 The initials AP are commonly used to refer to special Academic Preparation classes available at some public high schools for students identified as college-bound.
speaker's giftedness and informs actions years later. A proposition schema (proposed cause and effect) in which the speaker characterizes and identifies with a particular group is illustrated with: being gifted, enrolled in AP classes and studying Shakespeare linked to "so many different people" who have "appreciated" something (the Classics) that have stood the test of time.

It became necessary to use more specific and structured data coding as more models, schemas, and other linguistic conventions were identified through the second level of analysis. Cultural models perform multiple and complex tasks and are composed of sometimes direct (referential) and sometimes less direct (e.g. in metaphor, metonym, etc.) modes of representing persons, places or events (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). An example of a more direct reference is the cultural model of the learning process in Sample 1 above (i.e. students can learn to challenge and encourage themselves from teachers who act to challenge and encourage students in creative ways). In Samples 2 and 3, the words in the margins label the language convention(s) used by the speakers. I use codes at the end of each paragraph to label my inference or interpretation of the language convention. Sample 2 is from a female journalist, in response to the literacy history question (Question 1). In the first paragraph of Sample 2 below, the code M1 for metaphor indicates the way in which structures from one domain (in the form of an image schema) are mapped
to another, that is, she relates a childhood family experience to the impression that books are voices. They "say" something about their owners/readers. In the second paragraph of Sample 2, the female journalist uses the metaphor (M1) reading is (the same as) love, and the metonym (M2) reading represents learning, and writing represents sacred, even exalted practice.

Sample 2

"One of the first things I remember from my childhood is going to visit a cabin that was owned by my great uncle, and it was a very old cabin that smelled like an old cabin, with dust, and detritus piled everywhere. Next to the bed where I was going to sleep was a little table with books piled on it. And all my life I've loved going into anyone's house and seeing what's next to their bed ... And, uh, I love seeing what people read and finding out what it might say about them."  

\[ I - \text{travel, family, sights, smells, feelings} = \text{associations with books.} \]  

\[ M1 - \text{books in home are like voices.} \]

"But I so love reading that I feel transported by it. Um, some of my most moving reading experiences involved books by Edith Warton. Her character ... was someone I identified with so incredibly, I've read the book twice. It's a grueling book. I don't know if you're familiar? It's quite grueling, and it's just my favorite book on earth. I've felt that way also about the book Angle of Repose, by Wallace Stegner. It was just one of those things that moved me, just moved me. The writing was so beautiful and the story was so wrenching. Other favorites are by E.M. Forster; I can pick it up and open it anywhere and (just be moved to tears, literally. Um, what's the one, it's turned into a movie...? My God! Loved that book. And Howard's End, where the woman ...is always saying 'always connect', and that's how I feel about life. I always want connections with people, with what I'm doing. So I learn a little bit about myself, I'm reinforced in some of my thinking, by reading. And, most recently, I mean, surely for fun ... uh, my gosh, I was just in
heaven, reading this book. And it just made me realize I really want to write a book at some point.”

*M1* - reading is like falling in love over and over again – transported, moved, sometimes difficult, wrenched, love)

*M2, P* - learn, reinforce, reading and writing books > heaven

Sample 3 is from a female principal in response to the question “how is your literacy background reflected in your work?” I use the code M2 for metonym to indicate a domain structured by one element, such as a salient example or ideal (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Quinn and Holland, 1993). Key words are shaded in the text. Other codes, such as P and I for proposition and image schemas, which may be inhabited by or stand alone from metaphor or metonym, also appear at the end of each paragraph. Italicized words in the quoted speech illustrate the speaker’s strong emphasis of the words.

Sample 3

“I do associate so many pleasant memories with my own reading, and my interactions with my family, that when I think about kids reading, it’s not drudgery, it’s fun times. I enjoy going in to read to a class, or answering student’s letters, or just, we have a lot of events here. We try, I’m sure we’ll probably talk about some of the things we’re doing here that are literacy type events. And, because I have such a positive memory of those kinds of experiences as a kid, I feel like I really get into the [inaudible] celebrations here at school.”

*M2* - proposition schema inhabited by salient examples illustrating an ideal, from experience, reading is fun times.

Themes expressed in speakers’ narratives are the third linguistic unit important to this analysis. I defined themes as speakers’ ways of framing chunks of meaning in order to create simplified worlds or prototypical event sequences
to naturalize and make necessary (in a kind of tautology) the thematic proposition being expressed (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Themes may be composed of several linked ideas, illustrated by reference to experience, and/or by metaphors, metonyms, schemas, or other language conventions, or may be structured through an interpenetration of models, in which parts and pieces of other models become elements of the cognitive scaffold under construction. Speakers' and writers' development of theme is frequently the clearest illustration of both statements of identity (attributes and beliefs) and characteristics of a group with which the speaker fully or peripherally identifies.

In Sample 4 below the speaker, a male education journalist, responds to two questions. In response to a follow-up question asking him to clarify how he perceives the relationship between his examples of phonics and class-size reduction reforms to "miserable test scores," he develops a non-English language theme as explanation for a students' poor performance on tests. In response to my next question citing an article he had written, he cites language again, linking it to poverty by thematic extension to account for an institutionalized and naturalized relationship between language and economic-based (dis)advantage in education outcomes.

Sample 4

Q. Will this effort [reference to speaker's earlier discussion of "phonics, class-size reduction"] fix the "miserable test scores" you mentioned?
“I don’t know that it’s going to raise the test scores. I think it will help a lot of kids read better, and read earlier. And I think ultimately that will help them. Because if they, all the research says the earlier you learn how to read the better off you are, and the later you learn, the harder it is to catch up. Whether that will translate into better test scores is always an issue because there are issues that have nothing to do with phonics that affect our test scores, probably the biggest of them being language barriers, kids who speak Spanish and other languages, taking a test in English.) So phonics does nothing for you if you can’t speak the language.” [My emphasis].

Q. From the other article that you mentioned ... there’s another 66.667 percent of white and Asian students who aren’t proficient. But, then there’s that big gap between the 33 percent who are considered proficient among whites and Asians, versus the 7 and 8 percent among Hispanics and Blacks being proficient on that particular test. Where do you think that big gap is coming from?

“Well, for the Latino kids I think a lot of it has to do with language. For the Black students I’m not as clear. I would say part of it has to do with the fact that Black students who live in the State’s largest cities, the urban cores, the poorer areas, often have the least experienced teachers. That’s clear; that’s been shown. So if they have the least experienced teachers, who don’t really know what they are doing, you are not going to get the good start that you need. The more affluent districts tend to attract the more experienced teachers. Or, like in L.A. Unified, the more senior teachers can pick where they want to teach. And they go to Granada Hills, and they go to West Hills, and they go to Woodland Hills. And the least experienced teachers go down to Jefferson Middle school in South L.A. I mean, that’s not as a rule, but we see that a lot. And even the latest big report on this that I wrote about a few months ago, by Rand, said just that. You know, that schools in poorer areas have the least experienced teachers.”

“I think the third who are doing better will probably always do better, and will have a greater gain, and it’s not just because of their teaching. It’s because of a lot of other factors. You know, they have a leg up. You know, if you live in Agoura Hills, and your Dad is a doctor and your Mom is a psychologist, and the Mom picks you up from school and makes sure you have a nice snack after school, and Dad gets home late, but he gets home. And someone is there to make sure you do your homework. Um, you get a good dinner, you sleep in a nice big bed; wake up, and they give you breakfast, it’s a lot different, that’s going to affect you differently
over the course of your first 18 years than if you don’t have those things. And that’s even if you have a terrific teacher at school. There’s only so much that they can do. And that’s not, I don’t mean to say that every kid who lives in a poor area is going to do badly, that’s not the case. But those kids that live in those wealthier communities come with an advantage, I think, by and large.”

On initial reading it appears merely that several of the current California education reforms about which the Los Angeles Times and the speaker have written (and mentioned without prompting during the narrative) are being cited as direct responses to direct questions. On closer inspection, the elements of the theme emerge.

In the first paragraph of Sample 4, the speaker concludes the response with a reference to language barriers, specifically Spanish, as the salient example of why test scores may not improve even though more children may read earlier due to phonics and class size reductions. The speaker continues, after the follow-up question, to submit again that the unnamed (reference to Latino) Spanish language is the reason why 93 percent of Hispanic students are not proficient on a particular test. The direct and indirect references to the presumed influences of Spanish as a mother tongue are reinforced by dichotomy – an alternative example (Black students) that does not reference mother-tongue. The speaker explains that 92 percent of Black students are not proficient on the particular test because of inexperienced teachers, despite the speaker being aware that there are as many or more Hispanic/Latino students in urban cores (where there are “inexperienced teachers”) as there are Black students, and that most
Hispanic/Latino-heritage students actually do not have Spanish as a first language (Hakuta, 1998a, 1998b; Krashen, 1999a).

In the last paragraph of Sample 4, the speaker elaborates the structure of the theme by reference to “the third who ... will probably always do better,” which counter-poses economic advantage to lack of English fluency and poverty to account for high versus low scores on tests, without explaining the conditioning agents for economic advantage. The speaker’s introduction of the concept of learning to read early equated with academic advantage, in contrast to Spanish as a “barrier” silently equated with learning to read later, are then implicitly linked to the concept of economic advantage.

Inference and implication.

The key to the fullest understanding of thematic content and reasoning is often not just what is said, but what the speaker chooses not to say (i.e. details “erased”), or people, places or events exaggerated or otherwise distorted in some fashion (Irvine and Gal, 1996). In order to discern how and where this occurs in speech, the last step in the analysis of this research was to situate what speakers state in interviews, related to their writing (as in Sample 4 above), to their reasoning about personal experience, and to the larger social context.¹⁴

¹⁴ I define the “larger social context” in this study according to three source categories noted earlier. One is interviewees’ perceptions regarding their social context, and/or perceptions related to the so-called “literacy crisis.” A second category is composed of the substance of two Los Angeles Times’ series, “Public Education: California’s Perilous Slide” (1998) and Reading by 9, a series
Journalists, for instance, wrote about education at a newspaper at which choices were made to emphasize education coverage in particular ways, in a state in which the Governor elected in 1998 proclaimed education "my first, second and third priorities," and in which education reform related to language were the subject of great debate and legislative action. They have varying levels of experience as education writers, diverse reasons for pursuing that work, and short and longer-term commitments to staying with an education byline.

I applied the same analytical methods as illustrated in Samples 1-4 above to texts of news articles or proposition statutes, for example, in order to assess what language conventions or themes constituted the "larger social context" (primarily addressed in chapters six and seven) in those sources. Sample 5 below contains four excerpts (in the order in which they were give) from a Los Angeles Times article (Sahagun, 1998 November 1). The thesis of the article from which the quotations were taken was that since poverty is linked statistically to low test scores among students, teachers must do something different in a classroom populated by poor students. What teachers should do was not addressed. Instead, the correlation among test scores and poverty was offered as if there was a causal relationship among the two, with teachers, experts, and other research cited in an authoritative narrative. The writer explicates by use of comprising articles, editorials, and a weekly feature page initiated in 1998. The third source category is composed of the texts of California Initiative Statutes such as Propositions 187 and 227; demographic and other public information about California; and reference to scholarly treatments of related public
salient examples. The thesis is that poverty equals low test scores (metonymic mapping of one element of a domain onto a target domain, e.g., testing/achievement). He emphasized conditions of poverty linked to parents' lack of education and lack of English fluency as barriers to their son's learning. It was noted in the article that the student being profiled (Arturo, a pseudonym), whose first language and home language was Spanish, was not receiving any [comprehensible] first language instruction after having been in "bilingual" (the form not defined) instruction previously.

Sample 5

"'This is easy, Arturo' his brother says in rapid fire Spanish."

"'We were always very successful academically when our kids were coming from middle-class families' said Sue Shannon, coordinator of instruction for the district, which ranks at the bottom third of the nation on most standardized tests. 'What we need to do now is learn to be successful with children who are coming from lower economic areas, because that's the kind of children we have today.'"

"'These are parents who are acutely concerned about their children's education, but they lack basic tools needed to help,' Cornelius said. 'First and foremost is proficiency in English.'"

"Arturo eventually came up with a disappointing incomplete version of his own. 'i wm special...'

This example is important for what is unspoken. Arturo's primary language is linked not only to his own "disappointing" school performance, but discourses (e.g. Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Hakuta, 1998a, 1998b; Krashen, 1999a; Mehan, 1997).
also to his parents' poverty. Poverty is the unstated alternative to "middle-class families," and is linked to low test performance and unsuccessful schools. This model is made up of connected metonymic image and proposition schemas illustrating the theme language is a problem. Such a simplistically rendered theme was expressed among journalists interviewed for this study more often than among educators. Two of the six journalists and most educators developed somewhat more complex and fully integrated schemas regarding influences on students' learning and performance, highlighting the relevance of teacher behaviors and the education environment.

Educators' constructions of the larger social context were drawn from rich and lengthy experience working with children from diverse backgrounds. With the exception of one journalist, each principal and teacher with whom I spoke had worked as an educator (from six to 30 years) for a longer period than the journalists (one to six years) had been reporting on education. Principals and teachers worked in environments that had undergone dramatic change in the last 10 to 15 years. The cost of living in California was and is one of the highest in the nation; school populations have increased exponentially; education infrastructure had remained static; and requirements for teaching and administrative certifications had been increased, all without commensurate increases in pay.

The changes inside the classroom were of a greater order of magnitude than outside the classroom. As class-sizes in elementary schools through
highschool increased to an average of over 40 students, and student diversity (language and national origin) increased, the state began to mandate local level curriculum and administrative changes. Reading and other language (bilingual) programs were often instituted without appropriate funding, local expertise and program development, or availability of fluent teachers. Special education students were mainstreamed with no funding for teacher training.

The state mandated class-size reductions to 20 students per teacher in elementary schools in 1998 were temporarily initiated only in grades K-3 due to lack of preparation or funding for a higher number of teachers or classrooms. Most recently, the importance of statewide standardized testing has dramatically increased, with test scores tied to teacher pay and school funding, while being initiated prior to implementation of new California instructional standards, and at the same time as bilingual education was withdrawn in most schools. Each of these changes, among others, has (at least) added levels of complexity to teaching children to read. These data and perspectives helped to situate teacher and administrator talk and explanations. These factors in conjunction with journalists' talk, and textual analyses, supported inferences about implications of public discourses in which such conditions are erased or minimized.

Interpretation Validity and Generalizations

Making assertions and drawing conclusions from this data in order to suggest or recommend the ways in which the data may apply to education
policy, or to social policy related to education, was largely a matter of the validity of my data generation methods and analysis (Mason, 1997). I have directed the bulk of my attention in this chapter to detailing my methods and the ways in which these relate to the theoretical approaches and contexts introduced in chapter one. There were two objectives of the data gathering and analysis processes. One was to generate language about literacy as consistently as possible from 18 different participants in order to determine what language conventions (e.g. metaphor, schemas, and so on) informed the cultural logic of interviewees' reflections and explanations. The point of this methodological objective was consistency—so as to compare inherently diverse narratives in a convincing way.

The second objective was more specifically to assess how speakers constructed and situated themselves through a "literacy history," in explanations of education or journalistic practices, and in commentaries on the so-called literacy crisis in California. I used this assessment to analyze the extent to which journalists' and educators' language elements and cultural logic were present in such authoritative discourses as legislative statutes and texts, newspaper writing, and state-mandated reading policies and practices. The point of this methodological objective was to search for and compare patterns—so as to gain insights about how "speech is effective social action" (Silverstein, 1981).

My interpretation is also a construction, albeit premised on theoretical orientations, methodologies, and analyses employed by other researchers.
(Bourdieu, 1997; Linde, 1993; Mehan, 1997; Ruíz, 1984; Strauss, 1990; Woolard, 1989). As I noted in the first paragraph of chapter one, my viewpoint is interest and value-laden, and subject to my social experiences and social position. Since I adhere to Silverstein’s (1981) point regarding speech and social action, I have tried to take great care about my “speech” in this research process, attempting to delimit my viewpoint through participant contact protocols, the structure of written questions and follow-up questions, and in the modes of analysis. But given these limitations, I do intend my speech to be effective in specific ways. Ultimately, it will be up to reviewers to determine whether my approaches, data presentation, and conclusions and recommendations were construed from valid development of data, and careful analysis, generalizable to other contexts.

Summary

This chapter contains a description of my research assumptions and methods. As noted in the previous chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that the sociolinguistic analyses of historical precedents and viewpoints about the nature and practice of education may be examined through triangulation of media and statist texts, interview texts, and similar research by other scholars. I asked whether and how individuals negotiated meaning in characteristic ways, and if public discourses were characteristically related and patterned. In the following chapters I examine the extent to which such patterns may reproduce or contest asymmetrical power relationships around the subject of literacy.
CHAPTER THREE
EXPLANATORY SYSTEMS IN LITERACY HISTORY NARRATIVES

Introduction

One premise of this study was that among professional readers and writers such as teachers, principals and journalists, personal literacy experiences would be a filter for rationales or theory-making about how we come to be who we are, doing what we do, believing what we believe. It was also presumed that the literacy histories would be consciously or unconsciously constructed to achieve coherence through choice of narrative structure(s), choice of certain personal examples, and reference(s) to cultural models or parts of models. Coherence is achieved when a person’s sense-making and body of ideas is recognizable to a listener, and/or through textual analysis (Linde, 1993). By asking for a literacy history, I imposed a generic structure (history) on participants’ narratives, and suggested a theme (literacy), neither of which was defined, although I proposed certain boundaries (see the texts of the questions below).

Journalists, principals, and teachers narrative responses to the first three questions of the semi-structured interviews are discussed here in terms of the ways in which the speakers created “explanatory systems” (Linde, 1993). Each

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15 Linde (1993) uses explanatory system to mean “a system of beliefs and relations among beliefs that provide the environment in which one statement
organized their narratives around perceptions about literacy, carried in notions of cause and effect, or images of what goes with what. They chose events in their lives to make a story about themselves. Some stories were chronologically linear, some were in flashback form; a few declined the offer to create a literacy history as such, choosing instead to answer direct questions with little personal elaboration.

The first three interview questions, in order, were:

"We will focus on your experiences from throughout your life. Please try to tell me about events, people, places, times and your thoughts and feelings associated with whatever you think of as literacy, starting with your earliest memories. Try not to analyze too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later."

"How is your own literacy background reflected in your work?"

"How did you get to be a journalist (or) principal (or) teacher?"

OR

"How did you get to be an education writer (or) teacher of grade ...?"

In this chapter the focus is on narratives about "what happened to me;" reflections on what happened to me as this may relate to events happening in the world are addressed in subsequent chapters (Linde, 1993, p. 344). By making this distinction, participants' perceptions of the salience of their talk to their prior, or may or may not be taken as a cause for another statement." Also, "...a system of beliefs that occupies a position midway between common sense" which any person may be expected to know if not agree with, and "expert systems, which are beliefs and relations among beliefs held, understood and used by experts in a particular domain." Linde's data source was oral life stories of middle class American speakers." (Linde, 1993, p. 343.)
to future actions were less likely to become lost. In later chapters, I use a
different methodological framework to address participants’ explanations of the
significance of literacy-related events happening in the world.

Journalists and educators developed one primary explanatory system
(particular family structure and values precede literacy) and one primary
metaphor (literacy is related to family – inherited, or earned through sacrifice
and with difficulty) as signifiers of relative causation and continuity (i.e.
coherence) (Keesing, 1993). The explanatory system was entailed in direct and
indirect references to "expert" sociological and commonsense models of family,
and in "expert" education and commonsense models of learning. Speakers'
direct and indirect references to expert sociological or education models were
accompanied by assumptions about how literacy experiences might be related to
family structures, values and beliefs, habits, achievements and status. These
assumptions were carried in metaphor, salient examples, images, and the "logic"
of proverbs, for instance, and are diverse, depending on the individual speaker's
background.

As a brief illustration of an explanatory system containing commonsense
references to an expert model (although not a specific model of family), one male
journalist in the example below interpreted his revocation of fiction writing as a
profession. Participant profiles are provided in the next section; all names are
pseudonyms.

[How is your literacy background reflected in your work?]
Donald

"I thought/ / For a long time I thought that I would write fiction or poetry or something like that, but that was mostly prob'ly narcissism, or some disaffection from the mainstream; it was an alternative lifestyle. But, I kind of fell into journalism, but I was well prepared to be a good writer, and enjoyed doing a lot of writing prior to that. So I think there's definitely a connection."

The speaker taps 1) the psychological model of personality disorder (narcissism as a salient example borrowed from an expert, Freudian, model), and 2) a combination of a psychological model of social behavior, or disaffection (from something), and a sociological model of life-style (alternative versus mainstream). There is an assumption of mutual understanding between speaker and listener in the phrase "disaffection from the mainstream," suggesting more than revocation of former interests. Donald may be connecting his earlier self-description as blue-collar to being disaffected, and/or indicating that self-absorption (narcissism) is a constituent of or precursor to disaffection and living an alternative life-style. A sense of unexpectedness or surprise is expressed in the physical imagery of the term "fell into." This is a kind of "pay attention" strategy that is resolved through the terms "well prepared" and "connection." Donald used these linkages to perform a linguistic task. The terms well prepared and connection helped him to signify family, spoken of earlier in his narrative in terms of parents' work and reading habits, the ubiquity of books in the home, and so on, to rationalize the opportunity to be a journalist and his readiness for it.
Many of us borrow superficial elements of expert models to structure our commonsense understandings of complex events and to create meaning (Linde, 1993). How seriously should we think of this kind of recombinant coding as having greater import to such artifacts as group ideologies, institutional structures, social roles, or social opportunities?\textsuperscript{16} That depends on what else a speaker says over the course of a narrative (addressed in chapters four through six) and how a speaker’s language conventions and strategies may be reflected in public speech such as newspaper writing or government legislation (addressed in chapters seven and eight) (Keesing, 1993). There were important implications in what Donald said, how he said it, and even in what he did not say. I tried to attend to each of these possible alternatives for constructing meaning in each speaker’s responses. Did a journalist or educator choose to pursue one sort of explanation (such as psychological or sociological model) in her/his narrative? What are the social histories of the models used? How was each participants’ social status rationalized through the unique details of class, race, gender and generational experience in metaphor, salient and or prototypical examples, resonant images, or the “logic” of a proverb? What appeared to be a speaker’s

\textsuperscript{16} An artifact is “something made or modified for humans, usually for a purpose; \textit{esp.} an object remaining from another time or culture.” Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1995, p. 29. I quote this definition to emphasize that my use of the term artifact is purposeful. We create culture through our meaning-making; our language has historical precedent and physical manifestations. Ideas may be “objects,” as in “something that may be perceived or examined mentally” that are both passed down through generations and modified by use (Merriam Webster, 1995, p. 361). This perspective, expressed by the participants in their narratives, is examined in this chapter and in the final chapters.
narrative intent, perhaps identified in the reasoning carried in metaphor, metonym or in linkage of themes? Was identity expressed, and expressed the same way in different parts of the narrative? And what was “left-out,” such as the a priori conditions of social structure(s) and dominant ideolog(ies) in Donald’s case, that made it possible for him to “fall into” a potentially prestigious career such as journalism?

Analyses of educator and journalist talk in response to questions about their literacy histories, and how their literacy experiences may relate to later choices, provide partial answers to these questions in the sections that follow. In subsequent chapters I try to understand the ways in which participants' elaborated and related their literacy histories to later life choices and events, distinguishing their identities in social contexts (i.e. achieving coherence).

Participant Profiles

This section contains the relatively detailed profiles of six teachers and six principals who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Since all six of the journalists who agreed to be interviewed work for the same newspaper, I have merely repeated the information provided in chapter two to minimize the possibility that they might be recognized. I used pseudonyms and changed some minor details of background information on all participants for the same reason.
Journalist profiles

Journalist Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Site</th>
<th>Professional Duties</th>
<th>Journalist Gender</th>
<th>Journalist Language &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>Journalist Total Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Editor/Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/Ann-Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15-20 years.</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>7+ years</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>English; African-American</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/Donald</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educator Profiles

The educators with whom I spoke are all credentialed teachers, or principals who were formerly credentialed teachers. Several of the teachers also have Masters degrees, as do most of the principals. One principal is working on an education doctoral degree. Their experiences range from about four to 30 years as teachers, and from about four to 20 years as administrators. All have spent their working lives teaching or managing schools in southern California, experiencing first hand the demographic changes and systemic conditions in the public schools. Three are males (all teachers), and nine are females. Their
language and ethnic backgrounds are varied, with one teacher being African American, one a native Spanish speaker, one a native Tagalog-speaker, and one person being a native "Persian" speaker (as she labeled it). Their social and professional experiences are also quite varied. Three teachers and/or their parents are immigrants. The parents of two of these teachers are professionals who obtained higher education in their countries of origin. The parents of the third immigrant teacher are working class, obtaining high school equivalency education and vocational training after arriving in the U.S. The one educator who is African-American is from what she described as a very poor home, but a home with the "same value system as across the tracks." The remaining two teachers (one male and one female), and all of the principals (all female), are of Euro-American ancestry who grew up in working class to middle-class households, with parents having at least completed high school.

Along with the use of pseudonyms, the small details I changed in the profiles provided below protect the identities of those who agreed to be interviewed. The changes I made are not significant to the analysis.

Teacher profiles.

Dorothy is a white female, married, with two school-age children. She is a California native, but received her higher education in a neighboring state. One of her parents is a teacher. She taught in the Los Angeles Unified School District for between five and 10 years, in a high poverty urban school serving multilingual (most of whose primary language was Spanish) and multi-ethnic
students. She recently took a position in another district, first teaching in a school with a population of students substantially similar to the LAUSD school in which she had previously worked. She later transferred to a school in another part of the district serving a more suburban, working/middle class, multilingual and multi-ethnic student population. All of her experience has been teaching the primary grades. She speaks very limited Spanish.

Cyra is a married white female whose first language is "Persian." She was raised in the U.S. southwest, and her parents are educators. She received her undergraduate degree in the social sciences, but returned to school to obtain an M.A. in education. She has between five and 10 years experience as a primary grade teacher, four years working in a district serving suburban poor/working class, multilingual and multi-ethnic students. She recently works in an elite "west-side" school district in the Los Angeles area, composed of middle and upper class, multilingual and multi-ethnic students. She teaches third grade.

Wendell is a white male, unmarried. His family moved to California early in his life, where he was raised. He has between five and 10 years as a teacher in one suburban, poor/working class, multilingual and multi-ethnic school. He teaches third and fourth grades, and speaks limited Spanish.

Lillian is an African American female with 30 years teaching experience. She has one grown son. She is originally from a rural, Midwestern state; her father is deceased, and her mother, with a high school education, raised nine children, all of whom went to college. Lillian received her M.A. in multi-cultural education in California. She taught in a suburban area north of Los Angeles for
many years; she has been teaching primary grade students in south-central Los Angeles for five to 10 years. Lillian teaches primarily Spanish-speaking or native English Latino students, and African American students. She is an English only speaker.

Paco is a Mexican-American male, unmarried. His parents are from Mexico, and they returned to Mexico for each of their sons to be born “because that was important to them.” He was raised in California, attending parochial schools. He has taught for five to 10 years, initially in a parochial school, but more recently in a public school serving poor, suburban/working class, multilingual and multi-ethnic students. He is a fluent Spanish and English speaker; non- or limited-English speaking third and fourth grade students (with a wide variety of primary languages) are assigned to his classroom.

Deon is a Filipino-American male, married, with two children. He was raised in the Philippines, where he received his undergraduate degree in speech pathology, and a graduate degree in special education. He has been teaching special education students from diverse backgrounds for seven to ten years in two suburban school districts adjacent to Los Angeles. He is fluent in spoken Tagalog and fluent in spoken and written English.

Principal profiles.

Lela is a white female, married with two children. She received her undergraduate degree in the social sciences, but then trained as an administrator at an elite California university, later obtaining a multicultural and multilingual
certification. Her parents are educators; she is a native Californian. Lela is fluent in conversational Spanish, and she also writes parent letters, notices, etc. in Spanish. She has been a principal for eight years, in a suburban, poor/working class multilingual and multi-ethnic school near Los Angeles.

Jill is a white female, married, and a native Californian. She taught for many years, then served as an assistant principal. She has been a principal at a south-central Los Angeles, poor/working class, multilingual and multi-ethnic school for several years. She is comfortable with conversational Spanish.

Rosalie is a white female, married, and a native Californian. She was a teacher for several years, and then served as an assistant principal in a rural district near Los Angeles. She has been a principal at an elementary school in an elite "South Bay" school district, serving primarily middle and upper class students with little language and ethnic diversity, for between one and five years. She speaks English only.

Willa is a white female, originally from the northeast. She taught primary grade students for many years, and has been a principal for between eight and twelve years in a working class/middle class Orange County beach community school. She speaks English only.

Ana is a white female, married, with children, who grew up in Orange County, California (south of Los Angeles). Her mother was an educator, and her father is a Ph.D. She taught initially in LAUSD school(s) and then in an eastern Orange County school district, learning Spanish in order to work with Spanish speaking students. She has been a principal for five to 10 years in a working
class/middle class Orange County beach community school serving students from diverse backgrounds. She is comfortable with conversational Spanish.

Delta is a white female, married, with children. She is originally from the Midwest. She taught for over 20 years, and has been a principal for between five and 10 years in working class/middle class Orange County beach community school. She speaks English only.

An Explanatory System and a Useful Metaphor

Educators and journalists tried to achieve certain narrative goals, using linguistic strategies to create logical, experience based, yet socially acceptable explanations of experience. One example was references to the widely shared commonsense model of the ontological significance of family as relevant to development of values, habits, preferences, and general social competence. In the processes of reasoning about often quite diverse early-life personal experiences, family was a naturally common reference. But the variability of early experiences and family background appeared important to the ways in which literacy experiences were then characterized, or signified according to parental values and actions.

For some, having literacy was represented as easy, natural and rewarding. For others, having literacy was represented as difficult, tense, and not always rewarding. Most speakers continued to develop the "expert" and the
commonsense models of family while following these seemingly opposite courses.

The following brief excerpts are typical of the way some speakers' (as in the "I just fell into" journalism example above) expressed the naturalness and ease of becoming journalists or teachers. These comments, whether short or extended, give the impression that professional positions, and in the last excerpt directly below, prestigious positions "just happen." These kinds of statements were often made as if they needed no explanation. When the speakers did elaborate on their own, or in response to my request to do so, their explanations tended to be extrapolations from their love of and experiences with reading and writing as they grew up, in two-parent families where reading and writing was a valued activity.

"Well, I think I'm a natural teacher." (Dorothy, a teacher.)

"I don't know; it just happened." (Cyra, a teacher.)

"Chance." (Donald, a journalist.)

"And then after college I moved down to Washington, more or less on a whim, because a friend of mine was driving down to Washington with a U-haul, so I put my stuff in his U-haul and went down. Someone else I knew had an apartment that they needed to have a sitter for. Uh, I got a job in Washington and worked on Capitol Hill for a little while. Then after that I got on the newspaper, and sort of went from one job to another." (Thomas, a journalist.)

The metaphor, literacy is like a physical object, begins to be apparent as a linguistic strategy in speakers' meaning-making about their early experiences.
For those who characterized having literacy as easy, literacy was presented as a 'something' crafted by family values, habits, and parents' achievements, which parents may have inherited from their own parents. In these characterizations, literacy seems to be bequeathed to offspring, to take one to desired social places, and passed on again, as in the example below from Ana, one of the female principals. Ana is responding to the initial literacy history question; in her description she combines a model of the ontological significance of family with references to an "expert" educational model represented by the phrases "print rich environment" and "set me up," and the word stimulation. Her use of the word lucky is significant for her later comments. At this point it indicates her perception that not all children grow up in an environment like hers.

Ana

"I was lucky enough as a child to live in a home with both parents being UC graduates, and my father is a Ph.D. [scientist], and my mother was a ... teacher, although my mother stayed at home and did not work in the early part of my life. She reminds me that as a kindergartner I refused to let her teach me to read at home. And so I did not start kindergarten reading, but certainly had plenty of books read to me, lots of print rich environment, um, stimulation at home that would have set me up to be taught to read very easily."

For those who characterized having literacy as a difficult enterprise, literacy was not a well-crafted something given, or phenotypically inherited from parents so much as cobbled together from trial and error, or from scrutiny of good and bad experiences. From examples of language differences, schooling barriers, learning difficulties, and/or teachers' negative or indifferent attitudes, some participants constructed literacy as borne of parents' or their own sacrifices
and sweat. In the next response to the initial literacy history question, Paco, a Mexican-American male teacher, relates his parents’ examples to his own interest in reading, studying and achieving. He makes it clear later in his narrative that despite their modeling and his work and ambition, some goals are not attained easily.

Paco

“[My Dad] didn’t go on to the 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th in Mexico. When they came over here, my dad had to study to do his trade, which was to be a mechanic. So he had to study and take tests; he was actually trained in it. And so I would sit next to him in the bed, or whatever, as he was reading all this. I didn’t understand it, but I knew what he was doing. And it interested me just to kind of watch him do that. My Mom the same. She didn’t go to high school in Mexico, but in later years here, she completed high school here. And my Dad did as well. And so, I always saw them reading.”

Ed is a Euro-American male journalist who also refers to family examples and values, but in an inverse way. He invokes the importance of family, but family attributes such as parents’ ages, and (in another part of his narrative) their divorce, are expressed as reasons why they weren’t book-oriented. Ed depicts his parents as unknowing or uncaring about the importance of behaving in certain ways, and uses this depiction as a salient example to explain his own lack of early reading and (subsequently) his unimaginative writing. In two parts of his response to the question about how your own literacy background is reflected in your work, Ed combines a commonsense idea for how family behaviors influence children, linked to the notion that reading widely improves one’s writing.
Ed

"And I wish that my parents would have been more reading and book-oriented when I was a child. And they just weren't. They were young parents. They had me in their twenties, and I didn't have my son 'til I was in my thirties, so a ten year difference is a big difference, I think."

[In what way?]

"Well, I think you can be a proficient writer if you're not an avid reader. But I generally feel like I can tell. You can always tell the people who are avid readers, the reporters, because it shows up in their writing. Sometimes my writing is, um, is not very imaginative, and not as colorful as I would like. Because I don't think that I have the vocabulary and the spark, not the spark, but the um I don't have the words at my command that I would like to have. The range of words, and that only comes from reading, and I'm aware of that, and that's kind of an ongoing tension and frustration in my own heart..."

For speakers such as Paco and Ed, literacy is nevertheless a means to get you somewhere, but not necessarily as far as if literacy had been gifted or bequeathed. In their diverse uses of the metaphor 'literacy as bequeathed' or 'as strenuously acquired,' each speaker created her/his own kinds of coherence. In Ana's example, the socially functional educated, two-parent, working families who spend time with their children is contrasted to, and reinforced by the image and premise in Ed's example of too-young parents who do not spend time with their child, constituted to account for the speaker's perceptions of professional inadequacy.

Participants used other strategies to bring coherence and achieve narrative goals. Those who said having literacy was difficult made use of the same models of socially functional families as those for whom having literacy and
becoming educated was characterized as easy. But some whose experiences were difficult explained at some length how they came to be educated professionals despite having uneducated parents, and/or parents who spoke no English (among teachers, principals and journalists, only teachers are in this sub-group). These explanations point to perceptions that their experiences and achievements are anomalous, but not because of family. The alternative explanations for their more difficult literacy learning were heralded in examples such as Paco’s feelings about school tracking and labeling, and Lillian’s (an African-American female teacher) personal experiences of the cultural bias of standardized tests. Both responses are to the initial literacy history question.

Paco

"[B]ecause I remember thinking back, you know, second grade, you want to be in the blue group. I was in the red, so I was in the middle. But, everyday, I tried as hard as I could to get up to the blues, and it didn’t really matter. ‘Cause if you were in one group that’s where you stayed for the rest of the year. So I do remember that. And I remember reading at home, trying to improve. I mean, even to this day, I’m a very slow reader, very deliberate, very slow. But one thing that I can do, or at least that I was able to do in college was, when I read a page, and then being tested on it, all of a sudden the page would be in my head, and I could read the page again to figure out the answer. So I was very fortunate to have that, even though I was very slow."

Lillian

"So I think it was easy for me to catch on. But I didn’t have, I felt a little bit culturally deprived, growing up in ... So, my exposure was limited to [sic] vocabulary, in regards to taking tests, standardized tests. And I didn’t do as well as I should have on those I think because, not because I couldn’t read, but because I didn’t know what the words meant because of my exposure. Do you see what I’m saying? So, it was easier
for me, because I liked school. So it was easier for me to learn how to read. And I used to write poetry when I was a little girl, umhmm. It was fun. And like I say, my mom, that was just her thing. She reads the newspaper; the newspaper was what we would read sometimes, because that was all that there was to read. You know, was the daily paper, you know what I’m saying? And then we would go to the library a lot because the books were free. You know? [laughs]"

Also apparent in these two quotations are at least two schemas. In Paco’s imagery, labeling and tracking are filters for teacher perceptions, causing children to be “stuck” no matter how hard they try. The proposition schema in Lillian’s example is that standardized tests are biased because they test something (vocabulary) which is not in the experience of some students. Both Lillian and Paco elaborated on these ideas to create themes in their later narratives. Most participants created more or less persuasive narrative themes.

Other narrative strategies included a choice of monologue or dialogue, which tended to be maintained throughout the interview. Monologue (used by four journalists, at length, and six of twelve educators, less elaborated) was characterized by an expository approach, little resort to frequent turn-taking pauses, or acknowledgement of my presence through diverse facial expressions or changes in body language. Dialogue was characterized by a more conversational approach, frequent pauses with eye contact, and/or use of my name. Those who opted for a dialogic approach sometimes seemed to be testing whether it was okay to continue. Some (Lillian, Paco, and Deon) deployed euphemisms or other language conventions to determine whether it was acceptable to make a point through a difficult personal example. Those who
used a dialogic mode also borrowed more frequently from common sense images such as "up by your boot-straps" as in parents who work hard, parents who are honest, etc., as examples of powerful parental influence on literacy despite inadequacies of status or language. These images negotiated an alternative definition of socially functional family behaviors to those indexed by the phrase "I fell into journalism" which favors a premise of inherited literacy causing a prestigious job in journalism.

Making Sense and Making a Point in Literacy History Narratives

Making Sense

Three linguistic operations identified in this data are the variable uses of image and proposition schemas to express assumptions of mutual experience or understanding; the grammatical structure of English in the relation of tense to causality; and diverse uses of the textual structures of monologue and dialogue (Linde, 1993). Each are linguistic codes which shape what is spoken, what is heard, and what should, or may be understood from the interchange. Each are also uses of language which express a chain of reasoning (something is caused by something else; or, things are the way they are because) used as kinds of verbal shorthand. The first two examples from Ana and Paco in the prior section were coded in the sense that speakers assumed that they did not have to explain how
their literacy histories were related to their parents' activities. Both painted a picture, creating image (schema) gestalts that implied a kind of physics of social behavior, as if particular family habits such as parents reading in front of or to their children always result in children's literacy (Lakoff and Kovecses, 1993). Unresolved in such a gestalt are Paco's and Ana's differential literacy experiences, explored later in this chapter.

Another example from Donald below is a coded expectation of understanding or agreement from the listener. Donald accomplishes this 'coding' by making and then elaborating on the statement at length without seeking approval in any form for the conclusion (e.g. eye contact, verbal reinforcement, etc.). Instead, Donald's lack of explanation and use of monologue, seemed to indicate that I as the listener would not only understand, but agree with the idea that a lot of people get their reading habits directly from their mothers. The inverse proposition – if one does not get her/his reading habits directly from mother, then one is not like a lot of people – is an unstated reference to an element of the socially functional family explanatory model (mothers should be readers and read to their children) supporting the idea that literacy is bequeathed/inherited.

Donald

"Well, I think like a lot of people, my reading habits come very directly from my mother."
The following examples from Dorothy, a teacher, and from Thomas, a journalist, rely on the principle of post hoc, ergo propter hoc to express causation in the grammatical logic of English (Linde, 1993). That is, (from Dorothy) her mother being a teacher “before she had us” leads to reading to your children; and (from Thomas) being read to by parents frequently leads to a love of reading. The aphorism that practice makes perfect inherent in Thomas’ reminiscence referenced the metier of both teaching and journalism, or reading and writing frequently as a child leads to becoming a literacy professional.

Dorothy

“I’d say mostly I think about my mom and her reading to us a lot. She was a teacher before she had us.”

Thomas

“As I think about it, my, I remember reading books when I was four or five. Although, whether I actually was reading them, or they were just books that I had memorized because they had been read to me so often, it’s hard to know. It’s just that my main hobby outside of school was reading. And then, you know, eventually I became a writer...[w]hen I was a little kid, 8 or 9 or so, I used to sit at the kitchen table with a typewriter and type stories. And, then as time went on, I wrote other things. I started writing for a living when I was in college.”

17 “[A]fter this, therefore on account of it (a fallacy of argument),” a definition quoted from the Merriam Webster Dictionary, 1995, p. 633.
In the two examples above, the phrases "reading to us a lot" and "read to me so often" are advanced as elements in a reasoning chain. Thomas' elaboration linking early, frequent reading to "my main hobby" and then to "writing for a living" proposed simply by one statement following another that what came before causes what comes after. This is one way participants posited social definitions of literacy beyond the dictionary definition of the word (derived from the word literate, meaning to be educated through reading and writing, or knowledgeable of literature and other 'letters' (bodies of knowledge).18

When speakers were not sure if I would understand or agree with something just uttered, other linguistic devices (e.g. euphemisms; checking back) were used to negotiate meaning in a dialogic approach. For instance, Lillian, an African American teacher, frequently and automatically used checking back, such as in the form of questions like "do you know what I mean, Chris?" seeming to indicate hesitation about meanings just made, to propose certain ideas or simply to express a difficult personal example.

18 The dictionary definition of literacy stands in contrast to the definitions I use for this analysis, first mentioned in chapter one. According to Gee (1991), literacy is control of the secondary uses of language in domains such as school, work, politics, and so on. Dominant literacy is a materially and symbolically effective social resource because of its relationship to dominant discourses or "discourses that lead to social goods in society"(Gee, 1991, pp. 5, 8). The participants in this study tended consciously or unconsciously to construct literacy as a social phenomenon, while differentially expressing experiences with or opinions of dominant and non-dominant discourses and literacies.
Euphemism was another device, as in Lillian’s phrase “there are some accents that I have, and certain words are pronounced certain ways” that were an oblique introduction to a later statement of her parents’ use of “Ebonics” and “African American Dialect.” The devices of checking back and euphemism were forms that presupposed dialogic exchange to “find out” how intensely personal to be in negotiating understanding. These devices were obvious partly because they were so dissimilar to the presentation style (monologue) of other speakers.

Paco is a Mexican-American teacher who is fluent in Spanish and English. His words below were part of his description of college experiences, including choosing which university to attend, and choosing his first major in response to the ‘how did you choose teaching?’ question. He introduced a euphemism (“not very receptive to my background”) and a lengthy pause to test the interviewer’s openness to deeper disclosure about how and why he changed to an education major.

Paco

“And first quarter [of the second year] I ran into a teacher that was not very receptive to my background.” [Pause.]

As an interviewer, I had several options. I could have given no feedback, nodded my head, or commented neutrally, e.g. “that happens.” Paco may or may not have decided to reveal himself. I might have ignored the comment and changed direction. Or, I could choose to take the cue. My question and response
(in brackets) apparently opened the door to his description of a very difficult experience, one which prompted his decision to change to teaching from professional training (architecture) that had promised an upper-middle class lifestyle.

[Okay. How do you mean that?]

Paco

"Um, he called me a lazy Spic/"

(Smiles) "So, it kind of made me think, he's not really into Latinos/"

In his narrative, Paco constructs an ideological scaffold in which his Latino heritage and first language are central to his identity, matters of personal pride, and meaningful to his ability to effectively help students' of diverse backgrounds achieve academically. His use of particular examples suggest that we can understand Silverstein's (1981) position that "speech is effective social action" at ontological and epistemological levels simultaneously. The theme of Paco's life is not just what is, but what he makes of it. He chose to highlight and connect such examples as having learned English before going to school in order to help his parents communicate with English speaking neighbors, enduring 'tracking' "no matter how hard you try" in the primary grades, being passed
over for (and contesting) assignment to honors classes in high school, and the example above that led to changing his major.

Educators and journalists whose first languages were not English, and/or who are of immigrant backgrounds or African American descent tended to develop narrative coherence in a particular way. They more often (some frequently) used euphemism or checking back, talked about having literacy to be difficult, tense and not (always or maximally) rewarding, and suggested social experiences outside of family to account for their perceptions.

Those who tended to talk about having literacy as easy, natural and rewarding, however, also drew on diverse resources to make sense of their experiences. Singular examples of experiences that did not "fit" the presentation that one inherits literacy from "good" families (stable, two-parent, working, caring/spending time with children, and so on) were abstracted and usually accounted for by other models. Some reasoned that elements of character, family history, or at the time undiscovered scientific explanations, etc., were unique and/or salient to school performance, or circumstances of adult lives. These speakers were also negotiating meaning, but in monologue, as if musing out loud, seldom employing euphemism, nor otherwise indicating requests for response, approval or questions from the interviewer.

Rosalie, a Euro-American female principal, reasoned (below) that some initial problems she had in learning to read could be accounted for by "moving around" (a brief period of instability in family life), and/or an undiagnosed
learning deficit, resulting in a lack of a "solid foundation." This is an example of metonymy, in which a salient example is used to represent, in this case, two domains, the social and the psychological/cognitive. All participants (teachers, principals and journalists) frequently cited transiency and learning disabilities as reasons for poor academic performance, suggesting an interpenetration of two expert (sociological and learning) models.

Rosalie

"When I began in the school program, my family moved around quite a bit. And I wasn’t able to get a very solid foundation. Kindergarten, first and second grade were very tough grades for me. I had difficulty, not only because of the break in school experiences, but also I think I had some mild learning problems, attentional problems, at the time. I didn’t realize that until now."

Wendell is a male teacher of Euro-American background. His use of the words “drill” and “not enjoyable” and “unfortunate” (below) suggest a causal relationship to his (previously stated) lack of facility with mathematics. This construction also indicates (as an unstated opposite) his position that an education/pedagogy model which does not include drill and tedium are more effective for learning mathematics. Ed is a journalist of Euro-American background. He had been writing about education for three or fewer years. He is indexing the overlap of the family (expert) model and an education model. He builds here on comments quoted earlier (i.e. lack of early reading with parents led to insufficient facility with language). Ed expressed the cause of his emphasis on reading to and with his son through the label “negative” to describe
his parents' deficiencies and what he perceived resulted from that for him (i.e. lack of imaginative writing).

Wendell

"Because when I was growing up, when I was learning my math skills, it was very, uh, how do I say, we just drilled and drilled and drilled, and it kind of got to a point where it just really did become tedious, and it wasn't enjoyable. And that's unfortunate."

Ed

"Well, I do not have a lot of literacy memories. I got kind of a negative start. I don't remember being read to, or my parents reading much, or books in the home. But now I have a huge amount of experience with my own son."

Ed has used his relatively new knowledge of education, picked up as he asserted from colleagues, materials he reviewed and interviews conducted in order to write article, as a way to reflect on his own literacy. He developed a narrative theme as seen in the example above and in earlier and later comments). He formulated himself as someone who represented the wrong kind of literacy (negative start; professionally problematic "unimaginative" writing) trying to become someone who represents the right kind of literacy (actions with his child; study of a traditional/religious language; reading the classics). Each speaker strategically drew on their linguistic and experiential resources to present themselves coherently, and to differentiate the meaning of their experiences from some alternative. Ed and Paco are an interesting contrast in this regard. Ed finds himself (his parents, his attributes) to have been deficient according to some
norm to which he aspires. Paco finds that he has been perceived by others to be
deficient (tracking, being overlooked for honors classes, being slandered). Paco,
however, both rejects and critiques the deficiency perceptions and related
actions, and redefines what is acceptable in terms of his responses and actions.
These and other constructions of the meanings of literacy are explored more fully
in the next sub-section.

Making a Point

Participants’ elaborated on the metaphor ‘literacy is bequeathed’ or
‘acquired with difficulty’ to accommodate diverse experiences and to explicate at
least two thematic constructions of a single explanatory system. They presented
the ‘family’ explanatory system (the midpoint between expert and common
sense models) in terms of family attributes, beliefs, activities/roles differentially
organized to explain school achievement and life opportunities (Linde, 1993).
Some participants connoted learning to read and love of reading, college,
professional and sometimes prestigious job opportunities as happy accidents.
For others, primarily teachers who are African American, or who have non-
English, immigrant backgrounds, learning to read and love of reading, college,
professional and sometimes prestigious job opportunities were not cast as
genetic, nor a given, nor even readily available, but were connoted as gained
from strenuous and concentrated vigilance.
The speakers' different constructions of "theme" in developing an explanatory system were goal-oriented, designed to represent points of view, or ideologies (a body of ideas characteristic of an individual). This was "a level up," as Linde (1993, p. 350) refers to it, from creating coherence. Participants not only string together literacy related events from their lives, but they systematize experiences to suggest identity and group membership. Elements of experience perceived by a speaker to be prototypical to causal equations usually go unmarked; less prototypical organizations of elements may be emphasized to throw an opposition into relief.

Thomas is a 30-something journalist/editor with many years of experience. He responded to the initial literacy history question in the first paragraph below, and then to the second interview question. Starting to read early is the single element that serves as a foundation for a constellation of unmarked elements related to (post hoc, ergo propter hoc) early reading. The unmarked elements include a two-parent family with sufficient resources to go on summer vacations and to afford enough children's books to fill a large suitcase. Other unmarked elements in the constellation include himself as a precocious child (who either read or memorized books at age four or five, and wrote stories on a typewriter at ages eight or nine), and a kind of natural ("on a whim") acquisition of prestigious employment and career.

Thomas

"Well, I started reading quite early on in my life, and I spent large chunks of my childhood with my nose buried in a book. And most of..."
when we used to go on summer vacations and I would pack one reasonably small suitcase of clothes and a large suitcase of books. My father would usually have to carry the books. As I think about it, my, I remember reading books when I was four or five. Although, whether I actually was reading them, or they were just books that I had memorized because they had been read to me so often, it's hard to know. It's just that my main hobby outside of school was reading. And then, you know, eventually I became a writer."

"When I was a little kid, 8 or 9 or so, I used to sit at the kitchen table with a typewriter and type stories. And, then as time went on, I wrote other things. I started writing for a living when I was in college. Ah, well, most of my, I had various jobs writing. Worked for a newspaper between my junior and senior year in college. So I earned money to help pay for room and board."

[How did you get from there to what you are doing?]

"Well, I worked for newspapers, I worked for the college newspaper, and then I worked for newspapers during the summer. 'Cause I was interested in journalism, had a sense that was what I wanted to do. Because I enjoyed writing, and finding out about things, asking people questions, all that sort of thing. So I figured that was probably what I wanted to do. And then after college I moved down to Washington, more or less on a whim, because a friend of mine was driving down to Washington with a U-haul, so I put my stuff in his U-haul and went down. Someone else I knew had an apartment that they needed to have a sitter for. Uh, I got a job in Washington and worked on Capitol Hill for a little while. Then after that I got on the newspaper, and sort of went from one job to another."

The next example reflects a less prototypical organization of family and education elements, recognizable as such because the speaker points out (marks) what in his experience diverges from a perceived norm. In this example, starting to read early is the unmarked element (mentioned briefly in his learning-English narrative in another part of the transcript). In Paco's example (here) he was considered "unmotivated" despite high grades. In comments from Paco quoted
earlier in this chapter, the marked elements included parents’ education levels, awareness of tracking and labeling in school, and being insulted by a professor.

Paco

"But in eighth grade [after spending a year in Mexico], I did some work over the summer, and then I was back up to being an A student, and the honors class and all that. [So then in high school] the teacher was talking to certain people about going into the honors. And she didn’t talk to me. And I was like, okay. So I went to talk to her, and I said, well, do you think I could do it, or is there like a reason why you think I shouldn’t be in it? ‘Well, no, I just didn’t think you had the motivation to do it.’ I said, well, if it’s up to me, I’d rather be in the honors class. And so she said, ‘okay’, and she signed me on, and I went."

[Were you getting good grades in her class?]

“I was the highest score.”

There is consistency in the implied importance of family values and literacy activities among Thomas and Paco, noted in Thomas’ reading and writing/book and typewriter rich environment, and in Paco’s (quoted earlier) references to his parents work-related literacy activities. Other participants used a similar array of examples to develop the thematic oppositions observed here.

Among those who, like Thomas, devised having literacy to be easy and natural, learning to read early (or the importance of learning to read early), love of reading, the meaning of reading to one’s life and career were familiar emphases. Wendell, a male, Euro-American teacher with over five years experience responded to the question regarding how his literacy background was related to his work. He explained his love of reading through a reference to his earlier comments about creative teachers and teaching. Unspoken but
'present' here is his earlier assertion that it was creative teachers who influenced his decision to become a teacher himself.

Wendell

"And it's always been an attraction to me ... I remember, uh, reading and literacy being ... my, my love. Now, mathematics and the sciences were not the love at that time. And I've had to learn to appreciate that a little bit more in my years as a teacher."

"But I remember with our reading and our writing, you know, there was a lot more creative thought, there was a lot more interaction amongst peers. And for me that was just always so much more appealing."

The experienced journalist Ann-Marie, new to writing about education, is responding to two questions below. The first paragraph is her partial response to the initial literacy history question. The second paragraph is her full explanation for how she became an education writer. Ann-Marie frequently implicated deep and positive feeling associated with reading, using homely and comforting images as in her example of her uncle's cabin provided earlier and in the paragraph below. She also, as did Thomas above, naturalized her opportunity and choice to become an education writer.

Ann-Marie

"I love seeing what people read and finding out what it might say about them... I so love reading that I feel transported by it." "And I remember I would often lie on my Mom's bed// my Mom and Dad's bed, and read, nap in between, and wake up and read some more, and it was just something I loved doing."

"My career path// I had been in the [other] section for many, many years... and this opening came up and an editor asked if I were interested. It wasn't anything I sought out, actually, but once he proposed it, I was very interested."
Rosalie, a principal with about 25 years as an educator, is also responding below to the literacy history question. In this excerpt she somewhat ruefully ascribed her later choice to teach as related to her personality attributes (leadership; “enjoyed ... sharing learning”). Not shown here are her comments about her parents as role models, especially her father, whom she described as a leader in the manufacturing field. Using variations on the word 'lead,' Rosalie created a linkage among her father’s modeling, her actions as a child, and her later choices.

Rosalie

“I think I enjoyed the experience of sharing as a child, of sharing learning with other kids. So, um working with others, taking a leadership role, um learning, I think was always a part of my early experiences. ...[B]ringing them in and playing school at the age of four. Somehow, I had this knowledge I wanted to share . . . (laughs).

Several speakers, like Paco, organized and exemplified their narratives to emphasize the confusion they felt as children, connected to the difficulties they experienced, and the uncertain rewards from having literacy. The confidence, joy, and secure knowledge of reward implied in the comments by Ana, Thomas, Donald and Ann-Marie above are missing in the examples below.”
Deon, a Filipino-American male teacher with over 5 years experience is a native Tagalog-speaker. He expressed his frustration and struggle with being taught in an all-English school in the Philippines.

Deon

"I don't. I think I started reading at a later age than usual. Um, both my parents were working, and I don't remember them reading to me. Although my Dad did get me a reading tutor. And I don't know why. I mean it's something that's still gray to me up to this point. Because I usually excelled in class. And I really don't understand what the reading tutor was there for. So anyway this reading tutor would read with me. You know, long books and whatever. And it was in English. And I couldn't understand a thing. [Smiles ruefully and wags his head back and forth as he slowly enunciates each word.] Only because the language that I used with my friends was Tagalog.

And, I was a young second grader, and here's this reading tutor reading with me in English, I don't know what's going on! So it turned me off. I'll sit there, and I'll sit with her for a good 30 minutes. And then I just, I would ask her, 'can I go now? Can I play now?' But that was really strange. Because I'm not a bad// I wasn't a bad student. I was one of the more intelligent students in class. So I don't know why I felt that way. Probably because ... [w]hen you go home, everything around you is Tagalog. You know, your store is Tagalog, your friends Tagalog, T.V.'s Tagalog; everything's Tagalog. You only speak English when you're in school."

Cyra, a female teacher whose first language is, as she referred to it several times, "Persian," was also in all-English schooling, but in the U.S. Her parents speak English, and she heard English and Persian (probably Farsi) at home. She also describes a great deal of frustration and discouragement associated with her teachers' perceptions of her writing.
Cyra

"OK, so when I got into high school, the problems began, because my teachers, from all the work that I had done through elementary and junior high, my writing was not considered acceptable. My memories of literary (sic) experiences in high school, were sitting in one on one conferencing with my teacher, rewriting things, over and over, rewriting. And it was just, I didn’t quite understand, ever, what it is that was acceptable. I don’t feel like I ever learned from that writing experience in high school."

“So anyway, point being, is that through high school, I think I got a little more discouraged because the feedback I was getting was primarily negative. And I can’t to this day tell you what it is that I wasn’t doing correctly.

Then in college, I really only took one English course. It was an English 101, and once you took that then you could take anything that fell under the heading English, which could be a wide variety of things. So I never took any composition courses or anything after that. I really didn’t have any interest in it whatsoever. And I did a lot of reading, and writing reports, and so forth, but they were focused in psychology or sociology.” (Italics indicate speaker’s emphasis.)

The extended excerpt below is from Lillian, an African-American teacher who was quoted earlier in this chapter. She described some difficulty in the earlier excerpt with being judged on the basis of standardized tests geared to students with wider language experiences. In the excerpt below Lillian began by briefly referencing her initial difficulties with teaching reading differently than the way she learned, and with teaching reading in a middle-class school versus schools in Watts (high poverty/working-class minority neighborhood). This contrast is Lillian’s introduction to examples of ‘what’s wrong with’ the African-American and Latino students she teaches.
Lillian

"... when I learned how to read ... the teacher would just give you, or say words like catch, match, and so that's the way I learned how to read... And it was difficult for me to teach reading because of my experiences of the way I was taught to read. And working in the [San Fernando] Valley for eight years was different teaching reading here in the city to some degree. Because where I worked was in a middle class school, and the kids were exposed to a lot of, the vocabulary was heavier, and more extensive. See what I'm saying? So, um, the kids didn't depend on me as much, as far as accessing prior knowledge. Whereas here I have to almost like pull it out of the kids, like 'what is a busy day like?' You know, they couldn't identify with that, 'what is a busy day.'"

"Because when I grew up ... I was from a poor family, [many] kids, we had the same value system as the kids across the tracks who had money and middle class. We had the system, you know, 'do not cheat, do not steal, do your work.' But now it's different. Kids who are poor, sometimes parents use that as an escape goat not to teach the values. You know, now it's different. Kids who are poor, sometimes parents use that as an escape goat not to teach the values. You know, so it's like today, one of the questions I asked the group was, a reading survey, how often do you read – once a week, once a month, once a year? One kid wrote, 'a lot.' What is that? You know? (Laughs) So, I guess, one of the, I guess in teaching literacy there's so many strategies you have to use, and you have to find out what works, and you do that, you first have to assess the needs of the kids, and their experiences. And you go from there. You see what I'm saying? I look at the emergency cards to see the working parents, non-working parents, all that I take into consideration before I attack the group. Because I have some kids who fly a lot – who go in the airplane and fly, and some kids who've never been out of Watts. So, the vocabulary is limited, or just geared towards what they see on television."

"And my Mom was really a stickler for education. You may have to wear the same outfit two or three times a week; it was clean, but in other words, she stressed those principles. Do you see what I'm saying? You've got to read, and, you know, you have to sit down ... and it was so easy for the family to read. I guess, to me I'd say it has something to do with, I probably shouldn't say this, but I think from this working with kids, some things are just genetic, you know. Really, I do, about some things. Because I've had a family come in, and just the whole family is slow, you know?"
Lillian compared herself to her students (formerly in the predominantly middle-class [San Fernando] Valley, now in Watts) in terms of differences in values – including a linkage of reading with "you have to sit down" – and in terms of reading in the home, vocabulary, and "genetics." In this part of her narrative, Lillian is using multiple voices, as described by Strauss (1990), to build an explanatory system that borrowed from controversial and conflicting 'expert' understandings, and from her commonsense understandings of race, family, learning, and achievement (e.g. Gould, 1981; Hernstein and Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1968 in Tucker, 1994; Linde, 1993). In the excerpt from her narrative quoted earlier, she accounted for her own inadequate vocabulary and trouble on standardized tests by citing her family's poverty and her rural upbringing. To account for her own and her siblings' achievements she emphasized her mother's values and reading in the home. Elsewhere, Lillian noted that her mother moved the family to another town when she found that outdated textbooks were used in the local schools. In this model, Lillian asserted that poverty constituted an inability to engage in experiences that would support a larger or better vocabulary. She spoke of "middle-class" values "do not cheat, do not steal, do your work" as if the values were inherent among middle class persons, and as if literacy was a signifier of the middle class and their values. What is unspoken in this relational ordering is the apparent supposition that such values are not inherent among the poor. That is, only if poor people (as she was) or her students learned and applied the values (versus attaining them naturally), they
would no longer be poor, unless there were "genetic" reasons to account for learning problems.

Vela is an African-American journalist from the Midwest. She also acknowledged the influences of her family, but unlike Lillian, Vela was not the first generation to be college-educated, although her family was not well-to-do. In her literacy history narrative, Vela explained that she always knew (from first grade) that she was smart because of the way her teachers responded to her; she contrasted herself to a boy in her class who was "dumb" defining him partially by how he ended up (in jail). In response to the question 'How is your own literacy background reflected in your work?' Vela invoked family attributes, parent literacy habits, and the availability of and her love of books to account for her choice of profession. Something she noted earlier in her narrative, but which she does not mention in the example below is that she was one of a very few African Americans chosen to attend a prestigious private school on scholarship because of her race and her aptitudes. But what was lost in her image of herself as a prototypical achiever from a prototypical family was the confluence of an invitation to the private school inspired by (at the time) civil rights era consciousness, being "smart," and being in the right place at the right time.

Vela

"I’m the fourth generation of college-goers in my family, always around books. I learned from my mother, who is a genius, (we call her the answer woman, she hates that), how to synthesize a lot of information. She taught us how to find answers; we would go to the dictionary, and to the world book encyclopedia. Now I do it quickly, almost without thinking, which has helped me as a reporter."
I consider my writing ability separate from reading – newspaper writing can be formulaic; half the time I already have a frame of reference for any subject because I read so widely, it broadens my knowledge. When I'm writing I compartmentalize [but] writing for myself is pure pleasure. I see writing as unrelated, very different from reading. Writing for work represents the institutional viewpoint of the paper. It can be formulaic. I'm not necessarily proud of it, although it has received awards (glances at office wall). Writing for myself is part of who I am...”

It was not unusual for the participants in this study to speak from more than one point of view; there are many more examples of this in the following chapters. Vela referred to compartmentalizing in the example above, suggesting that it is possible to represent the institutional viewpoint of the paper as if she may not be representing her own viewpoint. She drew a distinction between that (formulaic) writing and “writing for myself” as “part of who I am.” Her intention was not to completely divorce herself from responsibility for her professional writing; in several other comments she spoke of the fulfillment of creative writing done outside of work as if I would understand that it was inherently more rewarding than formulaic writing for work. Yet her insight about thinking of one’s identity in compartments implicitly recognized what Strauss (1990) called belief “containment,” illustrating not only conscious perceptions regarding which kind of writing is most fulfilling. In the example above, Vela later integrated her unusual opportunity to participate in a race and class-dominated education experiment as a youngster, with her explanations of how her literacy experiences influenced her work. In her comments addressed in chapter four, Vela drew on being chosen to integrate a prestigious private high school as a salient example of her beliefs about education in general – that is, all
children should have “opportunities.” The constituents of such opportunity were clearly not luck nor fairness nor high quality, challenging education for all, but being “smart,” being recognized by other “smart” people, leading to the possibility of “choice.”

The teacher, Lillian, specifically injected her “ways of speaking,” and Lillian and Vela (the journalist) spoke of race and class earlier in their narratives than most other study participants, but all ultimately directly or indirectly referenced the simple, but effective, ‘story’ signifiers of race, class, language and achievement. Lillian’s explanatory system contained elements from both Paco’s and Ed’s explanations; she was, like Paco, aware of the influences of her family’s modeling, values, and achievements. Yet Lillian and Vela engage in the dominant discourse that ascribes (inherent) deficiencies to being poor and black, or poor and Latino; deficiencies that may be true for others, but not for them.

The Significance of Explaining and Being

Participants’ diverse use of linguistic strategies suggested their interests in achieving not only narrative coherence, but coherence of actual life experience—e.g. my life has meaning and literacy is meaningful in my life (Linde, 1993). But more than this somewhat unremarkable insight is that speakers seemed to weigh, measure, organize and direct their literacy experiences in a kind of idealized socio-relational imagery. The two alternative
images consisted of either a naturalized (e.g. inherited) state of being, or a painfully cobbled together state of being, born of parents’ or one’s own sacrifice.

The factors emphasized and positioned differentially in Figure 3.1 and 3.2 below represent the causal connections suggested by participants. These schemas focus on perceptions about the influences of family literacy habits on children. I have not tried to capture race or gender in these schemas, but it may be significant that three of the four people of color, and/or whose mother tongues are not English are represented in Figure 3.2. More complex perceptions about class, such as those proposed by Lillian and Vela at the end of the last section, are addressed more fully in the next and later chapters.

In Figure 3.1, 13 of those interviewed (all of whom speak English as a first language, including Vela, who is African American) reasoned about literacy in a way that suggests the connections shown (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). All but two participants “placed” themselves in the upper left quadrant. The principal Margaret described her background as consistent with the upper right quadrant. The principal Jill did not indicate her parents’ socio-economic status. Five participants (including Lillian, Paco, Deon, and Cyra (all teachers) and Ed, a journalist) reasoned about literacy in a way that suggests the connections made in Figure 3.2. Labeling differences in the two figures result from participants’ relationship of categorization to cause and effect (Quinn and Holland, 1993). Some participants in 3.1 cited teacher behaviors and school methods (not represented in the two schemas) as reasons for later success in schooling and/or (among educators) as models for their own teaching philosophies and practices.
This contrasts with examples offered by those who are represented in Figure 3.2. Five of the 18 participants have teachers as parents; four of these are among the group represented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Mental Map – Literacy Bequeathed/Inherited (13 participants): [Entitlement relative to parent values, habits and status ...]

![Mental Map Diagram]

The significance of family was usually illustrated through examples of books or other reading matter in the home, and the extent to which parents were readers and writers. Two variations on this theme that helped speakers to elaborate their perceptions of causation were parents' ages, education and/or professions - illustrated in the schematic (mental map) differences. The essence of these variations seems to be (in 3.1) parents are better literacy models if they have professions, are more highly educated, and/or are older when they have children. This "unmarked" ideal cognizes the common perception among all
participants that parent literacy habits influence children. Those represented in Figure 3.2 qualified the ideal in the sense that it is one to which they may aspire, but it was not what they experienced. A significant difference between the two schemas is that language per se was never mentioned by those represented in Figure 3.1, but those represented in Figure 3.2 noted language (as in parent concerns, attitudes of teachers, affect on standardized test achievement, and so on) to be a problem. Ed was the only person in this group with standard English v. e.g., Lillian's Ebonics, as his first language. The five participants represented in Figure 3.2 (three of whose first languages were not English) more often foregrounded teacher behaviors and school methods and requirements (not represented in the two schemas). Such foregrounding served to highlight the education experience as hindrance to their confidence or achievement in school, in spite of parents who worked hard, valued education, read at home, and so on.

Figure 3.2 Mental Map – Literacy Earned / Or A “Right” (5 participants):
[Sacrifice relative to parent values, habits and status ...]
Among participants such as Paco, Deon, and Lillian and Cyra (in Figure 3.2), the significance of language in relating literacy to Ebonics or to a mother-tongue other than English, as well as references to class, ethnicity and national origin, illustrate perceptions of the “distribution of social power” (Gee, 1991). We also see this in how speakers whose first language is English (represented in 3.1) build up one explanation of events by minimizing or erasing another. For instance, few of the thirteen represented in 3.1 accounted for their parents’ education levels or career opportunities as “lucky,” or as related to preferential social and institutional structures, or to naturalized privilege of dominant viewpoints; Ana was one exception to this. The strategies used by 13 of the 18 participants tended to naturalize their educational and professional successes as due to attributes inherent in parents rather than historically contingent social opportunities. Naturalizing approaches diverted their own and the listener’s attention from explanations other than what’s right and natural for learning how to read, write and be. Although Paco, Lillian (3.2) and Vela (3.1) raised issues which directly challenged a naturalized model, Lillian and Vela (both African-American), among others, applied dominant discourse propositions relating class, race and language to problematic school achievement while explaining their own and their siblings’ achievements as anomalous.
Summary

This chapter has been an introduction to participants’ responses to the initial questions of the semi-structured interviews (i.e. literacy history; how does your literacy history relate; and/or how did you come to be an educator or journalist). Participants have a common framework for understanding how their literacy experiences have shaped them (usually related to family values and habits), but quite different perspectives on how to understand themselves related to literacy in wider social contexts. The ways in which participants spoke of learning to read and write both filtered and indexed identity as an interior perception (e.g. this is who I am) and in terms of social relationships to others (e.g. this is why I am). The two schemas represented in figures 3.1 and 3.2 are highly simplified versions of even the most general differences that were apparent in speakers’ constructions of themselves. The schemas are nevertheless useful as reference points to explanatory systems (Linde, 1993). The schemas are also visual introductions to implicit constituents of ideology explored in the following chapters.
CHAPTER FOUR
BECOMING AND BEING TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

Introduction

In Chapter Four I examine educators’ comments and reflections in responses to questions about choosing the education profession, and their teaching and/or administrative practice(s) with students from diverse economic, ethnic/cultural and language backgrounds. Educators’ and journalists’ reflections and commentaries on the statist and media touted “literacy crisis” are explored in chapters five, and six.¹⁹

There are two analytical objectives for the responses I address in this chapter. One is to determine to what extent and in what ways teachers and principals may have retained themes, language conventions, and/or explanatory models from the literacy history (chapter three) narratives. The purpose of looking for consistency in mode and content of explanations is to understand the relationship of discursive practices to identity construction. There are broad implications to the ways in which educators constructed their individual and collective notions about themselves, and the students and communities they

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¹⁹ Representations about literacy in Los Angeles Times’ writing, as in relationships between reading, writing, family, language, culture, school, work, politics and the economy, were introduced in chapter one, and are addressed fully in the Reading by 9 chapters seven and eight.
serve, in a social environment in which educators and the education system are under intense scrutiny.

Such implications are partially addressed through my second analytical objective – to assess whether Gee’s (1991) notions about literacy were in any way present in educators’ responses. Gee (1991) suggests that literacy is the “control of secondary uses of language,” or the habituated routines of language used outside family or other intimate domains. Gee is attempting to show that familiarity with and ease of expressing and acting out, or on, ideas, behaviors, language conventions, institutions, and social “connections” relevant to a dominant discourse (or a discourse that leads to social goods) are at the heart of a “dominant literacy,” or literacy that is a materially and symbolically effective social resource (Gee, 1991, p. 8).

Gee’s (1991) definitions provided analytical foundation for and insight into educators’ constructions of social context and identity. Understanding literac(ies) as social resources with symbolic and material force was an entrée to implications of constraint or the potential for agency in thought and action as participants’ offered examples and ideas about cause and effect (see also Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). The extent to which an idea of literacy is more or less closely related to identity, interests and values appears indicative of its potential force.

I address the answers to two general and several related follow-up questions asked of the six teachers and six principals. The general questions asked in this order were:
1) "How did you get into teaching [or administration]?" and, "how did you decide to teach primary rather than another grade level [or be a principal of an elementary school]?

2) "Tell me about teaching?" or, "Tell me about being a principal?"

The follow-up questions varied depending on how each educator responded to each general question. I typically asked follow-up questions to provide or obtain clarification. Other follow-up questions were attempts to determine how and why the teacher or principal decided something, took action, drew a conclusion, and so on, in order that s/he had the opportunity to state meaning or context. If a follow-up question was called for in order to clarify, or because of an overly brief or general response, I used the speaker's words from an earlier response when possible, such as "you mentioned ..." "your example was..." or "help me understand...". Typical examples of follow-up questions, numbered to show relationship to the primary interview questions noted above, included:

1) "Why do you do this work?" or, "What have you learned?"
   "What is most rewarding about your work?"
   "What attributes make a good teacher [principal]?"

2) "What could you say from your own experience, and / or from your training about how kids learn?"
   "What role do you think a person's social experiences play in formal education?"
   "How do you get to know your students? What's your process for that?"
“What is the role of formal testing vs. informal observation in your teaching?” or, “How do you determine how your kids are doing, or the ways you know that ‘my kids are making the kind of progress that I want them to?’”

I applied some of the same analytical constructs to interviewees’ responses that I used in earlier chapters. I looked for themes, language conventions or reasoning chains within and between speakers’ responses to various questions (D’Andrade, 1993; Keesing, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993). I also applied Strauss’ (1990) notions regarding the ways in which one speaker may employ implicit and/or explicit theorizing, sometimes to expound conflicting social ideologies without apparent awareness. Strauss suggests that multiple, sometimes conflicting points of view may be kept cognitively separate because a speaker considers each important to her/his individual or group identity. Further, the manner of separation of the viewpoints (or “internalization” – related to perceptions of individual and collective identity) contributes to an individual’s ability to perceive or not perceive possible conflict of the ideas stated (Strauss, 1990, pp. 313-315, 323; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

Certain ways of explaining, as in Dorothy’s comments about bilingual education in this chapter, and Stephen’s comments about “high and low dialects of English” in the next chapter, may be advanced in the form of personal or professional examples. Explaining restricted to anecdotes is an illustration of
implicit theorizing, or ideas which are actually more like impressions of causal relationship, being held in memory as the "knowledge of what goes with what" (Strauss, 1988 in Strauss, 1990, p. 314). Explicit theories, according to Strauss, are propositions that may be contained for example in brief aphorisms or in linkages of several causal chains. Both implicit and explicit kinds of explanations are present in educators’ reflections.

Educator Profiles

The following tables (4.1 and 4.2, respectively) contain teacher and principal profile summaries to aid the reader with context. More detailed profile information on educators is contained in chapter three. All twelve educators are represented in the following analysis, but not in any particular order. The profiles above will be referenced to provide context for quotations and analyses.

Table 4.1

Teacher Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School locations/ Teacher names</th>
<th>School demographics</th>
<th>Teacher gender</th>
<th>Teacher language &amp; ethnicity</th>
<th>Teacher experience/ grade assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAUSD/ Lillian</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; some working-class African-American &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English/Ebonics; African-American</td>
<td>30 years; currently teaches third grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles/ Paco</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; English; Mexican- American</td>
<td>7 years; currently teaches third and fourth grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| School Locations/ Principal names | School demographics | Principals’ genders | Principals’ language & ethnicity | Principals’ experience/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles/ Deon</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Tagalog &amp; English; Filipino-American</td>
<td>7 years; currently teaches mixed grades / disabled students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles/ Wendell</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>Five years; currently teaches third and fourth grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles/ Dorothy</td>
<td>Middle-class; Euro-and Korean-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>10 years; has taught primarily first grade and K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westside/ Cyra</td>
<td>Middle and upper class Euro-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English and Persian; Middle-eastern-American</td>
<td>3 years; currently teaches third grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2
Principal Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Locations/ Principal names</th>
<th>School demographics</th>
<th>Principals’ genders</th>
<th>Principals’ language &amp; ethnicity</th>
<th>Principals’ experience/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAUSD/Jill</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; some working-class African-American &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English;/ Euro-American</td>
<td>10+ years as principal, including; 4 years as assistant. Taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Los Angeles/ Lela</td>
<td>High poverty &amp; working-class Latino-Filipino- &amp; Armenian-American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English &amp; Spanish; Euro-American</td>
<td>10+ years as principal; taught for 10+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections from Literacy Histories to Professional Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In chapter three, I introduced the analyses of educators’ and journalists’ literacy history narratives with the idea that explanatory systems bring coherence to narratives (Linde, 1993). The vehicle used by most educators (and journalists) to bring coherence to, or to make sense of their experiences was the ontological significance of family and its relationship to development of values, habits, preferences, and general social competence. Another frequently used discursive strategy was two versions of a similar metaphor; one version expressed literacy as being inherited while the other version expressed literacy as being earned through sacrifice (i.e. becoming literate or obtaining literacy is either easy, natural and rewarding, or difficult, tense, and not always rewarding).</td>
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Educators used certain schemas to illustrate experiences in ways that advanced the ideas of literacy inherited versus earned via sacrifice – or as Gee (1991) might characterize them, acquired versus learned literacy. Paco used the example of being “stuck” because of practices of labeling and tracking in grade school, of nearly losing out on a college preparatory curriculum because of a teacher’s assumptions about him, and of having his educational goal thwarted because of a professor’s bias. Lillian also cited great difficulty, which she ascribed to her family’s poverty, the inadequacy of her early schooling, and standardized tests biased in favor of those with wider experiences and hence more developed vocabularies. Cyra and Deon, both of whose first languages (along with Paco) were languages other than English, said they struggled with some aspects of school because of language or the language attitudes of instructors.

The importance of family remained salient in Paco’s and Lillian’s examples in this chapter. Both used examples of parents who were not highly educated but who valued education to promote an idea of up-by-your-bootstraps in the face of systemic inequities. Among educators who did not remark on any or very few problems in education, the influence of values or habits learned early in life to later choices was marked in diverse ways.

Educators whose experiences were somewhat “in-between” e.g. teachers Dorothy and Cyra and principal Rosalie who cited mild difficulty with early schooling/reading, did not become readers-for-pleasure until well into adulthood. None of these individuals suggested in the remainder of their
narratives that their lack of interest in reading for pleasure in any way limited their opportunities or ability to recognize or take advantage of opportunities.

Among those educators who either ascribed surmounting early schooling problems to help from caring teachers (i.e. Rosalie), or who were deeply impressed by nurturing and supportive teachers (Margaret, Willa, and Wendell), those traits became emblematic not only of good teaching, but of the identity of the educators themselves. However, among those educators who cited experiences with negative or hurtful teacher practices (Lillian and Paco), the opposite traits (being nurturing and supportive) also were said by them to be emblematic of good teaching and of their identities. Those educators who construed their youthful experiences with teachers as neither highly positive nor negative (Dorothy, Deon, Cyra, Ana, and Jill) – if they spoke of them at all – did not dwell on attributes of teachers or themselves. Some hint of Jill’s perceptions in this regard, however, was evident in the site plan she shared, which stated a goal of the education environment was to be “nurturing” in order to help students find meaning in their schooling experiences beyond learning to read and write. For the one principal under age 40 (Ana), and two of the five over age 40 (Lela and Willa), there was some anguish about the presumed or stated expectation by parents, other adults, and/or the women themselves, that being a teacher was the only professional option open to them. This is discussed in some detail below.
In the following sections I have reviewed the responses to two main\textsuperscript{20} and several follow-up questions stated in the introduction to this chapter. To assess narrative continuity, I tried to determine if educators extended and elaborated the explanatory patterns from their literacy histories into explanations for how they came to be educators (Linde, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993; Strauss, 1990). The section "Becoming an Educator" therefore mentions those patterns from the earlier analysis (chapter three) that seem related to educators' descriptions of meaningful events or life choices which may be inhabited by and/or a critique of a discourse of privilege, or "dominant discourse" (Gee, 1991). Because one person's narrative may exhibit comfort or collaboration with a privileged discourse and yet contain critique (i.e. Strauss' [1990] conflicting ideologies notion), in the section "Being an Educator" I looked for the extent to which educators' statements of principle and descriptions of their working lives represented such duality.

Becoming Educators

Choosing to be a teacher

Some educator and journalist responses illuminate the qualified nature of choosing. When we think of choosing (a college major, a career, and so on) the implication is that the act is free if not always informed. Several educators made

\textsuperscript{20} "How did you get into teaching [or administration]?” and, “How did you decide to teach primary rather than another grade level [or be a principal of an elementary school]?” “Tell me about teaching?” or, “Tell me about being a principal?”
it clear choosing is not always free of one or another kind of social restraint. For teachers Deon, Paco and Cyra, teaching was their second choice of professions. What is common among the three is their own or family immigrant experiences, and having a primary language other than English. But each constructs meaning around becoming an educator as much from their differences as their commonalities.

Principals Lela, Ana and Willa, (all six principals started as teachers) described teaching as the profession that was either expected of them as women, and/or in Ana’s case, a “fall back” profession. These educators each grew up in comfortable middle-class homes; each in diverse ways offered critiques of gender, language or culture biases. Another explanatory approach proposed by several teachers and principals was the idea of being a “born teacher,” being “destined” to teach, or “called” to teach. These explanations sound similar, but as I pointed out in chapter three, are quite diverse. The diversity of experiences related to the concepts of being born to teach or called to teach, as rationalized in perceptions about what it means to be an educator, the significance of having parents who are educators, and/or related to experiences of education inequity, represent either a collaboration with or a critique of a discourse of privilege.

The three teachers – Deon (Tagalog), Cyra (“Persian,” probably Farsi) and Paco (Spanish) – have certain language and immigrant experiences in common, but Deon’s and Cyra’s parents are educated professionals, and Paco’s parents are working class. In various ways, each expressed difficulty with schooling. Deon didn’t learn English easily, and this was very troubling to him because he
considered himself more than equal to the content he was being taught (in English-only, no Tagalog allowed) in a private school in the Philippines. Paco acquired conversational English early, acting as an interpreter between his parents and English speaking neighbors at the age of five, but perceived that tracking and later, some teachers' attitudes, would have held him back had he not tried harder than other students, and spoken out in his own defense. Cyra does not remember when she learned English, assuming it was before she went to school. But because she invariably had trouble with grammar and writing in middle and high schools (but not in college) she was not sure whether her lack of native English and/or teacher attitudes contributed to her difficulties.

For Deon and Cyra, class – as in the potential advantages or disadvantages of having more or fewer resources – was relatively unmarked in their emphases on the difficulties they associated with language or culture infused education experiences. Having to learn in English without primary language support (Deon), or simply not understanding what teachers wanted (Cyra), were examples they offered without my asking whether they had had “trouble” in school. It is potentially significant, however, that Paco, the only one of the three with a working class background, focused on ways that his class or his language/culture background seemed to be related to being tracked in the early grades, overlooked by a high school teacher for an honors course, and specifically threatened and insulted by a university professor.

The second primary commonality among the three is that each had looked forward to a profession other than teaching. I do not suggest that it is unique for
anyone to start out with one goal and then change her or his mind, or that there is some causal connection between having language- or culture-related trouble in school and becoming a teacher. However, according to self-reports from Deon and Paco, their hopes for training in other professions were lost – for Deon from lack of funds, and for Paco from a "choice" forced on him due to a professor's discriminatory practices. In contrast, Cyra was able to realize her choice to become therapist, but found it not to her liking.

CC:  "How did you decide to become a teacher?"

Deon: "I wasn’t going to be a teacher; I was going to be a doctor. So I went to pre-med, and I finished that in several years, in six years, and that’s a long time. I got invited to go to the University of the Philippines. And most brainiacs go there. Before you can go to that university, they give you a test; you have to make the cut. You don’t make the cut, you can’t go in there. So that’s where I went. Unfortunately, unlike other private universities, where they want to make sure that you’re done in four years, and they breathe on your back, this is like a laid back university, where they expect you to study on your own because you’re supposed to be a brainiac. But that wasn’t a match for me. Because I came from a private grammar school and high school, where someone was breathing on my back, you know, wonders what I’m doing. Checking on my grades. Making I’m sure I’m doing this homework and everything. And then all of a sudden there’s this change from that kind of situation to a situation where you can go to class if you want to. But you can’t pass the test if you don’t go to class. So six years in college, then I took the test for medical school. And I made the cut, I actually made the cut. Because of genes (laughs). So anyway, I applied and I got accepted. And then there was a problem involved, monetary. Can I afford to go to medical school. And that’s when it set in, no I can’t, I can’t. So instead of that I went to graduate school, and I got my master’s in special education."

CC:  "How did you choose that?"

Deon: "Well, my pre-med is actually in speech pathology. So when I was doing my clinics, I saw a lot of patients who had Down syndrome, and cleft palate, mental retardation, and all that good stuff. I was actually
exposed in two settings, the clinical setting and the educational setting. And I was really good when I was in the educational setting. I was a match for little kids."

CC: "And now you are here. How did that happen?"

Deon: "Interesting. Um. After I got my masters I worked for a couple of years in the Philippines, and then my family migrated over here. So I went with them, and I got a job right away. Because, because of my background. It's difficult to see a teacher who has a strong background in language. And who's teaching special ed. Most of the time, or more often than not, when you have a child in special education, that child's needs is primarily language. So I was a perfect fit, so they got me right away. And fortunately I proved to myself to be good at that."

CC: Paco, you did go to college; you made a choice to go to college (?)

Paco: "Yeah, well, going on to Cal ... was a big, major step. My cousins that are older than I went to school, but they were schooled locally, so they lived at home. And so, just before I went on to Cal ..., I thought a lot of different things, and I thought well, maybe I don't really want to move away. And I spoke to, um, at the time I was really into going to church, and all that, I was involved in youth groups and all that, and I spoke to a deacon, who was actually, maybe four or five years older than I was. And I respected his opinion, and we talked a little bit. And, we must of talked, off and on, over the last few months of my high school year. But we were talking a lot right about February, right when I had to send in all the paperwork. And he said, well think about it. He says ... you can save money, and do this. But if you really think this is an opportunity for you to really get out there, and really learn, then you should take it. And just him saying that made me decide. So I did. I went up to Cal ... as a, as an architecture major."

[Paco's remembrance regarding the professor who called him a "lazy spic", presented in chapter three, is located at this point in the narrative.]

"It was '89; it was '89 when this happened. And it's still not very diverse, and this is 10 years later and it's still not that diverse. But, so, they investigated some more. And the next quarter, I kind of took off. I only took six units. Trying to gather myself. And I did well in the six units, but, two classes, you know? And I got a job, and I started doing things at school so I could support myself, 'cause my Dad could no longer pay for my school. And I didn't want to drop out. I decided that was not the
thing I wanted to do. I went and talked to my advisor. And my advisor says well, you know, between you and me, he goes, if you say it EVER, I will deny it, but between you and me, this is the attitude he does have. That professor. So, he goes, I'm sorry that you hadda go through, he goes. But, what I've been advised to tell you is that, if you'd like to change majors to anything, we'll make it easier for you. So I said, that sounds like an idea. So I changed to history. So that's what, I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I decided that something I really enjoyed was history. So, that's why I started on this.”

CC: And your decision to become a teacher, Cyra, tell me about that.

Cyra: “I don’t know; it just happened. I had originally gone into psychology after graduate school for one year. And it just didn't feel right, having a desk job. It just, I got very antsy, I feel like I need to be doing more. It seemed like a waste of time. Everything seemed to be going in slow motion. It was very bizarre. And everyone was fine with it; but I felt like everyone was going so slow. And so, I had taught Kindergarten when I was in graduate school at an uncertified type program. It wasn't a public school, it was more of these private-type Montessori, but it wasn't a Montessori, but it was similar to that. So I was the Kindergarten teacher from 10:30 to 6:30, it was 2 and one-half hours in the morning of Kindergarten, and the afternoon it became the daycare. So I got comfortable in that setting, and then I went to night school for graduate school. And so I got comfortable with that. So that's, I just kept thinking about that, and also because my parents are teachers/ /”

CC: “So that had an effect/ /”

Cyra: “Oh, completely. It's just a hereditary thing.”

CC: “What does that mean?”

Cyra: “I think that it just means that you, not that all teachers are like this, but then again all teachers aren't good teachers either. But I think when someone says they are a born teacher that means that they are a leader, they like to take charge, they have ideas and aren't afraid to express them, they don't mind talking in front of groups, at a certain point. That doesn't mean you like to talk in front of your peers, but you know, at a certain level. There is a certain level of high school where I would be uncomfortable. But, what else does it mean? It means that you can handle a lot of tasks at one time; you don't mind things not being the same everyday, because they are always, everyday is going to be different.
There's no consistency, so you don't have that comfort, which becomes comfortable that it's not the same everyday. Things are going at a faster pace, and all of these things are what I think eventually then contribute to burning out as a teacher (laughs). Yeah, so, you know, they work for you, but the fact is that as you get older, you just get more tired, and it just gets harder. You know, I've even noticed, this is my fourth year, and even I've noticed that it's a lot different.”

Cyra had introduced the idea of being a “born teacher,” using the phrase “it's hereditary” to create a connection between her parents’ professions as educators and her self-described leadership, creativity, and desire for variety. Although neither Deon nor Paco used the term “born teacher,” Deon noted that “… I was really good in that setting. I was a match for little kids.” Wendell’s experiences, later in this section, were similar. Lillian approached the question about how she came to be an educator somewhat differently.

Lillian is an African American teacher with many more years' experience than Deon, Paco, Cyra, Wendell or Dorothy. Lillian preempted my question about how she came to be a teacher, explaining that she was inspired to teach by her observations of how she and other poor children were treated differently in school. Teaching was her first choice, and one that she continues to be happy about. She was, as she termed it, “called.”

CC: When you went on to high school, Lillian, did you feel that you got the support there to really tap into your talents?”

Lillian: “Yeah. No, I did! Because my Mom moved us. What happened, we were in a school district where the books were obsolete, and so she was one of those parents who was just very assertive, you know, a very assertive black lady. And what she did was, she moved us from one town to another. Because the school district, because she found out that we were using outdated books. And she worked for this group of people, this
white family. And she saw their kids reading certain books, that, you
know like, why my kids aren't reading these books? This ain't right. So
what she did was she moved us from... [name of her hometown]. Mom
was just really a stickler for education. Matter of fact, all of us finished
college, have a college degree ....
She was unusual/ /

CC: "And did your Mom graduate from high school herself?"

Lillian: "Yes she did. And she's 80 years old. She used to teach. You
know, in those days, you could sub, she was a really sharp lady. But she
only finished high school. Isn't that something. I went to ... college in ...
and she says to me, 'Well, I have six teachers in this family, but you could
have been doctors and lawyers if [inaudible],' and I go, 'Mom, this is our
calling. I mean some people have musicians in their family, some have
people in sports, you know you have teachers, educators in your family.' I
wanted to be a teacher when I was about in 6th grade. That's when I
realized, 'cause being poor, sometimes you're treated differently than the
kids who dress better. I mean even kids in your own race, even the black
kids who were dressing better, make more money, parents who have a
different income? And so I said, you know what, and I was treated
differently, and only reason why times I wasn't was because I made better
grades. So I said, I'm going to be a teacher, and I'm going to treat the kids
right, and I'm not going to treat kids, because they're poor, any different,
you know, poverty stricken. I'm going to be a teacher and I'm going to be
different than that."

CC: "So you felt this calling very early?"

"Very early, uh huh, very early."

CC: "There are some teachers I talk to who say some people are born
teachers. Do you agree with that? And if so, what do you think that
means?"

Lillian: "Born teachers [said under her breath]? Well, you know what. I
think teachers are ... [says to herself] 'are they born teachers?' ... I think,
I don't know about born teachers. But I think everyone is given a gift.
Everybody has a talent. And if you have that talent, then the opportunity
is there for you to see if you really have it. Because for me I feel it's, it's,
it's, it could be a born thing, or it could be teachers are made. Because,
I've been teaching since I was 20 years old and I'm 50 now, and I'm not
tired, and I'm not stressed (laughs). So it's like, if you take it away from
me I probably would be sad. So I think then, that's what I'm supposed to
do. But I don't want to be a principal/ /"
Teaching was not the first choice for either or Deon, but Wendell, the only other male educator with whom I spoke, did choose education first.

CC: “So, Wendell, you became a teacher. You said you were very influenced by Mrs F., and you mentioned someone else [both his teachers in elementary school]. What, uh, got you into teaching, just those influences or something else?”

Wendell: “Well, I think we all reach that point where, for me it was starting up college and getting into my college experience, where I was starting to really look at what I wanted to do. And I started to look back at all the jobs that I had had, up into that point. And most of them related around working with others and working with children. I was a camp counselor for a number of years, and um was a mentor, and had done a few different projects through my high school and through the United Way when I was a senior in college, er, excuse me, when I was a senior in high school.

And it started off very limited. I was tutor for two children in the LAUSD. Both were second grade students, and they were both students who were coming to the United States and didn’t speak any English. So I was the tutor who was helping along, helping with English. And my Spanish was limited, but that was the language we were using. And that was really neat because my experience with them, you know, three times a week I was in there for two hours, and I was just kind of dialoging with them. And we were using a lot of, you know, ‘total physical response’, a lot of acting things out, a lot of pictures. Um, and, I remember thinking, ‘well, I’m making a difference because these kids are starting to understand a little bit about what I’m saying.’ You know the very first few days it was tough, tough getting along, um, so that was a good experience. And then from there, as we, as I got into the education department farther with some of the higher level coursework, um, I then moved into a different role. Instead of tutoring, I was now working in our literacy center at college. And actually I ended up getting the job here … because I student-taught here.”

“Um, and I’m glad I did that [get my Masters’] because when I came here to … as a first year teacher I felt very comfortable with subject matter, with how I wanted to run my classroom, and uh, so I think that overall that was a good decision for me to make.”

Wendell did not describe himself as a born teacher, nor did he ascribe his decision to heredity. In an explanation slightly more reminiscent of Lillian’s idea
that teaching is a "calling" – but without the impetus of personally experienced unequal treatment – he spoke of his choices to be involved with kids in paid and unpaid work in high school and college, and the ways in which he was "making a difference" and doing something "meaningful." Dorothy however used the phrase "natural teacher." This sounds similar to "born teacher," but for her it seemed to be a concept that knit together her mother’s influence (similar to Cyra’s reasoning), her early preferences for helping out with tutoring and in classrooms (similar to Wendell’s examples), with her enjoyment and the "ease" of it, especially compared to business as a college major. Dorothy is the one White, middle class teacher who briefly related some discomfort with reading out loud in the early grades because other children were good readers and she felt she was not. In contrast to other teachers or principals who experienced similar difficulties, Dorothy drew no specific connections from this to her decision to teach, her perceptions for what constitutes good teaching, nor to what teaching means to her.

CC: “How did you get into teaching?”

Dorothy: “Well, I think I’m a natural teacher. Ever since I can remember going and helping, and volunteering in classrooms when I was in fifth and sixth grades going and tutoring kids. When I was in seventh grade there was even a program; a class that you’d take and you’d go to elementary schools and work, and I did that. Then when I went off to college, I thought, well I’ll go into Business [as a major]. And I did that for a semester, and I thought, ooh, I don’t think I’ll do this. [Laughs.] And I got into the education department at [a State college]. And just kind of went from there. My Mom was a teacher, and I think that had a lot to do with it. And it was natural, it was easy for me, and I enjoyed it. And I got through the reading; I mean, it’s not like I can’t read, but I just, I never, the reading for enjoyment ... well, see how I read, if I’m reading I want to
finish the book. I can’t read a chapter or two and put it down, and go back to it, like that. And I’m worthless then.”

CC: “How did you decide to teach primary rather than some other grade level?”

Dorothy: “Oh, gosh. I don’t know if it was a conscious decision. I always thought when I was going through in education that I’d want to teach the junior high kids. I thought I was really good at that. Oh my gosh, I don’t know what I was thinking at that point. And then I did student teaching in the fifth grade. And I did student teaching in a three/four split. How I ended up in first grade is, when I first started teaching, I taught the third just because of need, you know, and being low man on the totem pole, I got stuck in a first grade class down in LAUSD, a bilingual first grade, yeah, very interesting, this was eight, ten years ago. Um, and I enjoyed it, and then I, we transferred to a different school because they’re rebuilding, and then again low man, and I was in K. Which I, I really enjoyed that. And then I went up to second grade, so I kind of stayed with the lower age kids. I really haven’t taught the upper grades. It wasn’t a decision, I said, I want this. But I really, really enjoy it!”

To what extent are these teachers constructing themselves in terms of, or through a critique of, a discourse of privilege? Paco clearly critiques a system that allows a professor at a state-supported university to treat a student the way he was treated. He developed the theme of himself as a deserving and capable outsider from early in his narrative, and maintained it throughout. Deon, despite his more middle-class background, took a similar approach. Each made language and culture symbolic of their outsider status, yet emblematic of their success in a profession which may not be highly paid, but which provides a platform from which they may have their say, and influence others. Both retained an emphasis on language as they talked about being a teacher, later in this chapter. Wendell mentioned language, relating his teaching experiences with language minority students to “making a difference.”
Cyra’s and Dorothy’s constructions of themselves as individuals and as educators are similar to each other, but different than those of Deon and Paco, notwithstanding Cyra having a primary language other than English. Cyra hinted at the possibility that teacher attitudes had something to do with why she was always “conferencing” with her teachers about her writing (quoted in chapter three), but she portrayed as relatively unproblematic her progress in higher education and in one credentialed profession and then another. She credited her ultimate choice of teaching to a kind of boredom with being a therapist, and to “heredity,” citing her personal attributes. Neither Cyra nor Dorothy seemed to question the roles and influences on their decisions of their parents’ example(s) and expectations, nor the advantage of parents’ resources, nor of primary grade teaching as a gendered social choice. Dorothy used the word “natural” in reference to her becoming a teacher, and mentioned her mother being a teacher when talking about her choice. Both women, as noted in the section “Being an Educator” later in this chapter, take a similar approach to teaching; each seems to appreciate it for the potential variation in each new day, seeing their students learn, and the relatively short hours. And both sought and obtained moves to “better” schools.

Lillian and Wendell, despite gender, race, class and culture differences, constructed their individual and collective identities around “making a difference,” an idea that proposes a social significance to their work not echoed by Dorothy nor Cyra, but exemplified in Deon’s and Paco’s prideful embrace of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
Principals Starting as Teachers

All of the six female principals began their careers as teachers, with all teaching for over ten years (four taught for more than fifteen years) before becoming principals. Rosalie is the one principal who indicated that she had some difficulty in learning to read, until she encountered teachers who were more encouraging and focused on "the positive." She described herself as intent on becoming a teacher, despite having trained rigorously for a profession in the arts, and she expressed no regrets about her decision. Rosalie used the phrase, "destined to be a teacher," which she explained in a way similar to Cyra's model of teacher attributes - leadership, knowledge to share, assertiveness - acquired partly from parental modeling. In the excerpt from Rosalie's narrative quoted in chapter three, she also noted that her early difficulties with learning to read taught her that teachers who emphasize the positive with children, and who are encouraging, affected her strongly.

CC: When you say sharing with other kids, can you give me an example of what you mean by that?

Rosalie: "Oh, bringing them in and playing school at the age of four. Somehow, I had this knowledge I wanted to share with others [laughs]. I was destined to be a teacher, I think. And I think parental background is very important."

[Can you say what that means in terms of your own experience?]

"Um, I think, um parents being, my parents being a model for me. Of encouraging education, encouraging learning, um, in the roles that they played. My Dad was a leader himself in the manufacturing field, and was very knowledgeable about that role and what it involved. So I think he
had a tremendous influence on me, as well as my mother supported education as well.”

“... I always had a strong interest in being a teacher. So I think my focus in that area was to excel. To do what I was told to do as a student. To read my assignments, to read my classics. Um, I didn’t really enjoy a lot of free reading time. I was training to be a professional musician. My father’s hope was that I would be a concert performer. So most of my free time was spent reading music. And practicing. And doing my homework. So I tended to focus more on what was expected because what was expected was so demanding that I didn’t have a lot of time for free enjoyment of reading. It hasn’t been until just, um, after leaving college that I’ve had a chance to really let myself enjoy some of those opportunities to read what I want.”

[Did you go to college to become a musician or to become a teacher?]

“No, I, it was just too demanding, so I let it go. My parents gave me a choice, and I said no, I want to focus on college, and I want to focus on, you know, becoming a teacher. Uh, doing well in school. And I was still very much in getting the grades. And I wasn’t still in the place of learning to, for learning’s sake. It was more, I needed to this to get the grade, and so forth. So a lot of what I did was reading for research. Um, papers that I had written. I was a very strong student, almost a straight A student in college, and really focused on learning.”

Margaret is another person who explained her decision to become a teacher as if she was “destined” for it (and without my asking her the question directly). She uses the phrase “there was never any question in my mind.” But in contrast to others who pointed to the significance of play, as in taking on the role of teacher while playing school (a way of saying that adult role-modeling is influential), Margaret stated that she made a conscious decision to be a teacher as early as the first grade. She connected that choice with what it meant to her to learn to read, as a way to become “smart,” and to physical impressions of being exposed to and enjoying the library, and (not quoted here) feelings of holding and carrying books. What she does not say, perhaps partly because I did not ask
her to do so, is why being smart, and spending so much time at the library held such significance. But her final words in the excerpt below indicate that she tied being smart so directly to reading and to her identity as a teacher that when she realized that her writing proficiency was limited she began to question what it meant to be a teacher.

Margaret: “And it was at first grade when I knew I was going to be a teacher. That was, from that point on I wanted to be like my first grade teacher. And reading was it. I remember right after that my parents, or my mother took me to the library, and to this day I have a memory of libraries as being very warm, being the place I always wanted to be. I wanted to go there on the weekends. It was close to our home, and so I was able to walk whenever I wanted to. And through my school years, I spent a lot of time in the library ... And I remember reading, it was important to me to read a lot. Because I guess that to me meant I was smarter...

“So then as I got older, and I went to... Oh, during that time, when I was in high school, I did a lot writing. But never really connected that to being... My thoughts were [still] that if you read a lot you would be smart. You would be a smart person. Writing was just something I loved to do; I like to write, to write poetry. And I wrote a lot of poetry. But that came directly from my feelings. And so that to me was, people read my poetry, and complimented me on it, but that really didn’t help me think that I was a smarter person. And in all actuality I was practicing a skill that was very important, but to me that was just my feelings coming out on paper.

Um, then, of course I went to college to be a teacher, because I knew exactly what I wanted to be. There was never a question in my mind that I wasn’t going to teach the rest of my life. Went to college to be a teacher, and during that time I met my future husband, and we married, and right away I had a child, and I continued my schooling. I think I was out one semester to have my child and then went right back to school and became a teacher. And still at that point, reading was what would make me a smart person. It was still reading. And I was thinking about this the other day, it is very, very strange that it took until my son was in school, when he was in, I think, high school, when there was such an interest in producing writers. And he was much like I was when he was younger, he would put his feelings down on paper a lot. But then when he had to do a writing sample, and had either passed or failed, and then it would be sent home, and he was having problems with these writing samples. And I would look at them and I’d go, you know, I really don’t know how to write. It was at that point, and I was an adult, and I was teaching, I really
don't know how to write. And then, I realized, well, if I don't know how, I'm not teaching. I'm not teaching it if I don't really know it myself. Because I'm not able to help him as much as I thought I should be able to.”

Willa, as one of three principals who expressed some mild regret about having become an educator because it was expected, raised the possibility that teaching is a gendered professional choice. She explained the events and decisions that led to her choice as having three sources. One source was her parents' experiences (having come through the depression and being security minded). Another had to do with her “not achieving her potential,” perhaps due to her father's death when she was 15; and the third had to do with what was expected of women at the time she went to college.

CC: How did you get from having a tough time in some of your classes in jr. high and high school to deciding to be a teacher? But instead of analyzing, talk to me about your experiences that led to that, or your decision process.

Willa: “Well, that embarrasses me (laughs) because being the 51 year old woman that I am, unfortunately, it just seemed to be a given. “

CC: Because that’s the way the times were?

Willa: “Right. The times were such that I was going to be a teacher. And that’s all my parents ever talked about. You know, I could have been a nurse. But teaching was of course considered a highly regarded profession, and a secure profession. And one of my father’s values was security. And I had very elderly parents relative to my peers. So should my father have lived, he would be, well, a hundred. And my mother died 4 years ago. She was 89. She was 43 when she had me. So security was very important. They had come through the depression, um, survived the depression well. But security was always on their minds. And the teaching profession was a nice secure presentable profession to be in. Um, really, I never thought to be anything else. I played school when I was little. My poor mother was my student. She would practically be falling asleep in front of my chalk board some nights, she was so tired. But I enjoyed it; and I enjoyed it a lot. And I respected my elementary teachers
immensely. And looked up to them as mentors. Um, I think, the high school years were difficult for me not only because I think the instruction was not as consistent with my learning style as elementary was, but also, my father died when I was 15. And I don't, I think looking back on it, I think I had some issues with that, that at the time weren't really understood. So I probably didn't have my mind quite fully able to attend."

CC: "So you were a little distracted by all that?"

Willa: "It's possible. It's possible. I was always a student who succeeded. But, I did not meet my potential. I was not succeeding to the degree that I did in elementary school, or the degree to which my teachers always said that I should be. I remember saying that I wasn't. Meeting my potential."

"So from a more difficult high school experience, I went on to a four year university. Ah, [a northeast] State University ..., which had a teaching program. I received my teaching credential. But um you couldn't major in education. I majored in psychology. And was thinking very possibly that I would become a school psychologist. So I wasn't, um, first getting the teacher degree, but very possibly later, was going into school psychology. And um during that time, I became a better student. I enjoyed more what I was doing. Enjoyed the field of psychology, and what I was learning. And that intrigued me, and I had a very successful student teaching experience."

Ana, also a principal in an Orange County beach community school, spoke about the ways in which her attributes and talents were developed and encouraged by parents and teachers in primary grades, but sometimes diverted or thwarted by teacher or schooling expectations in later school experiences. For Ana, teaching was not her first choice of profession, but as she put it, a "fall back" in order to make a living. Ana grew up in a privileged environment, and was identified in third-grade as "gifted." She made a choice in high school to develop her own arts curriculum rather than pursue the "gifted English" curriculum. She related this choice to several things, one being that she believed what she had been told by a teacher in grade school — "you will not be a good
writer.” Another aspect of her “shying away” from writing, and therefore the more rigorous requirements of gifted English, was that she was a high achiever in math and science. She attributed this to her father being a scientist, but she was not encouraged to pursue these talents, so she applied her facility with math to choreography.

Ana: “I actually went to UC... and majored in theater [laughs] – for all my math, science background! Because I had been a choreographer, I had choreographed dances, taught people to dance, um taught lots of singers that were not dancers how to dance. And um there’s a, almost a way of thinking and I can see how the math, and the logic, and sequential steps lent itself to the dance and the choreography. But then probably what led me to teaching is those early experiences teaching other people how to dance, how to move, breaking things down into their smallest parts to explain them to other people. Um, and so that’s probably, you know, I just wanted to follow a passion of the arts, where my academic strengths were probably in math. So um anyway I finished my theater degree, um which was a rigorous curriculum, um even though we had to do set design, and movement of the actor, and even costumes and makeup and things, we still had to take a foreign language, so I took Latin. Of course because I didn’t want to speak, and speak a foreign language! Um, and you know just theater history, art history, all kinds of general history courses, philosophy courses and things. And so, when I graduated, of course nobody, we think we’re paid poorly in education, people are really paid poorly in the theater. So um I kind of had gotten a credential as a senior, and had that as a fall back position, so I started teaching for LA unified, um right as, I didn’t have a 5th year, I cleared my credential later.

I was placed in a Spanish speaking classroom, and I spoke no Spanish. I had taken Latin. I had taken some Spanish in high school, but basically had gotten a B the whole time. I really felt I didn’t have an ear for languages. I thought of course I really was more this math, science person, and maybe language wasn’t my thing. But after, I just did one year in LA, and then I wanted to move back ..., so I went and interviewed and got a job in [the east county], after being one year successful in L.A. And [the school district] had a requirement to get your bilingual credential, and you had to go to Spanish classes. So I did have some formal support of Spanish classes, but then I also had an instructional assistant. And I taught second grade in a bilingual program, so they were still learning to read and write in Spanish. But their level of Spanish was pretty high. So where the aid did a lot of the comprehension questions, and things like that, and reading the story ... I would listen to kids read, and go over their workbook pages, and after um four or five years of
doing that I really learned to speak Spanish. But those early years of decoding the Spanish, and having the accent correct to give a spelling test and things, really tuned my ear, so I learned to speak Spanish. And I speak Spanish pretty well. People are quite surprised to see a [non-Latino] person speaking Spanish with that strong of an accent, that's actually appropriate."

Ana's and Willa's references to expectations of parents or educators regarding what they could or should do as adults indexes a gender-specific bias which appears to span two generations. Ana is about 15 years younger than Willa, yet Willa's experience (parents who assumed that she would be a nurse or a teacher) is different only in form, not in kind, from the absence of direction Ana experienced to capitalize on her love of and facility with math and science. These two individuals have clearly not just come to these insights in the interview(s) I conducted with them. As with the teachers, Lillian, Deon, Cyra and Paco (who suggested that language and/or language attitudes were signifier(s) of the quality of their literacy experiences), it appears that Willa and Ana have engaged in some introspection, and have made these explanations before – to others or to themselves.

Ana's and Dorothy's similar teaching histories among children whose first language was Spanish resulted in divergent professional development. Despite nearly 10 years teaching among language minority children, Dorothy was unwilling to assert that she could speak any Spanish, and she gave the impression that parents' lack of English language prevented her from communicating with them about their children. Ana, on the other hand, decided that she was wrong about not having "an ear" for other languages. When faced with the challenge of teaching non-English speaking students, she polished her
language skills in order to communicate effectively with students and parents. It is also an interesting irony that the supporters of the (successful) effort to dismantle bilingual education in California assert that it takes only one year of classroom English to prepare a speaker of another language to advance. Ana found, as a "gifted," college educated professional teacher, that it was five years of using Spanish in the classroom (with extra outside training) before she was fluent. After being a Title I resource teacher, Ana taught gifted bilingual children in upper elementary grades (not quoted here). Ana and Lela (below) have two things in common. One is a similar approach to the challenge of teaching language minority children; the other is, along with Willa, an awareness of the influence of gendered expectations.

Lela appeared to be expressing some mild regret about her decision to go into education, although in her literacy history reflection she spoke of her great enjoyment with being associated with her parents' (both are educators) and her own school activities. She related her choice to "marriage being more interesting," the ease with which she could enter the teaching profession (versus going on for a doctoral degree in psychology), and then making the joke that today she spends her time as a principal being a therapist anyway. Unlike Ana and Willa, she merely hinted at the extent to which she might have missed something due to circumstances. Lela expanded, like Ana, on her experiences working with non-English speaking students and the choices she made for greater professional development connected with her interest in effectively serving their needs.
CC:  "Did you go into administration right away?"

Lela:  "No, I taught for 17 years before I became a principal. And I actually, I got my Masters in bilingual / multicultural education, not administration. And then went back later and got my administrative credential. I got my bilingual credential along the way, and taught Spanish kindergarten for a long time. Which, that literacy was transitional, and kind of interesting. Not having any Spanish background, I mean in high school, but I couldn't communicate at all. And then being thrown into a classroom where I had kindergartners who didn't speak any English. So I learned from kindergartners how to speak Spanish, and then how to read it. I learned with them. It was a neat way to learn."

Jill, a principal in a south-central Los Angeles school, explained her decision to go into teaching not as destiny, nor related to play or adult expectations, although she appears to be of the same generation as Willa, but somewhat younger than Margaret. Instead, she used the phrases "natural outgrowth" of the "joy of learning." What another person might describe as the joy of learning could, of course, lead to almost any professional choice. Jill was referring to school learning, but without, for instance, the personal insights Margaret provided by connecting learning to read to becoming "smart," and to a sense of emotional well-being. Even though I asked some follow up questions, the last one fairly specific to try to evoke a personal anecdote or two, Jill maintained a consistently pleasant, but somewhat distant tone. While I regret not asking Jill to tell me what volunteer organization she belonged to, it seemed to be clear that she was making the point that school and reading were enjoyable and important in her life, and that this contributed to her "driving desire to help little people learn how to read."
CC: "You decided to go into teaching . . . tell me about that decision?"

Jill: "It was a natural outgrowth of experiencing the joy of learning. I wanted to bring that and share that with others. And I enjoyed very much working with youngsters. When I was in college I was part of a volunteer organization that did a lot of work with youngsters in the area. And I found I enjoyed teaching, or, volunteer assisting [laughs]. And I had a real need, and a driving desire, to help little people learn how to read."

CC: What would you relate that to?

"I think the excitement of ... learning about other things, experiencing other places, getting to know other experiences that maybe I hadn't actually lived through, but I could read about how people handled situations, or went to certain places, you know, had a broadening of their knowledge levels."

CC: "I grew up in the '60s and things like the Civil Rights movement and MLK's death had an impact on decisions I made in my life. Did things like that that were going on in society have any influence on your life choices?"

Jill: "Hmm. I think yes, I think that's true. The need for youngsters to be successful in whatever they do, was something that was very important in my situation, and I wanted to give others that same understanding. You can be anything, if you want it badly enough. And people will help open doors for you but you have to be able to have the skills ready before that door will open. You can be fabulous, unless you know not only how to present those skills, demonstrate those skills, but present yourself."

Jill is a principal of a school of approximately 2500 students. The school population is a mix of Latino and African American children, most eligible for free or reduced-cost meals. All but one of the eight schools at which I interviewed educators had at least 25 percent of the students eligible for free or reduced cost meals, a common indicator of socio-economic level. Jill, a native of the Los Angeles area, had been at the school for some time, but she noted to me
that she had taught "all over" the area. I asked her a number of questions about her students and teachers, as I did all the principals I interviewed. Each principal, whether she was located in an elite area, a high poverty area, or somewhere in between, was invariably complimentary of her teachers and students, yet willing to answer direct questions about, as I called them, the "hurdles" that existed which might make the learning environments challenging, if not problematic.

I attended a school function at Jill's invitation, and witnessed the emphasis on performance in a controlled setting which has apparently been the essence of school-wide events at least since I was in elementary school many years ago. What was familiar included a kind of happy buzz among teachers, students and parents until the performance began; teachers trying to keep young students in line; older students (about 11 years old) engaging in naively flirtatious play; and parents trying to control babies and toddlers while waving to and encouraging their school-age children. There were also several differences from my own experiences growing up in the Midwest, only one of which seemed unnatural to me. Jill spoke Spanish to some parents and students (something I did not hear from many teachers), as one might expect in an immigrant-rich region; most of the students and parents were people of color, representing a kind of diversity I did not have an opportunity to experience as a youngster. What seemed to me unnatural, however, was that while the school environment itself was clean and reasonably well maintained (in contrast to the
condition of many schools in the Los Angeles area), the overall look of the school grounds reminded me of a military or prison compound.21

There were few trees at Jill’s school, all but one located at the front of the school and/or outside the grounds and away from classrooms. A huge expanse of asphalt at the back of the permanent buildings (like a mall parking lot) was about half covered with temporary buildings housing small, dark classrooms, a common sight at LA area schools. The school was surrounded with a high, chain link fence having several locked gates through which children were allowed to come and go only with adult supervision. Fences around playgrounds and/or around the whole school existed at other schools I visited in high poverty areas, and were described to me to be necessary for the safety of the children. In wealthier areas, however, playgrounds were at least partly grass-covered, and trees or other landscaping were common.

These two stark, readily apparent differences – the overall size of the schools (for example, Rosalie’s school enrollment is about 500 students; Jill’s school enrollment is about 2500 students), and the aesthetic of the facilities, are related to funding disparities. While Jill’s school in south-central L.A., for

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21 My sense of unnaturalness surely comes, at least partly, from my experiences in a 1950s farm community that was transforming quickly into a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. My school was a new, “ranch style” building surrounded by grassy fields, with a patch of woods nearby, and bounded on one side by a stream. At least one wall of each classroom contained windows along its entire width. We played on grass or in the woods in good weather, and even sledded on the hilly part of the school grounds in the winter. The only asphalt we encountered paved the front driveway and the basketball court. Through our classroom windows, we observed the seasons changing, and I recall that those changes were incorporated into our science lessons and related to our history, literature and other studies.
instance, seemed to suggest a safe haven for children, it shared with other schools in economically poor areas a kind of temporary, war zone look and feel.

It did not occur to me to ask the educators what they perceived to be ideal, tolerable, or intolerable school facilities, nor what the sources of such perceptions might be. Some did comment on the meaning of their surroundings. Cyra, who had worked in a school in a poor area, but one less depressed than south-central, moved to an elite, west-side suburban school at least partly because "it was more beautiful" which "made her feel good about going to school everyday." Lillian, who worked in a south-central Los Angeles school, mentioned that teachers used to be enticed to teach in poor, urban schools by being offered "combat pay," an option not available for some years and the loss of which contributed to her perception that she is underpaid.

I wondered if the outward differences in the poor versus the wealthier schools translated into significant differences inside the schools. I also asked whether such differences might be less apparent to a person like myself, for instance, or journalists who visit a school for only a few hours or days, than to those who try to work and study in the vastly different environments (Kozol, 1991). In the next section, teachers and principals provided provocative insights about the places they worked; about what, how and why they teach, and about their students.
Being A Teacher or Principal

Teachers and principals sometimes answered questions intended by me to encourage personal information from their early lives (e.g. their literacy histories) by offering their views, definitions, and observations about education in general. I begin this section with these comments because they illustrate some ways in which educators expanded on what we know about them already as they continue to construct their individual and collective identities.

What is a Good Educator?

Attitudes about and behaviors with children.

Rosalie, a principal at a wealthy South Bay school in the Los Angeles area, offered what she called her “perspective about education and the teaching of reading” within the first moments of her response to the literacy history question. Through sharing the anecdote about her own experiences in learning to read, she proposed a model for teacher behavior based upon a specific cause and effect schema. There were a number of elements borrowed from educational theory (e.g. the negative effects of attention problems and school transiency), but these were made peripheral to her main point regarding the positive effects of teachers who focus on what students can do rather than what they cannot do. Nevertheless, the dichotomy of “bright” students versus those who took longer to absorb, and/or to perform on demand, is under the surface of Rosalie’s commentary, indicating a common schema that speed of response is equal to intelligence.
Rosalie: "Well I can share with you part of my perspective about education and the teaching of reading. When I began in the school program, my family moved around quite a bit. And I wasn’t able to get a very solid foundation. Kindergarten and first grade were very tough grades for me. I had difficulty, not only because of the break in school experiences, but also I think I had some mild learning problems, attentional problems at the time. I recall my early reading teachers being somewhat negative, and focusing on what one couldn’t do. And showing more appreciation for those students who caught on quickly. And not those of us who needed that extra helping hand."

Um, and then we moved schools, and I went to my fifth new school in third grade, and met an absolutely wonderful teacher who saw the positive in everyone. And, I immediately started to excel. I found that the teacher’s attitude and approach made such a difference. And that was the beginning point of me as a scholar. I was more of a behavior problem, in my early years. Because, from attentional issues, and because I didn’t feel successful. It was a real transition year for me.”

CC: “You called yourself a behavior problem, did that change too?”

Rosalie: “Yes! I was a perfect child after that. [Laughs.] Um, because I felt success in the academics. I just didn’t believe in myself as a learner ‘til I was eight years old, and had this wonderful teacher, and a series of other very positive teachers. Who helped me feel comfortable in learning, in, in taking risks.

We had, I had some very, kind of, harsh older teachers in my early experience. And you didn’t feel comfortable taking risks. So reading out loud was a high level of anxiety for, for those of us who weren’t doing well. And we, it was clear that we were in the lowest reading group. And we already..."

CC: “How did you know that?

Rosalie: “You just know that as a kid. Cause I, the teacher’s attitude toward the group. The fact that I, we hadda make books, if you can believe it, we hadda make books that indicated all the words that we had missed. Everytime we read with the teacher, we hadda make these little books. You know, I made mine quite beautiful, with flowers on it and everything. I can still see it. But it was filled with more words than most of my peers, and I knew. And from the teacher’s anger, at, ‘I just told you that word, why can’t you remember it’, at the table, uh, that when I/ the low group got up to read, that we were not the highest, or that we were the lowest group there. I think it was the anxiety, and the fear of taking
risks within the group. And being the very shy child that I was, it just was pretty deadly, as far as encouraging reading."

"It's really influenced what I feel is important over all in an educational program. And it influenced me as a teacher. Because instead of always favoring my bright students, I made a special effort to motivate them, but as well, recognize students who had difficulties and tried to pull out their strengths. And I think that continues to carry over in my work as a principal."

Willa is a principal in an Orange County school. Within the first few moments of her response to the literacy history question, Willa mentioned some of her earliest school memories. She emphasized how much she cared for her primary grade teacher, who taught only a few students in different age groups in one of the last one room school houses in her home state. She said that the teacher was "child-centered" and was like a "surrogate mother," attributes that she believed were important in primary grade teachers. These are valuable insights for understanding Willa's notions about what is a good teacher. Also illuminated are her perceptions about why she felt she had not "achieved her potential" in junior and senior high school, which she felt resulted from a mismatch between sequential teaching geared to auditory learning and her own holistic learning style.

CC: "You mentioned that some of your trouble in achieving to your potential may have had to do with your father's death, but you also commented on the style of teaching."

Willa: "I think also it's a level of maturity. I think children have to be ready for the types of materials they're expected to understand. Um, so I think it would be a combination. The primary teaching style of the high school teachers was the lecture mode. And so, in looking back on it, I think a child would have to be very strong auditorily to, um, succeed as well as one might. And I don't think it has anything to do with ability or
intelligence, I just think it’s the way, the optimum mode of learning that each of us has. Perhaps having gone into this field, I’m a little more cognizant of it now. And I know how I learn best, and that I’m a holistic learner. I need to have things presented to me first, and then sequential. Whereas, um, I think many of the teachers that I had were sequential learners, and therefore they presented in a sequential way. Without showing you the big picture, they would take the little parts, and start building on the parts. Well, if I don’t know where we’re going, I can’t construct that myself. And I think if I were teaching today, that’s one of the things I would be very careful about, is to present things to children, to know my style, and to make sure that I consciously and purposefully present information in a variety of ways, not just the way it’s comfortable for me. And certainly I’m not trying to imply blame in any way, it’s just I think at that time they didn’t know, and we didn’t know as much about the brain, or the way children, as people, learn, as we do today.”

Throughout her narrative, Willa was a one who most often specifically referenced “expert” educational models, such as the learning style model and the ideas about holistic and sequential teaching approaches and learning modes. She used these references to strengthen the kernel of argument from her anecdote about her teacher’s attributes in the one-room school house. In this combination of anecdote and invocation of what experts say, she has constituted a middle ground explanatory model, borrowing elements from scientific explanations and her own experiences to self-identify (Linde, 1993). Willa’s and Rosalie’s reflections on what teacher attributes are effective in the early grades are also filtered through experiences of privilege. I observed this not just from how they described their childhoods, but more intimately from what they did not say — or what was unmarked — in regard to the ways in which their student populations are different than themselves.
For Rosalie, a teacher's kindness and encouragement, focusing on what was positive, and balancing attention among "bright" students and those "with difficulties" were means of commenting on tracking, or on teacher bias, without talking about it directly. Willa invoked learning styles and holistic versus sequential teaching and learning as ways of commenting upon the importance of teachers making themselves aware of and responding effectively to students' individualities. What was unmarked in both sets of comments were wide disparities in teachers' and students' (and systemic) gendered attitudes and expectations, class and race imbued experiences, language and culture attitudes regarding immigrants, and inequities in school conditions. As a contrast, Paco's and Lillian's ways of referring to tracking and teacher bias are marked, or constituted as deeply felt injustices related to their identities as members of language and culture minorities, brought forward in time to index how they perceive and treat minority students.

Attitudes about and approaches to language.

Ana also mentioned expert education theories, most often about the relationship of primary language teaching to the academic development of language minority students, perhaps because of her several years' experience teaching language minority children. Ana's next comments came after her reminiscence about learning Spanish from the children to whom she was teaching English (noted earlier in this chapter).
Ana: “So I figured out that maybe I’m really not so deficit in the language area [laughs]. I can become biliterate. But I really understood from teaching in a bilingual classroom that, um, I probably was successful because I had a strong background in my English language. And the kids that don’t get that advantage in their primary language are really going to struggle the whole time in their second language. And so, you know, my own experience, of course when I was an English-only speaker I thought, Oh god, I just want to teach in English. And of course, everywhere I went they needed Spanish bilingual teachers. And I didn’t want to teach in Spanish, it wasn’t my language, but the more I learned about language, the more I learned its so important for those kids to develop their first language because they’ll just get stopped in the second language at about mid-level and really never be, um, develop the cognitive academic language. And so, literacy to me isn’t just can you have a conversation and express yourself socially, but there’s an academic literacy that one has to obtain probably in their primary language. And if they lose their primary language, and it’s usurped it’s really going to be a harder struggle to do it in a second language. But that’s where I see all these kids not being successful in school is that they’re having a hard time getting that academic language.”

Paco’s and Lillian’s reflections on language are of a different order than Ana’s, although all three suggest an emotion-imbued connection to identity. Ana’s words such as “deficit,” and “it wasn’t my language” indicate a kind of fear of Spanish that she subsequently overcame. Experienced as learners of English as a second language (Paco), or a different dialect (Lillian), each comprehended (albeit differently) the language-to-school relationship as negotiation of a difficult social landscape, with Paco focused on development and comprehension, and Lillian focused on correctness.

Paco: “I really, truly believe in the bilingual idea of education. Teaching the kids in their language until they are able to transition and learn everything in English. Um, and so, when I was growing up, I remember I hadda learn the stuff that I could in Spanish, and then kind of translate it into English. ‘Cause that’s what I knew, was Spanish. And that made it very difficult. And then when I went to sixth grade, you know, in Mexico,
and then I knew English, I hadda do the exact opposite. And so, I really believe that, when it was allowed before 227 [California statute outlawing bilingual education], the bilingual approach, it was the best way to do it. You know, you teach 'em everything, and teach them their concepts, in the language that they are best capable of understanding in. And then, the teacher of English says, they're developing the skills so that eventually they can go, 'Oh, that's what this is in Spanish.' You know, they have it there. You don't have to reteach everything again from the beginning to end.

With the advent of 227, because we are unable to do it in that manner, I have taken the approach of what they call sheltered. You take the concepts, and some of the kids understand a little bit more than others, some of them don't. You have to take it and really break it down to the basic components of English, where they do understand, and build up from there. And so, in just having had to ... I had to do that, when I was growing up, you know, the teachers did it the best they could. They didn't know, and they didn't have any terminology for it, but I wouldn't've understood if they didn't do it that way."

CC: Tell me some examples of what you see work effectively ... and what the relative advantages and disadvantages are in your mind.

Paco: "Well, when bilingual instruction was still allowed, I had a student, he was in third grade, very low in reading, very low in writing. He was just one of those kids who comes along who's just really low. And so, I would take groups, small groups of writing, and we would work on our writing in Spanish and work on our concepts in terms, we did science units, and we did an oceanography unit, and we did all this stuff. And he would do everything in Spanish, you know just continue and continue and continue. Last year, when 227 passed, he was in the fifth grade in my class. And we're doing everything in English, but the fortunate thing for him is that I had him in third, fourth and fifth grade. So in fourth grade I saw that, he's ready for English, whether he thinks so or not. So I'm doing the transition for him slowly there. And I think the advantage to having the bilingual is that you can wait 'til they are ready. You know, obviously by about fourth or fifth grade, you have to do it no matter what. But, you have the option of waiting, and then they're actually feeling more and more comfortably, and they can do the transition on their own. In terms of sheltered, now we don't have the luxury of waiting.

This year, I have some kids that, last year they were in Spanish because they had a waiver. Well, the waiver runs out after a certain amount of time, and it ran out, and so they're in English. And you know, they're in fourth grade and they can't form sentences in English. They're having so much difficulty. And that's a hard part for me, because I go, 'well guys, we have to keep going, we have to keep pushing forward, and learning the best we can.'"
Lillian: “So I think the idea of saying poor is not an accurate research [sic]. Because growing up in a poor neighborhood, but we had strong values and principles. And like I said before, they were just as strong as the kid across the track whose kids had two parents and were middle class. Our parents taught us the same thing: do not steal; be respectful. So the values were the same. So I don’t think that’s the reason. And then coming from a quote, at that time it was called culturally deprived. Well, now they call it everything else, Ebonics, you know. But that has nothing to do with it because my ancestors came over, and my Mom sometimes spoke broken English or Ebonics, but that did not affect my standard English writing in the classroom because I knew that when I got in the classroom I had to use the correct verb to be. You know? And I knew that ‘we was’ was incorrect. No matter what my Mom may have said at home, or the model was at home, I know what I was taught at school, and I knew that was correct.”

Deon, a Filipino-American special education teacher, suggests another perspective on alternative uses of language in the classroom in conjunction with his response to questions about why he became a teacher. He assumes that language as communication may or may not include words. And his phrase in the penultimate sentence of the quotation “it’s ... a two-way thing” implies a world of meaning, especially in regard to teachers thinking of themselves as learners, creating a relationship with each student in order to negotiate effective and mutually rewarding risk-taking.

Deon: “Most of the time, or more often than not, when you have a child in special education, that child’s needs is primarily language. So I was a perfect fit.”

CC: “Their needs are primarily in language when they are in special ed. Could you expand on that?”
Deon: "Like for children with autism, who has a lot of stemming behavior? Well the reason why they are stemming is because they don’t have any way of expressing what they really want to do, or what they have in their minds."

CC: "And stemming is... ?]"

Deon: "Um, hitting behavior. The reason why children in special education hit and kick and bite and spit is because that’s their way of letting you know, ‘Hey, I need help over here.’ Or, ‘Hey, come over here and give me some attention.’ So it really helps if you know the language background. You kinda know how to go around it and then redirect so they will actually use a more appropriate way of expressing all those desires."

CC: "Can you give me one example of something that you did with one student?"

Deon: "Oh, let’s see. Umm, I used to have a student when I was in [another school district] who engages in a lot of aggressive behavior. And when I did a functional analysis I found out that the reason why he’s engaging in such behavior is because at that moment the work was getting too hard and he needed help. So, I taught the student how to do this [pats himself on the back hard several times], and then I knew that’s what he needed. So I’d go to him in group work. So even before the behavior happens, because he did this [demonstrates patting again] I know that he needs me to come over there. We work at it, and the behavior disappeared."

CC: "He didn’t even have to verbalize it then. And what did you say to him to help him recognize in himself when he needed to do that?"

Deon: "Well it’s not actually saying to him, because most of them have perceptive and expressive language disorders. Which means they may not have a clue of what I’m talking about. But whenever the behavior happens, you just put a stop to it, then you get the hand and you go like this [demonstrates taking one of his hands with other hand and patting self on back], and then you give them the attention. Until it sets."

CC: "Is it the sort of thing that you think is workable with kids who are not disabled? Students who act out for one reason or another?"

Deon: "It can be. Because most of these students who/ / Regular ed. students, right? They want to say something but they are not really sure that they should say it to you. And if you show them a signal, that they/ / “I really need to talk but I’m not really sure if you’re the right person to
..." you can actually give that child a break. That would be a signal to the teacher that this child needs space right now. Maybe I should give this child something else to do. Maybe the work is too difficult. But it's like a two-way thing. You teach the child how to use the signal, the child uses the signal, and you respond to it."

It is an explicit tenet of special education instruction that each child has different needs, and that the teacher's role is to set up learning tasks such that a student must start from something that is known (cognitively and/or affectively). Beginning with the known facilitates willingness to risk, and therefore enable grasping the significance of new information or skill at the outer edge of what is known (Cole, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). This tenet was said by Vygotsky, and now among those who have more recently studied his work and theory from the 1920's and 1930's, to be central to effective learning among all students (Cazden, 1988; Cole, 1990). That which might appear strange or foreign, and therefore frightening or overly challenging, is rendered accessible through exposure to it from an emotionally, contextually and cognitively familiar foundation (Cazden, 1988; Cole, 1990). The teacher's perception of what constitutes communication is crucial. As Deon notes, behavior that is not on task is also a form of communication, communication that may be interpreted in diverse ways by a teacher. If a special education student is distracted (and/or acts out), then she or he can be taught to recognize the implications of the behavior, and signal for help. Such a protocol gives the teacher the opportunity to adjust the task rather than "adjusting" the student through an irritable response, punishment, or more severe and deeply influential sanction (such as Rosalie's example of having to make a book of the words you don't know).
If the approach Deon described was effective among students with severe disabilities to self-regulate and communicate, even without words, in order to advance their academic learning, how much more potential might there be for students in regular education classes? Deon’s perspective on language as communication beyond words is actually a theme in all of the educators’ narratives. When Dorothy, Cyra, and Lillian refer to destiny, heredity, and being “called” to teaching, they are referring to a web of influences, comprising relationships, language, and modeling by parents and teachers. When Rosalie, Margaret, and Wendell, for instance, mention the influence of certain primary grade teachers on their learning, and on their retrospective meta-understandings of teaching and learning, they are referring to communication beyond words. In Ana’s, Lela’s, and Willa’s examples of gender-related career expectations, or Paco’s forced-choice to change majors from architecture to education, the symbolic and material power of discourses penetrate individual experience.

Summary

Each principal and teacher constructed her or himself as cultural and social beings in their personal narratives and in their more expository responses to questions about professional practices. Some also constructed themselves as moral beings, having made life-choices and/or professional choices based on their perceptions of right and wrong. This is not to say that those who did not talk this way did not consider themselves to be moral, or to have made moral
choices in their lives, but only that some chose to talk about themselves in that way. Paco, Lillian, Rosalie and Willa stated beliefs about how teachers should act with children – nurturing and supportive – which they say have driven their own actions as educators. Ana and Lela (who focused on becoming fluent in Spanish) and Paco (whose primary language is Spanish) cited from their experiences that primary language teaching is more effective for many students to achieve in more challenging academic coursework than absence of primary language support – a politically unpopular position in California. Among those who did not remark specifically on what they found to be meaningful in their work, or how they helped students find or make meaning through schooling, were Dorothy, who called herself a natural teacher, and Cyra, who stated that heredity influenced her professional choice. Lillian, who says she was “called” to teach, stated that she knows it’s a calling because after 30 years she’s not tired, she’s not stressed.

Many of the educators talked about how they knew that students were learning what was taught, with most confident that their students, whatever their backgrounds and or starting points, were developing appropriately. Yet Cyra changed schools partly because parents at the old school did not “value” her; and Dorothy asserted that she changed schools for virtually the same reason. Both however also ascribed their school-changes to being closer to home, making more money, and so on. Lillian, Wendell and Paco volunteer for after school programs and to lead weekend camping trips with at-risk students; Lela and Jill
spend long hours beyond the standard work day writing grant proposals to provide for sometimes the most basic needs of their students (i.e. library books).

Gender, race, ethnicity, language and class were salient in unique ways for each educator, sometimes congruent with the constituents of the explanatory models (literacy inherited or earned-with-difficulty) apparent in literacy history reflections. Among the (White, middle-class) women who remarked some ambivalence about becoming educators (Willa, Ana and Lela), each postulated the effects of gendered-role expectations on their choices. Among those whose first languages are not English there were diverse feelings about whether their languages or ethnicities were, and are, a problem (Cyra and Deon) or a resource (Paco). Dorothy, Wendell, Willa, Lela, Rosalie, and Ana, all from middle-class backgrounds, construed themselves as moving relatively unimpeded through education to teaching and/or into their promotions to administration. Lillian, who is African American and comes from a very poor background, Margaret, who is from a working class home – and each of those whose first languages are not English – talked about money, attitudes of teachers and other adults, and their own feelings about achievement, or becoming smart, to a much greater extent than those from more privileged homes.

Discursive patterns are significant to identity construction; Paco heralds himself as a person who cannot be kept down or out, and as a person who can and will help children like himself, whatever the political climate. He did not attempt to rationalize that what he wanted for himself as an architect was a quite different identity; he used his examples of discrimination to speak for who he
has become. Implicit in his and others' dedication and/or nurturing behaviors was an expectation that things will be different for their students; that teachers can partially overcome the gross inequities in schooling, such as 2500 versus 500 students in an elementary school; or not enough teachers and crowded classrooms. For others, gross inequities were unmentioned or were disconnected from the lives of students, such as in explanations for moving to better schools because parents at poor schools do not value teachers.

The distinctions between the two "mental map" schemas drawn in chapter three became qualified through the responses to questions addressed in this chapter. The matter of language-as-a-problem central to the responses in the second schema was either lost (e.g. no unprompted mention by Cyra in regard to her teaching) or transformed (e.g. Deon's focus on multi-mode and multi-level communication in his teaching) in responses to questions dealt with in this chapter. Paco is the single exception to this. He cited what he perceived to be his negative education experiences related to language and culture as his resource for understanding the present politicized language climate in California, and as a resource for supporting youngsters he teaches who are non- or limited English speakers. The concept of the "distribution of social power' (Gee, 1991) is also most potent in Paco's examples of the discriminatory teaching practices he encountered as a student. Paco (Mexican American) and Lillian (African American) are the two educators who spoke of pronounced discrimination, yet there are interesting differences in their constructions of private and professional selves. While both are appear to find strength in their difference, and take pride
in family related to their up from poverty trajectory, Paco declined to
disassociate himself from the potential to become like those who discriminated
against him for his background.

Among those represented in the “mental map” schema 3.1 (i.e. inherited
literacy) three principals (Lela, Ana, and Willa) expressed some ambivalence
about just what it was they inherited. Or, had they had some insight as young
women that there were real career choices other than teaching or nursing, they
might have (none entirely committed to an alternative) taken a different path. It
is also true that despite their more or less privileged upbringings, Ana, Lela and
Willa spoke of deeply held ideas about working with students and parents from
diverse backgrounds in ways that concretely respected such differences. Ana and
Lela both learned and continue to use Spanish in their work. Willa and Lela
suggest that teachers use the approach of visiting families in order to recognize
home resources and encourage parent help.

In these ways and in other examples in following chapters, the educators
evidenced complex and nuanced ideologies, as did journalists with whom I
spoke. As discussed in chapters three and five, journalists, like educators, link
some of their adult choices and perceptions to parental examples or expectations,
and a few mention teachers who were influential in their lives. But to a much
greater extent than educators, journalists directly invoked political and
politicized education and social policy references (the main exception to this was
the teacher, Dorothy). Educators did however, express diverse ideologies about
the significance of standard language or languages other than English, which are presented and discussed in chapter six.
CHAPTER FIVE

BECOMING AND BEING EDUCATION WRITERS

Introduction

In Chapter Five I examine six journalists' comments and reflections in response to questions about becoming journalists and education writers, and about doing the work of writing about education and literacy. I have applied the same two analytical objectives used in chapter four. The first determines whether the discursive strategies journalists employed in their literacy history reflections were continued or elaborated in answers to the questions addressed here. As noted in chapter four, the purpose of looking for consistency in mode and content of explanations is to understand the relationship of discursive practices to identity construction. There are broad implications to the ways in which journalists constructed their individual and collective notions about themselves as they explained their writing strategies and rationales. Journalists' talk is also significant for understanding 'literacy' writing in the Los Angeles Times – especially the writing in which educators, the education system, and the social environment are scrutinized (addressed more fully in chapters six, seven and eight).

One construct I use to assess the potential implications of journalists' talk about their work is Gee's (1991) definition of literacy as control of the secondary
uses of language. I looked for whether and how themes and language conventions reflected or were organized by, for instance, the idea of dominant literacy – or literacy that is a materially and symbolically effective social resource – as a foundation for understanding journalists’ constructions of social context and identity (Gee, 1991). As was true among educators, the extent to which journalists more or less closely related an idea of literacy to identity, interests and values appears indicative of its potential force.

I address the answers to two general, and several related follow-up questions asked of the six journalists in the interviews. The general questions asked, in this order, were:

1) “How did you come to write about education?” or, “be an education writer?”
2) “What are the factors you consider as you frame a (story, article, editorial)?

The follow-up questions varied depending on how each journalist responded to each general question. I typically asked follow-up questions to provide or obtain clarification, such as after one journalist stated “I don’t know what you mean by framing.” Other follow-up questions were attempts to determine how and why the journalist decided something, took action, drew a conclusion, and so on, in order that s/he had the opportunity to state meaning or context. If a follow-up question was called for in order to clarify, or because of an overly brief or general response, I used the speaker’s words from an earlier
response when possible, such as "you mentioned ...," "your example was...," or "help me understand..." Typical examples of follow-up questions include:

1) "Why do you do this work?"
   "Why do you continue in education journalism?"
   "What have you learned?"

2) "How do you explain your own framing process?"
   "How did you decide to lead your story with [state example]?"
   "Do you conduct your own research or is there a department which provides information to you?"
   "How do you decide what to ask, of whom, when?" or, "How do you decide who [sic] to use as experts or sources?"

I applied some of the same analytical constructs that I used in earlier chapters. I looked for themes, language conventions or reasoning chains within and between speakers' responses to various questions (D'Andrade, 1993; Keesing, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993). One finding from this part of the study is that for both the female journalists and two (of the four) male journalists, explanations about why they chose to write about education were thematically congruent to earlier literacy history explanations. For the females, the connections were in the form of examples about family-oriented values and interests. For the two males, the connections were in the form of examples drawn from life-long interests and experiences. One of the two males, considered by some to be the "expert" of the group, pointed to many years
experience “reading and thinking about” education, implicating the extent to which he valued the topic, his identity as an education writer, and indexing expertise. An idea reminiscent of “it was a good career move” was also offered by one of the females and the two remaining males’ for “why education writing.”

Despite extension of themes of family values and habits into rationales for choosing to write about education, when asked about their “framing” processes, many of the respondents used distancing strategies, tending to objectify their activities by divesting decisions, routines, or practices from personal values, experiences or business-culture contexts. Divesting of context tends to “naturalize” the actions that ultimately result in editorial, article or institutional viewpoints, making the actions instead into “things unto themselves” from which individual accountability is separated.

**Journalist Profiles**

In order to insure that journalists’ identities remain confidential, I provide less specific background information than for educators. The following profiles, used in prior chapters, are intended for reference to quotations in the following sections. Additional detail is available in the context of journalists’ reflections and the analyses in chapters three, six, seven, and eight.
Table 5.1

Journalist Profile Summary

<table>
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<th>Journalist gender</th>
<th>Journalist language &amp; ethnicity</th>
<th>Journalist total experience</th>
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<td>Editor/ Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
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<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/ Ann-Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/ Ed</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>7+ years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/ Steven</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English, French; Euro-American</td>
<td>20 years</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Editorial Writer/Vela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English; African-American</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Reporter/ Donald</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English; Euro-American</td>
<td>15 years</td>
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Becoming an Education Writer

Choosing to be an Education Writer

All six journalists answered the question ... “How did you come to write about education?” Journalists used one theme, stated in two ways, to describe the events, processes, or decisions connected to becoming education writers.

Some related their present work to family, and/or to an extension of prior experience and interests; others characterized their present work as being a good
career move. One female journalist’s statement of values referenced her parents as teachers and her parents’ teaching philosophy ("all children can learn") and the other female proposed that current family responsibilities explained her interest in moving to a different "beat" as an education writer. One male offered a similar proposal regarding the connection of journalism to his early interest and training in the social sciences. The two remaining male journalists and one of the females directly expressed values in a different way – by speaking of education writing as a wise career choice because of the political/news environment of the time.

Three of six journalists expressed an unelaborated idea about the relationship of education to differences between "the haves and have-nots." For two of the three this was in conflict with other statements about values. One of these statements, by Ann-Marie, was in response to "why education writing" (in the career/values section below). The other values comments are addressed in the literacy crisis chapter.

Values related to family or to prior experience.

Vela: "My parents are both educators. Education was always dinner table conversation in our house. Our parents taught some very poor children with no tradition of literacy, but one of the most powerful messages from my father was that every child can learn, and I believe that. So I’ve always been interested in education."
Ann-Marie: "It wasn't anything I sought out, actually, but ... I was very interested.

CC: "Could you say why?"

Ann-Marie: "Um, because of the importance education had for me. Because I've got a daughter, at the time she was in Kindergarten, and it was great timing personally. I have quite an interest in it, even though I have no expertise per se, but I have an incredible amount of interest in it."

CC: "How did you get from there (a college major in history) to what you are doing?"

Thomas: "And um, you know, a lot of history is reading documents, and figuring out what they can tell you. Reconstructing a picture of the past from the written records that are left behind. You know history and journalism have a certain connection. Ben Bradlee had a line about how journalism was the first rough draft of history. And it's a similar sort of process of trying to find out from people what happened. Sort of sifting the conflicting recollections of what happened, analyzing it, and then coming up with a narrative that tries to make sense of the evidence. So the two are akin in that way, although, you know, there's real differences. But they are both, at root, narrative arts that are designed to try to make sense of the past. It's just that journalism deals with the more recent past."

CC: "Donald, have you been an education journalist (all these years), or is that more recent?"

Donald: "I had not, but two papers I worked at previously I wrote about education. And during the period of the first five years here, I did not write about education, but I wrote, not for the paper anyway, but I did do a lot of writing for research groups and outside kind of translating research into common language and magazine articles. And so I've actually been writing and thinking and reading about education for about 15 years."
In the next section "career as a value," all three journalists who stated more directly that they are writing about education because, for instance, "it's a good beat to have right now," also say something about what their education writing means. Ann-Marie linked "it's a very hot topic in the nation" to the idea that poor education exacerbates "the problems between the haves and have nots." Stephen connected a school district being "in grave paralysis" to his decision to write about education because he is qualified to do the digging in the data to shed light on the paralysis. In response to my follow up question asking what he has learned (since writing about education), Ed stated "it's an enormously important issue" and very important "subject matter." In these responses there was little evidence of long term commitment to education writing (except by Donald), nor expressions of love, joy, or enthusiasm such as those expressed by some educators. This was true despite the ways they linked personal or professional experiences and interests to their present work in order to express some connection to identity. In this part of the study, education writing for most of the journalists is cast as one (wise, lucky, interesting, or important) stop in a career as writers, but not one that deeply indexes identity for any but Donald, except as it advances the career. In the career as a value segment below, journalists are continuing to respond to "why education writing" or related questions.
Career as a value.

Ann-Marie: “And, I don’t know, California is a complex place ... As a kind of a knee-jerk social liberal, I worry that we are exacerbating the problems between the have and the have nots because the children who most need the skills are sinking farther and farther down in the mire. Um, it’s a fascinating topic; it’s a very hot topic in the nation. School reform is on the lips of everybody in every state.”

Stephen: “And that’s why ... the ... school district is in grave paralysis right now, and they wanted somebody to be able to cover it on that basis [analyzing data] ...”

“[A]nd actually, it’s a very good spot to be in because there’s so much interest in the L.A. school district in particular, and in education in general. So it’s a good beat to have right now.”

Ed: “And I thought about it, and I thought that education was just a lousy, very boring beat, but I knew that the editors ... valued that beat, so I decided to try it. And just from the get go it was a pretty hot beat. And so I took that as an opportunity to write district wide stories, which mean the stories get played down here. And a lot of the stories that I wrote went on the front page ..., and, um, there were just lots of opportunity to write lots of good stories. And, um, it’s kind of this be as creative as you could be.”

CC: “What have you learned?”

Ed: “First of all that this is an enormously important issue. And I used to think that this was just the dud beat. And in small papers sometimes it often is because it’s not done in an interesting way; it can be very boring. But the subject matter is very important.”

In response to a follow up question about his potential for staying on the education beat, Stephen characterized it as a beat that required spending “too much time on the phone, too much time talking to academics,” therefore keeping him from “exploring Los Angeles.”
CC: "Is it something that you want to do for a long time, or not?"

Stephen: "No. I would expect, uh, I made a commitment. But, uh, in the long run, and I don’t know how long the long run is. I could be doing this job another year. Uh, I’m quite sure I’ll be doing it for another year. Beyond that, it’s a little hard to see ... I don’t want to do heavy lifting in computer analysis, but there is a, but I do a lot of really nifty work. And I have a real feel for the story that resides in data. And so I’d like to ... do a sort of a like a utility infielder role where I would be doing data analysis, but I’d also be doing street reporting, because I can’t imagine giving up street reporting. One reason I don’t care for educational reporting, is, uh, one reason I don’t see it as being where I want to spend the rest of my career, is that you spend too much time on the phone, too much time talking to academics and just not enough time on the streets. I, I, uh, I just like exploring Los Angeles; that’s really a lot of fun for me.

Spending time in schools does not, for Stephen, constitute exploring Los Angeles. Other participants do conduct some of their research at school sites, sometimes returning several times for extended interviews. Continuing to respond to the follow-up question, “What have you learned?” Ed (below) exemplified his learning with the phonics method of reading instruction. Phonics received frequent mention in the Times’ education coverage (see chapter eight); references to phonics also appeared in national Republican platform education planks in 1996 and in 2000 and in the California Republican platform education plank in 2000^2. Ed ended his comment in response to “what have you

^2 "We know what works in education, and it isn’t the liberal fads of the last thirty years. It’s discipline, parental involvement, an emphasis on basics including computer technology, phonics instead of look-say reading, and dedicated teaching" (RNC – Republican platform, 1996).
learned” with a reference to the publisher’s response to the article he wrote. By mentioning the publisher, Ed tied his “learning” back to his initial premise above – that the education beat is “hot” and therefore a good career move.

Ed: “And I got a press release about [English Renaissance books] and I went and checked it out and it turns out that some of these books are school books and they basically have phonics. So I went and I had the curator pull out one of the books for me and read it to me, and I had a tape recorder, and I taped her reading it because she wouldn’t let me touch the books. And then I went, and I went to, the Los Angeles School district has like a book depository, and I went there and I looked up like the most current reading series, one of the most popular, called Open Court, and I just read what they recommended for reading instruction, and basically it was the same. So we wrote a story about you know how phonics is 400, it’s been a mainstay of popular instruction for 400 years, and some of the history of phonics. It was kind of different. We got a note from the publisher on that one. I was just shocked.”

Betraying the “solution” principle.

The strength of this apparent tie-in between a “hot” beat, writing glowingly and unproblematically about phonics reading instruction, and the apparently positive experience of receiving a note from the publisher is

“It is long past time to debate what works in education. The verdict is in, and our Republican governors provided the key testimony: strong parental involvement, excellent teachers, safe and orderly classrooms, high academic standards, and a commitment to teaching the basics from an early start in phonics to mastery of computer technology” (Republican National Committee 2000, p. 2).

“Recognizing the current crisis in California education, the Republican Party supports placing priority on basic competence and the ability to reason in fundamental educational skills (phonics-based reading, writing, arithmetic) through strong curricula developed by local school boards” (California Republican Party 2000-2003, 2000, p. 3).
interesting and potentially important for understanding a problem addressed in chapter eight. While it is true that the State of California has decided that specific phonics curricula are required in schools, this position is controversial among educators, policy makers and academics (Coles, 2000; Goodman, 1998; Krashen, 1996b; McQuillan, 1998; Yatvin, 2000). One journalist, an editor (Thomas) stated that the Times’ responsibility is to analyze problems but not pick and choose between solutions in their education coverage.

CC: “There certainly have been a number of things that have come out of the State legislature, and through the state education department. Standards have changed, class size mandates, among other things. To what extent do you think that the newspaper has influence?”

Thomas: “I mean, the distinction we always draw is between problem and solution. We make a judgment about which problems we feel are more pressing. And again that judgment is always influenced somewhat by the pragmatic considerations is this is a topic that we can write about. There’s some problems that may be pressing, that might take three years to try to do a story about. And we decide that the game’s not worth the candle. But, we try to make decisions about what problems we feel are pressing, and that necessarily has an influence on the public agenda. And that’s fine. What we don’t do, or at least what we try not to do is pick among solutions. That, we can analyze particular solutions, and you know that analysis may lead our reporters to conclude that solution x is going to work better than solution y, but we still have to give the advocates of both sides a fair chance. And present the evidence on both sides, I should say all sides ’cause we seldom see a dispute that has two sides.”

The Times education and especially its Reading by 9 coverage, addressed in chapters seven and eight, again and again propounds heavily phonics-oriented reading instruction linked as a solution to an (unsupported) premise
that whole language reading instruction actually prevents many children from learning to read by age nine. There is no question that the complexity of teaching and learning to read are essentialized in this premise. To be fair, it is in the nature of newspaper coverage to be somewhat superficial; and it is also true as noted above that the State had opted for heavily scripted phonics instruction. But state curricular mandates are not new in California; the state required that the whole language instruction method be implemented in the late 1980s. However, given the editor's statement of principle, Ed's connection between phonics research and his article, and the publisher's subsequent recognition of his efforts, it is not unreasonable to begin to question under what conditions the "solution" principle is likely to be bent or broken, and why.

As one example of what Thomas calls an advocate of the other side, McQuillan's (1998) book *The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions,* describes "Myth #7" of the literacy crisis to be "that California's test scores declined dramatically due to whole language instruction." McQuillan points out that California's low ranking compared to other states does not equal a decline in student reading proficiency. He also notes that the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, was not conducted at the State level before 1992 (the first year of the very low ranking). The second set of scores cited by those who blame California's low ranking on insufficient phonics instruction (purportedly due to implementation of whole language instruction methods) were conducted only in 1992-93 and 1993-94, also making earlier comparisons
impossible. Citing California Achievement Program scores for 1984 through 1990 for grades three, six, eight and twelve (whole language instruction, which includes phonics instruction, was implemented in 1987), McQuillan finds that reading scores were remarkably stable (McQuillan, 1998, pp. 12-14).

In this case, betraying the “solution” principle may relate to a real, if highly simplistic perception that phonics reading instruction will truly insure that all students will learn to read by age nine. But even to someone uninitiated into the complex and challenging task of helping any person learn to read, this would seem to be something of an ideological proposition. Despite such contrary evidence as presented by McQuillan and others, it is not necessarily “long past time for debate” about how best to insure that all students receive the best education, including reading education (McQuillan, 1998; RNC, 1996). Why should a newspaper CEO’s position on a reading instruction method be so influential? And/or why are reading curricula decisions made by the State of California not questioned by the Los Angeles Times. Whether there are actually connections among the Times’ emphasis of, along with several Times’ writers acceptance of phonics as a “solution” is made more clear in the journalists’ comments in the following sections, as well as in chapter six through eight. In any case, the effect of unproblematically advancing the phonics solution is to decontextualize and even erase the complexities of teaching and learning to read (Irvine and Gal, 1996). More importantly, laying blame on a single factor for whatever may be wrong with education (a debate that has continued since at
least the 1950s) results in cutting off attention to or diverting debate from other factors. The topics of the next section are the relationships among journalists’ writing approaches and their personal viewpoints interpenetrated by consideration of cause and effect in education.

Being an Education Writer

Journalists’ comments in this section are in response to the general question, “what are the factors you consider as you frame a story, article or editorial?” Follow up questions to clarify or gain detail included:

“How do you explain your own framing process?”

“How did you decide to lead your story with [state example]?”

“Do you conduct your own research or is there a department which provides information to you?”

“How do you decide what to ask, of whom, when?” or, “How do you decide who [sic] to use as experts or sources?”

The purpose for asking a question about “framing” is to understand how journalists think about and explain their decisions and other factors that influence topics, content, leads, and reasoning in particular stories or editorials. I found that the participants foregrounded the journalistic process, describing, for instance, a story as a “room,” and the lead to the story (i.e. the most important
information) as a "door into the room." They tend to subordinate acts of choosing and deciding, thereby downplaying experiences, self-interest or environmental influences, such as the culture of the newspaper or social, political or larger economic conditions.

I define distancing as the result of several linguistic strategies that seem to peripheralize or take the speaker out of the picture. These are choices of words, grammatical structures, or the ordering of ideas that make it appear that actions requiring personal choices and decisions, or events in which the speaker has participated, have occurred with limited human influence. Another way of saying this is that the journalistic process of framing is objectified, or made a thing unto itself. I do not suggest that this is necessarily conscious, nor consciously deceptive. In fact, the way I introduced the questions addressed in this chapter to participants suggested a different narrative purpose than for questions about their "literacy histories". Nevertheless, as stated earlier in this chapter, distancing strategies that objectify action are linguistic forms which serve to ignore or downplay contexts that might otherwise raise questions from either the listener, or from the speaker herself or himself. The additional effect of objectifying is therefore that a person distances the possibility of having to account for the decisions, actions, and so on that are being described.

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23 One sentence from the introduction to questions about "literacy history" was "Try not to analyze too much; you will have a chance to do that a little later." The introduction to the questions addressed in this chapter was "The questions I'm going to ask you now will give you an opportunity to reflect on what you have told me up to this point."
Vela is an editorial writer. Editorials, according to Merriam Webster, “give the views of the editors or publishers.” Most readers of newspapers understand that editorials are opinions intended to persuade readers of a particular point of view. What does it mean that an institution is invested with a viewpoint, as Vela states below? Vela is engaging in at least two communicative activities simultaneously. Using the phrase “institutional viewpoint” to label the publisher’s, other editors’ and journalists, and/or her own viewpoint is a distancing strategy even though she says that her own interest in social justice is an element of the institutional viewpoint. This is true because the simultaneous second communicative activity is an attempt to persuade the listener (and perhaps herself) that it is possible for an editorial to start with “facts” and “research” without impetus of views, policies and agenda of the writer, the publisher and the “expert.” Vela states that “facts” are the first thing she considers in framing an editorial, a word that denotes realness, and by being qualified with “making a difference” and “social justice” implies properties of a social contract.

CC: “What are the factors you consider as you frame an editorial about literacy or reading education?”

Vela: “Facts. Sometimes I start writing immediately, but then realize I don’t know enough to write it well, so I have to do more research. I may
be on a deadline, but, but I am always conscious that I am building an argument and trying to persuade. I've always been interested in making a difference; the institutional viewpoint comes from my interest in social justice, from the publisher's policy, and then as a writer I believe I inform policy. I do research [cited "favorite" book], and I try to separate politics from instruction, achievement, and results. I go to [another journalist] as an expert; he is considered the best... We also have an education message string on line that I can refer to . . .”

In follow-up questions below, Vela states that the institutional viewpoint is “not personal,” yet she goes on to say that she feels like she is making a difference because she agrees with the mission of the paper.

CC: One of the things you said was that when you are writing for work, it can be formulaic, and it represents the institutional viewpoint //

Vela: “Right. It's not personal.”

CC: “And then you also said in the same paragraph, almost the next sentence, that you do feel like you are making a difference with your writing . . . //”

Vela: “I feel like I'm making a difference because I absolutely agree with the mission of the paper to include public education.”

I intended my questions to generate clarity about how Vela considers (separates, balances, prioritizes, applies) the influences of others' versus her own goals as she frames an editorial. This series of answers did not help me with that. I hoped to gain a better understanding of her “framing” context by asking the next follow-up question, to which she replied with a personal example.
CC: "And so can you expand more on how that [the paper's "mission"] has to do with your feelings about social justice?"

Vela: "Oh, sure. I integrated a high school when I was a kid. And one of the reasons my parents encouraged me to do that is because my family strongly believed in equal access to a good education. And so for me the social justice element is education can be the great leveler. And it also can be the great lever by which, um, a poor child, using his or her own innate abilities and skills can go on to develop potential. So, um, when I say that education is social justice, I simply mean that I believe that all children should have access to great education."

In the reflection above, Vela clarifies her earlier comment about "agree[ing] with the mission of the paper to include public education." Vela precedes her phrase "equal access to a good education" with the illustration of her unique opportunity to attend an elite Catholic girls' school (spoken about earlier in the interview) in the suburbs of the urban area where she grew up. She speaks of "social justice" in terms of (some) poor children's innate abilities and skills connected to "access to great education," but is she speaking of public education? The meaning of personal experiences to viewpoints, and the significance of viewpoints to adult actions, including professional practices, is powerful, yet often at the edge of consciousness. Vela's reasoning here is reminiscent of W.E.B. Du Bois (1902) idea of "the talented tenth" among U.S. African-Americans being prepared for leadership, or the European colonialist's Africa and Asia policy to provide education only to tribal leaders. This idea – in the form of providing the top 10 percent of high school graduates special consideration – is having renewed currency in Florida, Texas and California as an alternative to affirmative action in higher education.
Stephen is a staff reporter who has been a reporter for over ten years, and has been writing education stories for up to five years. Yet he begins his response to the framing question with the words “I have no idea.” He continues immediately however with a reflection on his writing process, describing the differences between writing shorter and longer pieces. Absent from this response are any references to interviews, research, sources, assignments, editorial and policy influences, or personal factors such as his perception (in the previous section) that writing about education “is a good place to be right now.” In this case he uses the metaphor a [news] story is like a “room,” and he describes a story as “successful” if the beginning of the story works like a “door” into the room.

CC: “What are the factors you consider as you frame a story about education?”

Stephen: “I have no idea. I, uh, short stories are easier to write than long stories. And, uh, that’s because at some length it’s just pure formula, you just know the elements that have to be in it and you just put them in. Uh, lots of times when I write longer stories, I’ve found if I’m having trouble writing the story ... I finally decide that the only way out of it is just to write through to the end. And then what I almost always find is that the beginning of the story was the end of the story. But I try to, try to think of the beginning of the story as the door. And, so I don’t know at what point, exactly, I want, I get into the room, but if the, the front of the story works like a door, then I think it’s a successful story.”

In order to try to move beyond Stephen’s distancing and objectification to how decisions are made to pursue a story, and construct it in a certain way for
the reader, I asked a follow up question about an article to which he had contributed. In the quotation above, Stephen avoided talking about context, focusing on the structure of the story as an object. In the response to the follow-up question below, he continued the distancing strategy, elaborating on the metaphor a story is like a room by phrases such as “backing in,” and adding drama with the images of “edges” (like a ledge on a tall building) and “narrow escapes.” Stephen also suggests that framing is something of a scientific enterprise in the phrases “proposing some hypotheses” and “ending up with a couple of hypotheses that worked.” He does not respond directly to the question about why the lead is language as a problem. He instead develops the idea that language as a problem is “news” by positing the information as something that is out there, like a room with “edges,” or a truth discovered through the scientific method. This example by Stephen introduces an idea that he reflects on at length in the next chapter – that language, or lack of “English fluency” in this case, is a “success barrier” in school and outside of school.

CC: “How did you decide that best way to frame a story about test scores was to lead with “English fluency” as a “success” barrier?”

Stephen: “It was a very strange story. We, uh, the initial analysis was done by ... computer assisted analysis. And it was a narrow escape; there wasn’t much of a story. We didn’t, we didn’t, I proposed some hypotheses, and started talking to ... about them. And, the better hypotheses just didn’t work, and it was obvious, it wasn’t, I was going out there on the edge, and in talking ... it was real clear that I was just too far out there on the edge. So we ended up with a couple of hypotheses that worked. And, it was the best we could get. And so we just went with the best we could get; the story ended up on A3. I still thought it should have
been an A1 story because it was a good analysis of what the test scores showed.

But it didn't have any pizzazz, and so, uh, the reason that was organized that way is that it was the most interesting, or, or, it was a piece of information that we thought was the least obvious or already established or known. We, we, we backed into that. We, we backed into that by the fact that there wasn't anything better, and that was the piece of information that seemed to be, when you finally get down to it, you ask, 'is it news?' And a lot of conclusions we drew weren't news because they were already well known. And that one seemed to be news. But obviously the editors thought it wasn't that newsy because they put it on page 3."

"Discovery" is also a theme in the next response. Ed has been a journalist for about ten years, and has been writing about education for less than five years. He begins his response, and his distancing strategy, with an example of a beat covered by a different journalist. Even though he suggests that the news does not walk in the front door, the implication of his introductory words combined with the headline example, "The L.A. School Board hired an outside chief executive ... ," makes it appear that the news is something whole and fully formed to be discovered rather than constructed out of data, opinions and observations from people, documents and so on. By using another person's beat rather than his own, he temporarily staves off my queries about how he might formulate questions or decide what is an issue (i.e. ways in which the news is constructed) in the context he offers.

Ed casts framing as a kind of detective work, tracking down what is out there, and then creatively determining whether "what readers have to know" fits
the story into the format of a "daily," a "project story," or a "weekender." He does not directly address how his or other journalists' experiences, values, or viewpoints influence the decisions about "what you are supposed to be exploring," what is the "most important piece of information," or "what readers have to know." In a two part rationale, he uses another important linguistic form, "you have to have a follow up weekender ... that kind of explains it ...," as if the story itself (the weekender) explains something without human intervention – and then suggests that his framing choices and decisions are led by his editor's questions.

Ed: "And it's not like someone walks in the morning from the L.A. school board and says OK ... here's the story for today. It doesn't happen that way. You have to think, well, what should we be writing about today, and what issues should we be looking at? Well, what are the questions that I want to know? And who do I have to go to get information from? Um, so it's incumbent upon reporters here to really think up your own ideas. Because there are daily stories, and then there are project stories, and then there are something called weekenders. And a lot of times you'll write a daily story, for instance you'll write it on Tuesday, you know, 'The L.A. School Board hired an outside chief executive officer to oversee the operations of the district,' you know, 'stripping Supt. Ruben Zacarias of his power.' That's a daily story. But then you have to have a follow up weekender about the, that kind of explains it and puts it into its broader context. And you have to figure out how to do that. And the editors at this newspaper, the editors who are in

24 A "daily" is more formulaic weekday coverage providing the basics of what the writer/editors define as a story, and containing the elements who, what, when where, why and how. A "project" is characterized by thematic content; several stories in a series may be written by different writers, with an overall goal to explicate in detail the same elements but with emphasis on the "why" element. A "weekender" is an article written usually as a follow-up to a daily report, containing other details and explanations obtained and/or verified after the daily was published.
charge of education, one of them in particular, I think is just brilliant, is very, very smart. And um will help you ask the questions, or help you, will ask some very key questions, ‘Well what about this, and what about this?’ to help you understand what you’re supposed to be exploring. Each story is different.

But um, there’s something that my editor calls the ‘so what’ factor. I mean, you know, you have to think, ‘What is the most important piece of information you have here?’ What is it that readers have to know? In paragraph one? And then, in some ways that dictates what’s gonna come in paragraph two. [In another job]... the editors would say, ‘don’t write anything until you’ve written your lead.’ And the lead could be no more than 3 computer lines. Because you need to know what you are saying.”

I wanted Ed to say more specifically what he considered as he framed a story he had written. I asked a follow up question to try to draw this out.

CC: “Can you give me one example of something you’ve written where you could just say, this was the most important thing in this story and that’s why I put it there and this is how I knew it?”

Ed: “The story that comes to mind is the story on test scores. The national test scores for reading about 8 months ago. It was a front-page story. It led the paper, meaning that it was the top right-hand column story on the front page. And it showed that California’s fourth graders were second to last in the nation. And there was a lot of information for that story. It was a report this thick [hold hands about six inches apart], and it was on a deadline. And the most important piece of information there was that, was two things. And it was hard to put it together, but that California’s fourth graders were second to last in their fourth grade reading scores, and that, and that just 20 percent of the fourth graders were considered proficient readers. So, those two, like, pieces, were, if you’d written nothing else, you would know what that report said. After that, I think it was a paragraph about how California was ranked only ahead of Hawaii, and that it was basically the same place where California ranked four years ago. So some context. But you just have to ask yourself, what is the most important thing that people need to know.
But in terms of interviewing and framing stories and writing stories, and thinking about what to ask and what to write, any reporter you interview here will tell you, if they're doing their job right, that, that they're 99 percent responsible. You know, editors weigh in, clearly. But they weigh in with ideas, and then it's up to you to go execute and get the information.”

Two things stand out in this example. One is that it seemed that only the first part of my three-part question was answered (i.e. “this was the most important thing”). However, on closer reading, the second implication is that the Ed is actually describing his thought process regarding “why I put it there” and “how I knew it.” “Executing” against the editor’s ideas is the way that he explains how he is “99 percent responsible” for reducing “a report this thick” to two main sentences. There is some sense of irresolution when the two responses from Ed are taken together. He is 99 percent responsible for discovering the news, but good editors help him decide what to look for; they provide ideas, he executes. Are “ideas” only 1 percent of the news and context-less “execution” 99 percent? For Ed, perhaps so. His proposition is that a “report this thick” may be reduced to two important ideas, which “if you’d written nothing else” were all readers really needed to know. The relationship of the ideas that he chose, however, to the “myths” addressed by McQuillan (1998) raises questions about just how important are the ideas of the reporter, editors or others to the framing process.

Thomas, an editor, uses three connected ideas to arrive at the point that some journalistic writing is much more an explanation of “why” — “to get across
to readers a certain set of points" – than it is the formula who, what, when, where, and how. I asked (below) about "creating," "truthfulness," and "frame of reference." He began his answer with the word craft, a word that connotes folk art. He then referenced comments from his literacy history narrative about the nature of historical writing (i.e. both journalism and history are "at root narrative arts") in order to draw the distinction that journalism is more collaborative. He responded to my request for an example of collaboration with a chair-building metaphor to exemplify the formulaic writing of shorter articles, and to explain the difference between shorter and longer articles he uses the words tone and mood “because meaning works on a lot of different levels.”

CC: “What would you say is the process that helps you and other writers know when, know how to respond to the different bits of information they have in order to not only create something that’s as truthful as possible, but to also apply some frame of reference that helps make meaning for the people who read it?”

Thomas: “Well, part of that is just learning your craft. I mean, it’s just part of what you learn as you do it. Part of what distinguishes good journalists from not so good journalists. Then the other part is, that’s a big part of what editors are for. Journalism is a more collaborative effort than history for an example. Generally, you know, a historian goes out, you write an article, you write a book. Because of the time constraints that we’re under, and the space constraints that we’re under, journalism ends up being much more of a collaboration between a reporter and an editor.”

CC: “So, by collaboration ... give me an example of something.”

Thomas: “Well, typically when I get a story I'll read it through. You know, I may go through on the first read and fix grammatical problems, or sort of immediate problems with sentence structure or something of that sort. But after that, the main thing that I look at is, does the structure here make sense. I mean, have we constructed this story in a way that we
are logically leading the readers through the narrative that we are trying to construct. And ask questions about, are you raising a question here that you are not answering, and does the evidence really support this point that you are trying to make?

There's some newspaper writing that is pretty formulaic. If you are writing a daily story on an event, there's a certain formula that things tend to fall into, it's much like building a chair. Some people build more handsome chairs than others, but at the end of the day there are certain basic similarities to all chairs. And it's the same kind of thing.

When you are writing a longer piece, then it's much more complicated, cause there isn't necessarily a fixed formula; you try to actually discourage things from being too formulaic. So then you have to kind of decide, what's the mood or the tone that I want to use in this piece, because meaning works on a lot of different levels. And if you're trying to get across to readers a certain set of points you want a tone that will compliment what the literal meaning of the words are.”

Framing Processes Situated

In the example above Thomas may not be saying “my values, or my opinions enter into how I determine what is news and how to write about it.” But in contrast to the comments from Stephen and Ed, Thomas’ responses index the situated nature of determining what is news and choices regarding framing in order to “get across ... a certain set of points.”

Donald has written about education longer than the other journalists interviewed. His answer to the framing question below is the least distancing despite his initial response (i.e. “I'm not sure what you mean”). He first defined how he recognized a story, using objectifying phrases such as “news climate,” “events that ... feed upon themselves,” and “what's new and interesting.” He then addressed what he called “context” in terms of a self-referenced audience (asking, relative to himself and/or for an imagined reader, how does this affect
me, my children, my business, and so on). He expanded on his self-referenced context by providing a couple of unprompted examples about education, easily expressing his opinions. He seemed untroubled by defining his audience in terms of "me" or "my children" as if his experiences and values were those of an Everyman Los Angeles Times' reader. His comments such as "student achievement doesn't seem to have gained much ground despite huge increases in spending," and the phrases "winners and losers," and "social eruption" are stated as facts rather than as either opinions or arguable or controversial views. There is "great worry about social eruption" by whom? In what sense does Donald understand education to be related to "winners and losers" in the economy? Is there evidence (despite the Times' published findings that California is last or near last in the nation in many categories of education spending) that there have been proportionally or historically "huge increases" in spending on education without student achievement? These ideas are arguable on many levels, but for this analysis the point is in what ways such opinions enter the framing process (Aronowitz, 1997; Berliner and Biddle, 1995; McQuillan, 1998; Schudson, 1996).

Donald is the most experienced of the education writers interviewed, and he is the person to whom other education journalists deferred several times with phrases such as "you should talk to ... about that." His comments here, and in later responses to questions about the "literacy crisis" are significant at least for that reason. As Schudson (1996, p. 3) states, the news is a "cultural product," not
least because, as is demonstrated by Donald, the "context" he described is his understanding of events, filtered through his view of the world, and applied to his "framing" process.

CC: “What are the factors you consider as you frame a story?”

Donald: “Um, I’m not sure what you mean by framing?”

CC: “How do you decide what’s most important; and what is your back up or your argument to support your lead?”

Donald: “Well, that’s kind of an open-ended question. I guess I start, well it seems to me that the process starts with identifying what is a story. And, I rely heavily on an idea called ‘news climate’. And the idea is that people are receptive to ideas that they are receptive to. And that sounds redundant, but it’s not, in the sense that, take today for example. A story about space, space exploration, the past history of space exploration, uh what we know about the planets, um what in education, you know, a great story today would be, you know, how is, how are teachers explaining the loss of the Mars Polar Lander. In other words, the loss of the Mars Polar Lander is in the news, and when something is in the news, you know, you build on that, and you // So, for the last 3 or 4 years reading instruction has been very much in the news. It started with low test scores, that led to a whole series of events that have continued to feed upon themselves. As awareness grows, people get curious about things that they didn’t even know that they didn’t know. And so that’s the starting point, beyond that, then, it’s pretty old-fashioned definition.

You know, what’s new? What’s new and interesting in news, what’s, it’s news, but you have to explain, uh, I always try to bring it down to the level of how does this impact me and my children and more broadly than that, how does it impact my community? You know, if I don’t have children, how does it affect my business, how does it affect my quality of life. And so then the next step is, having said something is news, and tried to explain why you should care, the next step is to educate people. To explain how we got into this mess, what the history is, what other kinds of things that are going on that are similar to this, what’s the context for this happening. I mean, for example, why is there so much concern about the quality of schools now? Well, the context for that is, you know, student achievement doesn’t seem to have gained much ground despite huge increases in spending. We’ve got an economy that’s largely, um, the winners and losers in the economy are largely determined
by your education level. The, you know, international competition tells us
that it’s not good enough just to do well in the U.S., you have to be
competitive internationally. We’ve got winners and losers in this
economy, and the losers tend to be minority members, and I think there’s
great worry about a social eruption over, you know, the gap in income
and access to the economy.”

Summary

Journalists responded to the questions about becoming education writers
in terms of valuing the writing for its personal interest (e.g. family values), social
importance (e.g. social justice), and as a means to enhance one’s career (e.g.
“valued” by the publisher/CEO of the Times). These schemas were erased or
peripheralized in the distanced and objectified responses to the “framing”
questions. Vela’s “facts and research,” “social justice,” and “making a
difference” became clarified in terms of some students rewarded for their “innate
abilities and skills.” Stephen’s metaphor of the lead for an article (a “door” into
the story) was exemplified by the “least obvious” or “already known”
information that lack of “English fluency” is a “success barrier.” These and the
other transformations of the framing process into “cultural products,” related by
themes, phrases, or reasoning to the institutional viewpoint of the Times, of the
Republican Party, or the contents of California ballot initiatives illustrate the
potential power of personal viewpoints that inhabit authoritative language.
The questions asked and answered in the following two chapters provide greater insight into educators' and journalists' personal viewpoints about what the Los Angeles Times, among other sources, has called the literacy crisis.
CHAPTER SIX

EDUCATORS RESPOND TO

THE "LITERACY CRISIS"

Introduction

A number of factors organize the potential for diversity of beliefs expressed by participants, and the ways those beliefs may be related through speech and actions to self-perception (Linde, 1993; Strauss, 1990). Each educator, as did each journalist, narrated themselves more or less as protagonists of their life stories, in the sense of being responsible, at least as narrators, for constructing themselves in a way that advanced the action, provided continuity, and determined meaning. Weaving together early experiences of learning to read and write with schooling, and with making educational and professional choices, some narratives more than others yielded an impression of cohesion and coherence, an impression partly the result of expository sophistication, and partly the result of ideological force. In this chapter, educators’ narratives provide a context for literacy crisis questions, through un-asked for definitions of literacy and through explanations of what makes for effective education, generally countering the notion that that there is a literacy crisis. In the next chapter (seven) journalists construed the literacy crisis to be real, evidenced in reasoning models and language forms also present in the public discourses about the purported crisis (for examples of the discourse see A Child Literacy Initiative,
Participants in this part of the interview had an opportunity to analyze what literacy was said to mean, what they each took it to mean related to personal experiences, and/or what each observed it to mean in social contexts outside of schooling, filtered through their more or less strategic presentations of themselves.

The main question answered by educators in this chapter was "Is there a literacy crisis?"\(^{25}\) Several follow-up questions, specific to teachers and principals were also used to gain greater clarity of and detail in points made by speakers. Examples of some follow-up questions (as appropriate to the person being interviewed) included:

"Are there major hurdles to helping your students? If so, what are they?"

"Do you feel you have been made ready or prepared for new standards?"

"What does the literacy crisis have to do with the correlations cited in (state examples from Times' coverage)?"

"What do you think about these public discussions?"

I asked these questions in order to understand the implications of "powerful literacy" (i.e. knowledge of discourse, and Discourse, and having the

\(^{25}\) The original "literacy crisis" question asked of some educators was modified to "is there a literacy crisis?" or some other short form after I found that the question was too long or confusing. Subsequently, the original text was only read to interviewee(s) if needed to gain more elaborated reflection on media and other public discourse characterizations of the so-called crisis.
training, experience, and social capital for distributing critiques of one's own and others' discourses) from participants' reflections on the purported elements of the literacy crisis (Gee, 1991). I looked for structure and content of critique in educators' words about themselves, their students and about public literacy discourses. I was interested in whether educators' perceptions of ideas about the so-called literacy crisis reflected propositions and connections found in certain public discourses about education, such as those that conflate and vilify immigration, languages other than English (or non-standard English), poverty, and school failure (Ruiz, 1984).

A very few educators (in contrast to journalists) used what has been called "legitimate language" as formulaic cultural wisdom, effectively idealizing their own primary language (English) and culture attributes, opinions and self-interests (Bourdieu, 1991). Among these educators, legitimate language was offered in the form of propositional reasoning consistent with points of view and language conventions in the Los Angeles Times, and/or language of political platforms and California ballot initiatives. Other educators also used legitimate language references, for instance to scientific (education) or official discourses, but without the devices of dichotomy, blame, or superiority emblematic of the Times' and certain other public literacy discourses. Educators more generally approached the idea of literacy as socially constructed and embedded, and to a greater or lesser extent, took responsibility for influencing students' acquisition/learning to help them make their own literacy meanings.
The remainder of the chapter is divided into three main sections and several sub-sections. The first main section contains a brief reminder of what has been called the literacy crisis, as discussed in earlier chapters and dealt with more fully in later chapters. The second main section contains educators' comments in responses to the questions asked. The final section is a summary of the main points of the chapter. Chapter seven is a continuation of participants' "literacy crisis" responses, addressing journalists' comments.

What is the Literacy Crisis?

The idea of crisis in education is not new; it is frequently invoked when politically expedient, as touched upon in earlier chapters. The purported literacy crisis in California is predicated on many of the same notions as those underlying education crisis arguments (e.g. declining test scores, dumbed-down curriculum, teacher incompetence, and so on) recently debunked by education scholars (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Krashen, 1999a & b; McQuillan, 1998). The public "literacy crisis" rhetoric, however, carries "traces" of earlier historical arguments. Test score, curriculum and teacher competence arguments were discursively elaborated to engage with immigration, language, and specific forms of reading instruction in cause and effect propositions (California Proposition 227, 1998; California Republican Party Platform 2000-2003; California
In Los Angeles Times' articles, editorials and promotional materials, the phrase "literacy crisis" was used interchangeably with the words "failure" and "illiteracy" and the phrases "lack of literacy" and "catastrophe of epic proportions" among others (E.g., Bars of the Mind, 1998, November 8; Reading ..., 1998, November 8; Willes and Parks, 1999). At one level, the literacy crisis was characterized in at least three ways: invocation of threat, the imagery of failed and failing public schools, and the proposition that socially-conscious businesses can save students and communities. Threat was invoked through linkage of emotion-charged words like illiteracy and catastrophe of epic proportions. Failure imagery was constructed of unqualified statistics such as "four out of five public school children are not reading at grade level" and profiles of failing immigrant students (Bars of the Mind, 1998; Facing the Poverty Factor, 1998; Letter to Volunteers, 1999). The business-as-savior proposition was offered in terms of the Times' and corporate partners-financed "crusade" (Reading by 9) which purported to hold solutions to the literacy crisis. This rhetoric appeared in daily installments throughout 1998, often in more than one article per day about reading education or reading related topics.
Beyond, or perhaps underneath explicit arguments of failure, crisis and crusade were three apparently taken-for-granted ideas in the Times' articles and editorials. One idea was that learning to read by age 9, as determined (in California) by the Stanford Achievement Test 9th Edition (SAT 9), is the same as "literacy," and the reverse, that not learning to read by age 9 according to SAT 9 norms is the same as "illiteracy." Another taken-for-granted idea was that the students represented in the proportion "four out of five" (who do not read at grade level) were cast as all the same. The impression of sameness was accomplished through the convention that there was one primary solution to the illiteracy "problem." That is, all those who were not reading at grade level by age nine needed the same scripted, phonics-oriented curricula for up to two-and-a-half hours per day. The stated objective of this "literacy," that seldom included social studies, science, art, and music in order to focus on the "basics," was to save students from failure (Helfand, 1999, January 27; Reading/Language Arts Framework, 1999, pp. 3, 13). The third taken-for-granted idea was that some languages and cultures (primarily Mexican-Latino) actually contribute to school and life failure, and other languages and cultures (Euro-American and Asian) ensure school and life success (e.g. Public Education, 1998; Facing the Poverty Factor, 1998). I wanted to understand if, or to what extent some, or all, of these "commonsense" ideas were present in interviewees' reflections and explanations.

26 Ideas that are implied or stated but not explained, and for which neither sources nor alternatives are directly evident.
(i.e. commonsense in that they appear to be a kind of cultural shorthand that may be “intrinsically persuasive”) (Linde, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993, p. 9).

Educators on the Literacy Crisis

Few educators concurred there was a literacy crisis per se, but elements of public domain crisis discourses are present in some explanations and reflections. Two of the six teachers blamed reading/learning problems on student or family attributes such as primary language(s) other than English. Several offered models for the effects (on themselves as teachers and on student learning) of an assumed relationship among parents' poverty, lack of English, low levels of education, and low “valuing” of education. With one exception, these explanations fell short of casting the relationships as innate. Several educators blamed media or public policy misunderstandings of the social conditions that influence children’s school experiences, presenting learning to read as highly complex. Many tried to explain why some students do not learn to read quickly or well, and/or what helps students to learn to read quickly and well. Models for what is involved in helping students learn to read quickly and well were more complex and dimensional than recognized or presented in public discourses. Included were elements and relationships among levels of teacher nurturance/caring, teacher assessments of student needs, teacher motivation (good environments; good pay; respect), parents' reading habits, class-size and school size, reading instruction methods, and relationship of schooling to home
life. No educator took sides in the contentious public debate about phonics versus whole language reading instruction, except in opining that both should be used depending upon a student's needs. And while there was little in the way of sustained powerful critique of inequities in public schooling, it was clear that several educators saw themselves as having power and influence among students who, without them, might otherwise "not make it."

Definitions of Literacy Among Educators

I did not ask the question, "What is literacy?" but several educators explicitly defined literacy. No journalist attempted to do so, even those who had written articles for the Reading by 9 series and the Reading Page (See Appendix G for an example of the initial Reading Page, 1998, November 8). The extent to which literacy was considered to be multi-level, multi-mode, purposeful, and socially powerful communication became more fully expressed as educators reflected on how ideas about the literacy crisis related to their experiences of being a teacher or principal.

Margaret (a principal) and Wendell (a teacher) offered their definitions of literacy as some of the first words they spoke upon being asked about their literacy histories. Margaret related literacy to music, to creativity, and to early social experiences and the feelings associated with those experiences. Her definition of literacy implicated what Gee (1991) calls control of secondary uses of language — or forms of communication that may include speaking, writing, or
other acts (in this case music) which are used outside the domain of family or other intimates. Wendell's definition of literacy recognized relationships among reading and writing, cognition and the potential for those relationships to result in either symbolic or material reward (Gee, 1991).

Margaret: “I probably would not have thought of music as being literacy. But to me, I think literacy is your own perception of what it is. And I remember, as probably a four-year old, being in programs at church, and singing. Being a person who was chosen to sing, and wearing a costume.”

Wendell: “Literacy for me means, uh, a way of understanding written words, and being able to apply that to one’s life. And an ability to take a look at something and get something back from it.”

Willa, a principal in Orange County, ended her response to the question “How is your own literacy background reflected in your work?” with the comment, “But to me, it’s all very closely connected. Writing, reading, thinking, and manipulating.” She expanded when I asked for an example. Willa’s reflection is very similar to Wendell’s, offering a self-referenced schema for the ways in which cognition and the written word may relate to shaping intention and/or action.

Willa: “Well I think there is no literacy unless you think about it. You know, reading the words on a page is not reading. It’s how you interact with those words on the page. Um, I read a lot. Most of it is either related to my work, or personal growth. Ah, books like Ismael, Tuesdays with Morry. Something that helps me be a better person, helps me think about my life, or helps me become a better manager of people.”
Jill, a principal in south-central Los Angeles, spoke of how reading can "transport" a person as she reflected on her own reading and her work. Just prior to the comments below, she had been talking about a grant she had written to improve her school library, the room in which the interview was being conducted. Jill directed her comments on the library to the idea that the "steps" of literacy include comportment (behaving according to some norm) and the appropriate use of standard English. She cited examples implicitly consistent with the idea that literacy, as control of the secondary uses of language, may index dominant discourse/dominant literacy concepts of "appropriate" behavior and language (Gee, 1991).

Jill: "Um hm. You noticed while you were in our outer office that we have a sign above our counter that 'We are an [AEMP] Academic English Mastery Program school'? Academic English mastery is basically standardized English. Our youngsters may comport themselves extremely well. Or, they may not even understand sometimes that we have to use language that we do not use out on the playground, when we are in certain settings. 'Good morning, my name is such and such' whereas, 'Hi, how ya doin'?'. So the literacy transference often is not just picking up the book, getting acquainted with the words and print, but also the understanding that literacy takes a lot of steps. So there's listening, speaking, reading and then writing."

Lela, a principal in a working class and high poverty school north of L.A., offered a personal example that illustrates her perception that "all of the language arts" constitute literacy. She stated this in a way that requires a pedagogy of purpose (what do I get back from learning this) somewhat similar to
Jill’s and Wendell’s points, specifying to students the freedom to choose a purpose which fits their needs.

Lela: “And literacy to me is more than reading. Literacy to me is all of the language arts. And public speaking to me is being orally literate. And writing is very important. I’ve always done a lot of writing. Grant writing and letter writing and technical writing and memo writing, things like that. I love to write. But I hated creative writing. It was not enjoyable to me to write without a true purpose. You know, you’re corresponding with a friend that you haven’t seen for a long time, or you’re writing a grant application, where actually maybe the payoff is getting the money. Or you’re writing a memo to a teacher that’s going to take that information and do something with it, um, I think it’s really important that we create purposes for writing. And for reading.”

**Literacy and Language**

There are qualitative differences implicit in Lela’s and Jill’s definitions of literacy, however. Jill appears to iconicize standard English usage, an explicitly “deficit” approach, i.e. that non-standard English is a herald of a non-standard person, which nevertheless addresses the practical matter of students being able to use standard English when it is to their advantage (Michaels, 1981). Jill does not express a deficit sentiment elsewhere in her narrative, and clearly the policy to implement the Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) is one prescribed by the LAUSD district office. Yet she does choose to make it central to her reflection of the meaning of literacy as taught in her school. Lela, neither in the comments quoted above, nor in the remainder of her narrative, suggests that standard English, nor English-only, are necessary constituents of literacy. She is one of two (Ana being the other person) of the three principals comfortable with conversational and written Spanish who has found through her personal and
professional experience that literacy in one language is transferable to literacy in (at least) a second language (Moll and Dworin, 1997).

CC: “So you were saying you learned Spanish from your little Kindergartners?”

Lela: “I speak Spanish almost all day. I have a bilingual credential, but I don’t consider myself to be fluent in Spanish. But I can get my point across, and I can understand, and I can even write letters and things in Spanish, to parents. And it is absolutely true that once you learn to read and write in one language, you don’t have to completely relearn it. You can become fluent in another. You know, we try to explain that to families. And if you learn to read in Spanish, and then you learn to speak English, it’s not that difficult to learn to read in it. But you know they’re convinced that my child is going to be so behind, so behind. [Laughs.]”

Like the principals Ana and Lela, Dorothy, a first grade teacher who had taught previously for many years in poor, urban (primarily Latino) areas of Los Angeles, was another educator who described herself as being “thrown into” classrooms filled with children whose primary language was not English. Her perceptions about these experiences differed from those of Lela and Ana. I offer an extended excerpt from her interview for several reasons. In contrast to Margaret, Wendell, Lela and Jill above, Dorothy did not attempt to explicitly define literacy. She also did not explicitly draw any inferences from her learning-to-read anecdote (about shyness and some lack of proficiency with reading out loud as a youngster - not quoted here) to how children learn, or how best to teach them (as did Rosalie, Lillian, Paco, Willa, Wendell). Her suggestions (below) that it is important to use different (teaching) modalities (i.e. auditory, visual – she does not mention kinesthetic) and to get to know children
because they all learn differently, were not mentioned as part of her practice among language minority children. And lastly, I provide this more lengthy quotation of Dorothy's in order to contextualize her statement about "readiness" and pedagogy to her opinions regarding bilingual education and the differences she perceives in education abilities and attitudes in Korean and Latino cultures.

CC: "What could you say from your own experience, and / or from your training about how kids learn?"

Dorothy: "Well, they're so individual, so many of the kids, some children learn real differently than other children. So it's really important to me that I provide a lot of different modalities or environments for certain children to learn. And I think a lot of us are visual learners, and that a lot of us are also auditory, so it's really necessary that we provide both for students."

CC: "How do you get to know your students? What's your process for that?"

Dorothy: "We do a lot of sharing. And I do a lot of listening. You know, sometimes I think it's, teachers might think it's kind of wasted time when they like to tell their little stories about their life, or whatever. But you know, it's three minutes out of the day here or there, and they usually have something to say, and it's usually very meaningful to them. I also, in the first week, well, back to school night sent home a little survey for the parents to fill out if they wished to. Did they go to pre-school, what was their experiences, do they have pets, do they have brothers and sisters, what are some their fears, what are some of their great experiences they've had? I ask the parents, 'what is the best way to discipline them, are there behavior problems?' Then, I try to just get down on their level, and ask them if they are having a bad day. I have a pretty good feel for most of my kids."

CC: "Did you get a chance to do that, and was it any different when you were at LAUSD?"

Dorothy: "No, I did not do it when I was with LAUSD. Basically because of the language; either the parents couldn't read what I, or I couldn't read
what they filled out. And, yeah, there was a huge communication gap with the children down there. And the Latino culture treats teachers a lot differently, a lot more respect and reverence. And they’re not going to open up to you about their problems.”

CC: “Did you get teacher aide support?”

Dorothy: “Um-hmm. Yes, at one school I had in first grade a six hour T.A., all day, which was really nice, and then in the others I had three hours every day. Yeah, it helped a ton.”

CC: “What happened to your Spanish?”

Dorothy: “Oh, my Spanish got really goo/, I mean, for, it wasn’t very formal. But don’t ask me to say anything now, I would lose it. But I did a lot of directions, but the academics was handled by my T.A. And that was one of the big problems with the bilingual program, personally.

CC: “Did you feel like they got the best possible education?”

Dorothy: “No. But my whole feeling with the whole bilingualism, especially in K., was we would, I don’t know if you’ve heard of LAP and Pre-LAP (language assessment program) that you give children when they come in to find out if how much they know of their native language and their second language, which would be English? And I would have these four year olds and five year olds come in and they would be non-fluent in their primary language, and non-fluent in English. But what do we do? We re-teach them their primary language so that we can teach them English. And that to me made no sense. If they didn’t know the color red or the number six in their primary language why teach it to them and then teach them in English. It was very frustrating. I thought it was a real disservice to the students.”

CC: “When you have students with a wide variety of experiences, when they come to you, some are pretty ready to start learning to read, and some are not. How do deal with that?”

Dorothy: “No teacher aides up here. Well, basically the first few months we are getting to know each other. There are some that really aren’t ready. They just do a lot of readiness things. You know, I don’t push it. We do a lot of talking, a lot of vocabulary. A lot of interactive writing, interactive reading together. And those that are ready still aren’t as ready as we think they are. All those activities still really help them a lot. Because sometimes I think the kids can go, Wow! they can read so
well! They may be able to decode really well, but they don't understand
the fundamentals of reading a book. Or, of the predicting, and the
sequencing. All of that I incorporate in, and I've seen such gains, even in
my low group, that are reading now. You know, they're not wonderful
readers, but they sure are a lot better than they were. And my high group,
I get in those chapter books, and telling and explaining and guessing
what's going to happen next. So I try and, it's probably not the right thing
to do, but I don't make a lot of allowances. I don't change my teaching
style a whole lot, unless there's a child that really stands out, and needs
certain help. Otherwise, my expectations on their quality of work is a
little different. I expect a little more writing from the higher group, or if
they have the free time when finished, to go and get a book and read.
And higher quality of things. But I don't try and separate them, because
the kids know. They know they are different. I expect the other group to
be a little more independent. So I don't maybe have to give my directions
quite so extensively, or I can sit them down and say 'ok we've done this
before, remember, here's a follow up.' With the other kids it may be a real
sit-down, guided lesson for them. I've never really been able to figure out
how can people can have three ongoing groups and lesson plans and so
forth."

CC: “How many students do you have?”

Dorothy: “20 students. And I have four LEP [Limited English Proficient]
students; or ELL [English Language Learners], whatever we're calling
them these days. But actually two of my LEP students are in my high
reading group. They should be transitioning anyway; they're smart. And
the other one was, but I put him down just a level because his
comprehension wasn't as low [sic]. And the other was, her, is kind of
leaps and bounds, not talking to reading, but she's very low. But you
know, Korean LEP students are very different than/ /”

[Different in what way, than say Spanish-speaking?]

Dorothy: “Brighter. Well, I don't know if brighter is the word, but I know
they go to Saturday school; they have tutors after school. Education is
much more praised, and much more important. I tell you, whoever
-teaches these kids to read at their Korean school should come up and
teach . . . they read so-oo fluently. But then again, they're not maybe
comprehending everything, but they are reading. But their expectations
are . . . sometimes I think we tend to stereotype them, 'cause they sure do
really well.”
Metacommentaries drawn from experiences, professional practices or references to expert models or theories about the social significance of teaching, were as common among the teachers as the principals. But even having certain things in common did not render viewpoints predictable. Ana's, Lela's, and Paco's idea that learning to read in a primary non-English language facilitates English literacy is well accepted in educational theory (Cummins, 1994, 1989; Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a; 1981; McCarty and Schaffer, 1992; McQuillan, 1998; Moll and Dworin, 1997). And the proposition that maintaining and learning in one's primary non-English language while also learning English is well supported as reasonable educational and social objectives (Cobarrubias, 1983; McCarty, 1993a; Fishman, 1996; Krashen, 1999a). In contrast, Dorothy constructs a rationale for cultural assimilation, of which a key element is the purported advantage of English-only teaching among students who, according to an assessment tool, "are not fluent" in their primary languages.

Dorothy's statements about the inadequacies of bilingual education are not (only) based on her experiences working with non-English or limited English speaking children. Her background is not qualitatively different from Lela's and Ana's. All three are white, middle-class, native-Californian daughters of educators, and each characterized themselves as "thrown into" language minority classrooms when they began as teachers. Lela and Ana approached the experience differently than Dorothy - seeing language not as a problem, but as an opportunity for themselves and their students. It is true that Dorothy does not
have the same level of education as Lela and Ana, and may therefore not have been exposed to research about language acquisition, language and cognition, or the social dimensions of education. I cannot know to what extent this factor may be relevant to the differences among these educators. Dorothy's commentary on bilingual education, her reasons for not getting to know non-English speaking Latino students and parents, and her comparisons between Latino and Korean cultures, (and her rhetorical questions about celebrating Mexican vs. U.S. holidays), leave the impression she views cultures and languages on a relative scale.

Dorothy's reasoning and several language conventions (e.g. bilingual education as a disservice to immigrant children) mimic the discourse of two "public" sources. One is California Proposition 227, the initiative to end "failed" bilingual education, passed by 61 percent of California voters in 1998, but rejected by 63 percent of Latino voters. The language as a problem trope is also elaborated in the Los Angeles Times' *Reading by 9* series (for example, Bars of the Mind, 1998, November 8; Sahagun, 1998, November 1). To be fair, Dorothy, and all inadequately trained teachers asked to teach language minority children, were placed in difficult positions. Although she appears to blame the students

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27 Bars of the Mind (1998, November 8) is a Los Angeles Time's editorial embossed with the *Reading by 9* logo. It advanced the notion of a literacy crisis through the devices of unproblematized correlations of and connections among poor reading skills and social pathologies (e.g. dropping out, gangs, welfare, crime, etc.). The Sahagun article (1998, November 1), embossed with the *Reading by 9* logo, profiled a child of Mexican immigrant parents. This article highlighted
and their parents for their inability to understand her, Dorothy does not question the systemic conditions under which she was expected to effectively teach, nor her idea that the huge communication gap was unbridgeable. Yet she also commented that she loved teaching language-minority students at LAUSD and the (primarily) English-speaking students she is currently teaching. She also declines the proposition (which also appears in Reading by 9 materials) that a phonics-heavy reading instruction methodology is effective for all students.

Educators Deconstruct the Literacy Crisis

The educators’ comments below address the core elements of the statist and media proposition that California is in the midst of a literacy crisis. It is fair to say that no educator among the 12 thoroughly accepted the idea that there was a crisis in either education or learning or society (as the literacy crisis was variously described in public policy and the media). The extent to which each educator sees her or himself as a willing, able, or trusted participant in improving the educational climate and conditions does however have something to do with what they referred to as optimizing education for students with diverse language(s), experience(s), and learning modalities. It is probably also fair to say that the twin influences of education principles (relatively well defined and/or robust), and agency (how much they perceived themselves to have),

and connected Spanish spoken in the home to the family’s poverty and the son’s struggles with learning to read. See Appendix Q.)
drove their explanations of purpose ("this is what I want to do;" "here's what I'm able to do").

Educators' comments contain four themes explicating the complex nature of education as one domain for the development of literacy, which they use to counter the public discourse crisis elements. The first theme I label “quality of education matters.” In this subsection, five educators speak to pedagogical principles. One of these principles, stated by the principal Rosalie, was the importance of focus on student talents versus what they do not know. Ana, a principal, stated the second pedagogical principle related to quality of education. Ana noted that the general goal of education is to help prepare all students to be socially competent. Paco, a teacher, addressed implications of treating students as individuals rather than as stereotypes. Willa, a principal, spoke about educators' responsibility for providing an optimum environment for each student's development to full potential, and Jill, a principal, talked about the difficulty of doing so when classrooms are overcrowded, teachers do not have full training, or other resources are lacking. The other three themes - reading instruction methods, getting to know students, and respect and power - are addressed below.

Quality of teaching matters.

Rosalie is a principal in a wealthy school district. As a child, though privileged, she had some difficulty learning to read, but believes she was turned
around by teachers who focused on the positive. She also suggested that her "later" (i.e. third grade) success may have had some influence on her state of mind, turning her into a "goody two-shoes" who concentrated more on grades than on the pleasure of learning for its own sake. This appears to be something of a critique of an over-emphasis on form versus substance, perhaps related to her rejection of some elements of the "accountability" model.

Rosalie defined accountability differently and more narrowly than it is defined in "literacy crisis" rhetoric, linking it with what she calls best practices, or the idea of transmitting what works in some schools to the "lowest" schools. This proposal appears to extend the implication from her literacy history that focusing on the positive is more effective than a deficit focus. She mused that the teacher and the quality of teaching are more important than almost any other factor (an idea born out in some research). She also, perhaps inadvertently, addressed the ways in which resources count; that is, she is able to attract the "cream of the crop" to her school, versus her example of 800 teachers without credentials in L.A. Unified.

Rosalie: "I think, um. It's hard. You know, when you talk about accountability of schools. That one always kind of gets us through the heart because the latest attempts to hold schools more and more accountable has actually done the opposite. And that is just not the way to go about bringing up literacy. Um, but I do think that it is important that schools are held accountable, in a way that rewards growth and supports schools that have not been able to find the strategies to reach that growth. Unfortunately, it's always chosen as a very negative approach as opposed to supporting them and sharing best practices. You know, the environment has such a major impact on how well someone achieves as a literate person. Um, but you just can't pick one
thing or the other. It's just a combination of all those things. You know, the models that parents provide; the quality of education that students receive. Um, I'm less likely to say that it's the program, or the lack of books. I think it's the teacher. The quality of teaching. And instruction. A good teacher could take whatever that they have available, and you know, make it work. Unfortunately we don't have enough well-trained teachers at this point in Los Angeles County, anyway. We have hundreds on emergency credentials. Not in [our district], thank goodness. We're able to pick the cream of the crop. But in L.A. Unified, what did they say, they have something like 800 new teachers on emergency credentials."

Ana is a principal in an Orange County district serving primarily middle class and some working class students. She was raised in an environment in which being "gifted" in a school with substantial resources translated into enriched education, but not into encouragement to highly develop her facility with math and science. She also questioned the premise of crisis, and the accountability solution. In response to the long version of the literacy crisis question, Ana indirectly defined literacy as a kind of social resourcefulness. She was critical of the linkage in some media representations of the literacy crisis from which I took my question about correlations and stereotypical images (e.g. Bars of the Mind, 1998; Public Education, 1998). She proposed that functional literacy (being able to rent an apartment, or determine the economical means of buying food) is an appropriate educational goal, as a kind of contrast to the "fair haired" idea that all students will go to college.

Ana: “Well, when I think about some of the things that you’ve mentioned from the paper, it is a correlation; and of course as researchers and people studying, we know what that means, but I don't know that every journalist is real cautious about how they write. And so they lead
the public to believe that those things are cause and effect, and every little Hispanic face they see is someone who is going to be an illiterate drop out and cause more welfare, crime and poverty to perpetuate itself. Which I know from my experience isn’t true. I’ve taught lots of kids who are very successful, and among my adult friends I have lots of Hispanic and Vietnamese who as kids probably didn’t speak English when they started school, but yet are very successful. And I think if you look at the UC campuses today, you’re going to see lots of different faces that maybe weren’t there when my parents went to UCLA. But there’s always exceptions even to correlations; studies only correlate with a certain degree of reliability anyway. I think that sells papers well, and that’s why journalists write about it.

But why literacy is important, even if you are not going to go to a UC campus, which is a fair-haired idea, that I think all my kids can get there. But to be able to participate in our very complex society, to rent an apartment, to be able to read the contract, to open a bank account . . . some of the simple things that we take for granted, to apply for a credit card, or even to figure out how to save enough money to buy the economy size instead of buying the quart of milk every day. That you actually get a better deal if you save up and buy a gallon, I mean that’s a form of mathematical literacy that sometimes the poor or the new immigrant, or they don’t have the means to do it. They may understand it but they don’t have the means to do that. I really feel sorry for some parents whose children need special education, and we give a whole psychologist’s report and it’s lengthy, and it has educational terms in it, and psychological terms, and they really have no idea what we said or what we are asking them to sign. We give them their language, and it says their rights, and even if it’s in their primary language, you know, they’re really not understanding.

So, I would hope, that we are not just striving to do better on standardized tests, and [produce] college graduates, but that we’re actually helping people able to be literate and to function in the complicated world that we’ve created.”

Paco teaches third and fourth graders whose first language(s) are not English, in a school near Los Angeles that serves primarily students from poor and working class families. His first language is Spanish; his parents are working class immigrants. His schooling experiences were punctuated by implied and direct discrimination. He studied history instead of architecture,
and ultimately became a teacher, at least partly because of one professor’s bias. His sense of himself as a deserving outsider appears to be strongly influenced by his impressions of others’ stereotypical attitudes, and implicit in his comments about the effects of “too much generalization” in public discourse. His presentation is more anecdote-driven than Rosalie’s above, but he arrives at similar conclusions. Teacher quality and commitment overcome many shortcomings, including students’ level of preparation when they arrive at school, their motivation to learn or other “problems.” His perception is that testing is, by itself, an inadequate indicator of what a student can do, a perception born out in both his and Rosalie’s (and others’) early memories of learning difficulties.

Paco: “I don’t know where to begin. You can’t generalize about it is the only thing I want to tell people. Let’s just take my family as an example. [About reading.] Um, I was always, in elementary school I wasn’t always a great student. But once I got into 9th grade, I was a straight A student. And in college I was a B student. And then in my graduate stuff I was an A student. And that’s just the way I’ve always been. My brothers, on the other hand, they just weren’t. But you asked me who reads the most it’s my third brother. That guy reads more than anybody I know. And he was probably the poorest reader out of all.

[About accountability.] Um, you know, merit pay. I can easily make that merit pay if I went to a school where the kids were better prepared. And better prepared could mean that they have a lot more, lot more help at home, but it’s not necessarily true.

[About testing and accountability.] We had areas where [our school’s] kids were scoring much, much better [than students in wealthier schools in the district]. But we had areas where we were scoring a lot worse. If your school ends up, you know, we got an API ranking of seven in comparison to all the other schools [in the district]. Which is, pretty good, ‘cause ten is awesome. But who cares? Who cares? What is more important is what are the kids getting out of it! Are the kids really learning at the school?
[About public discourse.] Always there’s somebody that wants to cause trouble with me about teaching. And they’ll come out and say certain things, and I’ll defend it the best that I can without, you know, gettin’ irritated and all that. And they, they go, ‘Oh man, I didn’t know that!’ You know, because, they didn’t. But yet, they’re ready to open their mouth and say, you know, what’s been said in the newspapers. The most recent thing that I remember, uh, their brother or sister was teaching in New York City, in a lower income school, and after 2 years hadda just give it up, couldn’t handle how ‘low ‘the kids were. And I said, ‘That’s not what they couldn’t handle. They couldn’t handle the job. They weren’t meant to be teachers.’ Because I have those, I betcha that I have kids that are lower than them, I betcha I have kids that have just as many problems if not more so than they had, and I love being with those kids. And when I see those eyes light up, it’s, you know, I go ... it makes you want to keep coming back. Whether it’s just once in that whole round, and that’s the way I see it.

These kids are, when they light up, and they’re excited about something, it’s. When they’re down about something, I’m like, ‘uh oh, what can I do to get them excited?’ Because if they’re not excited, they’re not going to participate. So that motivates me to make it more exciting. But that’s what I think, there’s too much generalization, and yes, the testing is coming out of that. And the testing comes out of negativity, not out of trying to help.”

Willa’s somewhat idyllic childhood, attending kindergarten through third grade in a one-room schoolhouse with a teacher who was a “surrogate mother,” seems almost existentially entwined with her metaphor of children as plants in a garden. In her choice of analogy, she cast herself as a person who cares for the plants to the extent that she tries to provide the best conditions for growth and development; her early interest in psychology was not inconsistent with this somewhat abstract image. In an indirect way, she acknowledged parents’ influences as “the first teachers,” and through the metaphor of children as part of nature, she acknowledged the influences of biology. Yet she chose, from the
array of correlations referenced in the literacy crisis question, to first critique the inverse relationship of socio-economic level to school achievement (found in so much literature), citing the critique as a tenet of her beliefs and her professional motivation. In this way, she saw education, and educators such as herself, as overcomers – much as Paco asserted – but founded on a very different experiential context.

Willa: “I believe we are a part of nature. So I like to use the garden metaphor. And, I can’t drive a plant to grow, I can’t force a plant to grow. But what I can do is create the conditions, the optimum conditions, that encourage, or allow, the reinforcing processes that are involved in that plants’ growth process, to occur. And I believe that that’s what we do as educators, and as parents. Parents are their children’s first educators, and I think research is now showing us the importance of the first few years of life. And how critical that time can be in a youngster’s environment. I believe that it’s not causal, but I do believe that it’s certainly correlated.

I think part of it is also that, well, first with, with the socio-economic level of the home, I think it’s a correlation, that socio-economic level is correlated with student achievement. But it’s not causal. And if I thought it was causal, then we’d all have to give up tomorrow and walk out the door. Because we really don’t make a difference in anybody’s lives if they come to us already pre-made and pre-set.”

Jill is principal of a south-central Los Angeles school serving 2500 students (about half of whom are eligible for free or reduced-cost meals). She did not directly question the crisis rhetoric in the way Ana did. She did not suggest a metaphor nor rely on personal or professional anecdotes to advance her ideas. She directly answered my questions, describing how the social context impacts the education environment, but she did not relate any of this to herself as a person with a history and a life outside of the school.
The surrounding community is a high poverty area. Because employment is often in short supply or is short term, there is a 50 percent transiency rate (i.e. half of the students arrive and/or depart in the same school year). There is also higher absenteeism, and higher numbers of late arrivers each day than in some other district schools. Half or more of the student body is classified as limited English proficient (LEP). There were two forms of instruction available under State guidelines after the elimination of bilingual education -- instruction in English-Model A, or instruction in English with primary language support available-Model B – dependent on whether the parent requested Model B, Model A, or made no request at all (assigned to Model A).

The school was on a year-round schedule and had inadequate space for the numbers of students it served (2500, K-5), which meant that some teachers and their students must move from classroom to classroom as a new “track” (school year schedule) began for another group of students. Six teaching positions were unfilled at the time of the interview in October of 1998. This caused those students to be assigned to other classrooms, thereby increasing the numbers of students in classrooms which, according to State mandate, should be held to 20 or fewer in grades K-Three. Substitute teachers were not always available; there was one resource specialist (for children with special needs) for the entire school, and other staff members attempted to fill multiple professional roles.
Jill did not directly critique the systemic inequities that governed her school situation; she stated her answers (above) to my questions without any hint of resignation in her voice. She spoke with less prompting when she focused on what teachers and students accomplish together. She considered it an important goal of schooled literacy to help students learn to “decode,” to give them encouragement so that they have the confidence to speak up to say, I can't do this, or, this is what I need, and therefore to succeed, despite tremendous odds. There is some potential for seeing this formulation as low expectations, but there was a kind of stoicism inherent in Jill’s narrative, and a hint that the word “decode” had multiple levels of meaning. She did suggest that “norm-referenced” testing does not measure literacy as competence. She also noted that a very negative response from a journalist whom she invited to attend the school’s science fair may have represented an intention to advance or sustain images of incompetence, or worse, in her school and other similar schools. This stood in contrast to her very indirect portrayal of the systemic ennui inherent in the bureaucracy, economic structure inequities, and the ambivalence of some students and parents toward education represented in the conditions described above.

Some of the details above are from different points in Jill’s narrative. I pick up her response as she was describing her staff.

Jill: “There’s some people we didn’t discuss who are key players as well our support staff. Our nurse, our psychologist. We don’t have a guidance counselor. She [the psychologist] has many hats. Our resource specialist, who works with youngsters with identified special needs.
Those are key players. And we do have itinerant personnel who come in also, speech and language, adaptive P.E. We try to find and keep having the same people if they are connecting with the youngsters. When I say connecting, not just the lesson, but giving them that encouragement.

Literacy has to be something that people can say 'I don't understand this when I look at the printed page.' Perhaps there's factors that we know nothing about. I'm thinking of dyslexia. But an extremely bright individual who can, if it's read to him, understand what's being said, and what is being communicated. So when I think of the word literacy, I think of all of those factors. I do have a problem, this is a personal issue, with a standardized test which may or may not truly show if a person is literate."

CC: "Example?"

Jill: "A norm-referenced test with paper and pencil. I'm thinking specifically of a man who's done an ad recently on television, who said he's 46 years old before he could actually decode the words out of the book. But he's extremely successful in another field, the automotive field. But I do not believe that anyone would have actually believed that this man was illiterate unless he said those words, and he did."

Reading instruction methods and literacy.

In this section are responses to the literacy crisis question(s) from Rosalie and Willa, principals, and the teacher Dorothy, in excerpts reflecting on phonemic awareness, and/or the influences of reading instruction methods. Rosalie cited lack of adequate training provided to teachers (consistent with her theme of the importance of teacher quality) in the whole language method of teaching in order to account for some problems among new teachers with using appropriate instructional approaches for certain students' needs.

Rosalie: "Certainly, everybody blames the whole language. You know, whole language this and whole language that. Well, I don't think there's a whole lot, um, that we could say about the negatives of whole language if
you take it in its pure form. The only problem was, the State of California leveled whole language on us, and didn’t provide any teacher training or guidance in terms of what should be provided in a whole language program. Which does include phonetics. Phonetic instruction. Um, so the lack of training and guidance to teachers; not putting a structured program in their hands, and saying this is how you teach this. Big concern in our district, and I really have to hand it to the professionalism of our teachers. Um, those who are experienced teachers can teach without that book. They know exactly, you know, where they’re going, what they’re doing."

While Rosalie focused on teacher training for when and how to use different reading instructional methods, Willa spoke about phonemic awareness, addressing it in terms of a child’s preparedness for understanding how auditory word/sound familiarity translated into visual letter and word/sound recognition. Her explanation, which built upon her earlier garden metaphor, and her critique of the inverse relationship of socio-economic level to achievement, is a very clear description of a “balanced” instructional approach. Subsequently, Willa responded to my somewhat leading question about the media’s apparent confusion over phonemic awareness and phonics. Fortunately she had experience to back up her reasoning that there may be some misperception about well-publicized education reforms, and their potential influence(s) on instructional outcomes.

Willa: “I think research has shown us that phonemic awareness with a youngster is critical. And can be the greatest predictor of reading success. So we would want to be able to identify those children early on who are having difficulty with the sounds of the language, with the phonemes, and make sure that a lot of our curriculum in Kindergarten and first grade addresses phonemic awareness. Um, we obviously, use the strategies of reading. We actively teach reading strategies to children. Make sure that
they understand picture clues, and the context clues in figuring out a word. And all of this within the umbrella of quality literature. I think that writing is, uh, totally connected with reading."

CC: “I often find when I read the newspaper that the word phonics seems to be confused with the idea of phonemic awareness. Do you find that to be the case?"

Willa: “Yes, I don’t think it is widely understood, but then I don’t think that we have really educated people [about it], nor has the media actually ever asked us. You know, it’s one of those political bandwagons upon which they have felt it necessary to take upon themselves. I was, um, [our] school was a school that Gov. Wilson came to. The [Orange County] Register wanted to do follow up surveys of my children, my parents. They didn’t understand that you can’t really evaluate class size reduction during the first year that you are trying to implement it. But whenever he would catch me, he would ask me questions, like, ‘Well, now you are teaching phonics?’ Like we had never taught it before! And in all my career, I have never been in a school that did not teach phonics. When whole language was in, it [phonics] was an element of the reading program. Phonics was never abandoned. It was never an either / or kind of thing. But I think that the media has that need to either/ or it; for some reason they don’t understand the balance.”

Dorothy, a first grade teacher in a suburban area adjacent to Los Angeles, also (briefly) addressed children’s readiness for school. In her own literacy history narrative she described some difficulty with early reading experiences (feeling she was not “proficient” to read out loud), and proposed several alternative explanations for this difficulty, not including her home experiences. Dorothy’s explanation below also postulated several other reasons (besides “readiness”) as to why students may have trouble reading. These included new teachers needing explicit guidance, insufficient use of phonics (versus whole language), and her suggestion that as teachers become more experienced, they find what works for them to respond to individual student needs.
Dorothy is speaking in two voices here, or using two points of view as she did when she stated her position on bilingual education. When Dorothy spoke about the problems of bilingual education, there was a tension between the Dorothy who conceived of herself as a well-trained and principled teacher who used multiple means to reach and teach her students, and the Dorothy who was unprepared, yet expected to teach non-English speaking students. As a well-trained teacher she knew what to do; as a person without alternative language skills, or English as a second language training, she rationalized that she could not apply her principles for meeting students’ individual needs because they and their parents spoke a different language.

As Dorothy touched upon one reason, and then another for what may underlie the “literacy crisis,” she did not reiterate her concerns about bilingual education (quoted earlier in this chapter) which so closely mirrored public notions of its failure. She did however echo some of the phrasing and cadence used by two of the six journalists interviewed regarding phonics as a solution to education problems. Journalists’ comments on the literacy crisis are addressed in detail in the next chapter; figure 6.1 below shows a comparison of Dorothy’s phrasing with those of one journalist, Donald, (elaborated in chapter seven). Despite such mimicry, Dorothy then reasserted herself as an experienced teacher who knows when and with whom to use a particular instructional approach, saying that “whole word” readers are able to read faster.
Figure 6.1 - Journalist/Teacher Phrase Comparison

| Donald: “...the propensity of education to swing so radically... [to]... phonics ... emerging as an important key element of reading instruction.” |
| Dorothy (teacher): “...we’re swinging back now to the phonics, which is, I think really important.” |
| Donald: “... whole language advocates who say anybody who talks about phonics is part of a right wing conspiracy ... who want to keep kids down and prevent them from thinking about what they read, and on and on and on and on.” |
| Dorothy: “Because when I first started, it was whole language, whole language, whole language. You wouldn’t find words anywhere, on the board/ /” |

Dorothy: “I think a lot of it needs to start at home. Because I really firmly believe so many of those studies, you know they say, the first five years of life are so important.

Some of the new teachers, they get too bombarded, and they don’t know what to use, what to decipher from, and I think that’s really difficult in the teaching. I mean, we’re swinging back now to the phonics, which is, I think really important. Because when I first started, it was whole language, whole language, whole language. You wouldn’t find words anywhere, on the board/ /”

CC: “Really?”

Dorothy: “No, not very many. We used to talk about the story, what happened, you know the vocabulary, supposedly the whole word// We find what works, what works for me and my style and how I want to teach, and what works for the teacher next door, may be two totally different things. Just like the kids.”

CC: “And is it different by kid, with a little more emphasis on one thing versus//”

Dorothy: “Yes, for instance I had a Mom tell me the other day, and her daughter is bright, probably one of my brightest, and, good reader, good writer, and she says you know, ‘could you do a little bit more of the phonics?’ I didn’t want to get into it with her, but I’m like, some of us are like that. Some can’t, [but] she can see if a word’s not spelled right. There aren’t phonetic readers. And actually the whole word reader reads better because they are not stuck on each sound. So we kind of do both.”
Dorothy's viewpoint(s) were relatively lightly theorized and "unintegrated," that is, they were "internalized in a selective combination" Strauss (1990). She indirectly took the position held by Willa, Rosalie and Paco regarding the importance of experienced teachers who understand that different children have different learning needs because of their experience, developmental stage, and/or learning (cognitive) style. Yet she stated (as presented earlier in this chapter) that she could not communicate with language minority parents and students to facilitate her understanding of their different needs.

In the passages just above, Dorothy linked a child's readiness, mode(s) of reading instruction, and teacher experience with little indication as to how one related to the other (in contrast to Willa's comments about phonemic awareness). Dorothy used phrasing found in the discourse on phonics and whole language in several media and other public sources, which resembled one journalists' phrasing in the Figure 6.1 comparison (See also California Reading Initiative, 1999; California Republican Platform, 2000; Helfand, 1998, October 25; Republican Party Platform, 1996, 2000). Dorothy's earlier comments about bilingual education were also lightly theorized, and reminiscent of public discourses, such as that found in the California Initiative Statute Proposition 227 (1998) to end "failed" bilingual education, reflecting ideas linking some kinds of cultures with education success (see also Public Education, 1998).
In follow-up questions, I asked other educators about getting to know their students since the topic of "individual needs" and "learning styles" or learning modalities was raised by several of them at various points in their narratives, including in the "literacy crisis" explanations. As well, one centerpiece of the research on effective pedagogy among economically, ethnically and linguistically diverse students upholds the advantage of teacher knowledge about and appreciation of students' home contexts (Heath, 1982; McCarty, 1993b; Michaels, 1981; Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992; Moll, Tapia and Whitmore, 1993). The following section addresses educators' responses to questions about getting to know students.

**Getting to Know Students**

Cyra and Deon, both teachers, responded to the following questions by explaining that their work is contingent on parents. Cyra said she changed schools - from an ethnically and linguistically diverse school in a working class suburb adjacent to Los Angeles, to a school in a wealthy west-side suburb - partly because she "wasn't able to relate to the kids because there wasn't that interest in my job from the parents." She went on to explain that home visits are for the purpose of seeing "what's going on in the home that might contribute to them not doing well in school," although her phrase "would have been" indicates that she did not make visits.
CC: "How important is it for you to know, to have a relationship with students? Some teachers make it a point to get to know students through home visits, and others say it's not important."

Cyra: "Well, that's one of the reasons why I changed schools, is because I wasn't able to relate to the kids. Besides the location of the school, which is much more convenient, I wasn't able to relate to the kids because there wasn't that interest in my job from the parents. And then, the students, I just felt like everyone was just going through the motions of being there. So I needed to have that feedback, that relationship, between teacher and students. I think it's very important to have a relationship, to gain a respect for each other.

Here at this school I don't think home visits are necessary, but at my old school I think they would have been. I think that's more a socio-economic issue to see what's going on in the home that might contribute to them not doing well in school. Not that the parents at the other schools didn't, but they were all working odd hours, and just, you know, maybe they weren't educated themselves, they don't know what goes on in a classroom."

Deon, a special education teacher in a working class area near Los Angeles, implicitly accepts the proposition that parent literacy is a necessary condition for, minimally, student motivation to learn, and may be a necessary and sufficient model for student literacy. His tone was plaintive; his device was to contrast his own parents' example, and himself as a model to his own children, to critique the idea that teachers should not be blamed for students' poor performance.

Deon: "I wish we have literate parents, because that will help. Only because if parents put a premium to education, because they were educated themselves, they will instill that in their children. And I think that will be enough to motivate children's learning. I want to be like my parent. We got a, like a listing, of where our parents finished education-wise. We actually have a few parents in this classroom who didn't finish highschool. And, you have a child who looks up to Dad or Mom. What do you think that child is thinking. My Dad didn't finish high school, so why should I care? So that's a big thing. I think the schools are doing
enough. I think the schools are doing more than enough. I mean I stay an hour to two hours every single day preparing for the next lesson. I see a lot of cars here still when I leave. We have a lot of working parents, like two parents working in the family. But I work, and I read to my kids before they go to bed. I can do it. I'm tired every day, but I can do it. We have libraries which let books for free. I don't know. I don't know.”

While different, both Cyra's and Deon's reflections on the relative importance of “getting to know your students” are lightly theorized yet strongly stated positions that a teacher's responsibility extends only as far as the threat to her/his professionalism. Cyra and Deon appear to be explaining in a kind of image schema tautology (of what goes with what), that parents' low economic levels are linked to low education levels, which are linked to parents' under-valuing education and literacy, to explain student achievement potential. They place themselves outside the circle, able to observe and comment. Throughout her narrative, Cyra's approach is not to intervene in the inevitability; Deon, in contrast expresses the value of parents' literacy in their child's life in terms of his own success and commitment. Yet both Cyra's and Deon's extrapolations are of a different order than, for instance, Willa's position that socio-economic level does not solely represent parents (e.g. healthy flowers are unlikely to come from unhealthy plants) nor predict the potential for student school learning.

Lela, principal of a school in a working class, ethnically and linguistically diverse district near Los Angeles, touches on many of the same elements of students' home life as do Cyra and Deon. Her proposition about literacy learning is that a low socio-economic level makes it more likely that parents are
so tired or stressed by the conditions of their lives that the quality of
communication with their children may influence their children's language skills
(in any language), thereby influencing school achievement. This explanation is
similar to "expert" theories that a language rich home environment is a predictor
of achievement (i.e. correlated to). While it does not in any way wholly account
for students' reading achievement, Lela's idea that parent/child communication
quality is significant to achievement is similar to a commonly used linkage of
parents' English reading proficiency with students' low reading scores (Helfand,
1999, March 5). However, Lela clearly sees this not as inevitable, but as only a
partial explanation for achievement. This is clear from the way in which she
qualified her assertions. She indexes the complexity of relationships among
parents' experiences and actions to student learning with several phrases. These
included "not the whole ball of wax," and "play a part", and by that part of her
narrative (not quoted here) in which she detailed the grant-writing, multiple
programs, and teachers' extra efforts dedicated to serving parents' and students'
social, material and educational needs.

Lela: "I truly think that some of the causes of illiteracy are not even
things there have been studies on. One of the things that I see, and we
have those families that have all of those other factors at play, and we
have 27 percent of our families have not gone to high school in any
country, and most of our students come in speaking another language, not
English. Many of our parents are not literate. Some of those children can
learn to read, and do, and do very well. So we know that that's not, that
can't been the whole thing. The whole ball of wax. I mean, I certainly
think that they play a part. But what I see as trends in the families that I
meet with because their children are struggling in school, are things like
parents who don't communicate much with their children. It's more,
adults barking orders, or kids answering a question that's asked of them.
But it's not a two-way communication. They're not developing comprehension, listening skills. They're not learning to express themselves.

Respect and Power

Educators' comments on the topics of respect and power are summarized here. When educators' focused on how they perceived changes and stresses in the general work environment, and recent "education reform" mandates to be related to what they conceive of as their ability to do their jobs effectively, the issues of respect and power came to the fore. It was clear that, without my asking any educator if she or he felt either blamed or at fault for the so-called literacy crisis, some responded to my questions as if the notion of literacy crisis was an assault on teaching, and therefore on them more or less personally.

Wendell and Paco each expressed concerns over the state-mandated ranking system (the API or Academic Performance Index) not, according to them, because their school was "low" (it ranked far above the 50th percentile), but because the rankings did not reflect students' continuous improvement and teachers' caring, creativity and hard work.

Cyra, a teacher, did not seem to perceive the "crisis" to target her, but she noted that teachers are not respected. Cyra emphasized work climate factors, as well as inadequate time to conduct all the assessments and do the paperwork and still educate her students. Lillian emphasized the Los Angeles Unified bureaucracy, teacher pay, a dependency mentality among poor people, and media misrepresentations as underlying causes of student failure. She also
specifically stated that teachers are not respected. Neither Cyra, nor Lillian, nor any of the other teachers or principals suggested that climate, bureaucracy, schools' physical plants, school rankings, or lack of resources for social studies, science, art, music, library books, and so on, might mean that poor and/or minority students and their families are not respected.

Margaret's comments presented a typical view of the mandated curricula and schedules implemented in each school in California since 1999. At least two-and-a-half hours per day must be dedicated to scripted, phonics-heavy reading instruction using "leveled" readers. Some teachers (as I have observed) use the same "level" book no matter what each individual student's reading development may be. Others may break students into groups and use higher level readers with some groups and lower level readers with other groups. But in any case, whole group work makes up the majority of the two-and-a-half hours spent on reading. The remainder of the school day is spent on math. Atypical in Margaret's comments were parent supported (money and time) programs she mentioned. Only two other educators, Rosalie and Cyra, mentioned such high levels of direct parent funding and time dedicated to the school. All three educators work in upper-middle to upper income areas. Schools in high poverty areas must rely on grants which provide funds for limited time periods, and on the goodwill of teachers asked to work after regular hours, often without extra pay (e.g. unquoted comments from Lela, Jill, Kay, Wendell and others).
It may be significant that no principal expressed concerns about respect and power. Each, in diverse ways, commented on the limits of their agency to affect the learning environment, or the realities of schools in privileged versus high poverty areas, but did not hint at feeling disrespected or helpless.

Summary

While explicit critiques of education or "literacy" among educators were nominal, Gee's (1991) idea that schooled literacy is not always an effective social resource is present in educators' talk in several ways. Attempts to define literacy, confined to educators, offered the ideas that social uses and meanings of literacy are signifiers of opportunity structures, but also of the roles of teachers in helping students to find purpose and make their own meanings. Each educator discursively situated her or himself via alternative views of, and personal actions related to students' language, parent education levels, and the freedoms inspired by or limitations on resources inherent in differential school resources. Paco's and Lillian's experiences of having been treated differently as youngsters seemed to inspire, albeit differentially, explicit connections to educators' taking responsibility for the inequities, and therefore having (some) power for altering the future. Ana and Lela critiqued the withdrawal of bilingual education in California schools based on their experiences with language minority children and on having taken responsibility to reach such children. Some implicated bureaucracy, work climate and teacher pay to indicate lack of respect. Few elaborated on vastly unequal school size, withdrawal of social studies, science,
art, music and physical education as indicators of disrespect, or attempts to render powerless.

Paco, Lela, Willa, Rosalie and Ana’s critiques contained implicit concerns about the matter of respect for students and their families, addressed in terms of pedagogical principles of treating students as individuals by building on their strengths. Among other educators, lack of respect for teachers was an explicit rationale for some educators’ moving to better schools, or an (implicit) reason for subtractive treatment of students. With the possible exception of Paco, no educator directly addressed the potential for helping students critique the social precedents that produce the unequal economic and educational conditions they endure. Mentioned were conditions of low teacher pay, or insufficient numbers of trained teachers, or lack of minimally enriched (e.g. science and social studies) curricula for students with a tone of inevitability rather than as the result of public attitudes and policy for which there are alternatives. The potential for these educators to maximize their students’ learning in a deeply conformist and critique-averse political climate is problematic. But all educators believed themselves to be well prepared and concerned. It is fair to say, however, that while none of the twelve educators wholly accepted the notion of literacy crisis, elements of the crisis argument that blamed student failure on language and culture were part of the thinking of at least three of the educators interviewed (Dorothy, Lillian and Cyra), and that this thinking had influenced their choices and actions as educators.
CHAPTER SEVEN
JOURNALISTS RESPOND TO
THE "LITERACY CRISIS"

Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis of participants' "literacy crisis" responses. Journalists were offered the opportunity to talk about what literacy was said to mean. As was true for educators, journalists filtered their perceptions of literacy through personal experiences and observations. Each journalist narrated herself or himself more or less as protagonists of their life stories; some narratives more than others yielded an impression of cohesion and coherence, an impression partly the result of expository sophistication, and partly the result of ideological force. In this chapter, journalists (in contrast to educators in the previous chapter) generally construed the literacy crisis to be real. Examples, reasoning models and language forms were contextualized by, and generally consistent with, public discourses about the purported crisis. (For examples of this discourse, see Appendix H, A Child Literacy Initiative, 1999, September 12; and Appendix I, We All Need to Help, 1998, October 18).

Journalists' responses to the question "Is there a literacy crisis?" are the main focus of this chapter. Several follow-up questions specific to journalists

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The original "literacy crisis" question, following, asked of some educators was modified to "Is there a literacy crisis?" or some other short form after I found that the original question was too long or confusing. Subsequently, the original text was only read to interviewee(s) if needed to gain more elaborated
were also used to gain greater clarity from and detail in speakers' comments. Examples of follow-up questions (as appropriate to the person being interviewed) included:

"What does the literacy crisis have to do with the correlations among (state examples) cited in (state examples from Times' coverage)?"

"What do you think about these public discussions?"

I asked these questions in order to understand the implications of what Gee (1991) calls "powerful literacy" (i.e. knowledge of discourse, and Discourses; having the training, experience, and social capital to critique one's own and others' discourses) from participants' reflections on the purported elements of the literacy crisis (Gee, 1991). I looked for structure and content of critique in journalists' words about themselves, their readers, and the subjects of their writing. I was interested in whether journalists' ideas about the so-called literacy crisis reflected particular propositions and connections found in public discourses about education, such as those that conflate and vilify immigration, languages other than English (or non-standard English), poverty, and school failure (Ruiz, 1984). Reflection on media and other public discourse characterizations of the so-called crisis.
Some journalists also used what has been called "legitimate language," casting such language as formulaic cultural wisdom, effectively idealizing their own primary language (English) and culture attributes, opinions and self-interests (Bourdieu, 1991). Legitimate language was offered in the form of references to scientific or official discourses, the institutional viewpoint of the Times, and/or language of political platforms and California ballot initiatives. The effect of this was to contrast themselves, or people like themselves, to those who speak languages other than English, poor immigrants, those who do not use standard English, and so on. Implicitly, the characteristics of those far from the ideal (under-educated, poor, immigrant non-English speakers, or poor, non-standard English speakers), are transformed into causes of early reading difficulties, school failure, and even of crime and poverty (Bourdieu, 1991; D'Andrade, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

The remainder of the chapter addresses journalists' explanations of the literacy crisis, offering two contrasting themes; one theme only lightly elaborated is that of literacy as cultural competence. The second theme more highly elaborated and integrated is that of cultural incompetence. Readers should refer to the Literacy Crisis section in the previous chapter for context, if necessary. The final section is a summary of the main points of the chapter.
Journalists on the Literacy Crisis

Journalists' rationales for what "causes" or is merely related to literacy or illiteracy among school children in southern California are expressed in explanations, in the sub-sections below, through three more or less well-structured models. The two least elaborated direct explanations were "capacity" and what I call "cultural competence." Capacity was expressed through the notion that 95 percent of people have the ability to learn to read – a kind of biological reference indexing humans are one species. The idea of cultural competence was suggested directly by two speakers as the relationship between learning to read and an ability to acquire the skills that may lead to social (primarily economic) opportunity.

The most elaborated rationales are in the "Cultural Incompetence - Causes, Correlations and Solutions" subsection, identified by category labels "Parent habits and values," "Phonics and teacher training," "Language as a problem" and "School funding." The idea of cultural competence is an indirect (or unstated) contrast in many of these commentaries. Some speakers are very explicit about relating dominant literacy, standard language, and so on, as 'natural' reasons for social stratification. These explanations express reasoning found in the Los Angeles Times' writing about the literacy crisis; some speakers also use ideas and ways of constructing ideas that mimic political discourse(s), such as the language of political party platforms and/or California political initiatives of recent years.
In particular, the notion that phonics is an important solution to the literacy crisis, advanced in Times' writing and by some speakers, is an idea that appeared in the national and state Republican Platform Education planks throughout the 1990s and for 2000. An unspoken premise of California Proposition 187 (the “Save Our State” Initiative), and a main premise of Proposition 227 (the “English for the Children” Initiative), mentioned by several journalists and elaborated at some length by two journalists, was the idea that school failure may be caused by accommodation of language(s) other than standard English and associated cultures (See also Bourdieu, 1991; Mehan, 1997; Woolard, 1989).

Some of my questions to journalists cited specific language they used in articles they wrote or with which they were familiar to help determine relationship between personal views and professional writing. This analysis references scholarly literature on bilingual education, on reading instruction, and the language of California Propositions 187 and 227. Ideas from the education planks of Republican and Democrat political platforms for the national election years 1996, 2000, and from the California platforms for the year 2000 are cited to indicate commonalities to journalist explanations.

My objectives for asking the questions above were to understand how the journalists who wrote about the literacy crisis conceived of and explained it. Were the language conventions and reasoning that appear in the Times' promotional materials and publisher comments (emotion-charged language, superficial data, crusade for solutions and taken-for-granted ideas) apparent in
the reflections of these individuals? To what extent, if at all, did the literacy crisis elements and solutions in Times' writing (by these and many other authors) appear in explanations, and if so, how did the speakers refer to and incorporate them? In what ways, if at all, was language and reasoning that appeared in other public discourses (i.e. California ballot initiatives or political party platforms) also present in journalists' responses? Answers to these questions suggest how the language conventions of certain authoritative (legitimate) and expertise-endowed cultural models may also carry "directive force" to fuel, yet control and narrowly define, public debate (D'Andrade, 1993; Quinn and Holland, 1993).

I found that journalists seldom mentioned the phrase "reading by [age] nine," or made references to low test scores, to explain or define the causes of the so-called literacy crisis. However, journalists' rationales for what caused or was merely related to literacy or illiteracy among school children in southern California differentially tapped many of the language conventions and ideas from public discourses. These ideas and the language used to advance the ideas, were sometimes "easily accessed," even sounding canned, while at other times speakers made the ideas available through personal or professional experiences/observations and examples (D'Andrade, 1993). Some journalists appeared to take great care to speak in terms of "facts," "evidence," "research," and/or to use

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29 Literacy crisis elements included students not reading on grade level, students not being able to read in English, low test scores, dropping out, crime, and a cycle of poverty. Literacy crisis solutions included statewide standards, emphasis of phonics reading instruction, increased standardized testing, class-size reductions, improved teacher-training, parents learning English and providing a language and print-rich environment, and improved school libraries. (See analysis in Reading by 9 chapters eight and nine for multiple references.)
the language of tendency and probability. But in response to my follow-up questions, the necessity to use examples provided them with the opportunity to connect experience to more or less well-structured cultural models. The ideas of capacity and what I call cultural competence were the two least elaborated direct explanations. Syllogistically, if “95 percent” of people have the ability to learn to read, and reading provides access to learning not as readily available without it, then capacity plus reading must lead to social (primarily economic) opportunity, or cultural competence. But capacity plus reading does not always have such a salutary affect; that is, not everyone who reads is successful. The so-called literacy crisis is, after all, a proposition that 95 percent capacity is not sufficient for economic success. Hence the explanations which were most elaborated avoided addressing the economy, class structure, the low levels of school funding – especially for school maintenance and construction, for libraries, and for “extras” like science, art and music curricula, counselors, special college preparation classes in urban and rural schools, and so on.

Journalists’ most elaborated rationales, in the “Cultural incompetence –causes, correlations and solutions” subsection, tended to focus on ideas about family and schooling (i.e. if “capacity” does not lead directly to economic opportunity, then cultural incompetence and/or teacher incompetence must be getting in the way). I use category labels “parents habits and values,” “phonics and teacher training,” “language as a problem” and “school funding” to identify similarities in speech and reasoning content.
Strauss' notions regarding the ways in which one speaker may employ implicit and/or explicit theorizing, sometimes to expound conflicting social ideologies without apparent awareness, was an especially useful explanatory tool in this subsection (Strauss, 1990). Through the "indirect evidence of speech" speakers may make their beliefs apparent as propositions (e.g. "success breeds success"), or through illustrations of meaningful experiences or observations. Propositions, whether contained in brief aphorisms or in linkages of several causal chains, are what Strauss calls "explicit" theories. Strauss labels less theorized impressions of causal relationship as "implicit" theories. Speakers may hold multiple, even conflicting points of view which they express implicitly or explicitly. The notion that "success breeds success" for instance (see the Capacity section below, Vela's comments) may be a belief held in memory much as it is stated. But some beliefs "are internalized ... less as explicit theory than as implicit knowledge of what goes with what" and are therefore only available through examples from experience (Strauss, 1990, p. 314). Partly because of this difference in how beliefs are coded in memory, they may be kept cognitively separate. If a speaker considers differing beliefs to be important to her/his individual or group identity, then any conflict in the beliefs may not come to awareness easily. Some ideas are so strongly connected to sense of self and/or sense of what is important to one's membership in one or more groups that the ideas are formed into a schema (Silverstein, 1981; Strauss, 1990; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). The manner of connection or separation (i.e. "internalization") of implicit or explicit theories contributes to an individual's ability to perceive or
not perceive how stated ideas or examples may conflict with each other (Strauss, 1990, pp. 313-315, 323).

Journalists' responses contained many unintegrated (sometimes conflicting) explicit theories. As causal propositions about separate domains, such as Ed's idea of the "basics" of learning to read, explicit theories were expressed easily, at length, and often with similarities in content and context to the texts of public discourses (Strauss, 1990, p. 314). Some explicit theories were integrated without apparent ideological conflict, such as in Thomas's reflections on causes and correlations among home life, school conditions, and student achievement.

The relationships of cause and effect in implicit theories tended to be articulated in a less theory-like manner, sometimes exemplified by more than one domain, through references to multiple observations and experiences (Strauss, 1991, p. 315). Donald's representations tended to combine explicit and implicit theories, linked to each other to form schemas, which nevertheless contained internal inconsistencies and which were inconsistent with some of his "identity" statements in the literacy history chapter.

**Cultural Competence**

Several speakers responded to questions about the literacy crisis, or to clarification or follow-up questions about illiteracy or lack of literacy, with multiple examples supporting a proposition that individuals with reading problems were not culturally competent (my label). Ed, Vela and Stephen,
illustrated the lack of cultural competence idea with diverse examples congruent with the connections among illiteracy and social pathology in public discourses. Ed cited an individual who could not fill out a job application; Vela spoke of people who go to jail, drop out, go on welfare, etc.; and Stephen contrasted those who speak "a high dialect and low dialect of English" as not a good thing for society.

Ed, a journalist with about seven or eight years of experience, introduced his example (drawn from a reader's e-mail request for his advice on how to fill out job applications) with a brief reference to test scores. The example (in response to a follow-up question) concluded with the idea that the 32 year-old's inability to fill out a job application resulted from "screwing around in class," a conclusion which was unfounded, at least based on the brief e-mail message Ed described to me. This conclusion apparently had some resonance for Ed. It is interesting that when I asked Ed how he responded, he commented that he couldn't be the correspondent's mother, despite the Times' having touted relationships forged with adult literacy organizations.

CC: "And how about the effects of lack of literacy?"

Ed: "... like the 32 year old person who can't fill out the job application. Like, there it is! That's the effect right there, 32 years later. Now the guy realizes, oh shoot, I should have listened when I was 17 instead of, you know, screwing around in class. But, you can't talk to 17 year olds like that."

Vela, an African-American journalist with substantial experience, began her response (below) to a follow-up question with "facts" frequently mentioned
and elaborated in Times' writing about the literacy crisis, and its effects. Vela also began her answer to the "framing" question in an earlier chapter with "facts." After stating the statistic about prison, and the correlations between not reading well and quitting school, going on welfare, etc., she raised the idea that "hopelessness" results from "problems with reading being an assault on a child's self-worth." Her example of Ruby Bridges (one of only a few African-American children initially allowed to integrate New Orleans' schools) contained the words "biased (rigged) test," and contrasted the effects on learning of "individual attention" (from a teacher) and "low expectations." These ideas were unusual among the journalists interviewed; no other journalists referenced either segregated schooling, nor its implications for the present. In the Ruby Bridges example, biased and/ or rigged tests were the assumed offspring of philosophies that engendered segregated schooling. From her statistical and correlational examples about present-day schooling, it appeared that Vela was saying that not reading well is both source and consequence of bad choices and bad decisions, a tautology that avoids the necessity to name the source(s) of the reading problems referenced in the statistic. This is an example of an implicit theory, not quite theory-like, yet expressing some kind of relationship between "bad decisions and bad choices," reading problems, and self-worth.

CC: "What are the primary effects of illiteracy, or of being illiterate?"

Vela: "Statistics say that over 60 percent of people in prison don't read well, and that lack of reading ability is correlated to decisions to quit school and to unemployment, prison, welfare, but I think problems with reading are an assault on a child's self-worth, which is the root of bad decisions and bad choices. So hopelessness is ... I mean look at Ruby
Bridges. I was shocked to find that she hadn’t gone to college. She was chosen to integrate that school based on a biased test on which only she and three other children did well. So she was very bright especially since the test was rigged, and that’s why she was the one to be placed with Mrs. Henry, and she got that individual attention. My sister said that meant she probably was at least two grade levels ahead after the first grade, but [later] she went into classrooms where she said she knew the teacher didn’t like her, and she wasn’t challenged, low expectations. She said she always wanted to go to college, but never did. You have to wonder what it would have been like for her if it was different.” (Emphasis made by the speaker.)

Stephen, a journalist with varied and extensive experience, posed the idea that the literacy crisis is real because in Los Angeles there are “at least two languages,” or “a high dialect and low dialect of English.” He suggested in response to the second (follow-up) question below that school reforms “are on the right track,” but it may be “naïve” to think that school reforms are the answer because there are “cultural things going on.” He illustrated with Black children being “out there” by fifth grade, and Latino children who are “as smart as can be,” but obesity, exaggerated make-up, and losing interest mark the path to dropping out in middle school. His statement about not being able to make sense of “deep sociological issues” signaled his change in reference to the idea that phonics (or “the base level,”), should be schools’ first responsibility so that children can get literacy as an “essential tool” (for the work place), like a “predator” learning how to hunt prey.

CC: “What are your thoughts on what’s been called the literacy crisis?”

Stephen: “Uh, I’ve seen it. I’ve spent some time in classrooms. I’ve, I’ve listened to children speak. I’ve seen their writing. Uh, I’ve seen a lot of
kids in, in jr. high school who couldn't read and write. I've no, I've no clear sense of the scale of it. But I suspect that the scale is rather great. And I think it's a real crisis. I think that, uh, I think in Los Angeles, I think we have at least two languages. Two forms of English, maybe more that I'm not aware of. But I think that, uh, we're almost at the point of having a high dialect and a low dialect of English. I think that would be aradical, and not positive shift in the direction of American society. I taught some classes ... in journalism. And I was astonished. Honestly I don't exactly know how to put these together, because I had some classes that were really very good students. And I had a couple of classes that at least 10% of the students were practically illiterate. In journalism, upper division. It was just astonishing. And I was a part time instructor, I had no real contact with the campus. I just came, you know, it, it was only 3 hours at night once a week; which is also bad. And I didn't know how to address it, but there were students who just didn't belong there. Uh, I couldn't figure it out."

CC: "Have you formed any opinions about what it's all about, I mean what does it come from?"

Stephen: "Uh, uh. I, I think that the reform efforts are on the right track. I think that social promotions, and the failure of having standards is a big part of the picture. But something deep inside thinks that that's naive to think that that's the whole picture. That there are other things at play that I can't begin to understand. There are cultural things going on. Black children, I mean, I've observed enough elementary schools to see that Black children seem to be right in step into the first and second grade, and even in third grade, and by the 5th grade they are just out there, they're just not competitive at all. I've no idea what's going on there. Uh, I've seen Latino kids in 5th and 6th grades who are just smart as can be, and then they get to middle school, and they get, you see obesity and exaggerated makeup and they just lose interest and they drop out. I don't know what's going on there. I just think those are deep sociological issues that are much bigger than education. Or, maybe education contributes to them too. I just know the picture is just too big for me to make any sense out of it.

Well, I, the, the debate between whole language and phonics seems to have settled down in favor of phonics. And I don't argue with that. But I think we're really quite confused about whether literacy is uh is something that is a central part of our self-development and understanding and expression or whether it's a tool. It tends to become, in the workplace, it tends to become more of a tool. And I think the economic life of society is in danger when people can't use that tool. But thinking back on my own experiences with literacy uh I hated the phonics instruction that I got. And I don't know if it was good for me or not, I have no idea. But I know that it was annoying. And as is really evident
from what I’ve told you so far, the literary experiences that meant a lot to me were all associated with discovery; and the content. And, I guess, what you would call today in this dialectic, the whole language side of learning reading. And so it was the inspiration that I got, and the things, what I could learn from reading that caused me to really start being a serious reader. And maybe the kill and drill that I did when I was in elementary school kept me from reading for a long time. I don’t know; that seems to me the case. Which I guess would make me a whole language advocate.”

CC: “Yes, I understand what you’re saying.”

Stephen: “But I think that anybody who doesn’t get the essential tools, who doesn’t become literate enough to use literacy as a tool, is in really grave trouble. And so we certainly have fostered a generation of people who aren’t very literate. Uh, so, uh I mean I think there’s a duality there. That at some level literacy is an essential tool, like learning how to, ah, you know like a predator who must know how to hunt prey, but at another level its, its, uh something that defines us, and instructs us, and teaches us where to go and, and runs our lives. And some people don’t get the one and some people don’t get the other. But everybody should have the one; everybody should at least be able to use literacy as a tool. So I guess I would say that for the educational system that’s the first duty that should be attended to, is providing a base level.”

Stephen used his observations to help him articulate what was clearly an explicit theory. He carefully used language, such as the word “culture” instead of stereotypical labels, or the phrase “sociological issues” instead of references to the assumptions of intelligence or good breeding. He also made it clear that he believed that knowledge of and facility with standard-English distinguished those who are successful in school, from those who are not. His expressed confusion, and the taken-for-granted neutrality of words like “culture,” may genuinely represent some dissonance of consciousness. He concluded that the “first duty” of education is to assume the “base level” (i.e. use of standard English) as appropriate – presumably for the Black children who are “out there” and the Latino students who drop out – in lieu of the “discovery” toward “self-
development, understanding and expression’ that turned him into a serious reader.

Capacity

One of the points made in Los Angeles Times’ writing about the literacy crisis was that 95 percent of children have the capacity to read. Direct and indirect references to this statement seemed to serve as a foundation for two lines of reasoning that were often at odds with each other in Times’ writing and in journalists’ comments. One was that since most children have the capacity, learning how to read puts them on the path to “success.” This line of reasoning is illustrated in this section. The second line of reasoning was that capacity is not all there is, or, despite capacity, how can we explain so many (especially those with different “cultures”) who have poor test scores, and how can we solve such problem(s)? This line of reasoning is represented in the next section, “Cultural Incompetence – Causes, Correlations and Solutions.”

Vela reflected on the relationship of capacity (for which she cited research) to her own family history. Even though in this case she was responding to a question about what caused illiteracy, her personal anecdote proposed that a caring person provided opportunity for her family to make choices, and because they chose reading, opportunities resulted. Vela’s comments here expanded on the idea she expressed about choices and hopelessness in the cultural competence section above.
CC: “What causes illiteracy?”

Vela: “Well, the research says that 95 percent have the capacity to read. I refer to the research from my previous reading on the difficulty of young children learning to read (I was really glad to see Reid Lyon speak on Saturday because I am so familiar with his research) in studies by the National Academy of Science and the National Institute of Health.”

I was really touched by Ruby Bridges reading of Frederick Douglas’ telling of how he learned to read as a slave. My own great-grandmother was a slave, but she was a seamstress and was taught to read the Bible at age 12 by a priest. That’s why we’re Catholic. One family story is that he said to her ‘when you get married, be sure to teach your husband to read, first thing.’”

CC: “And the primary effects of being literate or having literacy?”

Vela: “It opens up the world! There’s opportunities for success in nearly every area, and you have more and better choices.”

CC: “And any factors that are correlated with being literate, but that may not be either a cause or effect?”

Vela: “Well, maybe a GREAT job, I mean, not necessarily, but success breeds success!”

In his comments below, Ed was responding to a question similar to the second question posed to Vela (above). He used similar descriptors to suggest that opportunity (i.e. advantages), material success (i.e. a better job), and intellectual or emotional opportunity (i.e. “vast new worlds”) result from being literate.

CC: “So, what comes from being literate?”

Ed: “The advantages. The more literate you are, probably the better job you can get, in strict economic terms. You can enjoy your life, so that you can read directions when you are driving your car; or you can read the newspaper. It just opens your world; it opens you to vast new worlds.”
These two responses are the only ones of this type among journalists in response to literacy crisis questions. In the literacy histories in chapter three, most journalists' narratives made use of the metaphor of literacy as inherited, a kind of birthright that seemed to naturally result in professional success. Vela, Ed and the other journalists made few other references to past or present personal experiences, nor to literacy acquisition being easy or natural as they reflected on questions about the literacy crisis. Instead, in the next section are ideas that deeply qualify the proposition (above) that capacity plus reading leads to success. These propositions, sometimes in the form of contrasting images, performed the linguistic task of throwing into relief the notion that almost every child can do it (i.e. 95 percent have the capacity). This foregrounding was accomplished by use of the tropes of language and culture to account for differences in school performance, but avoided any references to privilege or to political, economic, and social gate-keeping processes.

Journalists took the opportunity to state what they thought or believed were factors that caused literacy or illiteracy, or which are correlated with literacy or illiteracy. I asked questions about correlation because correlations were frequently cited in L.A. Times' writing about literacy, reading, and reading related education. I asked about cause in order to understand the "taken-for-granted" ideas in the Times' writing. What seemed to be clear in the answers below is that the taken-for-granted ideas in the Times' writing – that is, "commonsense" models familiar to readers by being related to, and relating cultural systems, processes and institutions – were present in speakers' rationales
about the literacy crisis. For instance, common American experiences of schooled reading, judgments of grade level performance in order to be passed to the next grade, and standardized testing to determine individual and ethnic/racial or other social “group” rankings, were given special significance as natural, instead of culturally constructed gates or hurdles. Learning to read by age nine was iconicized as equal to LITERACY in terms of ideals such as English fluency, print-rich home environments, and so on, with direct or implicit contrasts to the deviance of other mother tongues and lack of reading in the home (Irvine and Gal, 1996).

Cultural Incompetence – Causes, Correlations and Solutions

The explanations that follow are consistent with, and draw on the taken-for-granted ideas that early, proficient reading equals literacy, and that one kind of curricula (phonics-oriented reading instruction) is a primary solution to the literacy crisis, but that some “cultures” contribute to school and life failure. The journalists primarily offered unintegrated explicit theories. They expressed causal propositions about one domain at a time (e.g. the process of learning to read, the relationship of family habits to childhood reading, or of class size to teaching efficacy) easily, at length, and with similarities in content and context from one person to another (Strauss, 1990, p. 314). Implicit theories were also present, with relationships of cause and effect not so easily articulated as theory, per se. Implicit theories tended to be articulated in a less theory-like manner, but nevertheless posited causation (Strauss, 1991, p. 315). There are ideological
implications in the ways in which speakers' connect or keep separate the explicit or implicit theories they expressed.

**Parent habits and values.**

In the first example below, it is worth noting that Vela’s responses to what could be considered mirror image questions bring mirror-image responses because this indicates some level of logical integration. The first answer begins with a statement that posits illiteracy as "caused" by parents' literacy habits and values, illustrated with a personal example that relates to her own literacy. The phrase "what’s important is values, not poverty" indexes her notion about being afforded and making the right choices (in the cultural competence and capacity sections above). Vela’s answer to the next question (...factors which lead to being literate) suggested a "language rich environment" as an example of choice. She also expanded on the idea of "values, not poverty" by referencing "not necessarily ‘educated’ language" to contrast herself to "others around here" who (apparently) valorized one language or certain forms of language. These answers are a combination of an explicit and an implicit theory, the explicit theory based on the "facts" and research she cited frequently, qualified by an implicit theory about the relation of poverty and language to reading acquisition from her personal experience.

**CC:** "What causes illiteracy?" [answer continued from the last section]

Vela: "... there's usually not enough language in the home, not enough reading or pre-reading; I know my mother was not reading to us in the womb when my sister and I were developing, but she was reading to my
older siblings during that time, so our home was language rich and print rich — some children don’t even know how to hold books, and read left to right. But what’s important is values, not poverty — lots of poor kids can read well, but a print rich environment with books around, and parents reading for themselves and to their kids.”

CC: “What do you think are the primary factors that lead to being literate?”

Vela: “An environment rich in language, parents who read a lot helps to prepare a child, although not necessarily ‘educated’ language, nor necessarily in English, which is where I disagree with some around here. I have lived overseas, in [a third world country] and I know that language is [inaudible].”

The content of Ed’s response is similar to Vela’s (parent habits and values influence literacy or illiteracy), but his theories are implicit and unintegrated. He supported his statements about the causes of illiteracy or literacy being “economic in the sense” with two illustrations that erase stark economic differences between classes. To account for what gets in the way of supporting “little Joey’s” needs, Ed cited one example of (wealthy) parents’ over-valuing high paying jobs. Ed cited a second illustration of poor, or less well-to-do parents (e.g. having to spend a lot of time at low paying jobs) as constituting “just the same thing” (over-valuing work), resulting in not being home to set boundaries, and so on. His subsequent examples of teachers having snacks on hand for hungry children trivializes the matter of child hunger and its relationship to learning through the phrase “so that’s economics.”

CC: “In your writing, and in education writing in general in the paper there’s been a lot of correlations that are proposed as having something to do with literacy or illiteracy. What do you think?”
Ed: "It's not one or the other. And I think they are causes. It's economic in the sense that if you, I don't think this is related to if you are poor or if you are rich, but maybe this is a social problem, I don't know. But if you don't have parents at home that are there to really help you, then you will probably, often times, you will struggle. And that's not whether you are poor or you are rich. I know someone who tutors kids. And some of these kids come from very wealthy homes, and yet they struggle because, you know, Dad's out because he's the movie mogul, and he's never around. So, little Joey flounders. He's got no one at home to set boundaries and to help. That's just the same thing as the guy who works two jobs and is never home because he is supporting his family. Or the single Mom. But it's economic too, because you know, I keep coming back to nutrition, and kids going to school hungry. You cannot function. Sometimes, if you are in these classrooms you'll notice some teachers will keep like a bucket of pretzels. And, I was in a classroom in Sacramento where the teacher, every morning, she gives the kids three peanuts. And, it doesn't seem like a lot, but that may stave off their hunger until lunch time so they can concentrate. And then she has one kid each day... and he goes around each table, so each kid gets a chance. And I thought, 'that was very smart'. I will never become a teacher, but if I ever was a teacher, my friend may become a teacher, I would suggest that. And the school I was in yesterday, she had a pot of stuff, she had a thing of pretzels, she had a thing of cheeseballs, and she had a thing of these chocolate eyeballs. And I was amazed that no one was grabbing for it. Fourth graders. I was ready to grab for it. No one took it until she said that they could. But it just seemed like a good idea. So, that's economics."

Thomas laid out several well-integrated explicit theories, each of which focused on a single domain. His propositions were similar to Vela's and Ed's, that parent habits and attitudes are significant, and he added the domains of teaching and of school organization (class size). He also carved out poverty as a correlate rather than a cause of literacy or illiteracy, but stated that certain family conditions or habits or values (he does not specify) "work against" proper nourishment and sleeping well. He made distinctions between causes and correlations, defining them with examples, and even using the word "subset."
Only in response to the last question (the relationship of literacy to gangs and crime) did he fail to articulate a firm (confident) explicit theory, referencing an alternative argument ("the case for economic opportunity"), a potentially meaningful opening, but on which he did not elaborate.

CC: "I'd like you to tell me what do you think are the primary social, economic, political factors which have to do with being literate or illiterate."

Thomas: "Well, I'd say in terms of actual causal factors, as opposed to things that correlate, I think a tradition of, or lacking that a commitment to literacy within the family is important. I think, parents who read tend to have, tend to raise children who read, and I think there's a causal factor there. Parents who don't read can raise children who do read if they are committed to it. I think the absence of either of those tends to be a causal factor for kids not being literate. I think teacher training definitely helps. So I think there's a causal factor there. I think books in the home, I would sort of lump into what I said before about tradition of or commitment to literacy, I think that's a subset of that. I think crime, or at any rate, violence, can have a traumatic effect on young children which makes it much more difficult for them to learn anything, reading included. And I think curriculum does matter, although probably not as much as teacher training. That's a hunch, I think the studies on that are somewhat inconclusive, but I believe that's probably true. And I think class size matters, up to a point."

CC: "And that being?"

Thomas: "I don't know that I can specify it, but I think it's certainly true two equally trained and gifted teachers, one of whom has a class of forty and one of whom has a class of 15, the teacher is going to do better with a class of 15. I think it's pretty hard to argue against that. Whether it makes a difference of 20 vs. 15 I think is somewhat more arguable. The problem comes in with, if the trade off is between smaller classes and less trained teachers. Then I think it's a tougher question to figure out. A really well trained teacher perhaps can do better with a class of 40 than an untrained teacher can do with a class of 15. Those would be the main things. I don't think poverty as such is a causal factor; I think it's a correlate. Poverty correlates strongly with a lack of family tradition of reading, and with a child being exposed to violence. And there are other factors which have to do with children's home life. You know, kids, in order to learn
properly need to be well nourished, they need to get a good night’s sleep, things like that. Poverty tends to work against all of those things, but I don’t think it’s poverty as such that’s the problem. School accountability is an important thing, but it’s not a causal factor, it’s a diagnostic.”

CC: “And the discussions about not being literate, not being able to read well, or on grade level by the time you get to a certain age influences decisions to engage in gangs or crime. How do you see that?”

Thomas: “There may be a connection there. I think it’s logical to assume that there’s some degree of connection if kids, uh. I think there is a strong connection if kids, uh, falling behind in reading and dropping out of school. Because kids who fall behind in reading then have a lot of trouble keeping up with their other courses as they get into the higher grades and start facing more difficult curriculum. And tend to become discouraged, and tend to drop out. So I think that’s pretty well established, that lack of literacy early on leads to dropping out later. Or increases the risk of dropping out later. And I think there’s a reasonably well established correlation between dropping out and crime. High school drop outs are more likely to get involved in criminal activities. Perhaps just because they have more time on their hands; perhaps because they feel their other economic avenues are pretty sharply limited. So you could follow the dots and say, had this kid learned how to read, he or she would have been less likely to read and therefore... but it’s something of a leap. I’m not sure, there are a lot of other factors that come in there, and I’m not sure you can draw a straight line from one to another. I think the case on economic opportunity is more compelling.”

Vela’s implicit theory - questioning a notion of “educated” language being necessary for early literacy - and Ed’s implicit theorizing about the “economic” illustrate one of the ways in which individuals master and change, in this case legitimate or authoritative cultural knowledge, via personal experience or observation. Thomas chose not to offer experiences or observations, or even social/historical commentary to support his explicit theories. The closest he came to personal commentary was in a brief reflection on the impact of immigration on the schools in a response later in this section.
There were three other propositions journalists offered in response to the causes and correlations questions. One proposition expressed the primacy of phonics instruction and teacher training for ensuring reading proficiency, a "solution" central to one of the Times' taken-for-granted ideas. Another addressed what was characterized earlier in this chapter as the "deep sociological issues" of language and culture; and the third considered the relevance of school funding. Propositions (theories) about language and culture and school funding were more implicit and less integrated than commentaries about phonics and teacher-training.

**Phonics and teacher training.**

Phonics and teacher training were cited frequently in the Los Angeles Times' coverage of reading and education reform, and by journalists discussing the causes, correlations (and cures for) the literacy crisis.

Ed defined "the basics" in education as ensuring that children have an understanding that letters are symbols for sounds by teaching "in a very direct way" and that this teaching is the foundation for learning to read "as anyone would define it." For two reasons, his exposition seemed quite explicit and apparently learned intact. First, Ed has no formal training in reading instruction; secondly, these ideas and phrasing mimic language used by phonics instruction advocates. It was also different from his articulation of the "economic" above. In the example below, there was no context, no attempt to connect ideas such as "setting boundaries" or "nutrition" from his reflections in the section above.
Ed's subsequent response to my question about his assertion that the "improved economy" was related to "reform" in phonics and other aspects of education demonstrated that his understanding of the processes of learning to read was relatively narrow. He used the phrase "phonics in textbooks" several times, either indicating his impression that phonics (or phonemic awareness) is a theory that children learn intact as an adult might learn it, or else he was calling basal readers "textbooks." In either case, my impression of Ed’s narrow understanding of the varied methods, contexts and implications of reading instruction was reinforced in two ways. Ed expressed great frustration and deep ambivalence about his tutoring of a third-grade boy. Despite all Ed’s efforts, the boy was still having a great deal of trouble sounding out words. Ed indicated he expected that a caring tutor was sufficient to save a failing child. Ed’s threshold for complexity or ambivalence was relatively low; he frequently characterized education research and education materials in terms of how "thick" the books or binders were, and how badly educators ("even professors") write, thereby making difficult his job of simplifying the information.

Ed’s response to the phonics question was an implicit rendering of his agreement with the State’s enactment of "California Reading Initiative" laws, in which phonics is a primary solution to the "pitiful test scores." This position was advanced often as the premise of one of the taken-for-granted ideas in the Time's literacy crisis coverage, controverting Thomas’s solution principle discussed in an earlier chapter. Ed also used language and reasoning present in the 1996, and
in the 2000 Republican platforms and the California Republican platform for 2000 (Appendix J).

CC: "You have used a phrase in your writing several times 'getting back to the basics.' Tell me a little about that."

Ed: "Well, the basics, I think, as they define it in this State, and I think as anyone would define it, is, in literacy is the idea that you have to understand the fundamental building blocks of the English language. And that is not only the letters of the alphabet, but that there are certain sounds that children make (aa, buh, ca, du) and that those letters equal as symbols, called letters. And that you have to learn how to string those letters together. First of all you have to learn that aa=A, and then you have learn that c, aa, t=cat; and you have to be able to do that so that you can do it fluently and comprehend what you are reading. And getting back to the basics is teaching these kids in a very direct way not by chance, but actually teaching them when you change the c in cat to s it becomes sat. So that they comprehend that difference. And by teaching those skills, the kids learn how to read so they don’t have to think is it cat or sat? But they get to the point where it is automatic. The cat sat on the hat, or whatever it is. And in that way, kids become fluent."

CC: "And phonics? It was part of your sentence on, 'improved economy allowing . . . reform in . . .,' and phonics was one of the things that you mentioned."

Ed: "I think it goes back to class size reduction. The idea of having more phonics in textbooks [sic], and having smaller class sizes, and having teachers retrained, and several other things, were all part of something called the California Reading Initiative. It was a series of laws that were enacted, starting in early 1995. That was in reaction to the really, really pitiful test scores that we had. And, the public seized on the class size reduction thing because it was very sexy and interesting, and they could actually see it. They could see fewer kids in the class. But phonics was clearly a part of that, and there was a new mandate to have phonics in textbooks [sic] or textbooks had to have a certain type of phonics if school were going to be able to spend their money on them. And then, new teachers were supposed to get trained in this phonics, but if you go into a school and you ask five teachers what their definition of explicit phonics is, you may get five different versions. So there’s really no one version of what phonics looks like. I think, pretty much, as long as you are sounding out short vowels and long vowels, and you are progressively teaching kids more complicated skills, you are probably heading in the right direction."
Donald, an experienced education journalist, addressed reading instruction in three ways in his comments below. One approach was to contrast whole language and phonics reading instruction methods, implying that whole language instruction or the improper application of whole language instruction caused poor test scores. Donald also characterized advocates of whole language as "extreme" "people in power" who "dominate the debate." His third approach was an argument that even though all this "makes for interesting coverage," it's a way to ensure that schools recognize they need to do "a little bit more phonics instruction."

These were three distinct, explicit theories, each of which constructed a proposition of cause and effect. In simpler terms, the first proposition was that one kind of instruction (whole language) was bad because it prevented learning. The second proposition was that people with extreme views held power and those who favor phonics are not extremist. And the third was that his coverage of these facts caused schools to recognize and use the good kind of reading instruction. By establishing connections among his opinions, Donald rationalized his actions, demonstrating how well he influenced public thinking on what he conceived of as good approaches to education. His views were internalized to the extent that he did not seem aware that he was doing what he stated others do – painting with the brush of extremism. As the "expert" to whom four of the five other journalists said they go when they write about
reading instruction, it is probably also fair to say that his views also influenced the institution’s viewpoint.

CC: “Give me an example.”

Donald: “You know, I still don’t understand the propensity of education to swing so radically from one extreme to another. Take reading instruction. I mean, you know, the worst kind of phonics instruction you can imagine in which everything is reduced to sounding out words and practicing letters and kids never get a chance to read or never get exposed to real literature, gives birth to whole language, in which you know, the reality is the theorists say they pay attention to phonics. The fact is that most whole language teachers don’t pay anywhere near enough attention to phonics. It’s like, you’re going to learn to read if you just read kids great books. They we, then people say ‘Hey wait a minute. That doesn’t work.’”

CC: “So are you saying it’s going to swing all the way to the worst kind of phonics instruction?”

Donald: “Well hopefully we won’t get there. Rightfully so, phonics is emerging as an important key element of reading instruction. But somebody said something to me the other day, they said, you know, ‘education suffers from too many unfriendly critics and not enough critical friends’. You know, the middle ground in education is just not that large. The people who occupy, who dominate the debate, generally are people who are at the extremes. And those who are in power try to paint anybody who criticizes them as extremists to keep them out of power. So you know you have whole language advocates who say anybody who talks about phonics is part of a right wing conspiracy that includes all the publishing companies, all, you know, the Christian right, Phyllis Schlafly, big business corporations who want to keep kids down and prevent them from thinking about what they read, and on and on and on. Which is ludicrous. But if you paint that conspiracy, then you keep out the critics, who actually are bringing good solid research, and are not saying let’s go back to the worst of phonics instruction. But goddamit if the schools fail to recognize that they need to do a little bit more phonics instruction you won’t get the worst of phonics instruction. So I say all that just because I think it makes for interesting coverage, but I also think that it means that we as journalists have to try to recognize that and put it in its proper place.”
Thomas, an experienced journalist, focused (below) on the practice of teaching in response to my follow-up questions about how it is that the language barriers mentioned so often in the Times' coverage did not seem to account for poor reading scores among White, middle-class, English speaking students. His comments were consistent with his responses to other literacy crisis questions above; his explanations were explicit, theory-like, with phrases such as "considerable evidence" and "fair conclusion." He also proposed, along with Donald, that whole language instruction was responsible for bad teaching, which in turn "had to do with a drop in scores."

CC: "As I understand it from [the Times] coverage, in the last set of scores in 1996 which preceded the "California's Perilous Slide" series in May 1998 and the beginning of the Reading by 9 series, there were a lot of so called mainstream kids who were also scoring very poorly in reading. If they are middle class, and don't have language issues, what's going on there?"

Thomas: "As I said, teacher training matters. We've got a lot of teachers in California who have not been well trained in teaching reading. I think there is considerable evidence that in the name of introducing whole language methods into the curriculum that a lot of bad teaching methods were adopted that may have not had anything to do with whole language as it was conceived of by the people who conceived of it. But whole language became a, in some places, a reason to stop teaching kids skills that a lot of kids needed. You know, some kids are going to take up learning how to read almost regardless of the curriculum method that you employ, but others aren't, who need particular skills. I think it's a fair conclusion to draw that some of those problems with teaching methods had to do with the drop in scores. And I think there may also be a problem with just a decline in the tradition of literacy. You know, just because kids are white doesn't mean that their parents read."
Language as a problem.

Stephen's beat was not reading instruction per se, but he did sometimes write about test scores. Perhaps partly because of this, he did not articulate the causes of the "literacy crisis" in the terms chosen by Vela, Donald, Thomas and Ed above. His approach in response to a follow-up question (below) was similar in viewpoint to his explanations offered earlier. He did not specifically re-state his concerns with "high and low dialects of English," but he continued with the premise that a "base-level" of literacy is needed by all, and he added that all should "have a crack at" mastering English "at a higher and higher level." He illustrated how this could be done with his own classical reading experiences. This is an explicit theory, expressing the position that schools have two responsibilities. One responsibility is to provide "survival" literacy skills and another responsibility is to "push" students. The central element to both is that particular forms and uses of the English language, on the one hand, equate to economic survival and on the other equate to the "ability to manage ideas with language." This position glossed the influences of Stephen's middle-class upbringing, and his father's work as a writer, creating a simplified world (as do most journalists' propositions about literacy) of one-to-one relationships and natural social and economic outcomes.

CC: "I want you to expand a little more on [your comments]:

'but everybody should have at least the one [base level literacy]. Everybody should at least be able to use literacy as a tool. So I guess I would say that for the educational system, that's the first duty that should be attended to, is providing a base level.'
"Tell me what the educational system is responsible for from your personal viewpoint regarding literacy levels."

Stephen: "I guess a base level would be like writing a police report, or writing a memo. Um, writing, you know, one of the tests, and I'm not sure what level it is. I think it's at 8th grade. But maybe higher, is to write a friendly letter. A business letter. So, I guess to write a letter to your credit card company saying you, you've got my social security number mixed up with someone else's, and please solve this problem. Which are just things that you have to do to sort of survive. So I think it's the responsibility of the educational system to push people beyond that as well. To have, and I'm not, this doesn't seem to me like an original thought here, to press kids to read more difficult material that forces language to a higher level. To read English literature, and world literature. To read Dante, and maybe the Iliad and the Odyssey. Just the basic framework of western civilization because by reading those materials and understanding them you push your ability to manage ideas with language. I think not everybody is going to read Sampson Agonistes, I guess, but everybody should be pressed throughout their education to continue managing the written word at a higher and higher level, at a more difficult level. I dropped off, I did read Sampson Agonistes and I thought it was pretty good, but I sort of lost interest at Ulysses. The Odyssey, I almost, I couldn't put it down. It's hard going. It really makes your mind work to read it. And I do think that the educational system has a duty to push every student to master English at a higher and higher level. And they're not all going to, but they should all have a crack at it. And they should be pressed to."

Stephen's ideas about language introduced another set of propositions offered by participants in response to literacy crisis questions. In his answers below he had an opportunity to clarify what he stated earlier about high and low dialects of English. He did so by proposing that schools' legitimation of "corrupted English" is bad for literacy, and that those who use "street language" do not have "the same level of thought" or "strength in expressing ideas." This is an old argument, one used often by those who equated so-called corrupted English with low intellectual capacity. Stephen did not seem to be making that
connection per se because he suggested that schools should be "pushing" students to master higher levels of English in his comments above. I tried with the next question to understand if an idea about "cognitive connections" was salient for Stephen (that is, should instruction build on students' prior knowledge and experiences, including forms of language), but he took my question to be about bilingual education. His position was that even if it may be ideal that all people should be able to speak more than one language, it is not the responsibility of the State to provide immigrants with a "first rate education" to "make up for the [language] handicap they bring with them." Stephen did not necessarily equate corrupted English with low intellectual capacity, nevertheless people without much economic power (perhaps both Black children who are "out there" by third grade, and Latino students who drop out in middle school) have no right to expect the same education as those who have economic power. No other journalists took the position that the State is not as responsible to immigrants with a language "handicap" as it is to English-speaking residents or immigrants, but language-as-a-problem (one of the taken for-granted ideas in the Times writing) was a proposition stated by several in the examples below.

CC: "From the end of our earlier interview, you agreed that literacy was in crisis, and you reflected at length on why you thought so. One thing that you said was that there were two languages, two forms of English, as you put it, two forms of English or more, something like a high and low dialect. What I'd like you to do is expand on the relationship of speaking two forms of English or more to literacy."

Stephen: "I don't remember saying all that, but everything you said right now, it sounds like something I would have said. So uh, and I'm thinking, the two or more is an interesting idea. I think there certainly is a formally
taught English, and there's a street English that might have lots of, you might encounter lots of different street English. But it all has one thing in common, that it's, it's a kind of corrupted English. I think Black English is the most common, as you know, I'm sure you're aware there was an effort to try to legitimize Black English, and say it was a language called Ebonics that merited separate study. But I think that it was quite obvious what Black English really is, is, is, is a language of acceptance among people who don't really, who haven't really mastered formal English. And I think what concerns me is the fact that, when I say a language of acceptance, I mean it's a language in which, in which people who really lack an adequate education can feel like they're, they can communicate on a level with people. And I think the problem with it is that, that, that, uh, there's been a tendency, I believe in the school district, and in probably every school district, in education in general, to legitimize those forms of language to try to get kids interested, and keep up their interest, so that the theory is that if they're forced to speak a harder to speak language that they might lose interest unless a less structured, and a less complete language is accepted as being adequate English. And so, I'm afraid that a form of illiteracy has been turned into, has been accepted too broadly as being adequate. And it isn't, because street languages really don't represent the same level of thought, and they don't have the strength in expressing ideas."

CC: “There's some scholarship that says that if you teach children in their first language they can build on cognitive connections they've already made and then transfer those into English; do you see any connection to that and what you've just said about seeing Black English as Ebonics?”

Stephen: “Yes, I do see a connection. And it's funny, being more or less bilingual myself, I'm not really, truly bilingual, but I certainly can get by in two languages and partly in a third. I think that it's a great benefit to any student to learn a second language, or a third language. And I think that that should be pretty standard. But that's a little different than bilingual education, in which, the goal of bilingual education is to kind of wean students into English. And uh I think the connection isn't so much, I don't know whether bilingual education is a good thing or a bad thing, I really don't have an opinion on that. I voted for abolishing it for a couple of reasons. One, I just didn't think it's the job of the state to guarantee all immigrants that they're going to get a first rate education. I mean, that the state is going to go overboard to make up for the handicap that they bring with them by arriving here without speaking English. So I just don't think that's the job of the state really. And the other reason was that, that the proof of that was that the resources that it would take to accomplish that were so great that the State really wasn't doing the job. That we had a program that was theoretically in force, but it wasn't being implemented
well at all. And it was a failure. And what was happening was that students were between one and the other, and weren't really learning English very rapidly, and weren't really learning their own language to the degree that they should have been at that time. So they weren't really learning one language or the other formally and properly as they should have been.

And so, I think that, well you've read that the school district has now decided that half of the 8th graders couldn't pass a reading test at grade level. I think that's indication that the whole system just accepted illiteracy as being allowable. And so I think it was the culture of bilingual education, was kind of tied up with well they're not going to achieve that well anyway because they don't really speak English. And instead of being forced to learn English rapidly, they were sort of held along from year after year being taught some things in Spanish, and trying to learn English, and it wasn't really effective. And the result was, if they weren't learning either language well you have to accept the fact that they were going to be less than literate. And somehow that got to be acceptable."

Thomas' position below (regarding parents' language and literacy) is explicit, as was Stephen's above, but he characterized the language problem as one of immigrant parents who are not literate in their first language. As did Stephen, Thomas stayed "on-message," a term used frequently in political campaign discourse. The objective is for simplified ideas to be internalized and integrated into a causal chain that, as it is stated and restated, almost go without saying, yet "form the objects of which they speak" (Bourdieu, 1997; Foucault, 1972 in Mehan, 1997).

CC: "And the language of parents?"

Thomas: "Um, well, you know, you can be literate in any language. I don't think, if what you are concerned with is literacy in English then obviously, um, the parents who are already fluent in English are going to have a leg up. But you can be literate in any language. One of the issues that we have here is you have an awful lot of parents who are not literate in any language. So it's not just that they don't speak English,
it's that they are not necessarily literate in their native tongue either; or not fluently literate."

In the next quoted passage, Ed expressed two explicit propositions, one that he does not explain ("language" is the cause of Latino students' low "proficiency"). The other (bad or inexperienced teaching) was explained as being clear, shown, and supported by a "Rand study." The systemic reality that teachers can and do choose to go to better environments when they can is another part of Ed's well-internalized theory. How well internalized was illustrated by several ironies. One was that Ed stated that similar levels of low reading proficiency among Blacks and Latinos were the result of different causes, at least one of which (purportedly inexperienced or bad teachers in poorer areas) affects both groups. Another was that only 33 percent of Whites and Asians, most living in suburban areas, were deemed "proficient" readers. This is a low number that cannot be explained by language (which would presumably affect some Asian students but few Whites), and which does not appear to be mitigated by having had better teachers. The third irony was that Ed appeared to accept the naturalness of teachers leaving poor conditions when they could, but did not seem to find this significant for the attitudes and commitment of learners.

CC: "Where do you think that big gap is coming from?"

Ed: "With which groups?"

CC: "Between the 33 percent of Whites and Asians [who are deemed 'proficient' readers in the test results] and the 7 percent and 8 percent of Latinos and African-Americans [who are deemed proficient]."
Ed: "Well, for the Latino kids I think a lot of it has to do with language. For the Black students I'm not as clear. I would say part of it has to do with the fact that Black students who live in the State's largest cities, the urban cores, the poorer areas, often have the least experienced teachers. That's clear. That's been shown. So if they have the least experienced teachers, who don't really know what they are doing, you are not going to get the good start that you need. The more affluent districts tend to attract the more experienced teachers. Or, like in L.A. Unified, the more senior teachers can pick where they want to teach. And they go to Granada Hills, and they go to West Hills, and they go to Woodland Hills. And the least experienced teachers go down to Jefferson Middle school in South L.A. I mean, that's not as a rule, but we see that a lot. And even the latest big report on this that I wrote about a few months ago, by Rand, said just that. You know, that schools in poorer areas have the least experienced teachers."

Donald (below) also proposed that language was a problem in schools, supported by a good program/bad program argument similar in form to his assertions about whole language and phonics above. He used the metaphor of bilingual education as a "theology" people believed in "blind faith." "Flawed" research and cultural sensitivity were apparently tenets of the faith, but kids [arguably] did not learn English, and therefore the theology failed in its promise. (See Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a; McQuillan, 1998 re controversial nature of these positions, supported by research). Donald did not wonder how the problematic whole language instruction figured into his proposition that language (bilingual education) was the cause of failure among language minority students. He was able to keep his phonics/whole language and bilingual education/English only causal chains separate. He also made a number of comments, such as those in regard to "neighborhoods in Los Angeles" and educators who "refused to deal with it, refused to deal with it...," which he cast as reasons why bilingual education was voted out in a "draconian" use of the
ballot box. Additionally, the language of Donald’s proposition was very similar to that used in the “English for the Children” Initiative (Proposition 227 – voted in November 1998)\(^{30}\) in which 63 percent of Latino voters (presumably citizens) voted against the proposition that outlawed bilingual education.

Donald: “I think [the literacy problem is] part of the bilingual question as well. It became, it became a theology. And people believed in bilingual education on blind faith. And as I said I don’t know whether it’s a good thing or not, but as it was being done, it wasn’t a good thing. But those who believed in it on blind faith never saw that. And would never admit to the fact that it was failing. And the only way that you could allow something to fail and not admit it is to say that failure is acceptable. And I think that became a philosophy. That infused the whole instructional program. And I’ve looked at other districts, and I find the same thing to be true.”

CC: “Is it most important to just get kids trained in English and leave their mother tongues behind, or in an ideal world would we be training them bilingually from early on so they were truly academically challenged in two languages in reading and writing from a young age?”

Donald: “Oh, I think the ideal is the latter. I wish my kids were being taught Spanish as well as English. But what we forget though is that in a lot of neighborhoods in Los Angeles English is not the dominant language. Children can be born here and arrive at school at the age of six never having heard English in any significant way. And, for a long time I think schools in an effort to be culturally sensitive and preserve the home language and out of a, and I think the research is terribly flawed, out of a sense that children naturally learned English over a long period of time and that they really didn’t need that much instruction in it, that what we wind up with is kids entering jr. high who were not fluent in English. And at that point, if the goal is to have them fluent in two languages then

\(^{30}\) “(b) Whereas, Immigrant parents are eager to have their children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and”

“(d) Whereas, the public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children; and” (Excerpts: Proposition 227, Proposed Law, Chapter 3, Article 1, Section 300).
we’ve failed, because they end up being fluent in Spanish. And so this is another example of a reaction and the backlash that I’ve spoken about before.

Ultimately educators refused to deal with it, refused to deal with it, refused to deal with it, and finally the populace said fuck that. I mean, you know, these kids are coming out of high school, they’re dropping out, and they can’t speak English. So we went to this draconian measure, through the ballot box, of legislating how you teach kids literacy. I mean that’s the most absurd thing you can imagine is to make education decisions at the ballot box. And yet you can understand why it happened that way. Because against all evidence, educators were insistent that this was the only way to do it. Ideally, everything occurs in the real world, and a lack of materials that are in two languages, a lack of teachers who are able to teach in two languages, a lack of, it’s much more difficult organizationally to take on the additional goals of having kids be bilingual.

The question is why we can’t do that here. It’s ridiculous. We bring kids to school who speak only Spanish and say you can’t speak Spanish in school. I mean this is a resource that they should not, I mean, in writing and reading they have access to a whole body of literature that English speaking kids don’t, they have access to a whole body of idiomatic phrases that English kids don’t, why should that be back-burnered and say that’s not important in our schools. But having said that, you can’t also say English is not important. Because then you are denying them the possibility of ever participating in this economy. So I’m appalled by that, and our schools need to be organized to be arrayed in such a way that you can support that.”

School funding.

Journalists’ propositions here were in response to the general literacy crisis question or to follow-up questions specifically about school funding. I asked about this in particular because the Times raised it in their series “Public Education: California’s Perilous Slide” (1998). In the late 1970s there were legislative actions to limit the ability of municipalities to pass bond issues (a two-thirds majority was required instead of a simple majority). I wanted to
understand how journalists conceived of the effects of funding on school performance in light of other "causes" given primacy for failure.

Thomas and Stephen proposed that the amount of money was not as important as schools' spending money the right way to get results. Ed’s proposition was that when there was a recession there wasn’t enough money to provide quality education; Donald’s proposition (similar to Thomas’) was that “school leadership” had been inadequate. Each of these is an ideological stance, founded on what Irvine and Gal called erasure – “facts that are inconsistent with an ideological scheme go unnoticed or are explained away” (Irvine and Gal, 1996, p. 6).

All three journalists seemed to agree that insufficient monies had been available to handle the increased needs of schools, yet none was willing to confront the relationship of inadequate facilities, crowded classrooms, lack of libraries and textbooks, low teacher pay, and other outcomes to student performance.

CC: “[Thomas], what does unequal school funding have to do with differences in performance?”

Thomas: “School funding has an impact on all those other things, you know, teacher training, curriculum, class size, availability of textbooks, ability to have support staff that can distinguish between kids who have an actual learning disability and kids who just don’t know how to read yet. Funding has an impact on all those things.”

CC: “Where does funding fit in the hierarchy you mentioned of causes v. correlations?”

Thomas: “Well, I don’t think it’s funding as such. Because it depends on what you do with the money. You could spend a lot more money, but not
spend any of it on teacher training, for example. Spend it all on building a better gymnasium, like they used to do in Chicago."

CC: "Do you think a lot of that is happening here?"

Thomas: "No, no, but I mean funding has been pretty low. I mean, if you want to advocate increased funding for schools, which the State is beginning to do, it's important in the process of doing that to make sure that the money is going into areas, if your primary concern is reading, it's important to make sure that the money is going into areas that will benefit that, as opposed to something else." But I guess I'd say that money is necessary but not sufficient; and more money doesn't necessarily make things better, but lack of money will make things worse."

CC: "[Ed], I read in the "California's Perilous Slide" series that there were voter decisions in the 1970s about the tax base. Is that an issue for what's going on today?"

Ed: "Well, because there was more money, because there was a budget surplus, the governor earmarked money to reduce class sizes. When there was no money, there was no money to do that, because you also have to hire new teachers. So the fact that there was more money in the State budget for that, because the State allocated, I think it allocated 4 billion dollars for that so far. So someone had to come up with that money, and when there was a recession, there was no money for that."

CC: "[Stephen], but what do you think about the money issue? Hasn't that had some effect on the quality of education in the last twenty years or so?"

Stephen: "I think it does, yeah. There are two, there are probably two factions on that. One is that everything wrong with the district, or with public education in California is a result of not having enough money. The other side says that money is not the deciding factor and that you can do a good job teaching student for a lot less money than there is. And I happen to think that there is some truth to that. But because a lot of money gets spent on things that probably aren't necessary. None the less, the whole education program is suffering a great deal because of the cutbacks of the eighties and nineties. Class size crept up over years and years, until it was really out of hand. And then Gov. Wilson, as his parting educational initiative, allowed State money directed to reducing class size. But it was done so rapidly, that it created a huge
teacher shortage. And that shortage was filled by teachers who aren't really qualified.

I do know that my daughter went to private school for two years when we moved. She was happy in public school, but when we moved she didn't want to go to the public school here, so she went to a lower end private school for two years, and for 4000 dollars a year she got a tremendously better education than she was getting in public school. The, at that time, the district was receiving something like seven or eight thousand dollars for every student. And so, I don't know what they did with all that money. But the private school that she went to was able to focus that money on the instructional program. The way the public school wasn't. With very small classes.”

Donald: “Let me go back to the financing question for a moment. The idea that I was grasping for, not successfully, was I would be loath to give, I mean, schools are getting more and more and more money. And that's fine, except that what I don’t see is an institutional focus of schools and I don’t see those moneys leveraged to achieve that focus. And the idea that urban schools get less money than suburban schools is not right, it's not true. Urban schools get a lot more money than suburban schools. But it's so diffuse in terms of how it's spent it's not organized to. I mean if your school is going to decide that we want to raise reading scores, we want to increase literacy. Then there's five or six or seven or eight different funds that, and the flexibility is enormous now. You can just take all that money and focus it all on that institutional goal, but I don’t see that happening. The money gets spent, but it gets spent in disparate ways, and there's no accountability for achieving the goal that the school wants to achieve, if there's a goal that the school wants to achieve. So I think there's a real breakdown in terms of management . . .”

CC: Is that a school issue, is that a political leadership issue, is it a community issue, is it all of the above. What do you think?”

Donald: “I think that it's a school issue. I think that we don't train principals in the way that we ought to. Each of those funds has a constituency, you know, we spend all our title one money on aides that all research shows that aides are a very ineffective of spending Title I money. You know, that's a nine billion dollar expenditure nationally. We just spend a lot of money in ways that don't contribute to students' learning. I think that it's mainly a school leadership issue.”
Summary

Journalists' ideologies and perceptions of identity were no more clearly expressed than in responses to questions about the literacy crisis. In the context of details from their literacy histories, why or how they came to write about education, and their framing processes (addressed in earlier chapters) – the responses in this chapter suggested three categorical organizations of the relationship of themselves to education and literacy. Several journalists expressed a sense of ownership, even stewardship of the institution of education. Public schooling is after all the one institutional experience shared by most Americans. Despite differences in the available educational experiences, and the uniqueness of each human being attending public schools, Donald, Ed and Stephen created simplified worlds in which it was assumed that every public education experience could be improved. If only children spoke or quickly learned English, their parents were home at night, and the teacher used phonics and doled out peanuts to hungry children, test scores would quickly go up and there could be success for all.

Another categorical organization reflected what Pratt (1992) called "lettered authority." One's position as a writer at one of the premier news organizations in the country confers entitlement, ontologically related to having literacy experiences of a particular kind. Therefore, those are not only the "right" kinds of literacy experiences or conditions, but there is established an implicit
responsibility to perpetuate the authority of the "letter" (i.e. their particular literacy) on the social landscape.

The third categorical organization has to do with choice. In a perceived open democracy in which everyone ostensibly has equal opportunity, there is no more reasonable expectation of the accountability of individuals for their own destinies than that they make the right choices. Journalists such as Vela, Donald, Stephen and Ed implicated that they made the right choices, unproblematised by social and linguistic structures of opportunity or constraint, and each expects that if other do so, "success" is imminent (Bennett, 1991)

These categorical forms, the details of language conventions, and cause and effect propositions familiar from journalists' and some educators' commentaries, are fully at work in the Times' texts about the literacy crisis – addressed in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER EIGHT

LANGUAGE POLITICS AND THE

INCEPTION OF READING BY 9

Introduction

This chapter provides background for the Los Angeles Times series Reading by 9, introduced in the two quotations below. Reading by 9 articles and editorials are analyzed in greater detail in chapter nine. Reading by 9 was structured as a way to report on and respond to what the newspaper labeled a "literacy crisis" in a May, 1998 special report entitled "Public Education: California's Perilous Slide." I develop the background and context for Reading by 9 through four sources. The first is a brief historical review of English literacy ideology, followed by an analysis of the literacy ideology in a Los Angeles Times special report. The third is a discussion of the literacy components in two recent California political initiatives, concluding with an introduction of the literacy model in the Reading by 9 series expressed through the words of several Los Angeles Times education journalists.

"Inspirational and empowering...devoted to teaching kids to read."

"Reading by 9 is the Los Angeles Times' commitment to working with Southern California communities to significantly improve the lives of their children by ensuring that they learn to read in English at grade level by the end of the third grade." (Reading by 9 Conference Guide, 1999, September 12 - Appendix K.)
"To make Reading by 9 work, the Times will mobilize the community by bringing it together for a united consortium on child illiteracy. The Times will partner with existing literacy programs to maximize and leverage the potential of each program. The Times will also enlist partners from business, education, government, media and civic organizations for this massive crusade. The Times will work with educators using the State's new testing and assessment program. The Times will report on its progress and publish reading scores, tracking effectiveness and results and promoting accountability for children's reading skills." (Reading by 9 (Conference Brochure), 1998, September - Appendix L.)

The historical, sociolinguistic, and educational frames introduced in earlier chapters are applied here. Following this introduction is a brief historical review of the methods and purposes for which literacy and standard English have been discursively linked in public rhetoric. The primary data in this chapter are journalists' explanations of the inception of the Reading by 9 series. The presentation and analysis of journalists' comments about the inception of Reading by 9 follows a presentation of a second data source as context. The second data source is an analysis the Los Angeles Times special report, California's Perilous Slide (May 1998). This report preceded the inception of Reading by 9 by several months. The secondary data also include the language of two political initiatives that preceded the inception of Reading by 9. These are included as background because of references to and implications for public education in the language of Proposition 187 (the "Save our state" initiative) and Proposition 227 (the "English for the Children" initiative).

The inception of Reading by 9 was a significant ideological event. Even though it purported commitment to "improve the lives of children," it borrowed
cultural models, and premises of cause and effect, and used language conventions historically connected to social stratification and control through education. From the Proposition 227 data, attitudes about language and education reform elements were not only present but central to the arguments in the Times' *California's Perilous Slide* special report. In the primary data, journalists’ explanations of the Times’ editorial policy regarding balanced coverage of reading problems and solutions were found to be inconsistent with explanations of the *Reading by 9* goals and decisions regarding what to cover and how to cover it. Language orientations and cultural arguments from Propositions 187 and 227 and “Public Education: California's Perilous Slide” (1998) were also present in journalists’ explanations of the inception and goals of *Reading by 9*. That is, teaching was problematized as not adequate to the demands of poor, non-English speaking children; learning among poor children was problematized as inadequate because children lack English fluency, and/or parents lack English literacy and/or commitment to education. These positions stand in contrast to the literacy-success models that 13 of 18 participants proposed in their literacy history narratives (Figure 3.1, chapter three), and are congruent with the cultural incompetence model proposed by journalists. I use Ruiz’ (1984) discussion of language as a problem, a right or a resource, and Cobarrubias’ (1983) typology for decision making about language to further explicate the significance of *Reading by 9*. 
Historical Implications of Literacy Ideology

**Standard English, Rank, and Social Control**

Cobarrubias (1983) states that "language functions may change as the result of spontaneous historical process [implicit policy] or as a result of decisions involving concerted or planned changes [explicit policy]" (Cobarrubias, 1983, p. 41). Both kinds of language policy have occurred in England, the United States, and in other English-dominant countries (see Herriman and Burnaby, 1996). Implicit and explicit policy tends to be constructed of explanations (official and otherwise) containing dichotomized characterizations of groups (Irvine and Gal, 1996; Mehan, 1997). The following historical examples of public discourse illustrate implicit definitions of stratified literacy for social control, and introduce concepts recognizable in implicit and explicit language/literacy policies in Los Angeles Times education writing and in California politics.

**Standard English and rank.**

Following the American Revolution, the England of the late 1700s was consolidating power and authority. Urbanization, industrialization, and increasing poverty, along with the spread of "seditious" materials such as Thomas Paine's 'The Rights of Man,' converged in social unrest (Donald, 1991). One answer was "in embryo a more sophisticated ideological response [than
blatant repression] in ... the battle of ideas" (Donald, 1991, p. 213). Prime Minister William Pitt called for

"[A] great deal of activity on the part of friends of our constitution to take pains properly to address the public mind, and to keep it in that state which was necessary to our present tranquility" (Webb, 1955, p. 40 in Donald, 1991, p. 213).

Three responses from “friends of our [British] Constitution” in the “battle of ideas” still resonate. One was the usage of a new public education to “allow of no writing for the poor ... to not make them fanatics” but to “train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety” (Simon, 1960, quoting Hannah More from the mid-1790s, in Donald, 1991, p. 213). Another response was the usage of newly minted social approaches of the law and policing to demonstrate, with “often lurid statistics” the link between illiteracy and criminality (Colquhoun, 1806 in Donald, 1991, p. 215). The linkage made self-evident “strategies of surveillance, regulation and training” to ensure that the poor stayed in “the rank they are destined to fill in society,” with the added advantage to the state of paying teachers “the lowest rate ever paid for instruction” (Donald, 1991, p. 215).

A strain toward a standardized English as a national language (with subsequent repression of Cornish, Welsh, Gaelic, Irish) was ideologically and pragmatically central to regulation and rank. This was at first signified in forms of reading instruction that emphasized correct grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and allowance of only certain kinds of reading, at the expense of the imagination and critical thinking which might stir up the propensity to be “fanatical” or seditious. Literacy became, not being well read, but knowing one’s ABCs, how
to write a proper letter, and how to perform a job appropriate to one's social rank.

The activities generated by the call to properly address the public mind were not lost on the breakaway republic on the other side of the Atlantic. The developing relationship of control, rank, and schooling took root in the American mind. What was called common schooling was nevertheless differentiated; it was initially unavailable, or available only in a limited way, to females, slaves and American Indians (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1988; Szasz, 1988; Vaughn, 1965). The perception of the destined rank of the poor may be exemplified by (but not limited to) 1) the principles of the Hampton Industrial School for southern Negroes, (briefly including a school for American Indians); 2) the principle of the "talented tenth" of the Tuskegee Institute; 3) the language and culture repression of the Carlisle Indian School; and 4) Bureau of Indian Affairs education policies (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1988; DeJong, 1993; Szasz, 1988).

The focus on standard English, and the linkages of illiteracy with criminality, especially in industrializing urban centers, were so often conflated in the public imagination that they seem now to be nearly organic (Collins, 1991; Donald, 1991).

But the implications of reading and speaking "standard" English are even more profound than efforts to keep writing from the poor in the 18th Century. According to Heath and Mandabach (1983), use of a certain kind of English in speaking and writing came to mean intelligence, character, and patriotism. And, in a Britain in which French was dominant for 500 years following the Norman
Invasion of 1066, English very slowly attained dominance (an earlier form of English was one of several actively used languages of the British Isles before 1066). As English became dominant, a standard norm of use was established. The model for English dominance included grammar as a proxy for logic, so that use of correct grammar came to mean the ability to be logical. Later, incorrect grammar was said in the popular media to reflect "circumscribed thought" and "to promote improper behaviors and prejudices" (Heath and Mandabach, 1983, p. 91). An individual's language decisions based on "discernment" were considered to be symbolic of good character, taste and judgement; the opposite was symbolic of "defaming the nation, absence of self-control, failure to use logic and reason, and lack of diligence in pursuit of good" (Heath and Mandabach, 1983, p. 92).

The linkage of correct English usage with intelligence (i.e. logic), character and patriotism ultimately transformed in the U.S. into a rationale for opposing languages other than English in any public forum. Although initially colonists characterized American Indians' "choices" to learn English as good judgement and discernment, rather than admit any force, it was not long before an explicit U.S. policy to eradicate American Indian languages and cultures was undertaken (DeJong, 1993; Heath and Mandabach, 1983, p. 93; Szasz, 1977, 1988). (See also Vaughan's 1965 treatment of the work of John Eliot and Robert Mayhew in the New England Praying Towns). As U.S. territory and populations increased and consolidated, there was created not just a perceived need for norms of behavior, variety restriction, uniformity and conformity, but a need for a "sophisticated
ideological response," partly borrowed from the British, "to produce new forms of consciousness" (Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983). Immigration, annexations of territories, populations shifting westward, combined with the industrial revolution, urbanization, and the common school movement all raised the specter of too much diversity to control effectively without particular tools. Language was used as a tool of conformity; speaking English symbolized being a predictable, rational person of good taste, character, intelligence and reason (Heath and Mandabach, 1983, pp. 95-96).

Situated and rationalized in doctrines of separation and superiority, rising up in responses to crises of the economy and of nationalism have been, for their time, logical, civilized arguments for language dominance, both implicit and explicit (Heath and Mandabach, 1983). In retrospect, much of what occurred is today considered appalling. Results include separate but [un]equal education for African Americans; American Indian languages and cultures brutally repressed (including schooling in the Cherokee language in Oklahoma); Spanish-speaking children in newly acquired territories often receiving no public education or separate education; German and other immigrant children and their teachers punished for advancing literacy in their native language (Heath & Mandabach 1983, p. 97); ubiquitous "official English" initiatives (e.g. in Arizona in 1987 and 2000, and in California in 1986); and a recent political initiative to eliminate "failed" bilingual instruction (i.e. Proposition 227, California, 1998) despite 63 percent of Latino voters rejecting the proposition. As suggested by Heath and Mandabach (1983) in their review of the history of English language
dominance in England, implicit policy, connected to ideology regarding what it means to speak English and speak it correctly, is crucial.

Consistent between present-day California, historical England, and the early days of the United States, is the public response to a convergence of demographic and economic changes (Fishman, 1991). In urbanizing, industrializing England and the U.S., populations shifted to cities, poverty was concentrated, and the traditionally and newly privileged classes discursively differentiated themselves by posing language, literacy and the potential for "fanaticism" among the poor as problems (Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983). In the U.S. and in California during the last 10 years of the 20th century, an increasing number of service jobs (low-paid blue and white-collar jobs), and a growing technology sector (more highly paid white-collar jobs), began to replace heavy industry. At the same time, undocumented immigration increased. Through appeals to now time-honored threats to economic and political status quo in California, in the form of newspaper special reports and political initiatives, standard English and a new idea of literacy were made icons of political stability, economic potential, and social cohesion.

**Literacy and control.**

In the earlier examples from the 18th and early 19th Century England, members of an emerging middle class (Hannah More and Magistrate Colquhoun among others) responded to Prime Minister Pitt's call to "friends of our constitution" to "address the public mind" toward tranquility among the people
In this example, it was not languages other than English that were the "problem" but access to and uses of English as a (written) language for ostensible sedition or fanaticism, or simply to question the prevailing order (Donald, 1991). Prime Minister Pitt and the pamphlet writer More's purposes were to respond to, and/or to develop a perception of crisis, invoking the elements of patriotism and superiority as solutions to the potential chaos of an upended social system (Donald, 1991). Colquhoun constituted imminent crisis in the correlation of illiteracy with crime (Donald, 1991). In these two examples, the image of crisis and the emphasis on reading and speaking correct English are entwined. In the post-Civil War United States, the Hampton Institute Industrial School was primarily a school for "southern Negroes" (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1978). The crisis of that time was to control Negro freedmen and funnel them into burgeoning industries in both the north and south that required cheap, minimally educated, and subservient labor. Language as a problem was situated in the lack of standard-English, to be corrected by offering no more than basic literacy to the new freedmen.

The Hampton Institute's stated philosophy was not just to "develop habits of industry, build character, and instill a feeling for the dignity of labor," but also to create an apolitical class of laboring freedmen and women who would return to their communities and teach others how to adjust to subordinate social roles (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1978, p. 61). In the early 20th Century, World War I was the social crisis to which a literacy crisis was appended. "Literacy" on an army induction test was a problem for many recent immigrants or farm laborer
youth. The tests designed originally to screen or place draftees were purported to be ideal for use in schools. From the "self-evident" lower test results of those with less education or English fluency came the ubiquity of intelligence tests to rank students for public schools (Tucker, 1994, pp. 106-110). Language was also a problem in public and private schools in the Midwest in which the language of instruction was German; teachers were required to change the language of instruction to English, despite English being incomprehensible to many teachers and students.

Language is a problem in public discourse under certain conditions (Ruiz, 1984). The conditions that apply most recently in California are highly reminiscent of the examples discussed above. The most recognizable elements are the appeal to crisis and the centrality of language as a problem, explicated in the next section. The "solution" of controlled literacy in English is advanced as a central element in the Times' introductions to Reading by 9.

Immigration, Bilingual Education, and Literacy in California

"Public Education: California's Perilous Slide."

The Los Angeles Times special report "Public Education: California's Perilous Slide" became the Los Angeles Times' official and politically salient pronouncement (Schudson, 1996, pp. 11, 171) on the contexts and causes of California students' dismal reading test scores. The report was presented as a special three part insert (six to eight pages each) on three subsequent days in
May 1998. “Public Education: California’s Perilous Slide” first-page headline read, “Why Our Schools are Failing,” and was subtitled “Lower Standards, Money, Changing Student Body Are the Challenges” (Appendix M).

The first-page headline on the following day read, “Language, Culture: How Schools Cope” with the subtitle, “Influences Outside the Classroom Can Determine Success or Failure.” On the third and last day of the series, the first-page headline, “Little Training, Poor Oversight” was subtitled, “Too Many Teachers are Ill-Prepared,” and “No One Knows If Money Is Well-Spent.”

On each of the six to eight pages of each insert, print was overlarge, full color photos filled the top half the first pages and were prominent on other pages, and each first page contained a blue box entitled “Key Findings.”

One example of a key finding in the May 18, 1998 “Language, Culture” article read:

“Culture is important: Cultural influences have a big impact on success or failure. The success of Asian American students contrasts sharply with other ethnic groups.”

The linkage of the series title, headlines and content from the three days suggests an image. The state is on a dangerous down-slope, evoking lack of control and a dark future. Schools represent the foundation on which the state sits, and schools’ “failure” (as measured by purportedly declining test scores) has tilted the terrain (as in a mudslide or earthquake) through policies of dumbing-down (lower standards) in response to immigration (changing student body). Despite the invocation of money as a challenge, the matter of school funding was given one full paragraph out of approximately 200 in the initial (1998, May 18)
seven-page treatise. Languages (other than English) and culture (other than Euro-American) were, with the important exception of Asians, cited as the source of low expectations speeding California down the slope to oblivion. Misguided state policies and ineffective school administrators conspired to produce lower standards and related practices. Teachers were devised as sometimes unwitting or unwilling accomplices in the crisis.

As noted in chapter seven, when asked about "what is called the literacy crisis," the journalist Stephen characterized the crisis as language-centered. He used the phrases "I've listened to children speak" and "a high and low dialect of English" to portend "a radical ... shift in the direction of American society."

Mehan (1997) points out in his analysis of the Proposition 187 debate that discourse strategies are not in themselves inherently racist or stratifying, nor do they always consistently (or consciously) serve other specific ends of their users. But the use of particular language conventions are also not purely referential – they don't always directly represent objects, but do have the potential to "form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, in Mehan, 1997).

In the perilous slide example, the strategies of evoking danger and enemies, and then expertly explaining their meaning, combine to focus on and to blame the backgrounds of students and their families, while diverting the gaze from other examinations (Irvine and Gal, 1996). The journalist Stephen's personal reflection on the literacy crisis also begins with students and their social context, implying a relationship between students' language (low dialect) and inability to read and write, from which we must infer its opposite, that high
dialect is associated with (causative of?) skill in reading and writing. The "projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship," called recursiveness by Irvine and Gal (1996, p. 540), "provides actors with the discursive or cultural resources to claim [or] to create shifting 'communities,' identities, selves and roles, ... within a cultural field."

The "Influences outside the classroom..." (May 18, 1998) lead article concludes that students' and parents' cultures account for achievement (Woo, 1998, May 18). The conclusions are based on anecdotal references to individual student representatives of a "culture," sound-bite citations of three scholars (a "Temple University researcher," a UC Davis education professor, and an author of a 1986 California education report), and boxed statistics that readers were apparently to assume provided support for the writer's assertions. The writer disclaimed that neither ethnicity nor race could explain all educational performance, but that culture can. Despite the disclaimer, the writer, in the "causes" and "ethnic trends" sub-sections, repeatedly equated culture with ethnicity and/or race. Examples include:

"... three-quarters of Chinese and Japanese students in San Francisco are present for virtually all - more than 90% of - their classes. Only 29% of black students - and 54% of whites - attend school that regularly" (p. R5)

"the persistence of ethnic gaps in school success is a key finding . . ."
"... twice as many Asians as whites take the [Advanced Placement] courses" (p. R5)

"[Hodgkinson] . . . urged State officials to 'think of ways in which motivations and achievements' of Asian American 'could be transferred to others . . .'' (p. R4) [Hodgkinson, an "education researcher," was cited as the author of a 1988 report entitled "California: The State and Its Education System."]
The thesis is that since other ethnic or racial groups and their cultures are even farther from the Asian benchmark than whites, language and culture are the culprits. It is important to point out that all Asians are lumped together in this writing, through the same devices of statistics, anecdote, and profile used to make most of the arguments – Vietnamese Hmong students, despite their relatively recent refugee status, were profiled as dedicated to doing their homework each evening. Hidden, but in plain sight, was the implication that if Latinos, African Americans and Native Americans fare much worse than whites on all measures, than whites – and the Asians who showed the “discernment” to follow their model – are “predictable, rational person[s] of good taste, character, intelligence and reason” (Heath and Mandabach, 1983).

The designation of “California’s Perilous Slide” articles as a special report suggests that this information is more than just news; it represents a relationship to the real world in which its assertions may pass unquestioned into a “premise for any conversation at all” (Schudson 1996, p. 54). By lack of any reference to some alternative or conditional contentions made in the other articles in the series, the propositions of the article have explanatory strength, buoyed by certain scholars’ (i.e. experts) quotations, without any contrary citations by other experts about such a complex topic.

What may be especially profound about a special report strategy was that through recursiveness (projection of sometimes unexpressed oppositions), this special report persuasively deployed tactics people commonly use to reason
about the world. Examples included reasoning from personal experience to substantiate a common sense model, as in the journalist's reflection on the literacy crisis above. The citation of expert comments or statistics, or examples of real students who are made to appear as ideal examples of their groups are also typical of cognitive strategies any of us may use to make a point. Presented at length are apparently prototypical Asians (language attitudes, study habits, parent values, and achievement despite all odds, etc.) contrasted with examples of students of other ethnicities or races whom the reader must suppose are also prototypical of their ethnic, language or racial groupings. The explanatory model was rounded out by use of statistical findings that compared those who take SATs, hours spent on homework, etc., to suggest to the reader, in numbers, the significance of the prototypical examples. Students, the reader must infer, will definitely only have themselves to blame for achievement disparities if their cultures (not only study habits and classroom practices) are not amenable to revised standards.

31 In a discursive strategy that contrasts with using culture to explain school performance (cultural explanations relieve observers, policy makers, and the education process of responsibility to develop each child as an individual), an educator (not in this study) described a professional development class for teachers. The facilitator of the class posed the dilemma to teachers of "thinking deeper" about why statistics might show differences in educational performance between students. This facilitator's tactic was to ask teachers to question and observe each student's comprehension and study strategies, cooperation and collaboration in and out of the classroom, and critical thinking tactics. Teachers were then provided with support for how to do this, and for how to develop models, interventions or other methods for improving students' skills (Educator Personal Communication: November 2, 1999).
The Los Angeles Times has a kind of authority and credibility peculiar to our free-speech democracy (Schudson, 1995, p. 205). As with other large news organizations, the Times' authority and credibility partly derive from its supposed firewall of journalistic ethics and professional procedure. But the greater power of the news derives from the medium's freedom to provide, and readers' willingness to accept the forms in which the news appears (Schudson, 1995, p. 54). Is it unethical to appeal to crisis if the special report that proposes the crisis makes a good argument for crisis? Or must we be careful to ascertain whose interests are at stake in determining the genuineness of the crisis contention? Is it merely professional "craft", as journalist Thomas claimed, that determine the language conventions used to narrate the contexts and the facts of reading scores? Or are narrative constructions of an enemy and of an imminent threat to readers' personal safety and the future of democracy both immoral and irrational choices for portraying reading, language and culture (Cobarrubias, 1983; Ruíz, 1984).

Ruíz (1984) argues that an appeal to crisis may be a response to perceptions of threat, such as could be construed in this case from California's economic recession and high immigration in the early 1990s. But the choices to conflate bilingual education with lower standards, and "low dialect" with "dismal" reading scores, or to invest one culture with the stink of failure and another with a sweet smell of success, are not necessarily rational responses to threat. Instead, these are choices of highly contested and politically charged constructions of reality, such as are posed by the language and the reasoning in
the propositions discussed below. The attractiveness of the ideas advanced in the Times' "California's Perilous Slide" report (1998), that in hindsight might be found to be appallingly dim, are an appeal to what is familiar, credible, authoritative, and predictable to people who, in the Times' imagery, are unremittingly fearful and ethno- and English language-centric. But since hindsight hasn't yet kicked in, the question remains, how have education, and especially reading education, become such powerful icons?

Proposition 187 – The "Save Our State" Initiative.

Proposition 187 was passed by California voters on November 8, 1994 (Appendix N). The thrust of this initiative was to identify, control and turn back undocumented immigrants, especially poor people of color with limited English. That the initiative targeted poor people of color with limited English may be inferred from its mandate for police, educators, and social service providers to identify and report suspected illegal immigrants: How does one know whom to suspect? One of the more controversial aspects of the initiative was that social services (e.g. health care, education, and food stamps) would also be severed for documented immigrants. This aspect of the initiative was supposed to reduce

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32 For a similar purpose, an ordinance was passed by the city council in Chandler, Arizona. Chandler police “rounded up” a number of U.S. citizens of Mexican or Latino heritage because they did not carry Green cards documenting their status as legal immigrants. It was later determined that the individuals were born in the U.S. The detainees sued the city government and the ordinance was overturned. The Chandler police responded to initial reports of the incidents by saying that they targeted those who looked illegal.
the motivation of some to remain in the U.S. and others to emigrate in the first place. It relied upon incorrect assumptions that immigrants do not pay taxes, are over-represented on welfare, and are therefore a burden on social service systems (Mehan, 1997). The public debate was multi-textured; many supported the initiative, including some Latinos and California’s then Governor Pete Wilson, among others. Others opposed it, such as The Times and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southern California (Mehan, 1997). Various sections of this document received an immediate legal challenge, and all but the assignment of felony status to production of false documents were deemed unconstitutional. (See Mehan 1997 for a more detailed description and further implications.\(^33\))

Despite having been determined to be unconstitutional, two ideas from the arguments of Proposition 187 borrowed from historical precedent and have made their way into the later arguments proffered in “California’s Perilous Slide” discussed earlier, and in Proposition 227, and Reading by 9 discussed below. One of these ideas was that immigrants, especially “illegal” immigrants, are a burden on the system, destined, because they do not learn English quickly, to recreate their cultures of poverty. The second was the idea that poverty transformed from being a function of economic structures and policies - as in the ideology inclusive of “all men are created equal” and the Civil Rights laws. The transformation was to posit the cause of poverty as an unyielding linkage of

\(^{33}\) Even though most sections of the Proposition 187 initiative statute have been deemed unconstitutional, the residual effects, as reported in Mehan (1997, p. 256) are, among other things, that immigrants' use of health services has declined and “hate speech” has increased in schools.
attributes, such as speaking a language other than English and lack of English literacy, with ostensible choices of poor people, such as leaving school early or illegally emigrating.

Proposition 227 – The “English for the Children” Initiative.

Proposition 227, designed to end “failed” bilingual education, was passed by 61 percent of California voters in June 1998 (Appendix O). The proposition’s initial guise was to improve education outcomes; a reduced dropout rate among Latinos, improved reading scores on standardized tests, and general academic achievement were said to have resulted from ending bilingual education in some districts.

In an analysis of California’s Latino dropout statistics, Krashen (1999a) reported that young people who never enrolled in school upon arrival in the U.S. composed one-third of the purported Latino dropout rate which proponents of 227 used to support their contentions of failed bilingual education. Fewer than half of the Latino school population were limited English proficient, with 30 percent of those in bilingual education, and 22 percent having “informal” support in their first language (Macias, 1997 in Krashen, 1999a). Krashen concluded that far less than half of the Latino dropout rate might be composed of students with some level of bilingual education. Contrary to the claims of the English for the Children Initiative, effective bilingual education may actually reduce dropping out (Rumbaut, 1995, among others, in Krashen, 1999a, p. 6).
As chair of the committee that produced a 1997 National Research Council Report concerning the needs of English language learners and native language programs in schools, Hakuta (1998a) addressed in substantial detail the misunderstandings and misrepresentations by the authors and some supporters of Proposition 227 (Appendix P). In a formal declaration to California state government, Hakuta noted that those who cited the report as favoring the aims of Proposition 227 did so by ignoring some research, emphasizing preliminary and/or inconclusive research, and simplifying outcomes of studies with multiple variables by focusing on one or two variables. Hakuta allows that some of this may result from what he termed a misunderstanding, but much of it, by otherwise reputable researchers, was of such an egregious nature that the "truth is bent" in the misrepresentation of research analyzed in the report (Hakuta, 1998a, Point 1, Paragraph 44).

Krashen’s (1999a), Hakuta’s (1998a), and others’ basic research and analyses or meta-analyses, along with extensive evaluations by the National Research Council (1997, in Hakuta, 1998a) with the point-by-point refutations and clarifications of the “research-based” claims of supporters of Proposition 227, are of inestimable value to academics, policy makers and laypersons. These detailed and methodologically sound analyses also provided a platform from which another kind of evaluation is possible. An ideology relating language, education and social stability comprise the infrastructure of Proposition 227, starting with phrases such as “English for the Children” and “to end failed bilingual education.” Misrepresentations of research and polls peripheralized or
erased arguments that attempted to unpack such relationships (Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a, pp. 86-90).

Bilingual education in Proposition 227 became a proxy for language as a problem. One argument was that it was “unfair” to teach children in their primary languages because they would dropout (go on welfare, join a gang, end up in jail, not pay taxes, etc.). From the logic of Proposition 227, graduating was ostensibly the result of English fluency as measured on standardized tests, and school completion was the basis of economic success. It followed that the “failure” of bilingual education was the failure of immigrants to carry their own weight, creating a burden on workers and taxpayers. This inferential chain turned on its head nearly three decades of political precedent regarding minority language rights, and social and educational research substantiating the value of strongly academic, well-funded bilingual programs for language as a resource (Cummins, 1997, 1989; Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Moll & Greenberg, 1997; Watahomigie and McCarty, 1996). (See Appendix P - Hakuta, 1998c; see also McCarty, 1993a)

Nineteen-ninety eight, the year of Proposition 227, was also an election year; education was touted as one of the three most important issues by all Democratic and Republican candidates for the California’s executive, legislative

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34 One journalist, in reflecting on the newspaper’s goals for its Reading page, explained “[We] can have an impact by focusing public attention in order to raise test scores [because] seeing more kids learn to read is best measured by test scores.”
and departmental offices. Gray Davis (Democrat) won the governors' office, promising that education "is my first, second, and third priority."


The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1995) report showed reading scores in the United States over the previous 25 years, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were stable, not declining (McQuillan, 1998, pp. 67-72). If 40 percent of students could not read proficiently, then that had to have been the case for the previous 25 years - an argument no one was making (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Glass, 1978 in McQuillan, 1998, pp. 13-15; Krashen, 1999b; NCES, 1995, in McQuillan, 1998, pp. 2-3, 13-15). Significantly, the 1992 NAEP and 1994 NAEP reading scores, categorized by teacher self-report, showed phonics instruction to be the least effective form of instruction compared to whole language, literature-based instruction (see also Table 8.1 below) (Campbell, Donohue, Reese & Phillips, 1996)
in McQuillan, 1998; NCES, 1994, p. 284 in McQuillan, 1998, p. 14). What, then, is the purpose of the claims that reading proficiency had declined and whole language instruction was to blame?

Table 8.1
Correlations Between Reading Method and State NAEP Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS USING:</th>
<th>CORRELATION WITH NAEP SCORE</th>
<th>CONTROLLED FOR POVERTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Language</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>-.59</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from NCES, 1994, in McQuillan, 1998, p. 68. Reprinted with permission.)

In this case, whole language reading instruction became a proxy for language as a problem, as did bilingual education a few years later, generating the idea that basic (i.e. inexpensive) education can reverse the (unproven) damage done by whole language and bilingual education. One thread is common to Proposition 187 (Save our State), Proposition 227 (ending failed bilingual education), and the scapegoating of whole language as a premise for increasing emphasis on standards, standardized tests, and “accountability” (i.e. rewards and punishments). A proposition relating the use of standard English to social and political stability and to economic prosperity “intrinsically persuades” that it is unnecessary, in fact unamerican, to promote costly accommodation of students’ diverse needs. The influences of such ideas, especially as these constitute a nexus of privilege and power, take on ideologically monstrous aspects (see Gramsci, 1975, p. 2346 in Donald, 1991, p. 212 regarding “language
coming to the fore...”). In one school with which I am acquainted as a volunteer instructor, a well-stocked library (an anomaly in most Los Angeles inner-city schools) goes unused because teachers’ two-and-a-half hour per day scripted lesson drills on phonics do not allow time for the library. Students with above grade-level reading skills in the fall of 2000 are confused and bored with reading basal storybooks by spring, 2001.

Four so-called reforms have been implemented in California since 1997. These include the virtual elimination of bilingual education and the development of a single set of statewide teaching and learning standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening in English for all public schools, all grades. The idea of “teacher-proofing” (i.e. purportedly protecting students from the ineptitude of teachers) resulted in implementation of mandated programs, texts, and teacher training in all public schools. The emphasis on reading instruction through phonics (through seventh grade), and programs to reward and punish schools based on standardized test results (in English), have resulted in massive state and school district efforts.

Collins (1991) suggests, “...the association of language with national unification; the association of literacy with mobility; and the indexical fixing of an authoritative literate tradition” - or schooled literacy - has driven the hegemony of standard language literacy as the only correct form to which all must adhere (Collins, 1991, pp. 232, 247). "Democratic" equal opportunity in education has become an icon for equal opportunity (social mobility) through education. This belief is accompanied, however, by an "actual stratification of
literacy . . . through [what emerged in "separate but equal" schools as] a system of differentiated educational institutions" (Collins, 1991, p. 235).

Literacy stratification continues to exist in California, advanced through the counterbalancing effects of certain pedagogical practices. The abolishment of bilingual education for language minority students combined with ability tracking ensures that language minority students will be tracked into low-ability groups. When combined with the increasing importance of standardized tests, mandating phonics reading instruction methods, with an emphasis on correctness prior to exposure to more challenging academic content for poor and/or language minority students, ensures lower and slower performance for those students. The bureaucratic burden of repeated applications for special state and federal grants, combined with consistent under-funding of schools in low income areas, ensures that any gains made from promotion of standards and teacher training will stagnate or be lost in the "aesthetically unpleasing environments" (according to one teacher in this study) of large, crowded, poorly-maintained schools offering low teacher pay and demoralizing conditions for staff and students (Hanson 1993; Kozol, 1992; Rethinking Schools Report, 2001).

Journalists Explain the Inception of Reading by 9

Reading by 9 was the Los Angeles Times solution to the problems it delineated in the California's Perilous Slide special report. Journalists' ways of
talking about *Reading by 9* (how it started, it goals, and its components) were thematically related to *Reading by 9* series content (addressed in chapter nine).

The question “What started *Reading by 9*?” was asked directly of two journalists. Journalists’ responses to the questions “How do you decide what to write about?” “Do you do your own research?” and “Where do you get your information?” that related to inception or development of *Reading by 9* are also addressed in this chapter.

The responses of Ed and Thomas, below, contain several consistent elements. Initial answers emphasized the publisher’s role and beliefs (Mark Willes, previously an executive in non-media industry, was the publisher and CEO to whom the journalists referred). Ed used the phrase “very important to the publisher” and Thomas used the phrase “the publisher decided.” Quotations that began this chapter use wording attributed the publisher in *Reading by 9*

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promotional material (see also the introductory quotations to chapter nine). The words and phrases below, such as "campaign," "focus attention," "important issue," and "focus public attention" connote a political or marketing campaign approach to an "issue" the publisher had determined was important. Thomas then explained why the publisher was interested, after the question [do you know why?] - as the "problems of teaching reading," and "learn[ing] to read adequately." Here, teaching and learning were simplistically problematized, becoming two parts of an icon for the so-called literacy crisis elaborated in Public Education: California's Perilous Slide special report and in Reading by 9 promotional materials and reporting.

Teaching and reading "adequately" were combined and transformed into data for test scores, as in the phrase "the impact he's interested in having" (below). The relevance of measuring to account (lay blame) for problematic teaching and reading was reinforced in the Times "commitment" in a brochure excerpt36 and in multiple references to accountability, test scores, effectiveness, results, progress, and assessment addressed in the next chapter.

CC:  "What started Reading by 9?"

Ed: "Well, the whole concept was something that was very important to the publisher. And this is, the LA Times is not the first paper to do this. The Baltimore Sun, which is a sister paper to the LA Times, owned by

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36 "The Times will work with educators using the State's new testing and assessment program. The Times will report on its progress and publish reading scores, tracking effectiveness and results and promoting accountability for children's reading skills." (Reading by 9 Brochure. Appendix L.)
Times Mirror, did this first. At any rate, they wanted to do a similar sort of campaign here . . .

CC: “What started Reading by 9?”

Thomas: “Well, it was fairly simple. I mean, the publisher decided that this was a topic that he really wanted us to focus a lot of attention on. And, one of the things he asked us to do is come up with a reading page. So we did.”

CC: “Do you know why?”

“Um. Well, I’ve heard him talk about it. He thinks it’s a very important issue and one on which the Times can have an impact by focusing public attention on the problems of teaching reading, and the number of kids in this region who haven’t learned to read adequately. And it’s a subject that he’s greatly interested in.”

CC: “When you hear (the publisher) use a phrase like “focusing public attention,” what kind of impact is he interested having?”

“Well, the impact that he’s interested in having is in raising test scores. I should put it a slightly different way. His desire is to see more kids learn to read. Uh, he’s a number oriented guy, as a lot of business people are.”

Several follow-up questions suggested themselves as these journalists reflected on the inception of the Reading by 9 series. One arose from another comment by Thomas: “I don’t know that you can necessarily measure ... what we [journalists] do by whether test scores go up or down.” Thomas’ response, which overlapped my question, was cited in an earlier chapter. I have shortened it here to reflect its essence – the differentiation of journalists’ roles regarding problems and solutions.
CC: "How would you measure?"

Thomas: "I think our job is two things. One is to focus public attention on the issue. And the other is to give people a sense of what's going on in their community."

CC: "One person mentioned an interest in effecting policy. To what extent do you think that the newspaper has influence?"

"The news pages, we can and do analyze issues that are in public debate and look at what the arguments are on both sides, what the evidence is for those arguments, and then leave it up to readers to decide what to do with that information. I mean, the distinction we always draw is between problem and solution. We make a judgment about which problems we feel are more pressing...and that necessarily has an influence on the public agenda. And that's fine. What we don't do, or at least what we try not to do is pick among solutions."

Thomas went on to say that it is not the Times' practice to pick among solutions but rather "make judgments about which problems we feel are most pressing," "analyze particular solutions" and "give advocates of (all) sides a fair chance." Thomas was objectifying a necessarily privileged communicative position, robbing it of personal or institutional influences by ignoring the values-context of personal "judgment" as a frame for choosing "particular" solutions. The power (as in the phrase "give advocates...a fair chance,") that accompanied the privilege was hinted at, but personal and institutional viewpoints were still not acknowledged, and the linguistic strategy of objectification was maintained.

If this were all that were occurring here it would be rather unremarkable. There are few people who do not recognize that news organizations have a point of view, and that news reporters, editors, and editorial writers' viewpoints also
enter into what is written. What is significant is that the fairness model proposed was simply not borne out, at least as it related to *Reading by 9*.

Journalists’ commentaries about *Reading by 9* as a series and about the content of writing examples revealed choices; choices to take positions on and direct public attention to idealized, homogeneous behaviors in contrast to something threatening (i.e. illiteracy). Problems and solutions were not just conflated, but magnified. What was necessarily reflected in a close focus was the reality context of the journalist-observer. A journalist’s writing therefore tends to operate according to Foucault’s premise that language conventions are not purely referential – not always directly representing, but “form[ing] the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972 quoted in Mehan, 1997). Emphasis on the measured explanations of *Reading by 9*, separated from the personal viewpoints of journalists and the then-publisher, Mark Willes, diverted examination of other possible problems and solutions, such as the effects of over-large and under-maintained schools, decimated or non-existent school and public libraries, and underpaid educators (Kozol, 1992; McQuillan, 1998). Questions about the fairness or even the morality of some arguments, and whether the privilege of Times writers and the institution itself are at stake in editorial and reporting stances, were lost in the focus on phonics and the use of standard English, accountability, and so on.

The nature of a newspaper as a business, and of journalists as employees pursuing careers was also important. In response to the question, “How do you decide what to write about?” Ed commented...
"And my job was just, they told me just to go out and you have to [write for] the Reading page, but we expect you to write A-1, page 1 stories about anything about reading. It wasn't, they didn't come to me with an agenda. They actually, I went to them with, um, to get the job..."

In order to better understand what it meant to be an employee-writer on the topic of education, I asked Ed what he had learned and how his thinking was different since his experience with Reading by 9. He responded with an example of something he wrote in which he highlighted an historical link to "phonics" instruction that garnered him a complimentary note from Mark Willes. It may have been that Willes sent the note because he was impressed with the reporter's research, writing style, or development of content and conclusions. It may be that he sent the note because of some personal interest in the topic. What is known is that from late 1998 through 1999, the Times advanced "phonics" (in English) as the solution to "dismal" reading scores at least 28 times, either as an article's main topic, and/or referenced in an article as superior to other methods of reading instruction. (This is addressed more fully in chapter nine.) Ed was one of several writers who "solved" the problems of teaching and reading adequately by choosing a solution and promoting it – an approach not only contrary to the position stated by Thomas, but one which may be related to the influences of Willes' powerful viewpoint.

The journalist Donald advanced the idea of "news climate" to explain his decisions about what voices get into his writing on education.

"I rely heavily on an idea called 'news climate.' And you know, we talked about research, you know, I like to talk to people who have actually
investigated these questions. Which means that I think, sometimes I think the voices of authentic educators like teachers and principals get squeezed out of my stories because I'm trying to talk to people who've really investigated these questions. Now, that's not to say that teachers and principals are not expert in their own way, which is that they see the implications of this in the classroom and in the school everyday. And I think we could do more with relying on those voices, but uh, um I do the best that I can with the space that we have. So that's kind of the process that I follow."

In a quotation in chapter five, Donald made the argument (underlying much of the Times' writing on the literacy crisis) that low test scores demonstrate the effectiveness of kinds of reading instruction. As noted earlier in the chapter, this argument is facile at best (Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a). His explanation there and above robbed his journalism of personal choice or institutional influence. He made a minimally unacknowledged value judgment about the "voices of authentic educators," blaming his decision to use experts on "the space that we have." In this explanation, educators implicitly do not "really" know about reading instruction and test scores, making it easier to include them in blame for the fabricated crisis.

Whether it is actually redundant to state, as Donald did in the material quoted from his interview in chapter five, that "people are receptive to ideas that they are receptive to," the idea that education is a shaper of social knowledge, values and relationships is quintessentially American. The relationship of education to social and economic opportunity was a common-sense model so frequently used by all respondents to explain their own literacy histories in chapter three that is not surprising that education as an "idea they are receptive
to" goes without saying (Bourdieu, 1997). Donald's explanation above and in chapter five, in which the choices and values that impinge on writing were virtually elided, tended to re-form the elements of teaching, reading achievement and education in general into an image that was familiar – at least to those who have been privileged by the dominant discourse linkages between home and school. This was also evident in Ed's response below to a follow-up question about the goals of Reading by 9.

CC: "Are you reaching the people who you say "need it most"? Or are you, as one person said to me, preaching to the choir?"

Ed: "For the most part, probably not. Um, yeah, I think there's a certain element of preaching to the choir, but you've got to preach to someone; either that or don't preach. Sometimes I think that the Reading page can be overkill, um, but some of the things ... I've tried to make as useful as possible. Sort of utilitarian, so that people can actually rip that page out and put it in their classroom. And one of the things I was very happy with was, we had new State standards in English and math. And, they're saying here's what the kids are supposed to know each year. So ... I had the State people up in Sacramento ... pick out the key standards in K through 6 that you would want to see in the paper, that you would want people to know about. And ... then we just said, here are the standards, here's what your kids are supposed to know. And what is so interesting is that, we went and interviewed some pre-school people for my son, this was 6 months ago. And the principal at the pre-school, this was just after it had come out, he mentioned that he had read in the LA Times that he had seen these standards. And he wanted to have it cut-out and put in all their classrooms. And I thought, Oh, well that's terrific. And so for the few people who do read that, it's a resource. And another one that I thought was helpful was that there was a brand new book put out by something called the National Research Council [sic]. And the NRC are the top reading, language researchers in the country on this committee who wrote a book, a big thick book about reading difficulties. And they took that and reduced to about this thick, a very practical guide for parents. Here's how to help your kids read."
CC: “I was just interested in whether you thought it was possible to get to parents of what you describe as ‘kids at risk?’”

Ed: “I don’t think so. I mean, I think schools have a hard enough time getting to the parents of kids at risk because they have to chase, not chase, but they have to go out and find these parents and try to keep the parents on top of the kids homework. That’s a big complaint you hear from teachers. You know, we can only do so much with this kid if he goes home and the TV is on, or there’s no one to make sure that he does his five equations.”

Ed answered a different question than the one asked, dismissing those who he described as “needing it most” [i.e. “it” being information found in Reading by 9 series writing], or the parents of “kids at risk.” This explanation fits neatly into a model in which lack of parental commitment to children’s education is linked to not reading, another premise significant in much Times’ writing, as detailed in the next chapter.

The inception of Reading by 9 was a significant ideological event, a harbinger, despite its universal appeal to the positive benefits of children learning to read, of increasingly blurred distinctions between the source(s) of, nature of, and methods for assessing problems and beneficiaries of solutions. Its ostensible premise - to focus public attention on reading problems - evolved, in journalists’ commentaries, into opportunities to “properly address the public mind ...” (William Pitt in Donald, 1991). Although Thomas suggested that the Times was not interested in choosing between solutions, it did so frequently. The Times was purportedly analyzing problems, but the Times’ analysis of problems was narrowly oriented and purposefully delimited “authentic voices.” And the Times’ ideal position of “leaving it up to readers to decide what to do
with the information” was betrayed by journalists’ generalizations about “those people” and the propensity to objectify writing processes that are necessarily value-laden.

It is conceivable that the public may perceive organizations like the Times as “liberal” (Journalist Comment, 7/99), or that the organization is seen as a bastion of democratic ideals. It may be that the Reading by 9 series and the Times’ corporate and government “community” partnerships were understood by readers to be a deep-pockets, open-hearted, and even-handed commitment to correcting class inequities through education reform and democratic process. But the “public” to whom the Times’ writes is not Everyperson, nor is the expressed democratic ideal in Reading by 9 unproblematic (Schudson, 1994, pp. 206-208).

Conclusion

Ruiz’ (1984) language orientation model expresses three ideological responses to language: as a right, a resource, or a problem. The significance of the three orientations rests in the convergence of the social status of the holders, the purpose(s) for which a speaker might make use of an orientation, and the explanatory mechanism(s) employed to elaborate the orientation. Implications of the convergence of status, speaker’s purpose and explanatory methods (illustrated in the Figure 8.1 schema) are discussed below.
Figure 8.1
Situated Language Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Explanatory Dichotomies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominant / Subaltern</td>
<td>chaos/security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scarcity/abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>superiority/equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>patriotism/guar freedoms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Orientations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lang as Problem</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lang as Resource</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lang as Right</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8.1 illustrates what this study suggests: an orientation to language as a problem was offered as part of a dominant/privileged discourse that argues imminence of social crisis (chaos, scarcity, and so on), resolvable via the superior viewpoints (*Reading by 9*) of those defining the crisis. Discourse related to the column Explanatory Dichotomies for the language as a problem alternatives were characterized by such phrases as “a wave of illegal immigrants” or “California’s perilous slide” discussed earlier. Whether one’s orientation is to language as a problem, as a resource, or as a right, these examples illustrate the use of language about language as “a communicative behavior [to] enact collective order” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55).

If we apply this model to the Los Angeles Times special report, “Public Education: California’s Perilous Slide,” we see that language is a problem when
conflated with the idea of purported cultures of poverty. The journalists who wrote the “Perilous Slide” series that preceded *Reading by 9* are middle class; some Latino, others Euro-American, and some ethnicities are not known. The purpose of the series was to define the social dimensions of a crisis, including the attributes of those who caused it and the attributes of those who, despite differences of language or culture, have not. The explanatory methods invoked imminent chaos, superiority of some cultures over others, and the importance to the national interests of all poor people, including undocumented immigrants, becoming hard-working, tax-paying, English-speaking citizens. The implication is that poor people are generally not hardworking taxpayers. Three underlying ideas are very troubling. The logical extension of a premise of language and culture superiority of the few is that all people are not created equal, speech is not free for some, rights to privacy are not guaranteed, and equal opportunity applies unequally to those who speak certain languages. A second is that attention is not to students’ interests and more genuine education reform; third is that the status quo is maintained.

Since the mid-1960s there have been many examples of language as a resource and language as a right orientations. Such orientations have been exemplified in the U.S. among American Indian tribes (McCarty, 1993a), Chinese Americans in San Francisco (Lau v. Nichols, 1974, Supreme Court ruling), and Spanish speaking immigrants in the East and throughout the Southwest (Lau Regulations, 1980). But the confluence of a public discourse entwining the elements of culture of failure, the evils of bilingual education, and the reification
of standardized reading in English take the language as a problem orientation to a new level.

Cobarrubias (1983) suggests that one must examine all reasoning regarding language decisions according to both moral and rational criteria. It is not sufficient to determine whether a decision makes sense to the individuals or to the majority voters with the power to make it, but whether a decision makes sense (in terms of the opinions, preferences, rights, and relative awareness and knowledge status) to those being affected by the decision(s). There are four categories of decisions under this precedent. One is labeled moral and rational, such as for rights to vernacular education and equal education funding. A second is moral and irrational, such as the example of keeping the quality of education low for the poor in order to prevent "fanaticism" and social unrest (More, 1793 in Donald, 1991). A third is immoral and rational (examples of linguistic assimilation for social control), and fourth is immoral and irrational, or prohibition of the uses of vernacular languages in schools (e.g. Bureau of Indian Affairs policies, Meyer v. Nebraska 1923 in McCarty, forthcoming; or Proposition 227 "English for the Children") (Cobarrubias 1983, p. 80). The last three kinds are harder to "see" at their inception because they tend to arise from emotion-laden contexts, ideological constructions, instrumental or expediency-driven situations, or entrenched, sometimes bureaucratic processes.
Summary

This chapter introduced and offered context for the Los Angeles Times' series Reading by 9. I explained the historical linkage of literacy ideologies to discursive practices in particular writing, including the language of crisis and its elaborations in the Los Angeles Times, and in other public discourses. I presented journalists' explanations for the inception of Reading by 9 in which the premises of crisis are readily apparent. I proposed in the conclusion that questions of status and power were implicated in institutional and individual viewpoints expressed in the public discourses of literacy in crisis, and that the possibility for a moral and rational habitation toward education was not, but could be realized in such writing.

The next chapter elaborates on the premises, language conventions and themes in Reading by 9 editorials, articles, and on the Reading Page introduced in journalists' comments and analysis of journalists' comments in this chapter.
CHAPTER NINE

READING BY 9 – CULTURE OF FAILURE,

CULTURE OF SUCCESS

Introduction

The Los Angeles Times' series Reading by 9 advanced an idealized social image, constructed from contrasting cultural models, as a premise for a language-oriented education reform model. Reading by 9 promotional material, articles and editorials told a story within a story (see Pratt, 1982, 1992, regarding potential fictiveness of non-fiction). The plot device was the dramatic tension established by the culture of success protagonist Los Angeles Times and partners unmasking those who inhabited or purveyed the culture of failure – comprising poverty-stricken non-English speakers, uncaring or inexperienced teachers and proponents of the whole language method of reading instruction. The main idea of the plot was that a social crisis vortex was driving California to ruin. As heroes coming to the rescue, the Times' and its partners knew how to rescue all of California, and especially the culture of failure inhabitants.

"We must stop accepting failure. Ninety-five percent of all children are capable of learning to read. That must become the standard we aim for and achieve" (Willes and Parks, 1998, September 12).

"Thank you for your interest in Reading by 9. As you know, the lack of literacy in our schools and in our society has reached a crisis point. Four out of five public school children are not reading at their grade level. Studies show that children who fail to learn to read often face a lifetime of failure" (Reading by 9 Letter to Volunteers, 1999, August).
“Failure to teach our children to read is a catastrophe of epic proportions. But it is not inevitable.” “Unless we dramatically increase the number of children who learn to read well, we will in the next five years consign nearly one million to lives of poverty and distress” (Willes and Parks, 1999).

“As California’s largest newspaper—and one of the few institutions that touches all corners of the Southland—The Times has a responsibility to call attention to the challenges we face and to help our communities in their search for solutions” (Willes and Parks, 1999).

Who can disagree with the expectation that 95 percent of children should be reading by age nine (Willes & Parks, 1999, September 12)? Who can challenge the image of a parent reading to a child (recommended in “Nine Steps to Reading Success” (1999, September 12)? Who can dispute that reading is the foundation for education achievement and for democracy through an informed citizenry, particularly when these laudable ideals are characterized as “civic responsibility” (Journalist Comment, 10/99)? To answer these questions we must ask others. What cultural visions, social philosophies, and educational imperatives are enacted in the Times’ Reading by 9 series (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56)? And who is genuinely empowered as a result of the rhetoric?

There are four key ideas proposed in the quotations above. One is that failure, or an expectation of low achievement for many students, is universally accepted. Another is that there is a “lack of literacy” (i.e. an illiteracy) crisis. A third key idea is that a united business consortium can prevent a catastrophe of epic proportions. The fourth idea is implicit, having been stated by journalists as
the publisher’s goal (see Chapter 8): reading improvement is determined through testing.\textsuperscript{57}

These premises use forms of crisis rhetoric similar to those developed in other times and places, and hint at the cultures of success and failure imagery developed in the “Public Education: California’s Perilous Slide” report discussed in chapter eight (Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983). In Reading by 9 series (articles, editorials and columns) these ideas serve as a kind of centrifugal force, signaling thematic content and proscribing boundaries. The introductory editorials and articles for the Reading by 9 series “focus public attention,” as journalists described the newspaper’s goals in the last chapter, on the languages and cultures of “children who [if they] do not learn to read by the third grade . . . are much more likely to go on drugs . . . welfare . . . to prison . . . and far less likely to get a good job” (Bars of the Mind, 1998, November 8).

As Gillmore, Goldman, McDermott and Smith (1993) note, “natural disasters come on their own schedules, and we must learn to cope with their inevitability. School failure, on the other hand, should be more tractable. [I]t behooves us to deal with school failure as a social creation, an institutional fabrication, a mock-up, and a game that takes our attention and diverts it from the inescapable side effects of our actions.” (Gillmore et al. 1993, p. 209.) The authors of this quotation recognized what the authors of the literacy crisis do not.

\textsuperscript{57} The word consortium is from the Latin, meaning fellowship. The phrase a united consortium is somewhat redundant, but seems here to signal purposeful, like-minded, and authoritative alliances among the State, businesses, and local school districts.
The discourse of crisis empowers the powerful to explain school failure through “assigning people to their respective niches” and to reproduce school success as a function of the language and culture(s) of those already successful (Gillmore, et al, 1992, p. 209). The authentic voices of teachers, as labeled by one journalist, silenced in much of the Reading by 9 coverage have no place in such a closed circle.

The remainder of this chapter is a detailed look at Reading by 9 in terms of the four ideas indicated in the Times’ quotations.

Speak English!

Cultural Visions, Social Philosophies, and Educational Imperatives

What is a Culture of Failure?

In a November 1, 1998 (“Facing the Poverty Factor”) article, and an editorial (“Bars of the Mind”) on November 8, 1998, the Times establishes the elements of a culture of failure to lay the foundation for Reading by 9.38

Following is one journalist’s response to the question: “When it’s a series, like the Reading by 9 series for instance, is there a [special] framing process?”

“Well, in terms of the initial series ... there’s a certain amount of formula that goes on, into something like this. Your first piece in a series is almost always going to be something that gives you an overview. You know, here’s what the issue is, this is why we’re writing about it, this is why it’s important. So that part is fairly easy. And basically what we did is try to have a fairly diverse group of writers, at least in terms of their interests, so that they wouldn’t end up writing
In "Facing the Poverty Factor" the profile of a nine-year-old Mexican immigrant boy, Arturo (a pseudonym), and his family are models in an implicitly powerful prototypical image for why schools are failing (Sahagun, 1998, November 1). The writer positions emotionally and experientially evocative ideas, each following the other, to support the premise that poverty, plus the family's language and personal habits, cause Arturo's school failure (Cobarrubias, 1983). The chain of reasoning is subtle yet apparent. Arturo "sits slumped on a lumpy blue couch" with three brothers (there are seven children in all), watching television instead of doing homework (Sahagun, 1998, November 1). Arturo's father is "depressed after failing to land a job on a nearby street corner" (Sahagun, 1998, November 1). Arturo tries to do his homework, but is distracted by the television and is not supervised. "[T]he one hundred worst performing schools [are] ... clustered in the poorest neighborhoods;" Arturo's school was successful with middle-class students in the past, but schools fail with poor students. The article notes that all parents want their children to succeed, (and that) Arturo's parents "even went to a yearlong domestic violence class last year, which helped" them "focus" on the needs of their children (Sahagun, 1998, November 1). Arturo's English proficiency (according to an academic expert) is "basically different variations of the same thing. And you know, then they came up with an interesting assortment of stories. And you say, well all right, these kind of fit together."

See also Linde (1993) for an explication of the directive efficacy of grammatical construction; and Silverstein (1981) (from Whorf) regarding the ways in which grammatical structures reference reality.
first and foremost;" and "parents need to be involved" (Sahagun, 1998, November 1). But ...

"...[Arturo’s parents], who were among hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who immigrated to the United States from Mexico City in the mid-1980s, say they are anxious to try new strategies. But they haven’t learned to speak English, which would dramatically increase their ability to support their children’s education and boost their earning power” (Sahagun, 1998, November 1, p. A-3).

The November 8\textsuperscript{th} editorial, “Bars of the Mind,” began with the words “Prisons are filled with men and women who cannot read,” followed by the caveat “...inability to read of course does not condemn one to a life of crime, but the correlation cannot be ignored.” The remainder of the editorial makes good on the advice to not ignore the correlation, supplementing the image of (illiterate) criminals with the statistics “[n]early two out of three Southern California third-graders fail to read at grade level,” “[r]eading failure is one likely cause for the frustration and anger that result in delinquent behavior” and “68 percent of inmates can’t read well enough to hold a job.” The writer(s) conflate illiteracy, school failure and crime, using words such as cripple, at-risk, long-term consequences, handicapped, failure, delinquent, and recidivism (Appendix Q).

In the profile of Arturo and his family, studies are cited which show that “wealth is the strongest influence on test scores.” Since no other information about the studies is given, the reader is apparently to infer from this unconditional conclusion the “unstated premises” that wealth causes higher test scores, and that standardized tests are reasonable measurements of learning
among students who are not wealthy (Woolard, 1989). There are no caveats to indicate that no matter how many studies relate wealth and test scores, correlation is not cause, nor to indicate that standardized tests are shown in many other studies to be inadequate measures of learning among those whose languages, personal experiences, and instruction are inconsistent with the premises and the content of the tests (Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a; Sacks, 2001). Except to illustrate what Arturo cannot do, the myriad complexities of cognition, the learner's physical and emotional condition, family relationships, teacher attitudes, language and quality of school instruction, among other factors, are not cited as significant (Cazden, 1988; Moll and Dworin, 1997; Moll and Greenberg, 1997).

Also hidden in plain view in the profile of Arturo and his family was the "evidence" that Spanish plus poverty caused lack of economic opportunity and school failure. The article proposed that the cycle may only be broken if parents learn English, students learn in English, and parents "take responsibility" and become "better advocates for their children's education." Arturo's father commented that he went to the school each time he was asked, and Arturo's mother commented that she will not have Arturo placed in special education because he will not make progress. These comments are not "in the picture" of Arturo watching television versus doing his homework. They are instead trivialized. The father may hurry over to the school, but he had plenty of time to do so because he was out of work. Further, domestic violence was a part of the
family's "picture." One must wonder if Arturo's father said the sentences below in just the way they were translated, and in the order given.

"'If the school calls with a problem regarding one of my boys, I hurry over there the same day,' added [Arturo's father], who hasn't held a steady job since hurting his back several months ago. 'My wife and I even went to a yearlong domestic violence class last year, which helped us focus on our children's needs.'" (Sahagun, 1998, November 1. Emphasis added.)

His mother's stated concerns about Arturo being placed in special education classes were followed by the words "She may be right" and then a sentence about a "federal examination of the Latino education experience" citing the high frequency of emotionally disturbed and learning disabled classifications. The next clause, "virtually all Arturo's teachers," introduced the idea that his mother isn't right. Virtually all Arturo's teachers and the school psychologist, it was noted, agreed that Arturo should be in special education. Ultimately, the father's depression, lack of work, welfare status, and the other tremendous stresses on the family's social resources were cast as nearly inevitable consequences of the parents' inability to speak English.

Also hidden in plain view in the editorial, "Bars of the Mind," published on November 8th, 1998, was the "evidence" that failing to read at grade level leads to criminal behavior and jail. No genuine evidence was offered for this implication, only correlations suggesting connections among illiteracy and crime/incarceration. The writers of this editorial and "Facing the Poverty Factor" have constructed "simplified worlds," choosing facts, linking ideas, emphasizing some attributes while ignoring others, to create polarized attribute
clusters (Quinn and Holland, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Negative images of Spanish-speaking, poor, "illiterate" immigrants and/or criminals form one cluster, cast against ideal images of English-speaking, employed, literate, law-abiding citizens. A journalist who (somewhat facetiously) expressed secret ambitions of breaking the big story by finding the "smoking gun," e.g. Watergate, and who stated that sometimes ambition does color journalists' writing, may have inadvertently been speaking to the problematic usage of particular language conventions in public discourse. Invoking crises which at least overstate reality, peopling the crises with friends and enemies, and proposing that some parents, students and teachers complicitly choose illiteracy, does not so much reveal a smoking gun as divert attention from structural inequities and reproduce problematic attitudes about educating those with diverse backgrounds and needs.

In this case, journalists' opinions, in the form of cultural models and experiences, and the cognitive influences of grammar, and of image and proposition schemas, were inherent in the explanatory systems that have brought them successfully to where they were. They "made sense" in ways that balanced and fit what may be disparate elements of personal experience, professional expectations, and story details, discarding unnecessary or inconsistent details because of "time ... and space constraints we're under" and to generate "mood and tone" (Journalist Comments, 11/99). To simplify, the writing examined for this study skims the surface of journalists' own and others'
complex lives to compactly narrate a vision of something that readers may recognize which also contains special elements to make a point.

Making sense through interest and power-laden ideas and language constructions is the essence of most language usage. For this study of Reading by 9 language, or for any understanding of the goal-oriented nature of language, the issue is not whether this occurs, but what kind of meaning is being made, by whom, directed to whom, and to what ends. It is important to ask how the attributes and interests of some are envisioned as morally and socially superior through unexpressed assumptions or causal relationships in Reading by 9 and other reading related writing (Woolard, 1989, p. 269). It is also important to ask how it is that the authentic attributes and interests of others are erased, and replaced with "coded and transformed" linkage of a language to a social image (culture) of illiteracy, poverty and crime" (Irvine and Gal, 1996, pp. 3-4). And, in what way do the structures of systems (such as the media) and institutions (such as the Times) benefit by language constructions which reproduce dichotomies of enacted moral superiority versus the dangerously-potentialed Other? Lastly, can journalistic ethics and professional procedures, ostensibly designed to promote balance, comprehensiveness, and reduce interest conflicts, reciprocally inform contested language ideologies among individual writers and editors, or is this impossible given that "cultural conceptions about language attitudes, standards, [and] hegemony" are liminal to awareness (Irvine and Gal, 1996; Silverstein, 1981)?
Particular cultural assumptions are ubiquitous in the *Reading by 9* series, despite writers' distancing rationales. In responses to the semi-structured interviews addressed in earlier chapters, journalists accounted for the ways in which they framed the writing (what was most interesting, unknown, or a more imaginative way of writing) by invoking their own backgrounds, or professional collaboration, craft and formula. When probed about the Times' *Reading by 9* initiative and related articles and editorials, journalists cited the kinds of operational factors directly or indirectly meaningful to what they considered when framing the writing. These factors included "what's important to the publisher" (Journalist Comment, 11/99); the social significance of different approaches to reading instruction; and the social significance of standard language usage. Others reflected on the salience of family experiences in learning to read, or pointed to the cause/effect relationship between their early reading preferences and job-related uses of reading and writing. Interview experiences with teachers and children, helping one's own child learn to read, and the functionality of standardized testing for education reforms also were elaborated. Finally, several said that it was unlikely that people who needed the information most were actually readers of the Times' and its *Reading by 9* series. If "the people who need the information most" (presumably people like the Arturo's parents, who do not read in English) are not being "reached," then to whom is the Times' writing targeted?

From their narratives, it is possible to glimpse the imagined readers to whom journalists write, their backgrounds, language, interests, status, and
minutia of everyday lives in contrast to those who, if they do not learn to read in English, "face a lifetime of failure." Casting stories about illiteracy with poor people is familiar, having been a consistent trope for hundreds of years (Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983). In a country of immigrants such as the United States, the elements of immigration and language differences in stories of illiteracy are also familiar, but contested. Some immigrants, despite language differences, do well in U.S. education (Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a; Gibson, 1993; Ogbu, 1993). But the deep cultural and experiential complexities that underlie these differences were exorcised in depictions of educationally successful Asian students, and also in depictions of poor, Spanish-speaking/Latino educational failures (Erickson, 1993; McCarty, 1993b; Levinson and Holland, 1996; Moll and Dworin, 1997; Public Education, 1998; Sahagun, 1998, November 1).

**Education Reform and a Culture of Success**

Doctrines of language correctness and purism have long been conflated with class and race or ethnicity in the English-speaking world, especially related to power consolidation and nation building (Adams, 1977; Anderson, 1978; Bennett, 1991; Collins, 1991; Donald, 1991; Heath and Mandabach, 1983; Ronda, 1977; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). The Los Angeles Times focus on Reading by 9 expounds such a doctrine in the form of an education reform model. The education reform model shown below is conflated with the culture of success
attributes implicit in the Times' unexpressed image of Arturo's family as a
culture of failure prototype.

Figure 9.1

Reading by 9 Discursive Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education reform model</th>
<th>Culture of success attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only instruction</td>
<td>Speak, learn, &amp; teach children English at early age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic, &quot;scientific&quot; reading</td>
<td>Model and/or instruct children in phonemic awareness through speaking, reading, reading to and with, volunteering at school, library use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(explicit letter and phoneme sound instruction to precede introduction to literature)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized testing in English</td>
<td>Practice question/response behaviors; supervise homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability: rewards, punishments, efficiency/cost control, winners and losers</td>
<td>Assimilated, middle / upper class, employed, tax-paying, law-abiding citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Times' Reading by 9 effort and weekly series were formally introduced on November 8, 1998 by Editor Michael Parks. The Reading by 9 series followed by from six months to three years the political initiatives and the "California's Perilous Slide" series discussed in chapter eight and chapter one. Articles and editorials identified with the Reading by 9 logo began appearing in the paper prior to the November kickoff of the Reading page series. The first article appeared on Sunday, October 25th. It was titled and subtitled ...

"Some Professors Resist State's Reform Formula." "Education: Many aspiring teachers are instructed in using whole language method. Law mandates phonics."
Four other articles carrying the Reading by 9 logo ran prior to the November 8\textsuperscript{th} introduction. An article on October 8, 1998 emphasized a "new chapter in push for literacy," profiling Republican mayor, Richard Riordan. An October 29\textsuperscript{th} article dichotomizes "reading improvement" approaches (teacher training and smaller classes vs. systematic phonics) as political choices. In the November 1\textsuperscript{st} article profiling Arturo and his family, poverty and reading problems are correlated, linked to the use of Spanish in the home, and used to account for the father’s problems in finding a job and for the child "headed for academic failure."\textsuperscript{40} The Los Angeles Unified School District’s (LAUSD) mandated phonics curriculum was the subject of an article on November 7\textsuperscript{th}. These articles purport, by virtue of the Reading by 9 logo, connections significant to a child learning to read by the age of nine.

On November 8, 1998, the Times formally introduced the Reading Page, to run each Sunday in the Metro Section, page B2. This page was initially subtitled "The ABCs of helping youngsters achieve literacy – the first skill." The subtitle

\textsuperscript{40} In something of an obscene follow-up article on Arturo, the writer relegated Arturo, who "has made progress, but remains far behind his classmates" to the status of a "proof" of the benefits and limits of volunteerism. Arturo’s humanity is distilled to evidence of failure. He is reading and writing sentences, but is not on grade level. He goes to the library with his tutor, but his parents shouldn’t have bought the new TV when his father got a job. He has "self-defeating attitudes" because his brothers tell him "Why try, Arturo? You’re dumb," but not because of the huge front page article in which he was initially profiled – filled with negative images and predictions for his future. His parents need to "be educated to sit down and give their children meaning and purpose in life” despite his mother’s insistence (supported by at least one teacher) that Arturo won’t make progress in the special education that so many others have recommended.
was changed sometime in early 2000 to read "The world of literacy, language, and literature." The Reading by 9 logo continued to appear on front page, front page section (Section A), Section B, and Editorial Section writing throughout 1999. The Times sponsored, along with several corporate partners, a Reading by 9 Conference. Held in September 1999, it focused on the community and corporate partner initiatives noted in the quotations at the beginning of this chapter, and promised to "have 6,000 trained reading tutors and literacy volunteers helping children, mostly in public schools across Southern California," and "[o]ver the next school year, the campaign intends to put 1 million new books into Kindergarten-through-third grade classrooms in the region" (L.A.T. Editorial, 6/14/99). (When asked recently whether these goals had been met, the Coordinator of the Reading by 9 project stated "the Times didn't really understand about a project like this. Our goal is to have 1,000 tutors in schools by the end of this year" [Personal Communication, 8/18/2000]).

In the promotion surrounding the conference, but more publicly visible in articles and editorials, the Times promoted several approaches to ensure that all children read by age nine. These included volunteer tutoring, phonics-based reading instruction in English, parent/child literacy activities, and using standardized testing to measure students' progress and school/teacher accountability. Despite comments that the Times' is more interested in defining problems, each of these "solutions" is woven into the article profiling Arturo, and each is a primary topic of separate articles or editorials, many imprinted with the Reading by 9 logo.
The Times' promoted volunteer tutoring through their own, their partners', and "local literacy program" solicitation of volunteers (one hour per week) to read to classes or work one-on-one with teacher-selected students. Phonics instruction was emphasized in references to state mandates, "scientific" or "research based" instructional programs, the structuring of either/or justifications of phonics versus whole language methods, and selected quotations from experts, teachers and parents. The significance of teaching how to read in English (rather than through the use of bilingual education) was typically inserted as in the first quotation beginning chapter eight, indirectly supported by the differential results of standardized tests, or in linkage to images of poverty and crime. California’s Stanford 9 (standardized test) scores came out one year after the "elimination" of bilingual education. Many articles about the results, and articles about or opinion pieces by the creator of the bilingual education initiatives creator, Silicon Valley computer entrepreneur Ron Unz, appeared in the Times claiming that Proposition 227 "worked." According to analyses of the "failed bilingual education" premise before the passage of Proposition 227, Stanford University Professor and Chair of the California Research Council Report, Kenji Hakuta, provided evidence that the claims were in some cases gross misrepresentations (Hakuta, 1998a). Unz' frequent visibility in the Times, and the tenor of the Times own analyses of SAT9 scores after the elimination of bilingual education have been countered in analyses by language experts whose work does not appear in the Times (Hakuta, 2001; Krashen, 1999a, in-press).
As in the language of the political propositions 187 and 227, and in "California’s Perilous Slide" references in chapter eight, demographic changes, language, and phonics reading instruction are historically contingent ideological bedfellows. A peculiar but not unexpected transformation occurs as these topics are referenced, exemplified and rationalized (Woolard, 1989). As discussed earlier, when asked about the presumptive causal relationships among these themes in the Times' reporting, one journalist drew a distinction between "offering opinions" versus "solving problems." This is a rationalizing strategy that sublimates the inherently value-laden premises for defining either problems or solutions especially as the problems or solutions relate or are said to relate to language as a defining social indicator (Irvine and Gal, 1996, pp. 1-2; Kuhn, 1970; Woolard, 1989; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

Language as a problem, especially the iconic linkage of Spanish with immigrant poverty/dependency, school failure/illiteracy, and criminality, is the coded opposition in the Los Angeles Times' unexpressed premise of (English) language as a solution (Irvine and Gal, 1996; Woolard, 1989). This opposition is the thematic thread that runs through the Times' three primary transformations. State standards (reading, speaking, listening and writing in English) become a backdrop for editorials and many articles that foreground scripted, rigidly developmental phonics-based reading instruction (in English). Other articles and editorials foreground the "solution" of improving parenting habits, skills, values and accountability. These two solutions are then linked to each other in emphases on the significance of standardized testing to assess how well teachers
have absorbed and regurgitated mandated phonics curricula (in English), and by extension, whether or not parents are also "taking responsibility" (Sahagun, 1998, November 1).

The phonics solution to language as a problem.

From late 1998 through 1999, the Times advanced "phonics" as the solution to "dismal" reading scores at least 28 times. In a sampling of 47 Reading (series) Pages ("The ABC's of helping youngsters achieve literacy – the first skill"), seven articles mentioned phonics in the headline, in the subtitle (or "deckhead" in Times' parlance), or within the text to index "what's most important" or "what's most interesting" (Figure 9.2). In a sampling of other reading-related articles and editorials (carried elsewhere in the paper) that were imprinted with the Reading by 9 logo over the same time period, 10 mentioned phonics in the headline, in the deckhead, or to index what was important or interesting (Figure 9.3). In a sampling of other reading and education related articles not showing the Reading by 9 logo (Figure 9.4), eleven articles were about or referred to phonics. Other words and phrases were frequent coded indicators of (references to) phonics. Phonics was used as a salient example whenever the word "basics," as in "teaching the basics" or "education basics" was addressed.41 The words "methods, literacy, tools, and standards" were also used interchangeably with, or to exemplify phonics instruction (e.g. Figure 9.2,

41 "Now that California is returning to phonics as the foundation for reading instruction, educators are searching for ways to make learning the basics fun." (Hooked on the Sonics of Phonics, Figure 9.2).
4/25/99; 6/6/99; 7/25/99). The phrases “education plans that work, weak spots (versus the “strength” of phonics), education reform, and read fluently (in English)” also indexed phonics instruction. (See Figures 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 below.)

Figure 9.2
Reading Page Reading by 9 Logo “Phonics” Articles

12/12/99 “KAPOW!” “Comic books, once reviled by parents and teachers, gain credibility in schools as a way of motivating students and packing a wallop for literacy. The genre offers a surprisingly challenging vocabulary, one expert says.” Helfand

10/17/99 “A Philosophy that Doesn’t Rush Pupils to Read.” “At Waldorf Schools, students aren’t expected to read until third or fourth grade. Proponents say they become better readers by starting later, when they are more prepared.” Gorman

9/12/99 “It’s Child’s Play.” “Teachers are supplementing traditional classroom tools with toys and games that teach phonics and other skills. ‘When it’s a game, the kids love it,’ says one educator. But another believes focus should be on books.” Yates

7/25/99 “A Renaissance Read on Phonics.” “Huntington Library exhibit shows a schoolmaster’s success with the technique, which helped pave way for mass literacy in England. Parallels persist 400 years later.” Helfand

6/6/99 “The Future is Now for School Literacy Push.” “With support flowing to education from several corners and common ground reached on many reading issues, students may finally have the tools for success.” Helfand

4/25/99 “Hooked on the Sonics of Phonics.” “For instructor Lindamichellebaron, it’s all about rhyme and reason. Using poems and rap lyrics, she teaches young students the foundation for reading.” Trejos

2/21/99 “Motions That Motivate.” “Some teachers say sign language can be a useful tool for all beginning readers, including hearing students, by allowing them to link signals with words and phonics.” Marroquin

1/3/99 “Big Bucks Draw a Big Response.” “State mandate to spend $1 billion on new textbooks brings a flood of submissions from publishers. New law slashes time required to adopt new materials and lets schools buy specialized words to bolster weak spots in lessons.” Helfand

10/25/98 “Some Professors Resist State’s Reform Formula.” “Education: Many aspiring teachers are instructed in using whole-language method. Law mandates phonics.” Helfand
### Figure 9.3 - Reading-Related Articles and Editorials, L.A. Times' Sections A and B, Reading by 9 Logo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/00/99</td>
<td>“Davis Links bonuses to Stanford 9 Scores.”</td>
<td>Education: Schools that boost test scores by 5 percentile points next</td>
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<td>spring will get cash awards of $150 per pupil, governor says at reading</td>
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<td>conference.</td>
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<td>9/17/99</td>
<td>“A Weekend for Reading” (Editorial)</td>
<td>(Key words: 2 out of 3 can’t read, Times’ Reading by 9 conference,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>volunteers, rock bottom, shockingly last, phonics, standards, teacher</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>training, research based programs, libraries, class size)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12/99</td>
<td>“Early Assessment is Key.” (Editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/3/99</td>
<td>“Reading Plans that Work”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/23/99</td>
<td>“First Steps on Road to Reading.”</td>
<td>(Photo caption: “Starting Out Right” offers step-by-step guidance on</td>
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<td>how to teach children to read, including the role that preschools and</td>
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<td>libraries can play, such as this program in Thousand Oaks. The book</td>
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<td>does not take sides in the divisive phonics versus whole language</td>
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<td>approaches to reading instruction.”</td>
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<td>5/22/99</td>
<td>“Educators Tout Standards, Foresee Slow Progress.”</td>
<td>Sauerwein</td>
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<td>5/5/99</td>
<td>“Reading Wars Rage On at Teachers Convention.”</td>
<td>“Critics attack California’s move to explicit phonics instruction.</td>
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<td>Popular T-shirts demand “freedom to learn.”</td>
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<td>4/21/99</td>
<td>“5,000 Teachers to Get Training Geared Toward State Standards.”</td>
<td>“Seeking to improve reading and math instruction, Los Angeles County</td>
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<td>education officials this summer will begin training thousands of</td>
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<td>teachers from 14 counties in systematic phonics and other promising</td>
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<td>instructional methods.”</td>
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<td>3/2/99</td>
<td>“In Schools Nationwide, Today Is One for the Books.”</td>
<td>“Literacy: Read Across America, on Dr. Seuss’ 95th birthday, reflects</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>renewed emphasis on education basics.”</td>
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<td>2/11/99</td>
<td>“Teaching the Basics, finally.”</td>
<td>“With too many students unable to grasp lessons at grade level, a</td>
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<td>Sacramento middle school trains 13-year-olds in phonics.”</td>
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<td>2/10/99</td>
<td>“School Board Adopts Broad Reading Plan.”</td>
<td>“LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Board of Education Tuesday adopted a</td>
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<td>districtwide reading plan that will require all elementary schools to</td>
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<td>spend at least two hours daily on reading and language instruction</td>
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<td>grounded in phonics and other basic skills.”</td>
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<td>2/2/99</td>
<td>“State Taking a Lesson from School’s Success Story.”</td>
<td>“Reforms: Methods that led to dramatic turnaround in reading ability</td>
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<td>spark statewide teacher training effort.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/10/98</td>
<td>“Education Board Expected to OK Phonics Rules.”</td>
<td>“California today is expected to complete its return to phonics as the</td>
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<td>foundation of reading instruction when the State Board of education</td>
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<td>adopts new guidelines calling for students to learn basic word skills</td>
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<td>before tackling literature and other material.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/29/98</td>
<td>“Phonics Spells Business for Entrepreneurs.”</td>
<td>“Don’t be fooled by the hokey games or the zebra-striped rug on the</td>
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<td>office floor. Zoo-phonics means business. And this is a banner year</td>
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<td>for the thriving company that was hatched in a garage. ’We’re crazy</td>
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<td>busy,’ says President Charlene Wrighton.”</td>
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<td>11/7/98</td>
<td>“L.A. Schools Chief Orders Phonics Lessons.”</td>
<td>“In an effort to improve dismal reading scores, the Superintendent of</td>
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<td>Los Angeles schools has ordered that phonics be made mandatory part of</td>
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<td>the curriculum districtwide, officials disclosed Friday.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>“Reading Improvement Surfaces as Key Battlefield.”</td>
<td>“Incumbent Eastin favors smaller classes and more teacher training.</td>
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<td>Challenger Matta Tuchman backs systematic use of phonics.”</td>
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</table>
**Figure 9.4**
Reading, Standards, and Bilingual Education Related Articles and Editorials, Without *Reading by 9* Logo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/10/00</td>
<td>“Decades Later, Frustrated Father is Phonics Guru.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/4/99</td>
<td>“Efforts to Improve Literacy to Focus on Child-Care Providers.”</td>
<td>Cooper</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/26/99</td>
<td>“Standards for Reading and Writing Are Unveiled.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/00</td>
<td>&quot;Tools for the Principals&quot; (Editorial) (Key words: accountability, rewards, union pressure, intervention, failing schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/28/99</td>
<td>“Parent Anger Runs High at Schools in Poverty Areas.”</td>
<td>Colvin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21/99</td>
<td>“5,000 Teachers to Get Training Geared Toward State Standards.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29/99</td>
<td>School Reforms Face Long Road to Classroom.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/99</td>
<td>“Phonics Foot Draggers (Editorial).”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/14/99</td>
<td>“Another Way to Think About Reading.”</td>
<td>Wolk (OpEd)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/12/99</td>
<td>“Zacarias Orders Overhaul of New Phonics Materials.”</td>
<td>Helfand and Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4/99</td>
<td>“3 Measures on Davis’ Education Agenda Advance.”</td>
<td>Pyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27/99</td>
<td>“L.A. Schools Unveil Plan to Strengthen Reading Instruction.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/99</td>
<td>“Title I’s $118 Billion Fails to Close Gap.”</td>
<td>Frammolino</td>
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<td>1/11/99</td>
<td>“Teachers’ View of Davis Plans: Devil Is in Details.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/10/99</td>
<td>“Think Big on the Schools.”</td>
<td>Helfand</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/23/98</td>
<td>“Hundreds Wait for Bilingual Education.”</td>
<td>Sahagun and Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/98</td>
<td>“Bilingual Classes Still Thriving in Wake of Prop. 227.”</td>
<td>Anderson and Sahagun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/98</td>
<td>“Conference Urges Balanced Program for Young Readers.”</td>
<td>O’Connor</td>
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<tr>
<td>date unknown/99 “Advance for Reading Teachers” (Editorial) (key words: teacher training, phonics programs, scientific research, catastrophe)</td>
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<tr>
<td>date unknown/99 “The Power of ABCs.” “The alphabet stands as one of our best, most enduring tools, one with the force to democratize.” (Editorial)</td>
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</table>
Phonics is an historically recent (20th century) label for simplified phonetic methods of reading instruction that focus on letter/syllable/sound recognition (Heilman, 1981). From as far back as the 1500s, many instructional approaches to beginning reading have proposed some emphasis on letter/sound recognition, although Noah Webster's approach was tied to elimination of problematic dialects through improved elocution (Cordts, 1965; Groff, 1977). Stripped of its political implications, the word phonics has to do with the science of sound (acoustics), but more recent instructional applications draw upon linguistic studies of how phones (transcribed as letters or diphthongs) or syllabic speech sounds are made, perceived, and distributed in language to make meaning.

Phonemes are a group of distinctive sounds at the psychological level that make up the words of a language; phonetics is a branch of linguistics dealing with speech sounds and pronunciation, concerned with speech sound production, sound waves, and effect on hearer(s) (Language Files, 1998).

One inherent difficulty in using the sound value of letters in words (phonemes) as either the exclusive or universal method to teach beginning reading is that English is not a phonetically regular language, a fact that layers in some difficulty even for children whose first language is English. Childhood experiences with context-dependent language, and with vocabulary or print-rich language use can be helpful. Such experiences may add to a child's phonological awareness, or the ability to distinguish ways in which spoken language may be taken apart, and sometimes with phonemic awareness, or ability to distinguish individual sounds in a word (Chard and Dixon, 1999). In contrast to English,
Spanish is a phonetically regular language, with the actual names of the letters being the same as the sounds of the letters in most words. The letter/sound correspondence in English holds true most frequently in the very simple vocabularies in early grade reading, with the exception of a sight vocabulary of about 100 words that children often are asked to memorize (e.g. the words a, an, and the). As reading vocabularies become more challenging, even by the second grade, spelling and sound pattern irregularities can pose significant problems for decoding and writing. Phonics drills can become an exercise in futility without a student’s already established engagement with, if not love of print.

For students to comprehend more difficult materials as they advance in school, other kinds of experiences with print, from very early ages, are important. As children learn language, substantial opportunities to see and hear materials read to them, and to talk about what is read using a vocabulary slightly above their current level of understanding should occur before school starts and continue through the early years of schooling (Cazden, 1988; Goodman and Goodman, 1990). Having lots of time to read interesting (to students) and challenging material silently is also important after students start school. But absent vocabulary-rich and print-rich home environments, phonemic awareness is not exclusively, nor even maximally learned and advanced (especially for second language learners) through an emphasis on letter sound correspondence or the learning of phonics “rules” (Cummins, 1997; Krashen, 1981). Why then is phonics reading instruction been cast as an icon for education reform, for reversing “dismal” reading scores, for poor children becoming successful, and
even for maintaining democracy in the Times' *Reading by 9* and other reading-related articles and editorials?

The answer seems to be the linkage of phonics with learning in English. The questions of reading achievement, instructional approaches to reading, and the social, economic and political significance of reading (literacy) are hardly new. Literacy has been a crisis, in crisis or a conditional solution to crisis since Nebrija's Grammatica Castellana in 15th Century Spain, proceeding through Hannah More's 18th Century England, and fully flowering in the advent of "objective" psychology and eugenics-inspired (e.g. E.L. Thorndike's) "scientific" measurement and testing approaches to education (Simon, 1960, in Donald, 1991; Tucker, 1994). It is not coincidental that phonics is repeatedly touted as scientific, and the whole language instructional approach it replaces (which also employs phonetic recognition as one way to decode) is said to be "unscientific" (e.g. Figure 9.2, 6/6/99. See also Teale, 1995, for a review and analysis of trends in early childhood reading). It is also not coincidental that correct pronunciation and spelling of English words is a by-product of systematic, scripted, phonics-based instruction, as in the repeated conflation of phonics with ideas such as "basics," "foundation" and "skill," linked to California's standards for reading, writing, and speaking and listening in English. (Reading/Language Arts Framework, 1999. See also Cordts, 1965, p. 207 regarding the 18th Century usage of phonics to rid English of dialects through emphasis on elocution). But as Teale (1995) points out, the dichotomies are often most apparent in the public
sphere. Conflict is the essence of drama, and drama is the essence of the literacy story propounded by the Times.

**Parenting habits, skills, values and accountability solution to language as a problem.**

The Times’ formulation of particular parenting habits, skills, and values was advanced primarily in three Reading Page columns appearing weekly, and in some articles. “Head of the Class - Reading Tips and Notes” ran from fall 1998 to fall 1999. “Reading Partners - People Making a Difference” ran for approximately the same time period. “Discovering Books” was re-titled as “Treasured Books;” the column “Check It Out” recommended books for young readers. Some columns (by publishing executives, principals, teachers, and academics) for “Head of the Class” were labeled “expert advice.” The themes directed to parents included (1) preparing children prior to schooling (phonological/ phonemic awareness, reading daily, decoding, books in the home); (2) homework (strategies, books in the home, reading out loud to older students); (3) literacy development (writing, spelling, critical reading, comprehension); and (4) evaluating school programs (early reading programs, standards, good principal and teacher practices).

In a region in which nearly half the school-age population either has a primary language other than English, or whose parents first language is not English, two of the “Head of the Class” columns from 47 Reading pages sampled (late November 1998 through 1999) were about children who came to school speaking another language, or who were bilingual/bicultural (Hakuta, 1998b).
One column “2 Languages, 1 Set of Skills” (Guitierrez, 1999, January 3) was not labeled as “expert advice.” In the column, Guitierrez, an associate professor at UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, addressed teachers with the main idea that children who read in another language, and whose parents read with them at home, can transfer the skills to English reading and writing. Another “Head of the Class” column, untitled but labeled “expert advice,” addressed English learning by immigrant children and parents. This column, by Clara Chu, assistant professor of Library and Information Science at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, began with an anecdote about her childhood embarrassment with a mother who never learned English.

The “Reading Partners” columns profiled volunteers and famous writers and actors as role models, and bookstore owners, publishers of children’s books, and library services as examples of guidance for “where to go,” and “what to look for.” The columns did not explicitly or implicitly address considerations of children learning to read in more than one language; some Latinos were profiled, but they were either not asked or chose to say nothing about this.

In the “Check It Out” columns, out of about 330 recommended to parents and young readers, one book “From the Bellybutton of the Moon,” by Francisco X. Alarcon (on 9/26/99) contains “short bilingual poems that capture family fun in Mexico” [emphasis added]. Three “Check It Out” columns out of the 47 Reading Pages contained clusters of books that could be considered Latino-oriented. Also on September 26, 1999, six books in English by authors with
Latino last names were to "to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month." On August 8, 1999 five books were featured to "introduce the Mexican muralist [Diego Rivera]," and on May 12th five books were proposed "to commemorate Cinco de Mayo."

From the 47 Reading pages sampled, one article (center-page) addressed "what can be hard to find in this country: books by Latinos" (i.e. Filling a Literary Gap 8/22/99, Raouf). This article, which covered a festival produced by actor Edward James Olmos and sponsored by Latino literacy organizations, raised the problem of availability of books that represent and speak to Latinos. The express intention of the event was to introduce Latino readers to authors and sources for Spanish as well as English language books. The sponsors were quoted as saying the event is expected to "help boost literacy" and "play a big part in increasing literacy." In the body of the same article, the Times' staff writer chose to highlight the dire statistics that re-state Latinos' high dropout percentages, the oft-cited "dismal" showing on standardized tests, and low levels of adult (English) literacy. There is no mention of adult literacy levels in Spanish, nor the information that many more Latino students from English-only programs drop out than do those in bilingual programs, nor the well-documented advantage of reading in one's first language for learning a second language (Hakuta, 1998a; Krashen, 1999a).

Latino students were pictured in six of 12 center-page articles among the 47 Reading pages in which reading as a problem was highlighted. The six center-page articles were, "Luring Students to Literature" (3/14/99); "Better Late
than Never” (4/4/99); “Closing a Learning Gap, and Having Fun” (4/11/99);
“Sweating Out the Summer, ... to Help Lagging 9th Graders” (6/20/99);
“Meeting A Need” (8/8/99); and “Filling a Literary Gap” (8/22/99). Two of the
12 center-page articles about reading as a problem pictured White students (“The
Road to Reading, ...to Help [homeless] Children” (1/31/99); and “Healing the
Pain, a Page at a Time, ... Treatment [for] Troubled Children” (4/18/99)). Three
of the 12 articles were accompanied by photos of “experts.” These included the
photo of a phonics reading game publisher (Big Bucks Draw a Big Response,
1/3/99); the photo of Alice Furry, California Reading Resources Director (The
Future Is Now for School Literacy Push, 6/6/99); and the photo of a school nurse
giving an eye exam (An Eye-Popping Problem, 5/16/99).

The last of the 12 reading as a problem articles (KAPOW! 12/12/99) is
about the ways in which comic books “once reviled by parents and teachers, gain
credibility in schools ... packing a wallop for literacy.” The graphic
accompaniment to this article is significant. The article, about students reading
and drawing cartoons, features a cartoon by a Times’ staffer in shades of grey
(Appendix R). It pictures a presumably White teacher (light hair and skin tone)
giving directions to students, one White student with hand raised, and other
White students speaking the words “I want to be the writer...,” and “How about
... Amon, ... and Thoth, the god of learning and the inventor of writing.” Two
presumably African American students are pictured with kinky black hair, one
stating “I love to draw” in the frame in which the White student says, “I want to
be the writer.” The other African American student is pictured from the back,
sitting with arms down, in the frame in which the White student has his hand raised. Two other students of color are shown. One student with black hair and Asian features stating “Boy, this is a really different way to do school work. I can’t believe we’re going to make comic books!” (Emphasis in original). The other student of color, with very dark hair and darker skin tone, pictured in the frame with the White student who is commenting on Amon and Thoth, is given no voice.

A number of other articles about reading as a problem have appeared in the front page and metro sections of the paper over the same time frame, some carrying the Reading by 9 logo. When these articles are supplemented with photos, they are invariably of Latino students (determined by names in text or captions). A sampling of these includes the “Arturo” profile discussed earlier; “Partnership Aims to Lift East Valley Test Scores” (4/10/99); “Probation System Presses Literacy Effort” (5/19/99); “Motivating Kids to Read Focus of Yo-Yo Show” (7/14/99); “Despite Aid, Boy Still Far Behind Peers” (6/30/99 – an Arturo follow up); and “Teaching the Basics, Finally” (2/11/99). Seventeen center-page articles on the Reading Page that might be construed as informational (e.g. about library services, without references to testing or phonics or standards) carried photos of Latino students in about half of the instances in which students were pictured (six out of 11). Neither of the two articles that specifically profiled student “successes” (5/2/99, “The Little Girl Who Could;” and 10/10/99 “Love Naomi”) were about Latino, African American or Native American students.
The solution of standardized testing for teacher, school, and parent accountability.

Articles about standardized tests and scores were ubiquitous. These appeared occasionally on the Reading page, but more frequently in the front-page section and in the Metro section on the Education Page (same page, B2, as Reading Page, but ran on Wednesdays instead of Sundays). Articles about testing were seldom imprinted with the Reading by 9 logo, although testing was a primary element of the Times' education reform model. The contrasting cultures of success and failure propounded in the Times were made salient in test article themes that compared states', school districts' and students' language, race, and ethnicity on multiple measures (reading, math, and so on). The Times' coverage infrequently questioned the appropriateness of high stakes testing, nor use of the particular standardized test (the Stanford Achievement Test “SAT” 9) chosen by the state, nor in what ways the SAT9 related to other tests (such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress) used currently or in the past. Code words used to index the crises, developed in the “California’s Perilous Slide” series and the Reading by 9 materials to legitimate emphasis on testing as crisis resolution, included “high stakes, high standards, proficiency, skills, accountability and success/failure.” Testing was problematized only three times in 1999, in one article, one editorial and one guest opinion (Figure 9.5 below).
Figure 9.5  
**Testing as Element of the Times’ Education/Reading Reform Model**

9/29/99 “1 in 4 U.S. Students Has Proficiency in Writing”  “Academics: California trails nation in skills needed for future success. Education Department testing shows.”  Cooper and Groves

9/19/99 “Davis Links Bonuses to Stanford 9 Scores”  “Education: Schools that boost test scores by 5 percentile points next spring will get cash awards of $150 per pupil, governor says at reading conference.”  Smith Reading by 9 logo

9/16/99 “Inquiry Into English-Only Tests Ordered”  “Education: Presidential panel says use of such exams for children with limited proficiency in the language may violate their civil rights. It calls for a probe.”  Cooper and Colvin

9/16/99 “Los Angeles County Test Scores”  “The table below gives a snapshot of how school districts in Los Angeles County performed on this year’s statewide standardized test...”

8/4/99 “Small Gains on Stanford 9 Scores Cut Across All Levels of Language Ability”  “Education: But lack of English fluency is biggest barrier to success, Times analysis shows.”  Smith and Groves.

7/23/99 “How L.A. County Schools Raised Test Scores Sharply”  Helfand and Sahagun

7/23/99 “Evaluating the Stanford 9 Tests: A Report Card”  “How L.A. County Schools Fared on Statewide Exams”  [6 pages, U1-U6].  Page U1 – two articles:  “What the Scores Tell Us”  “Pocketsof Progress, but Question Marks, Too”  L.A. Unified: Despite general gains, the district’s lackluster improvement in reading and overall low national standing temper any excitement (Smith)” and “Bilingual education: Experts say small increases make it difficult to tell if Prop. 227 or other reforms are responsible (Sahagun).”


7/23/99 “Test Scores as Signposts”  (Editorial)  (Key words: English learners ... still did poorly; proficient; English; early; teachers; figure out; risk failure; accountability)

4/28/99 “Relax, It’s Just a Test”  “At many private schools this spring, students will take standardized tests similar to the Stanford 9 exam of public schools. But less emphasis is placed on scores.”  Groves

3/10/99 “Proficient Readers”  “The National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] found that only 20 percent of California’s fourth-graders were deemed proficient readers last year ...”  [Chart ranks States for 1992, 1994, 1998 by gender, race, ethnicity; source National Center for Educational Statistics, or NCES.]

3/5/99 “California Ranks Second to last in U.S. Reading Test”  “Education: Only 20 percent of state’s fourth-graders are proficient readers. Officials say recent reforms have not had time to show results, but they vow to press ahead.”  Chart captions and explanations: “Score Differences”  “The following chart shows the percentage of California public school fourth-graders who are proficient readers, based on a national test of reading skills.”  “1992, ’94, ’98 [for] Asian 31 percent, White 39 percent, Average 20 percent, Latino 8 percent, Black 7 percent [in ’98]” and “The Scores by State”  “California fourth-graders ranked second to last in a nationwide assessment of reading skills given last year. Below are the average scores for each of the 39 states ... participating...”

2/28/99 “Fairness in Improving Schools”  (Editorial)  (Key words: exit exam; school ranking; fairness; equity; standards; equal funding help; test bias; portfolios; loophole; Texas; gap closing)

2/13/99 “Reading Test Scores Rebound After Reforms”  Anderson  [national reading scores back to 1992 levels.]

00/00/99 “Score-Boosting Emphasis Shortchanges Education”  “Education: By putting the emphasis on results, we are cheapening the learning experience for children.”  (Guest Opinion)  Popham (Emeritus Professor, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies)
In the July, 1999 editorial, "Tests Fail the Grade," the field of inquiry was narrow (incorrect reporting by testing service), with suggestions made to step-up oversight of and withhold payment from the testing service, Harcourt Brace. In the article, "Inquiry Into English Only Tests Ordered" on 9/16/99, the topic was reported as a national issue, with California state officials expressing wary concern; the article included a quote from a Washington-based representative of supporters of California Proposition 227 (to end "failed" bilingual education). The article ended by citing the 1974 Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court ruling requiring specialized education support to limited English proficient students, and the relevance of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The topics of the potentially discriminatory effects, or at least unreasonableness of testing limited-English proficient students with English-only tests, have not received any further coverage to date.

In the 1999 guest opinion, "Score-Boosting Emphasis Shortchanges Education," the writer's explanation included the following, which received no commentary by the Times in either editorial or article form.

"A newspaper's readers believe that schools with high-scoring students are effective, while schools with low-scoring students aren't. Such beliefs are based on faulty information. Standardized achievement tests are designed to permit comparisons between a student's performance and the performances of a group of previous test takers known as the test's norm group. To make such comparisons with sufficient precision, there must be a substantial degree of differences in the scores that students earn. If students' scores are too similar, you can't contrast them satisfactorily. In order to produce such score differences, test developers include many items that are not likely to be influenced by classroom instruction. In truth, such items actually assess children's socioeconomic status and their inherited academic aptitudes. They measure what children bring to school, not what they learn there. Moreover, test makers can only sample
course content. As a result, the particular items might not coincide with the content addressed by a specific school. Taken together, these problems typically lead to the mismeasurement of a school's effectiveness.” (Popham, 1999)

The Times' reporting of standardized test results implicitly advanced the premises that the tests were appropriate for all students, that the categories and calculations provided by the state were meaningful, and that the usage of test results to reward and punish schools (via “API,” or academic performance index – see Appendix S) would motivate education reform (Hanson, 1993; Tucker, 1994). The tests tell all, whether students are English speakers, English learners, or non-English speakers. The tests tell all, whether students are in schools with textbooks and libraries or those without. The tests tell all, whether students are blessed with experienced, creative teachers, teachers who understand what they are saying, or none. The tests tell all, whether or not classrooms are crowded or the premises are crumbling. All of the disparities suggested here have nevertheless received coverage by the Times, but in no way were standardized testing or its uses problematized by examination of the unresolved inequities except as a means to “hold accountable” those who have little or no control over the mismeasurement juggernaut.

From the inception of Reading by 9, and even in the prior “California’s Perilous Slide” series, parent practices (as “culture”) and teacher practices (as reading instruction methods) were linked to failure or success determined by test scores. The Times’ reporting (and some editorials) about testing as the salient criterion of “accountability” carried an aura of certitude. This appeared to relate
to the ways in which test results among schools and districts were invested with one or more function(s) that may or may not have corresponded to the intentions of test makers or test givers, but which tapped a particular model of education reform and student performance. That model was one which saw children as raw material, having “capacity” to be molded into literate adults on English only, phonics assembly lines. The model reified test numbers, group comparisons, vast categories, minute “progress,” but eschewed context, except to develop contrasting images. One sort of image was that of (language or culture minority) families painted with words about learning such as late, lagging, gap, and dismal; another sort of image was that of teachers, painted with words about their need to be trained in phonics; and schools were painted as unidimensional competitors for test score rankings. These images were contrasted to successful English-speaking, middle-class students in schools that ranked high on the state’s index.

It is significant that the Times’ coverage presented no systematic analysis of reading instruction methods at so-called successful schools. At least implicit, if not consciously intended in the Times’ coverage, the “functions” of normed, standardized tests were to demonstrate (through success/failure “accountability”) that the values attached to the contrasting images were absolutes rather than ideological constructions designed to appeal to imagined readers. “Cultures of success” were English speaking, phonics learning, test-normative, 50th percentile and above citizens. The inherent problems with test structures, such as described by Popham in the quotation above, and goals of
standardized tests (it is not possible for all students/schools to be at or above the 50th percentile) disappeared from view. The dilemmas of teachers who must pinpoint a strength or a problem of a student in order to develop and encourage that student’s learning were transformed into how many were speaking English, how fast, and where they ranked.

On August 4, 1999, the Times calculated school district composite scores “as an average of the scores for all grade levels on the reading, math, language test batteries” (Los Angeles County Test Scores, p. B2). The name of the statewide test was not given, although the SAT 9 is assumed but not verified. The method of calculation (e.g. whether weighted by number of students per test) was not given, nor was any statistical methodology cited to suggest what level of confidence or comparability were purported for the results. There was also no analysis provided; the scores and rankings must therefore have been intended to speak for themselves, however problematic that might be. The results for Los Angeles County districts were laid out in five columns. The first column was district name, then 1999 score, 1998 score, County rank, State rank, and “percent LEP” (or percent of students who were “limited English proficient,” but without indication of what year applied to percent LEP). The “scores” for Los Angeles Unified (there are over 700 schools in LAUSD) for instance, changed two percentage points, from 28 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 1999.

With 80 L.A. County school districts listed, what meaning can readers make of this? Most of the districts showed improved scores, in the range of two
to five percentage points. As mentioned above, the statistical significance of this was not stated, nor determinable from the information given. Perhaps the point was the placement of the state ranking of each L.A. County school district (out of 977 Statewide districts) next to percent LEP for each district. For those who are familiar with L.A. County, the names of the districts, along with state ranking and percent LEP was revealing. School districts that ranked in the lowest quartile of all districts for the state (ranks of over 800th out of 977 districts) were either in poor and Latino, high “LEP” (25 percent to 80 percent), and/or African American enclaves. Perhaps the journalistic goal was to complement the Times’ consistent implication that poverty, plus lack of English fluency, causes poor school performance (i.e. Reading by 9 editorial introductions and promotional materials).

High stakes are not defined by assessments, but are attached to and legitimated by formal and informal relationships within schools and between schools and other institutions. While there are positive and negative aspects of standardized tests, the increasing emphasis on high stakes testing tends to subordinate the negative aspects. There is much evidence that standardized tests are culturally biased, that results only temporarily increase due to testing focus by teachers, and that the SAT 9 is accurate only 30 percent of time in math and 42 percent in reading (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; S. Krashen, in-press; Rand, 2000). Emphasis on “high stakes” testing not only reduces the time and the inherent value of teaching to individual students’ needs, but codifies and reifies the tenets of hidden curricula and null curricula (what is not taught, e.g. critical thinking).
Thorndike envisioned "impartial scientific truth" as the foundation of social ethics in order to overcome the problems of "sentimental prejudice in favor of equal treatment" from studies of individual differences (Thorndike, 1940 in Tucker, 1994, pp. 134-135). Many have eagerly submitted to that view, from Jensen (1969, in Tucker (1994), and Hernstein and Murray (1993) to Rushton (1999). Efforts to prove, time and again, that biological differences account for inferiority on purportedly objective measures such as intelligence tests, and that those in poverty or in jail merely get what they are "designed" for, seem to rise like the undead. The current emphasis on high stakes testing for accountability is ostensibly to correct school site inequities so that students may have sufficient education to rise out of poverty. But accountability is a word with significant ramifications that are only infrequently made clear. When accountability is defined, it is done so in terms of the consequences of failure. As standards, phonics and testing are fully implemented, the Times' model assumes failure can only occur by those who have not made the right choices, i.e. through "discernment" or "character" (Heath and Mandabach, 1983). When individual students fail to Read by 9 through the new curricula, parents and students are accountable, perhaps due to having the wrong culture. When schools fail to reach the 50th percentile on standardized tests, teachers and principles are threatened with the loss of their jobs. When districts fail to dramatically increase school performance on standardized tests each year, school choice becomes the answer. As the idea of accountability is defined according to failure, the phrase "high stakes" is taken to the next level of meaning, coding the "scientific"
relevance of higher test scores as an inherent attribute of those who inhabit the culture of success.

The hollowness of high stakes testing as one element of education reform mistakenly assumes that high stakes assessments are not already conducted, or that one kind of beginning reading approach will work for all students, or that English language teaching “with support in primary language” by thousands of untrained, English-only teachers provides students with the best education possible. The necessarily multivalent view of assessment is narrowed, taking the focus off other assessments that account more comprehensively for students as whole persons, the essential value of student experience, or teachers' learning and development. The narrow focus on testing, phonics and English-only also diverts resources and attention from institutionalized asymmetries. Among many other complexities that underlie education performance, these include funding inequities, well-documented teacher preferences for and support of some students over others, and giving up on some students by overrepresenting minority language and culture students in learning disabled or special education categories (Wright, Hirlinger & England, 1998).

Conclusion

I began this chapter with several questions, making the point that language is bound to be goal-oriented, but to understand the goals and purposes for which language is used we must ask what kind of meaning is being made, by whom, directed toward whom, and toward what ends.
It appeared that in the *Reading by 9* series the attributes and interests of those who inhabit an ostensible culture of success are envisioned as morally and socially superior to those who inhabit a culture of failure; inhabiting one or another culture is positioned as a matter of choice (Gal, 1996, pp. 3-4; Woolard, 1989, p. 269). It also appeared that the Times benefits by language constructions that reproduce dichotomies of enacted moral superiority—that is, moral superiority sells. Despite the Los Angeles Times' statements of “95 percent ... capable” and the invocation of the democratic ideal, the relentless linkages of language, culture and poverty with school performance are chilling, yet apparently “liminal to [public] awareness” (Silverstein, 1981).

“We ... do the same thing that historians do. We view the world ethnocentrically. Uh, newspapers tend to tell the story of those who buy them or advertise in them. They also make a great effort to tell the stories of those who don’t; of the average person, of the uneducated. We devote a lot of attention to telling the story of immigrants, but certainly not proportionally to their numbers. And we certainly don’t make an effort to address our product to those people. At this moment, that’s a big debate within the paper. And it certainly is not settled. It has been a big debate over the years. We’ve tried to give Latinos a greater presence in our newspaper over the last year, year and a half. You can see that, it’s evident. And that’s a result of self conscious readjustment, of, of how we see the world. Are we now telling the story of the world as it really is? Not by a long shot. And we won’t. Because we have a fairly narrow audience.” (Journalist Comments, 12/99.)

Summary

The question of whether the ethics and professional procedures of institutional public discourse can incorporate a self-questioning that somehow recognizes and accounts for hegemony is still open. It seems apparent from the
reasoning process and content similarities in the personal narratives and in the reviews in this chapter that personal viewpoints, and the demands of journalists' collective identities have resulted in enactments of a lettered authority skewed toward the interests of its imagined community of readers. "Those people" who do not or cannot read the Times' articles about reading and education are either invisible or patronized as at the bottom of a literacy scale whose weights and measures comprise language, race, ethnicity and class.

The next, final chapter summarizes and draws conclusions about the data chapters. I also propose suggestions for recognizing the responsibilities of agency in the development of private and public literacy discourses.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter contains the study conclusions, implications and recommendations. I set out to examine discursive organizations of race/ethnicity, class, and language orientations expressed through media, journalist and educator literacy ideologies, to better understand implications of literacy ideologies in California’s pluralistic classrooms. Journalists’ and educators’ personal literacy reflections and explanations were a means of triangulating with literacy ideologies expressed in Los Angeles Times’ texts and in historically situated public discourses (Donald, 1991). My goal was to identify the common signifiers among modes and content of participants’ literacy explanations that may serve as discursive linchpins to individual and collective identities. The objective was to illuminate possible motives for and cognitive, linguistic and material means of reproducing or contesting asymmetric education opportunity structures and processes.

Participants expressed at least three powerful linchpins, or “feature clusters,” to connect the politicized media representations of literacy, class, language and race/ethnicity to individual and collective identities (Woolard, 1998). Each linchpin recursively signifies orientations to particular sets of social relations (Gal, 1998). One linchpin was voiced through a dichotomy among participants’ competing visions regarding what Gee (1991) calls dominant literacy (leading to goods in society) in contrast to the potential for powerful literacy
(ability to meta-critique one’s own and others discourses). One vision of literacy comprised the proposition that reading by age nine in English leads to “success,” as typified by the rhetorically implicit logic, “It worked for me — see where I am?” This contrasted with an alternative vision (or counter hegemony), expressed by several educators, comprising the status possibilities arising from student access to critical literacy through fine-tuned teacher/school responses to instantiate increasingly sophisticated awareness and decision processes, built up from each student’s prior experience (Philips, 1998). Those who expressed the latter idealization acknowledged the systemic barriers to its realization, not the least of which was the ascendance of the “It worked for me...” vision in education policy and practice.

Obliquely or directly related to the simplified and highly decontextualized proposition that reading by age nine leads to “success” were expressions of an Anglo-conformity, melting-pot notion, from and through which nearly all participants naturalized relationships among gate-keeping opportunity structures and hierarchies of privilege. With few exceptions (see the third “linchpin” below), educators and journalists iconized the social dimensions of literacy on a cause-effect continuum comprising (standard) English fluency, parents’ literacy habits and socioeconomic status, and children’s (standardized test-determined) literacy/education achievement (Appleton, 1983, in Martin, 1993; Irvine and Gal, 1996).

Constituting the third linchpin are hegemonic and counter hegemonic implications of language, race/ethnicity, class, and perceptions of choice in “voluntary” and “involuntary/castelike” participants’ speech. Ogbu’s (1992)
categories of "immigrant/castelike" minorities and "voluntary" immigrants, although otherwise over-general and simplistic with regard to agency, are a point of departure to illustrate immigrant participants’ linguistic orientations (Erickson, 1993; Philips, 1998). Among one journalist and four educator-participants who might be defined as either voluntary or involuntary minorities were quite diverse constructions of language, culture, and literacy cross-cutting Ogbu’s (1992) category characteristics, but congruent with each speaker’s class.

Arising from these conclusions are significant education policy and practice implications for California’s pluralistic classrooms, and for an increasingly pluralistic U.S. society. Manipulations of purposeful language reinforce the criterion of language for hierarchical definitions of personhood and national identity, implicating mythic proportions of social domination through, in this case, education (Woolard, 1998). Particular guaranteed freedoms have been re-imagined to consume and regurgitate the children of the Other in terms acceptable to the status quo. In this project, material and ideological production are one, construing a naturalized order in which the privileged retain and pass on their status through “the freedom” to speak English only, the freedom to associate with those having similar test scores, the freedom of the press to

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42 Ogbu (1992) implicates immigrant status of "voluntary" minorities (those who chose to move to a new country for a better life) or "involuntary/castelike" minorities (descendents of slaves, Native Americans and other colonized minorities who did not choose to immigrate/be colonized) as significant for school achievement. He posits that involuntary/castelike minorities develop secondary cultural characteristics in opposition to norms that lead to school success. Two educator participants in this study are “voluntary” immigrants, and two other educators and one journalist are “involuntary immigrants” according to Ogbu’s definitions. However, despite superficial similarities among members within each group, class experiences are most significant to individual or collective literacy related identity concepts.
promote personal ideologies as religious crusades born out by [un]scientific social certainties, and the freedom of the State to deny educators the option to inform parents of rights to request redress (Philips, 1998). Language and culture conformity form a foundation for discursive maintenance and reproduction of unequal relationships – through the belief that they are natural, right, and unassailable – entering the realm of doxa, and as such, permit no consideration of alternatives (Bourdieu, 1997).

The subtle and not-so-subtle discursive patterns conflating Anglo-saxonization with school achievement are deeply embedded in social and historical contexts, disingenuously appropriating social conscience and democratic values schemas belied by the singular, rigid, and authoritarian approaches to school curricula and pedagogy (Donald, 1991). Representations of “paternalistic compassion for the less competent” sustain systemic barriers in order to remain true to the cultural logic that privilege and self-interest recursively define (Woolard, 1989, p. 275). Such subtlety demands tenacious but careful exposure of patterns of thought, speech, social action and systemic structures and processes that tend to reproduce, in fact naturalize, inequality for the “less competent.”

Toward the goal of tenacious, careful exposure, I recommend continuing and expanding the critical project of disengaging literacy from status and nationhood through reengaging literacy with autonomous personhood; and disengaging literacy from control through reengaging with agency (Gee, 1991; McLaren, 1996; McLaren & Hammer, 1996; Noble, 1997). These recommendations will be addressed more comprehensively below,
intertextualizing deeper discussions of the "linchpin" conclusions and the education/social implications introduced in this section.

It bears restating that I understand my own lens, through which I have judged the significance of patterns and processes in my data and background research, to be partial (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Also important to the conclusions, implications and recommendations on which I will expand in the remainder of this chapter are the implications of speech, text and analysis as simultaneously time-bound and emergent phenomena. The landscape of meanings addressed here are altered simply by being observed, but also through a continuous dialogic enterprise in which perceptions of self-interest, including my own, are reconstructed. To attempt to mitigate the biases inherent in my own ideological positions, I employed multiple contexts for the research, triangulating data and comparisons within and between the historical, public and interview texts. To establish the relevance of my findings beyond the "snapshot" period of my study, I demonstrate that triangulation within and between media, statist, and interview texts heralds cognitive/materialist codings of particular discursive and material choices. The "codings" index identity, values, professional principles, and contexts for action over time (Bennett, 1991; Bourdieu, 1997; Collins, 1991; Donald, 1991; Gee, 1991; Jacob and Jordan, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994).

I subscribe to the notion that ideology is a matter of lived relations, "knowable" through signifying practices which constitute human beings as subjects of "the dominant relations of production in society" (Althusser, 1971, and Eagleton, 1991, in Woolard, 1998, p. 6). I therefore demand from those who
may apprehend these concepts, including myself, responsibility for the intended and unintended educational, economic and political consequences of speech and other social actions or inactions that rationalize privilege through recourse to “saturation of consciousness” and the “structures of feeling” of the privileged (Williams, 1977, from Gramsci, in Woolard, 1998, p. 6).

Abbreviated participant profile summaries from earlier chapters are presented below, intended to be reminders of earlier descriptions of participants, and to provide reference for the remaining discussion. Table 10.1 is a brief recap of journalist information; teacher and principal demographic information is combined in Table 10.2 to provide a snapshot look at these individuals in relation to their work and their communities.

Table 10.1 – Journalist Profile Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Ethnicity / Language</th>
<th>Work site</th>
<th>Professional duties</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Education-experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Euro-Amer. / English</td>
<td>LA Times</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann-Marie</td>
<td>Euro-Amer. / English</td>
<td>LA Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>&lt; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>Euro-Amer. / English</td>
<td>LA Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>7 –</td>
<td>&lt; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>Euro-Amer. English</td>
<td>LA Times</td>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>15 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Demographics:</td>
<td>Teacher/Principal</td>
<td>Educator ethnicity/ race</td>
<td>Educator exper. totals</td>
<td>Educators' primary language</td>
<td>Educators' secondary language</td>
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<td>High poverty/ Working-class</td>
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<td>Ebonyics</td>
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<td>T</td>
<td>Paco/Latino 7 +</td>
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<td>Dean/Filipino 7 +</td>
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<td>P</td>
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<td>Middle-class/ working-class</td>
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<td>Dorothy/Euro 10 +</td>
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<td>Margaret/Euro 30 +</td>
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<td>Willa/Euro 25 +</td>
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<td>Middle-class/ upper class</td>
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<td>Cyra/Mid East. 3 +</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>Rosalie/Euro 20 +</td>
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Table 10.2.
Educator Demographic Summary
Conclusions

Classrooms and newsrooms are political spaces in the sense of identities and beliefs “underpin[ning] fundamental social institutions” through “cultural conceptions about language attitudes, standards, [and] hegemony” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1996). Representations of contested activities undertaken in public education sites, and in powerful media organizations such as the Los Angeles Times, became invisible in the glare of state and corporate interests laden with perspectives of social position. That is, literacy came to stand for social position and social position represented the economic and statist rewards inherent in dominant literacy.

“To make Reading by 9 work, the Times will mobilize the community by bringing it together for a united consortium on child illiteracy. The Times will partner with existing literacy programs to maximize and leverage the potential of each program. The Times will also enlist partners from business, education, government, media and civic organizations for this massive crusade. The Times will work with educators using the State’s new testing and assessment program. The Times will report on its progress and publish reading scores, tracking effectiveness and results and promoting accountability for children’s reading skills.” (Reading by 9 Conference Brochure, 1998, September - Appendix L.)

There is potential for an “alternative hegemony.” Such potential – apparently not in response to recent state or national standards, curricula, and pedagogy indexing statist ideologies of language and culture – may arise from

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43 Raymond Williams developed the phrase alternative hegemony “to refer to alternatives to hegemonic ideology not shaped by dominant ideology” in contrast to counter hegemony, defined as “resistance to ideological hegemony profoundly shaped by hegemony being resisted.” (Philips, 1998, pp. 215-216).
educators' awareness that there are status implications in classroom interactions, and understanding of student learning as processually complex (Philips, 1998, pp. 216-217). (See Moll (1990) and Vygotsky (1978), for discussions of relational/processual complexity of cognition and learning.) The hegemonic significance of the Times' statist language ideology in literacy crisis texts derives from the "feature clustering that underlies group identification [as] such a powerful cognitive mechanism that knowledge about one feature ..." such as, parents' choices to speak Spanish at home, are "... assumed to be enough" to index all features in the cluster, such as students' low achievement, the potential to drop out, be in a gang, go on welfare, and so on (Bars of the Mind, 1998, Nov. 8; Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998, p. 193; Sahagun, 1998, November 1).

From powerful cognitive mechanisms as feature clustering, arises "conceptual systematicity" from which "the norm of homogeneity turns language itself into an interethnic battlefield" (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 195). Under a norm of homogeneity, tolerance for a demonized Other may paradoxically be advocated simultaneous to advancing educational policies and processes that marginalize educator and parent attempts to question the homogeneity norm.

Linguists' and anthropologists' dissections of education explore structures, processes and educational practices as ideologically born constructions and reconstructions of unequal lived relations (Davidson, 1996; Erickson, 1993; Levinson, Foley and Holland, 1996; Macedo, 2000; Mehan, 1996; Willis, 1977). Over more than a two-year period, Los Angeles Times' texts organized a status and language oriented literacy crisis that does not exist (Bars of the Mind, 1998,
“Unless we dramatically increase the number of children who learn to read well, we will in the next five years consign nearly one million to lives of poverty and distress” (Willes and Parks, 1999).

Feature clusters signifying status, through such tropes as poverty and distress caused by lack of “reading well,” also occurred in participants’ speech.

“I think we’re really quite confused about whether literacy is, uh, is something that is a central part of our self-development and understanding and expression or whether it’s a tool. It tends to become, in the workplace, it tends to become more of a tool. And I think the economic life of society is in danger when people can’t use that tool. So I guess I would say that for the educational system that’s the first duty that should be attended to, is providing a base level” (Stephen, Journalist).

“The more literate you are, probably the better job you can get, in strict economic terms” (Ed, Journalist).

“It’s economic too, because you know, I keep coming back to nutrition, and kids going to school hungry. You cannot function. I was in a classroom in Sacramento where the teacher, every morning, she gives the kids three peanuts. And, it doesn’t seem like a lot, but that may stave off their hunger until lunchtime so they can concentrate. So, that’s economics” (Ed, Journalist).

In the excerpt above, Stephen construes at least two forms of literacy for the “economic life of society” – literacy as self-development for people such as himself, and “base level” education for the Other – or those whom he previously described as being “handicapped” by languages other than English. Ed links nutrition to school performance, and better jobs to being “more literate,” as if peanuts explain economic success. Noted in a previous chapter, the journalist Donald expressed the idea that discovery and inquiry-oriented pedagogy and curricula are fine for middle-class kids, but “it does not work for poor kids.” (See
critical perspectives in Cazden, 1988; Krashen, 1999a & b; McCarty, 1993b; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Dworin, 1997; Roseberry, Warren & Conant, 1992; Wells, 1995).

In the following excerpts, educator-participants took a more nuanced view than expressed by journalists above of “the economic” in schooling, contextualizing the learning environment and processes with implicit messages about unequal school funding and teacher support.

“There’s some people we didn’t discuss who are key players as well on our support staff. Our nurse, our psychologist. We don’t have a guidance counselor. She [the psychologist] has many hats; she wears that hat as well. Our resource specialist [one person], who works with youngsters with identified special needs. Those are key players. And we do have itinerant personnel who come in also, speech and language, adaptive P.E.” (Jill, Principal, 2500 student K-5 school. Emphases added).

“When I came to L.A. Unified [25 years before] I had a resource teacher for two or three months who came and sat with me in the classroom. It doesn’t happen now. Teachers then, we had to do student teaching. Now, the teaching [sic: learning how to teach] comes while you are teaching” (Lillian, Teacher. Emphasis in speech).

One implication for student learning in any language of politicized influence on the possibilities of “discovery” pedagogy and curriculum is educators’ long experience with efforts to de-legitimize their ability to use critical approaches about the institution of education from the inside (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Guitierrez, 2001; Spring, 1997). I make no claim as to the depth or breadth of influence per se. Journalists do critique educators and education en masse – potentially influencing a very wide audience – with arguably little direct knowledge of the nature of educators’ work, or understanding of complex

In the article in which the following excerpt appeared, continuing effects of political repression and extractive economic practices were reduced to the connection between English and earning power (Cazden, 1988; Heath and Mandabach, 1983; Kozol, 1992; Macedo, 2000; Moll and Dworin, 1997; Moll and Greenberg, 1990).

"[Parents of profiled student], who were among hundreds of thousand of Mexicans who immigrated to the United States from Mexico City in the mid-1980s, say they are anxious to try new strategies. But they haven't learned to speak English, which would dramatically increase their ability to support their children's education and boost their earning power" (Sahagun 1998, November 1, p. A-3. Emphasis added. See chapter nine).

The Los Angeles Times did not editorially support interventions such as California Proposition 227 to end bilingual education. Once approved by a majority of English-speaking voters, the Times' coverage subsequently ignored the extraordinary challenges of teaching and learning in the context of an unfamiliar language as if the vote itself changed the reality of second language learners' academic challenges. Language in the Times' texts about the literacy crisis (see Figures 9.1-9.5 and discussion in chapter nine) iconicized the relationship of standards in English, testing in English, and teaching phonics to all. This included remediation for middle and high school language minority students through (imminently federalized) "scientific" teacher scripts and phonics curricula (Gee, 1991; Irvine & Gal, 1996; Olson & Viadero, 2002).

Educators are usually discouraged, if not expressly forbidden from critiquing the systems in which they work; they have few legitimate outlets, with
the possible exception of unions and professional associations, for such critiques outside their systemic environments (Berliner and Biddle, 1995; Gutierrez, 2001). However, journalists' access to the means and outlets for critique do not necessarily transfer (e.g., examples below) to critical self-examinations of the ethical and moral grounds of their analyses. In highly reductionist propositions, Stephen equates ethnocentrism with corporate interests, and Donald equates English fluency with economic participation. In an example of what Linde (1993) refers to as a non-integrated explanatory system, Stephen rejects "principles" after having spent some time earlier discussing the impact of Thoreau on his life, and stating several (especially language-related) principles by which he judges others (Cobarrubias, 1984; Ruiz, 1984; Schudson, 1996).

"We ... do the same thing that historians do. We view the world ethnocentrically. Uh, newspapers tend to tell the story of those who buy them or advertise in them" (Stephen, Journalist).

"I don't think that anybody lives much by a set of principles. I think we have principles that guide you through moments of indecision, but that, uh, I don't know too many people who really live by principles" (Stephen, Journalist).

"Ultimately educators refused to deal with it, refused to deal with it, refused to deal with it, and finally the populace said fuck that. I mean, you know, these kids are coming out of highschool, they're dropping out, and they can't speak English. It's ridiculous we bring kids to school who speak only Spanish and say you can't speak Spanish in school. But having said that, you can't also say English is not important. Because then you are denying them the possibility of ever participating in this economy." (Donald, Journalist).

At least seven of the educators in this study were, to varying degrees, in the practice of helping students develop critical literacy skills, requiring some
level of self-critique in order to do so effectively, despite or perhaps because of internal contradictions in their own worldviews.

"Because of the level of income down there [Paco’s one year of school in Mexico], they saw me and they thought I was rich, even though that’s not the case. So that put me in a different level. [But more to the point] Since I already knew how to read English pretty well, and I was pretty good in comprehension ... the Spanish [reading] was like a really easy transition. I became a Spanish [fluent reader], you know, I just had to learn some of the vocabulary. And so, I really believe that, when it was allowed before 227, the bilingual approach, it was the best way to do it. You know, you teach ’em everything, and teach them their concepts, in the language that they are best capable of understanding in. And then, the teacher of English says, they’re developing the skills so that eventually they can go, ‘Oh, that’s what this is in Spanish.’ You know, they have it there. You don’t have to reteach everthing again from the beginning to end" (Paco, Teacher. Emphasis added).

But reflections such as Paco’s, well integrated with other explanations into a robustly developed explanatory system, were rare in this research (Linde, 1993). In the following discussion, the apparent ideological diversity in participants’ expressions of sectional or class-based collective interests were simultaneously invocations of a statist ideology, envisioning the Other as “naturally” constrained in order to enable one’s own social position and aspirations (Krashen, 1998a & b; McQuillen, 1998; Philips, 1998).

Competing Visions of Powerful Literacy

If, as Gee (1991) proposes, dominant literacy drives acquisition of symbolic and material capital, there are crucial implications for the ways in which education problems and solutions may be envisioned. A language ideology which naturalizes a literacy / social class, status or sectional interest linkage, and naturalizes connections between stratified status and the national interest,
reaffirms an education vision that systematically prevents language minorities and many poor students access to the very learning—critical literacy—necessary to penetrate such mystification. The hegemonic parable simultaneously reifies and devitalizes every symbol of freedom that resulted from critique of the unreasonable uses of power. The engines of dissent, protest, and agency essential to creation of the Magna Carta, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, Emancipation Proclamation, women’s right to vote and the voting rights amendments, Civil Rights Act, and recent language rights movements are rendered trivial and peripheral through a priori heritable social class assumptions. Critique is reserved for “the winners” in the economy (Lau v. Nichols, 1974; McCarty, 1993a, 2001, and Forthcoming).

“[S]tudent achievement doesn’t seem to have gained much ground despite huge increases in spending. We’ve got an economy that’s largely, um, the winners and losers in the economy are largely determined by your education level. We’ve got winners and losers in this economy, and the losers tend to be minority members, and I think there’s great worry about a social eruption over, you know, the gap in income and access to the economy.” (Donald, Journalist).

“I worry that we are exacerbating the problems between the haves and the have not because the children who most need the skills are sinking farther and farther down in the mire. I think we’re preaching to the choir, almost, with our education coverage. The lower income blacks and Latinos are not reading us; they’re not getting the message. A colleague was telling me ... there have been studies showing that in middle class African American homes, middle class and upper middle class homes, books are simply hardly in evidence. Reading to the children is not something that they do as a matter of course. It’s a cultural thing, and it’s just not done.” (Ann-Marie, Journalist).

In the texts analyzed for this study, semiosis of status entails and delimits critiques of abusive power. In the texts, and among journalist-participants, non-Asian immigrants, African Americans and the poor were demonized or
envisioned paternalistically as incompetent. Seven of twelve educators who spoke to immigration and diversity directly did so through counter-hegemonic constructions (Philips, 1998). Emphasized was the idea of reading to develop critical thinking capabilities, and to prepare for adult autonomy (i.e. authentic choice to engage in a wide variety of options, not necessarily corporate, in economic and social life), and for effective participation in democratic processes.

Is it possible to disengage conceptions of literacy from status and nationhood by reimagining autonomous personhood? If the collective good of individuals, communities, states and the nation are advanced by a literate population, then a single principle appears to be on the symbolic/discursive negotiating table: the right to unlimited literacy. What “feature cluster” represents unlimited literacy?

Educators held more complex views than journalists regarding child development, language in the classroom, and literacy pedagogy, as would be expected from their training and professional practice, but their views regarding classrooms and schools as political spaces per se were also more heterogeneous than journalists. Educators drew upon images from their more diverse (than journalists’) personal backgrounds and present social positions, and on values, beliefs, and role expectations, to relate professional experiences to opinion-models referencing bilingual education, reading instruction, funding, respect for teachers, high stakes testing, and cultural norms.

A vital implication of this view is that only one educator (Dorothy), of the 10 who addressed their students’ family backgrounds, explicitly ascribed “deficit” status to parent attributes. All twelve educators acknowledged responsibility to
be aware of differences in students' prior experiences, and to co-construct learning with students, drawing on a large repertoire of options expressed in examples (Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1983; McCarty, 1992; Moll and Dworin, 1997; Moll and Gonzalez, 1994; Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). Another implication is that despite seven or eight (of 12) educator-participants' explicitly describing their approaches to learning among students with sometimes widely divergent prior experiences, and building also upon educator and parent collaborations, educators' were frustrated by increasing external limitations on opportunities to be creative.

Dorothy, a teacher, does not support bilingual education, or the whole language method of instruction. She rejects scripted instruction (a tenet of the phonics movement) and limits on teacher's autonomy to differentiate instruction.

"We find what works. What works for me and my style and how I want to teach, and what works for the teacher next door, may be two totally different things. Just like the kids. They're so individual, so many of the kids, some children learn real differently than other children. So it's really important to me that I provide a lot of different modalities or environments for certain children to learn. I have a child right now that we're having evaluated. She's such a great kid; she can listen, recite, but she can't write, she can't write. You know, there's something going wrong, she's a bright girl. So I just know her reading is low, but she's learning.

We do a lot of sharing. And I do a lot of listening. You know, sometimes I think it's, teachers might think it's kind of wasted time when they like to tell their little stories about their life, or whatever. But you know, it's three minutes out of the day here or there, and they usually have something to say, and it's usually very meaningful to them." (Dorothy, Teacher.)
In the Times and other public texts, and among five of six education journalists, homogenized, basic education is seemingly favored; but educator participants eschewed what one called “one-size-fits-all” education (Sue and Padilla, 1986). From this perspective, educators rejected ideas of genetic inferiority of individuals or groups, “cultural mismatch” to account for differential achievement, or views of language, cognition and social action as discrete phenomena.

Educators who chose what Sue and Padilla (1986) called a contextual interaction perspective voiced conscious choices that may be described as a “feature cluster” that contrasts with that of journalists. The choices not to generalize about students and their families were expressed in two ways. Teachers Owen, Paco, Deon, Dorothy, Cyra, and Lillian, and principals Ana, Willa, Rosalie, and Lela offered explicit practices designed to support equality of student outcomes through respectful responses to individual needs. Such practices were linked by several of these educators (except Deon, Dorothy and Cyra) to an explicit principle of thoughtful coexistence derived from express and implied mutual respect among individuals in a pluralistic society (Cobarrubias, 1983; Heath, 1988; Ruíz, 1984; Sue and Padilla, 1986).

**Naturalizing Unequal Relationships**

The second discursive linchpin is illustrated in journalists conjoining of a simplistic “success” proposition to an Anglo-conformity, melting-pot idea. Literacy is icon and a kind of supernatural elixir represented through a feature cluster comprising behavior, language, and “values” norms — in terms of
economic and social opportunities. The naturalized economic and social relationships (it worked for us!) indexed gate-keeping structures operationalized through hierarchies of privilege, speaking standard English, parents' literacy habits and socioeconomic status, and children's (standardized test-determined) literacy/education achievement (Appleton, 1983, in Martin, 1993; Spring, 1997).

In examples of the iconic binding of English to a particular social image, qualities supposedly shared by the social image and the linguistic image are made to appear inherent (Irvine & Gal, 1996; Public Education: California's Perilous Slide, 1998). The premise of English-as-superior is advanced in images of successful Asian immigrants and a prototypical Euro-American ideal that implicitly validates a connection between sacrifice of a different mother tongue to gain social goods in society. A culture-of-learning image is denied Latinos and African Americans who recursively become “projections of oppositions,” facetiously validated by examples of white parents who do not press their children to attain high grades (Irvine and Gal, 1996; Public Education, 1998, May 18, pp. R1-R-4).

The journalist Ed explained that “language” (or a presumed lack of English fluency) accounts for differential standardized test results among all Latinos, but “teacher quality” explains African-American's test results. The journalist Stephen, who opined that bilingual education would be ideal, also stated that non-English speaking immigrants cannot expect taxpayers to accommodate their “handicap” in order to provide high quality education. (Krashen, 1999a; Moll and Dworin, 1997). The journalist Donald also stated that bilingual education would be ideal. But he and the teacher Dorothy both
expressed the politically resonant but highly controversial and over-generalized ideas that bilingual education does not work among poor immigrants because 1) parents are not educated, and 2) children are not “fluent” in their own languages (See Krashen, 1981, 1999a & b; McQuillan, 1998, for meta-analyses of research).

Race, class and gender differentiated education has been a fact of public education before, during and since “separate but equal.” Language as an excuse for unequal education is merely an “undead” version of the race, class and/or gender arguments, walking the earth once again to divert attention from unchanging inequalities.

Ideas in the Times’ writing that conflate English and social competence are necessarily formed differently than in the speech examples of participants (Nadin, 1983). There is a different reciprocal relationship with social reality among writers who write for wide public consumption. A requirement for meta-discourse / meta-text processes may nevertheless comprise “action algorithms” – as in pre-given cultural options that are not “open to dialogue” – concretely realizable only in the meanings made related to social and group contexts (Nadin, 1983, pp. 385-386, 390). Readers have the option to accept, reject or only partially agree with media propositions, but the power of feature clusters in public discourses, notwithstanding a multitude of less authoritative voices of disagreement, is significant (Crawford, 1992; Schudson, 1996; Woolard, 1998).

If a literate population is vital to the collective good, as represented in the public discourse reviewed here and voiced by participants with otherwise disparate positions, then how is limited literacy for some consistent with the definition of literate?
In the written and spoken texts examined for this study, literacy is a code word. The word ‘literate’ connects literacy to a continuum of interpretations: from “educated, cultured” or “able to read and write”, to “having knowledge or competence” (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1998).¹ There is enormous opportunity to create personalized meanings from the multiple definitions of literate, and of what it may mean to be either educated, cultured, or to have knowledge. From such a wide array of possibilities were the Los Angeles Times’ texts, participants’ literacy images and propositions articulated.

The extent to which cultural concepts are more or less propitiously congruent with personal experiences, and/or adult choices and professional work, appear to strongly influence “semiotic processes through which ideologies come to signify” (Woolard, 1998, p. 18). This is an additional indicator of the fluidity in, yet constraints of cultural models, and may be a metaphor for dialectic tension between institutional-structural frontiers, and cognitive/linguistic and psycho-social influences on agency. Without confusing motivation with rationalization, participants’ implicated personal values in explanatory forms and contents, indexing personal and professional choices and actions (Quinn and Holland, 1993).

While collectivities as cultural models are not singular, nor homogenous, they are influential to perceptions of identity. Neither the collectivity of teachers and principals, nor education journalists as a group held the same views within the groups, for instance, on whether bilingual education in California schools mitigated for or against literacy; but collectivity of class experience did influence
such perceptions. Thus was limited literacy imagined to be consistent with connections among being literate and the public good.

"Voluntary or Involuntary" Immigrants

The third linchpin indexing identity through public representations of literacy, class, language and race/ethnicity arises from two feature clusters which cross-cut Ogbu's (1992) characterizations of voluntary/involuntary minority characteristics. Ogbu (1992) would describe participants Vela, an African American journalist, and Lillian, an African American teacher, as involuntary/castelike minorities. Ogbu would classify teachers Cyra, Deon and Paco, all born in other countries and having primary languages other than English, as voluntary minorities. Contradicting the defining characteristics of Ogbu’s rigid categories are the participants’ considerably varied education experiences, attitudes about education, and perceptions of their own individual and collective identities within each category. With Ogbu’s categories as a platform, the hegemonic and counterhegemonic in these participants’ narratives stands out in stark relief (Philips, 1998).

Although both Vela and Lillian are African American, neither developed the "secondary cultural characteristics" (opposition or hostility to the education system) that are said to define their category and mitigate against education achievement (Ogbu, 1992, pp. 8-9). The two women are of similar ages, from the Midwest, have masters degrees, and siblings are college educated. Lillian and Vela partially credited parents’ high expectations for their educational achievements. Their home situations and parents’ educational experiences
however were quite different. Vela’s parents were educators; she was educated on scholarship at an elite, mostly White, parochial girls’ high school in a suburb of the urban area where she lived. Lillian’s widowed mother cleaned other people’s homes in the rural area where she grew up; Lillian attended “separate but equal” primary and secondary schools and a traditionally African-American college. Vela attended a state university, and a highly regarded private university on the east coast.

Vela, currently a member of the economic upper middle class, supports bilingual education, but allowed that her professional success is due to her intelligence, hard work, and good choices and that success for others (i.e. the Other) could accrue from the same sources. Lillian, self-defined as an Ebonics speaker, is member of the economic lower middle class; she expressed no opinion about bilingual education per se, but felt that the public, partially as a result of journalistic ignorance about Ebonics, does not understand the influence of language on learning. Lillian allowed that her achievements are the result of hewing to the “good values” passed to her by her mother.

Gramsci (1997) defines hegemony as domination with the partial consent of the dominated. Vela discursively erased the unique conditions that allowed her privileged education. Although Lillian noted an early negative experience with standardized tests, neither she nor Vela sustained a critique of life opportunity or choice limitations implicated by their reflections on language/Ebonics, the segregated educational systems of their youth, nor the economically segregated educational systems of today.
The teacher, Paco—the only one of the three “voluntary” minorities from a working class background—offered a well-developed counter hegemonic perception (Philips, 1998). Paco’s proposition questioned negative racial and language attitudes of individuals toward himself and others, but he also elaborated on the insidiousness of systemic tracking, the illogic and unfairness of English-only language policy, and the inadequacy of testing bureaucracies and accountability systems to advance authentic education, among other critiques.

Cyra and Deon, from middle-class backgrounds, developed no opinions regarding bilingual education, although both experienced distress during their experiences as second language learners in school. Each focused on parent values (rather than poverty or language per se) as indicators of students’ academic success, although this linkage in Deon’s narrative was implicit. I.e., students who were having trouble in the classroom had parents who did not care; students who were doing well must have parents who care. Neither wanted to work in a place where parents do not care; each, as teachers, felt they were not valued if students did not do their homework.

Only Paco’s commentaries (among the “involuntary/voluntary” minorities and among the larger subset of educator participants) offered a counter hegemonic explanation. The very lack of critique, or underdeveloped critique among other participants, especially when given the confidential opportunity to engage, validates the the ways in which language ideologies may contribute to social mystification and domination through express and implied links to naturalized, status-signified identities (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56).
Summary

What choices do any of us have? To accept culturally coded, class-implicit life options and terms, and to raise no questions? To credit or blame the system, the ideas of those who benefit most from it, or ourselves, for the available options and the relative correspondence between our aspirations and options? The extent to which any of us either do not question, or credit or blame ourselves for the arbitrariness of the social order, is an indicator of the level of hegemony, or our acceptance of naturalized arbitrariness: what goes without saying, comes without saying (Bourdieu, 1997; Gramsci, 1997). It is hard to imagine two more important professions than those of educators and journalists from whom a democratic society should expect the capacity and will to meta-critique. Is it enough (or is it even true), as one journalist opined, that whatever we don’t get right will be righted later? Is it possible that there is no quarter for development of principled practice for the system and practice of education?

Implications

Overview

Akinnaso (2001) conceded that although “literacy defies a monolithic definition,” alternative views among literacy researchers are not incompatible. Common to the views cited by Akinnaso, and among other literacy researchers since, is at least an implicit acknowledgement that literacy is more than reading and writing. The “sociocognitive model” of literacy incorporates ideas of literacy as social practice (cognition, language, and activity together constitute

Literacy discourse(s) among participants, and in media literacy crisis invocations that critique and reconstruct literacy definitions, offered an analytical opportunity to operationalize linkages of ideology, social practice and sociocognition. Three semiotic processes in the data were found to be crucial for constituting class, race/ethnicity, language and/or gender-imbued definitions of literacy. Borrowing from Irvine and Gal (1996, pp. 4-6), iconicity is the process by which sign and ideological representation seem inherently "bound," e.g., English as icon, with inherent attributes of intelligence, cultural competence and status. Recursiveness, or prototypical social roles and status made meaningful from "projections of oppositions" makes possible the notion that not "choosing" English can signify poverty. Erasure is the process by which "the economic" realities of poor and working class are ignored or trivialized. These processes served to advance conversation or writing objectives, promulgate speakers' and writers' ideologies, and simultaneously to divert listeners' or readers' consciousness from interest-laden meanings. Crucial to the tenacious, careful exposure and potential redress of naturalized inequality is to train educators to train students to recognize iconicity, recursiveness and erasure as they occur. In order to inculcate powerful literacy among students from all backgrounds, such
critique illuminates these semiotic processes as vehicles for feature clusters implicating otherwise unreflected upon individual and collective identities.

If literacy discourses construct literacy as “academic English mastery,” then correctness models are more pedagogically significant than an inquiry-based learning model (Wells, 1995). If literacy discourses construct literacy as rigid, English-only phonics programs in primary and middle grades, then letter sound decoding and English pronunciation are more significant to enacting “reading” than are comprehension, explanation and extension of content developed from a student’s personal experience (Cazden, 1998; Moll & Dworin, 1997; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1996). If literacy discourses construct literacy as confined to being a standard English-speaking citizen, then illiteracy is constituted of the alternatives.

In journalistic practice, framing is often so deeply formulaic (historically and ideologically contingent) that neither writers nor readers may be aware of the exaggeration, minimizing or erasing of some aspects of the realities being reported. At a fundamental level, “framing” – for example constructing the lead paragraphs of a story to provide the “most important” information first, and also to signify the spatio-temporal relevance of the occurrences being reported – expresses viewpoint (potential ideology). One example was journalist Stephen’s discussion about a story in which he chose the most important piece of data from results of a multiple variable standardized test to be “language [other than English] as a barrier” to test performance. Other comments by Stephen regarding language reflect the language component of Stephen’s identity. Stephen proposed that immigrants’ languages are a handicap too expensive for
public education to overcome; he reflected that non-standard English especially among Blacks is "corrupted" and reflects inadequate thinking; and he noted that he carries a compressed version of "the classics" on his laptop to read when he can.

Literacy became a "knowledge-building project" in the Los Angeles Times through conventionalized journalistic practices such as special series coverage of what were referred to as newsworthy topics, through framing and collaboration processes among writers and editors, and commitment to corporate-sponsored good citizenship (Pratt, 1992, p. 38). These conventions masked the mutual indemnification between journalistic conventions and the advancement of business objectives, individual careers, and personal viewpoints. The semi-scholarship of journalistic practices, the institutional privilege and legitimacy of media-provided information related to the structuring of what passes for knowledge, affirmed a lettered authority over public consciousness. Yet ostensibly acceptable definitions of literacy cannot be constituted by journalistic conventions, by iconicity, recursiveness and erasure, or by political system conventions in which voter statute propositions replace the representative system of government, unless writers and readers implicitly or explicitly appropriate the conventions to definitions of self (Bourdieu, 1997; Broder, 2000; Irvine and Gal, 1996; Nadin, 1983; Pratt, 1992; Schudson, 1996).

Participant experience narratives instantiated literacy coded as social and cultural competence ("success"), expressed recursively through explicit or implicit oppositions, erasure of uncomfortable facts, or iconic binding of symbol and reality (Akinnaso, 2001; Cazden, 1988; Gee, 1991; Heath, 1983; Irvine & Gal,
There were at least five complex elements of the code.

The superiority of English was one idea either implicit, or explicitly stated in various ways by participants and in the reviewed texts. Certain participants stated resistance to this iconic rendering. Another implicit and explicit proposition from the data was intelligence — or as Donald (1991) found in historical propositions, at least “discernment, character and good taste” — recursively rationalized as the correct use of English; there was also some resistance to this idea (i.e. Paco and Lillian). A third notion was differentiated, or unequal, education as normal, signifying family values and behaviors, and also related to later adult status. A fourth was the expression of national identity, related to assimilation of immigrants and others, dependent upon sacrifice of particular elements of one’s prior identity, primarily language and certain life ways or behaviors, that may be inconsistent with or not complementary to a middle-class, Euro-American ideal. And the fifth was poverty-as-a-choice, related to individual’s relative willingness to sacrifice elements of prior identity (Akinnaso, 2001; Ruiz, 1984).

**Structures of Significance**

**Language, intelligence and competence.**

Educators used the devices of direct or oblique contrast to link language and “intelligence.” In one example, the principle Willa mentioned that English language learners in her district were sent to a different school, a school that also housed students in the gifted and talented program. When asked, she stated that
“unfortunately” very few English language learners were in the “gifted” category. Jill, a principal, used examples contrasting what might be appropriate language “on the playground” to the school’s objective to teach “academic English” so that students might be able to communicate intelligibly in job interviews.

The contrasting social images linking intelligence with standard-English were given another level of resonance among those who resisted or countered the notion that fluency in standard English was an indicator of intelligence. Ana, a principal who, at one time, had taught gifted LEP students at another district addressed language use and cognition in an unspoken reference to the idea of scaffolding, or building on what a student already knew in the first language. “The more I learned about language, the more I learned it’s so important for those kids to develop their first language because they’ll just get stopped in the second language at about mid-level and really never be, um, develop the cognitive academic language.” The principal Lela echoed Ana by stating that students gain “an advantage” from schooled learning first in primary languages. As a native speaker of Spanish, Paco referenced personal experiences as a student in bilingual education to issues of socioeconomic class, school tracking, teacher attitudes, and testing and accountability protocols related to social inequality.

**Unequal education as a function of family.**

How was social and educational inequality constituted as “normal?” Participants offered contrasting intelligence/language social images through
recursive expressions of relationships among family, schooling and literacy (Irvine and Gal, 1996). The naturalness and desirability of middle-class values and privilege ultimately overshadowed issues expressed by those who used the "sacrifice" model (e.g. feeling deficient, school tracking or bias, unfairness of standardized tests, etc.), and/or of those who otherwise acknowledged the inherent inequality of over-crowded and underfunded schools, and the attitudes and policies that serve to maintain them. The device used to accomplish the construction of the field, or a kind of slide from the oppositions expressed by some into an implicit acceptance of (or at least resignation to) the naturalness and desirability of systematized asymmetry, were references to a prototypical self whose experiences exemplified the ways in which family attributes related to schooling achievement.

Rosalie, a principal, turned transience as an explanation of education underachievement on its head. By referencing personal attributes, e.g. stating she was destined to be a teacher, even though her "... family moved around quite a bit, and I wasn't able to get a very solid foundation" and by referencing status, e.g. her father was "a leader" in his professional field, Rosalie recursively indicated that transience was only a problem for poor children without her "destiny." Other references to prototypical self included Donald's statement, "Well, I think like a lot of other people, my reading habits come very directly from my mother;" and Thomas' connection between "reading books when I was four or five ... my main hobby was reading ... and then eventually I became a writer." Teacher Dorothy connected her mother's profession as a teacher to her own choice and to being a "natural" teacher. Such statements indicate terms of
social identity that include parent habits, professional opportunity, and social status which necessarily stand in contrast to alternative terms of social identity.

Lillian, an African-American teacher, in oblique references to social class and to socio-cognitive learning theories, protested the unfairness of standardized tests because she was not exposed to experiences that prepared her for what was tested. Lillian syllogistically equated reading at home with school achievement and professional status, using herself as the example without suggesting the source of her mother's "value" of reading. Lillian also equated her "calling" to teach to her feelings about being treated differently due to her childhood poverty. With herself as the example, parent values were viewed as necessary and seemingly sufficient to constitute a child's (her own) school performance. When reflecting on her own students' differential student performance, values remained salient, but Lillian also speculated that even when parents care, "... some things are just genetic, you know. Because I've had a family come in, and just the whole family is slow, you know?"

Assimilation and sacrifice, or, poverty as a choice.

I noted in an earlier chapter that even though we all make sense of the world by using interest and power-laden ideas and language constructions, it is important to ask what kind of meanings are being made, by whom, directed to whom, and to what ends. Symbolic ranking was discursively accomplished through iconic binding of particular family attributes to schooling and life achievement. Alternative authentic attributes and interests were coded and transformed into images of a culture of illiteracy, poverty and crime (Irvine and
Gal, 1996; Ruiz, 1984; Woolard, 1989). Symbolic ranking and transformed images in participants' speech and in public writing carried "traces" of reasoning similar to historical examples of literacy ideology cited in earlier chapters (Quinn and Holland, 1993). Historical examples, such as conceptual progressions from savage to civilized linked to the so-called races (red, black, yellow, and white), were justifications for the manifest destiny idea that masked colonizers' and nation-builder's economic and political interests (Adams, 1977). References by participants to the people "who don't read the paper," to "street language" indicating "not the same level of thinking," to genetic "slowness," to "natural" or born-to professions, reflect conceptual progressions. Stratified literacy – historically and in the present – mask dominant interests' binding of political tranquility to the attributes of those with literate economic prosperity (Anderson, 1978; Donald, 1991).

Some participants recognized that actual access to the middle class did not hinge solely on an eschewing language and culture identities other than Euro-American – an acknowledgement that unmasked the "no guarantees" conditionality of such sacrifices, yet avoided the potential for intellectual or emotional dissonance from too deeply questioning why, how, and to whom breakdowns in the social contract implicated, even disenfranchised, those having made the greatest sacrifices. One masking strategy was to suggest that sacrifice was a reward unto itself. When pressed to account for the relationship of literacy to social class, participants sustained the image of themselves as unique, or an anomaly, in contrast to those who hadn't yet "made it," or would never make it (e.g., the "dumb boy" sitting next to Vela in first grade). In either case, speakers
accounted for unspoken relationships of literacy to poverty by default. If each participant had the right parents and/or made the right choices (one or both of which were true in each self-characterization), then their successes were explained and became implicit contrasts to the Other. The Times' series writing on literacy and education elaborated the implicit Other of most participants' narratives, peopling the elaborations with multiple examples of education success ratios by race, language fluency, and socio-economic levels, among other markers. By profiling real people in poverty, and putting a face on the unsuccessful Other, the Times' series discourse rationalized poverty both through family attributes and purported values and habits, along with substantially meaningless statistical and statewide test score (Krashen, in-press). These devices served as diversions, iconically linking language to poverty, recursively expressing the attributes of "successful" cultures, thereby erasing all students who did not fit the explanations – such as the majority of Latinos whose first language is English (Krashen, 1999a).

Summary

The "authentic voices" of so many educators, parents and students whose viewpoints and interests are appropriated according to melting pot ideals, demand answers to lingering questions about the potential opportunities, or unavoidable constraints of the semiotic processes described.

1) What can we reasonably expect from purveyors of public discourse, such as members of the media, legislators, and others, regarding recognition of inequities reproduced from their talk and writing?
2) In what ways can pedagogy and curriculum more effectively support opportunities for equitable learning among, and respect for those who are otherwise vilified because the truths of their lives are too many and too different to fit into a newspaper column, or be accommodated in the present school funding scheme?

3) Is it possible to inform the awareness of individuals, in general, regarding what I call comfortable blindness? Or to avoid the narrow viewpoint that accrues from cognitive-materialist codings underlying the "fictiveness" in public truths in order to appreciate more magnanimous possibilities (Pratt, 1992)?

**Recommendations**

What participants “know” about literacy, and how each situates (explains) their understanding, represents a different order of knowledge than reflected in the Los Angeles Times, California proposition statutes, or legislative mandate discourses (Pratt, 1992; Schudson, 1996). This final section addresses the three questions posed in the summary of the last section as these relate to the construction and effects of individual and institutional knowledge. I also propose ways of considering the possibilities for Other-informed action (Bourdieu, 1997; Cobarrubias, 1983; Gee, 1991; Philips, 1998; Ruíz, 1984; Schudson, 1996; Silverstein, 1981).
Inequities Reproduced in Talk and Writing

Authentic voices.

What can we reasonably expect from purveyors of public discourse regarding recognition of inequities naturalized through their talk and writing? It is a truism to say that with freedom comes responsibility. The truism applies to freedom of the press – as reflected in one articulation of journalistic ethics and principles excerpted below (Appendix T).

“Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to 2.† Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability. 4.† Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.” (Excerpts, American Journalist Association Code of Ethics, Appendix T.)

In the Times' writing, literacy, status and nationhood were ineffably linked. Several of the ethical principles above were compromised in such explanations. The key question for critical thinkers in a democratic society is in what ways autonomous personhood may be connected to literacy in public writing and in educational praxis, with attention to delimiting blame based on language, race or ethnicity by those who have and exercise discursive power?

I do not believe it is unreasonable for journalists to acknowledge and accommodate the complicated middle. Neither dichotomy nor prototype are the only conventions for presenting a news story. Had the journalist, Donald, talked to the same educators I talked to (or the “authentic voices” he suggested he did
not have time to interview), he would have found that middle ground is real. Among only 12 educators with quite diverse backgrounds was over 200 years of experience, ranging from three to 30+ years as primary grade teachers and administrators. Most of these individuals did not know each other and their views were not homogenous, yet all held tremendously more complex views of the proposition that whole language failed, and that phonics is a panacea to the literacy crisis, or for that matter, that bilingual education failed and that English-only instruction is a panacea.

The upside of discourse as catalyst is that it is "an essential antidote to egocentrism" (Piaget, 1950 in Cazden, 1988, p. 125). But given journalists' characterizations of an audience as "writing to ourselves," the antidote to egocentrism cannot prevail. Only with awareness of the relationships among cognition, talk and social action in and between individuals, awareness of the repetitive historical patterns of social talk and action in particular domains, and the ethical ramifications of dismissing the complicated middle may ego- or ethnocentrism be tempered. Certainly black/white, good/bad, crisis/tranquility models help to sell newspapers and entice viewers to the evening news. But to what extent might these models arise from the way alternative points of view win or lose in the journalistic collaboration processes? Who is silenced or misrepresented in the focus on contrasts?

An election does not a policy expert make; nor does obtaining a job as a journalist or educator guarantee unique insights into the lives of those affected by one's profession. The discourse processes that produce or facilitate reflection on education policy must acknowledge children, parents and others with a wide
variety of meaningful interests. Each, somehow, must be represented in representative government, given voice in a free-speech enabled media, and actualized through public schooling. How can representation of thousands, millions of voices occur?

In a promising Times' article by Garrett and Warren (2000, March 27), the authors' underlying premise appears to question the relationship of legislators' experiences to their representation of constituents on education matters. The authors noted that in California as of the date of the article, only one in five lawmakers had a child in public school. This results in a "one dimensional approach," with legislators being "less critical of remedies proposed by wonks" according to some views cited in the article. The article focused on legislators' "profiles" in response to a survey about how or whether they send their children to public schools, and on legislators' responses to the contention of being one-dimensional and uncritical of remedies. The authors contrasted legislators' anecdotal comments regarding how they remain informed on education issues. An examination of how all legislators make their decisions about education, with concrete examples for what sources of information they found to be relevant for a certain policy decision, and why, could reinvigorate voters' interest and motivation to act.

In a Newsweek magazine editorial entitled, "Those Darned Readers," one conservative media critic stated: "The values of accountants and plumbers don't matter much to customers, but those of reporters are crucial" (Leo, 2000, February 24). In a separate editorial, Leo suggested that the news media should fret much more about "class attitudes and the homogenization of opinion in the
newsroom” (Leo, 2000, May 1). Class attitudes are not the singular territory of either liberals or conservatives. Relationship of class attitudes and other kinds of biases to the homogenized newspaper discourses are complex and often “invisible,” frequently not recognizing the power of linguistic conventions to render biases into diversionary solutions to social (for instance education) problems, or more problematically, to recursively define problems as inherent to individuals or groups (Blasi, 2000, May 19; Irvine and Gal, 1996; Kozol, 1992; Macedo, 2000; Schudson, 1996). As to education coverage, editors and reporters must question whether they intended to sustain perceptions that poverty is a choice, or that literacy solves poverty, or that class and language-specific literacy should be entitlements to resources and power.

Arguing for a possible change in the Times’ literacy ideology were two opinion columns published subsequent to the end of Reading by 9. One columnist questioned the relevance of high stakes “normed” testing not congruent with the backgrounds of most students; the other questioned the tendency to blame teachers for education outcomes tied more to overcrowding, old textbooks, and other infrastructure and funding disparities at inner-city and rural schools (Banks, 2001, January 28; McNamara, 2001, January 29).

While the Times’ may, in the 18 months since this study ended, have repositioned its coverage of literacy and education, there has yet to be a comprehensive look at the roots of the continuously unresolved systemic inequities in education. It would take rare courage to examine the complex interrelationships among education discourses and the unequal distribution of knowledge and political and economic advantage. One examination might
explore the intersection of political advantage to legislators and government officials who made education the “first, second and third priorities” while maintaining the sacred cow status of, and adding meaningless carrot and stick models for invariably asymmetrical state school funding protocols. Another might explore the economic advantage to textbook publishers and others on the “winning” side of highly controversial pedagogical or curricular disagreements, whose systems are nevertheless vaunted in Times’ coverage as cures to education ills. Another examination might address the economic advantage to the news media for naturalizing majority opinions about immigrants and bilingual education, and the disgraceful use of divisive social class, race, and ethnicity (e.g. the “culture of poverty” premise in the Times’ writing) imagery to scapegoat the children of the poor. Without such public examinations, the questions about, at least, the public education and literacy discourses remain – whose interests are represented as superior, and whose interests are liminalized, ignored or erased, and why (Ridley-Thomas, 2000).

**Opportunities for Learning Equity.**

In what ways can pedagogy and curriculum more effectively support equitable education opportunities among those who are otherwise vilified? Educators also have codes of ethics and principles, articulated in professional organization statements (such as the example below), schools of education mission statements, and sometimes school district or individual school mission statements (Appendix U). These tend to focus on responsibilities.
PRINCIPLE I
Commitment to the Student

The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the student, the educator—
1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning.
2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student's access to varying points of view.
3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.
4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.
5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.
6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, unfairly—
   a. Exclude any student from participation in any program
   b. Deny benefits to any student
   c. Grant any advantage to any student

(Excerpt, National Education Association Code of Ethics of the Education Profession. Appendix L.)

But historical education structures and processes and educators' speech and actions are also conditioned by personal and collective viewpoints and diverse language and role socializations, and are too often overwhelmed by over populated classrooms, under-resourced schools, and bureaucratic demands. Even the best-trained and experienced teachers' ideals and good intentions may be swayed or even lost; among the under-trained, least experienced, or those not having the highest ideals and intentions for each student, the adage "when a fish stinks, it stinks from the head" applies. How can a leadership ethic be engendered in each educator?
Reciprocal processes of cognition, talk, and actions in classrooms – more magnanimous possibilities.

Cazden (1988) addresses how speech “unites the cognitive and the social,” drawing from Piaget (1950, 1980), Vygotsky (1978) and others to explicate the instructional effects of providing opportunities for alternative forms of discourse. Preconceptions about the relationships of language, poverty, and learning influenced educators’ as well as journalists’ approaches to new information (i.e. literacy/education reform) in the present study. What are alternative ways of considering the sources and implications of such knowledge as other than a zero sum proposition?

While educator-participants in this study acknowledged and generally took responsibility for responding to the complex lives of students and the complicated lives of parents, all educator-participants, some more than others, used the labels “high” and “low” when referring to children in schools. This characterization is also common among teachers in at least one Masters/credentialling program in my experience. The implications of this are monumental. Regarding teachers’ understanding of human cognition, students are high or low compared to what? What are the myriad differences in how high/low students are treated? Ask any parent if she or he ever refers to her or his own child as “high” or “low.” These and similar categorizations are formed and re-formed in multiple institutional and social domains and processes, but are explicitly authorized and demonstrated in structures, processes, and protocols of schools (Blasi, 2000, May 19; Davidson, 1996; Erickson, 1993; Gee, 1991; Kozol, 1992; Mehan, 1996; Wink, 1997; Willis, 1977; Wright, 1998).
The sources of the categorical divisions are many, but the issue for educators (journalists and others) is that the problems and challenges of schooling are too often defined according to a high/low dichotomies despite the good intentions of many educators to view each child as an individual. The result of natural or naturalized high/low categories was to precondition problems as solvable according to the purported attributes of those in each category. The high/low schema present in participants', in media, and in bureaucratic language about literacy and education were elaborated through the protocols of schooling, especially testing, behavior standards, and the use of standard-English, to instantiate and reinstantiate, in a closed loop, the logic of the protocols themselves. If so-called gifted children deserve an enriched education then ungifted children do not. If gifted children among the poor are anomalous, then the ungifted majority receive quality of education warranted by their "level," i.e., correctness drills, easy content, little or no social studies or music, art, science, physical education, and few nurses, libraries, librarians, or AP (college preparation) classes, and so on. The linkage of gifted (bright, smart, high) to the idea of deserving, became conflated with middle and upper class values. Despite the troubling inconsistencies between the dichotomies raised by my questions or conceived by the participants themselves, the elaborated high category suggested the natural contrast to the ungifted (low), undeserving, working/lower class category. Yet a few educators did sustain critiques of education asymmetries, primarily through well-integrated examples of principled practice and identity.
Educators' rare critiques of the system tended to revolve around the intersection of what each person could control and take responsibility for, ironically perpetuating a paradox of choice. That is, most educators (and journalists) construed accidents of birth and parent status as a kind of DNA of choice, imbuing their lives with a power that precluded the need to consider the intended or unintended consequences of one's daily routines. But those who questioned the morality, justice, or rationality of education asymmetries expressed their questions as considered actions, or conscious choices to act in specific ways (Cobarrubius, 1983). That is, it is both inexact and misconceived to define people as one defines objects (listing attributes), and that what happens in and of each momentary now is significant to (valuable, evaluated by) not only ourselves, but also those touched by our actions and words (Kierkegaard, 1996).

The action-logic (or thought/speech/action algorithms) of dichotomy results in reproduction of zero sum (high/low, winners/losers, poverty/middle-class) inevitabilities. The potential for other-oriented agency is necessarily conditioned by a number of factors. Aronowitz (1997) states that "our schools have no social or historical vision today" (p. 194). To be sure, the seemingly never-ending cycles of reform seem predicated on an essential ignorance or misrepresentation of the historical relationship of education to economic, political and other social domains (Aronowitz, 1997; Bennet, 1991; Donald, 1991; Gee, 1999; Macedo, 2000; Mehan, 1997). But if the subtle influences of class and identity politics apparent in relationships among explanations and actions in this study are any indication of the power of "vision," the primary task of education leaders (including teachers, parents and students) and more traditional
leadership (e.g. principals, school boards, researchers, and legislators) is to directly confront the influences of class and identity politics discourses in every aspect of so-called public education.

Gee (1991) proposes that all students, mainstream and non-mainstream, be enabled and provided opportunities to critique dominant discourses in order to understand the full implication of the ways in which mastering a standard curriculum is related to gatekeeping (see also Levinson and Holland, 1996). Cazden (1988), Watahomigie & McCarty (1996), Moll & Dworin (1997), Wink (1997) and many others offer concrete responsive pedagogy/practice approaches to supplement teachers' recognition of and reflections on the implications of their own attitudes and practices. Freire's notion is to enable recognition of one's power through critical literacy – posed as education available to all that must be especially concerned about individuals and groups historically disenfranchised in unjust social structures (Freire, 1997). Aronowitz (1997), hooks (1994), Kozol (1992), and Willis (1977) penetrate the articulation of explicit and implicit structures of dominance that rationalize the reproduction of class, race and other asymmetries in and through education.

Stunning and recalcitrant effects of asymmetric power in and through schooling have been addressed throughout this dissertation. Emergent possibilities offered by the authors above are provocatively cast. Aronowitz suggests a suspension of disbelief that innovation will always "become a strategy for achieving old goals in public education" (Aronowitz, 1997, p. 194). His invocation is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee humane, equity-driven actions by educators. hooks has been "inspired by those teachers who have had
the courage to transgress boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning” (hooks, 1997, p. 13). hooks’ direct confrontations of the implications of class, race, gender, and language on education are accessible as a powerful mirror for those who would try to see themselves in it (see also Macedo, 2000). Kozol (1992) relentlessly details the causes and consequences of official neglect on ghettoized schools and on the students, their families and communities. Kozol pressed home the irrefutable truths of reforms castrated by the bureaucratic processes that reproduce the unofficial class structure (see also Fine, 1991; Noddings, 1995, pp. 165-177). Willis (1977) also detailed the causes and consequences of official neglect in a school serving working class “lads” in Britain. Willis found that cultural models held by the instructors, parents and the lads themselves conditioned perceptions of and responses to “choice” in much the same way as choice is paradoxically naturalized (as flowing from parents) by participants in this study.

The common thread among the authors cited in the previous two paragraphs is that such critique may serve to improve both the internal (cognitive potential and psychological) and external (schooling and community) lives of disenfranchised but also mainstream students. It does not demand a zero sum accounting, it is locally oriented, and it requires tempered optimism, in support of educators’ energetic innovation. Two general pedagogical approaches are crucial to the education practice identified here. Both require introduction to the concepts of discourse from the earliest levels of schooling. At primary, middle, and secondary levels, the focus must be on (appropriately leveled) support of students’ meta-awareness of cognition, speech, and action
linkages in personal, social and historical context(s). Information about education in history, producing literacy histories, journaling and conversing about diverse engagements with text, developing literacy plans, critiquing the ethical and social dimensions of literacy and other discourses elemental to lived realities, are each reasonable goals or activities for even young students (Cazden, 1988; Moll and Greenberg, 1990).

In higher education, the focus must be on introducing appropriately structured history of education at the undergraduate level, to include engagement with critical approaches, at least to prospective educators. Not having such an introduction is akin to entering a new land without a map. Introduction, or continued development of the understanding of discourse concepts, as these apply to one's decision to enter the education profession, to recognize the effects of alternative practices, and to prepare for engaging future students in discourse activities such as recommended by Cazden (1988) and others are a must. I expect to continue my own engagement as a professional educator with these recommendations.

"Naturalizing" – how ideology does its work.

There is a renewed and re-emerging literacy ideology formed from dialectic among inverted freedoms and perverted responsibilities premised on deficit views, paternalism, and increasingly narrow constructions of educators' and others' intellectual freedom. Democracy is being re-imagined as control over languages spoken in the home and the school, control over reading and other curricular content, control of teacher and administrator speech, and of
what counts as student learning and achievement. Civic responsibility is being re-imagined as engaging in the establishment of such controls through education policies.

There is no evidence that a virtually singular assimilative curriculum in English, mandated in U.S. public schools from the World War I era to the early 1970s, wiped out achievement disparities among cultural, linguistic, or economic minorities. To the contrary, English only, and/or "basic" education has never been shown to be related to long-term, positive changes in minority achievement and/or economic success. Responsive pedagogy, including bilingual education, efforts toward not-separate but equal education, critical theory introduced to schools of education, and higher education outreach (especially financial aid) to historically underserved populations are credited with achievement changes and increased economic success (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Heath, 1983; Spring 1997; Sue & Padilla, 1986).

When public education is not of, for, and by the increasingly pluralistic public, but organized to repress or oppress diverse views or critique, the concept of being literate constitutes only an a priori condition for class differentiation. More congruent with democratic values and guaranteed freedoms is an expectation from public education for critical literacy, developed from an additive posture toward diversity, on a social justice foundation, to serve as an a priori condition for educator and student agency.
APPENDIX A

Department of Language, Reading and Culture

Dissertation Proposal Approval

Committee member signatures attest to the appropriateness and accuracy of the proposal in content, format, design, language, instrumentation, referencing, and protection of subjects (see UA Advancement to Candidacy form). Please submit this form, appropriately signed, with one copy of the approved proposal to the graduate secretary.

NAME: Christine Lee Cain

Degree Sought: Ph.D.
The Dissertation Committee met on June 24, 1990 and approved the dissertation proposal.

TITLE OF DISSERTATION:
Personal and Public Literacy Discourses in California Education Reform.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN (procedures, data collection, data analysis): (See attached.)

MAJOR Language, Reading and Culture

Note: All three members of the committee representing the major department should sign below if the proposal is approved.

DISSESTATION DIRECTOR: Dr. Teresa L. McCarty

MAJOR COMMITTEE MEMBER: Dr. Luis Moll

MAJOR COMMITTEE MEMBER: Dr. Richard Ruiz

K. Tsianina Lomawaima

MINOR: Anthropology

Note: The minor committee members may waive participation in the dissertation preparation and final oral examination, unless the major department requests participation of one or two members from the minor division. Therefore, members from the minor division should sign below in the space provided for either approvals of waivers.

MINOR COMMITTEE MEMBER: Susan U. Phillips (Participation waived YES or NO)

MINOR COMMITTEE MEMBER: David Olsen, Anthropology Dept. Chair. (Participation waived YES or NO)

MAJOR DEPARTMENT HEAD:
14 July 1999

Christine L. Cain, Ph.D. Candidate

c/o Teresa L. McCarty, Ph.D.

Department of Language, Reading/Culture

Education Building, Room 512A

PO BOX 210069

RE: PERSONAL AND PUBLIC LITERACY DISCOURSES IN CALIFORNIA EDUCATION REFORM

Dear Ms. Cain:

We have received documents concerning your above referenced project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101 (b) (2)] exempt this type of research from review by our Committee.

Please be advised that clearance from academic and/or other official authorities for site(s) where proposed research is to be conducted must be obtained prior to performance of this study. Evidence of this must be submitted to the Human Subjects Committee.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

David G. Johnson, M.D.

Chairman

Human Subjects Committee

DGJ/fs

cc: Department/College Review Committee
October 1, 1999

Ms. Christine Lee Cain

Dear Ms. Cain:

The Committee on Research Studies approved your request to conduct a study with the descriptive title, “Personal and Public Literacy Discourses in California Education Reform,” in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Please send the Committee a list of the schools you select for your sample. Letters will be sent to inform the principals of your study’s approval.

This approval by the Committee is in no way a requirement for district personnel to participate. All participation must be completely voluntary. The anonymity of all data sources must be maintained.

At the conclusion of your study, please send an abstract of the findings to the Committee.

Sincerely,

William Renfroe, Ed.D.
Chairman, Committee on Research Studies

cc: Dr. Teresa L. McCarty, Adviser
September 15, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

Chris Cain is conducting a research study on the relationship between personal views of literacy and literacy practices. I have reviewed her research proposal and recognize its potential to help inform our understanding of literacy issues and efforts to continually improve our students' literacy. Chris has permission to contact principals and teachers to see if they are willing to participate in one to two interviews with her regarding their views on literacy.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Linda Ed.D.
Coordinator, Research and Evaluation
January 26, 2000

Ms. Christine L. Cain

Dear Chris:

It was a pleasure to talk with you about your dissertation research project and to grant authorization for you to seek interviews with principals and teachers in School District. It is understood that the granting of interviews is entirely voluntary, and the anonymity of sources will be maintained.

I'm sure you will enjoy the research involved with this project, and I wish you continued success as you write your dissertation and complete the requirements of the doctoral program.

Sincerely,

Ed.D.
Superintendent

“We Are An Equal Opportunity Employer”
Revised Contact Letter

(Date)

(Name), Principal
Newcomer Center
Address

Dear Mr. (Name):

I have been closely following the political education climate in California, as well as the Los Angeles newspaper coverage of education matters for about the last year, especially the recent Reading by 9 series and news articles. LAUSD has given me permission to contact you. I am engaged in a doctoral research project which includes interviews with school principals, teachers, and journalists, and a review of writing they create or use in their work. My brief biography is on the attached page.

My research goal is to test the idea that the nature of individuals' literacy experiences significantly and reciprocally informs certain of our life choices, and that our beliefs about what literacy means in society arise from our reasoning about these experiences. I am initially interested in asking you about your biographical and professional experiences related to reading and writing, and then engaging in further discussion about how you relate these literacy experiences to choices you make in your life and your work.

I will conduct interviews only with your informed consent, and to insure confidentiality, no names or sources will be used in the dissertation unless you give permission. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please call the Human Subjects Committee at 520-626-0721.

We may be able to complete the interview in one sitting (about 1 to 2 hours, tape-recorded), but the process is not likely to extend to more than two interviews. I will be happy to provide you with any other information you need on which to make your decision. I will call you within about a week of the date of this letter. Thank you in advance for positively considering my request.

Regards.

Christine L. Cain
(Contact information)
The Word Is: Parents

Mothers and fathers are a big part of teaching a child to read. It's not an easy role to play in a busy home.

By SALT BAKES
Thirteen expert

The author and her daughter Brittany read a book aloud before bedtime. Children need practice to master the complex skills needed.

archaeology

The ABCs of helping youngsters achieve literacy — the first skill.


KINDERGARTEN

...are full of vital wisdom, music, and lesson plans for communication and interaction with the written word.

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THE Problem

• There are 1.1 million K through third-grade students in the five-county area (Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside).
• Studies show that about 65% of third graders in this area are not reading at grade level.
• California students scored last in the nation in reading skills.
• There are more students in Los Angeles than in 44 states.
• There are 181 school districts, nearly 4,600 public and private elementary schools and 90 languages spoken.
• 70% of students are Limited English Proficient.
• If children do not learn to read by the third grade, they almost never catch up.
• In grades K-3, children learn to read. After this development period, children read to learn.

THE Vision

• Provide leadership in the creation and implementation of a massive reading initiative that will ensure that children learn to read in English at grade level by the third grade.
• Send a message of urgency and community responsibility through editorial, marketing, and community outreach programs.
• Publish news and feature sections focusing public attention on early literacy, the extent of the problems and possible solutions.
• Bring organizations and individual volunteers together to participate in existing and new reading/literacy programs.
TO OUR COMMUNITY

We All Need to Help Teach Our Children

Reprint of an editorial that appeared in the Los Angeles Times October 18, 1998

Each generation has a duty to teach the next the skills it will need to deal with the challenges and opportunities that will face. We are failing to do so because we are failing to teach our children how to read.

Teaching at least two-thirds of young children in the Los Angeles area are not able to read adequately. In Los Angeles County, more than 150,000 second- and third-grade pupils are poor readers. In Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties, there are 100,000 more.

Yet reading is the basis upon which virtually all other learning depends. And if children do not learn to read by the third grade, they almost never catch up.

Research shows that children who do not learn to read are much more likely to go on drugs, much more likely to go on welfare, much more likely to go to prison and far less likely to get a good job.

Unless we dramatically increase the number of children who learn to read well, we will be in the next five years condemn more than 1 million to lives of poverty and distress.

Failure to teach our children to read is a catastrophe of epic proportions. But it is not inevitable. We can, in fact, teach them to read, and to read well, and shame on us if we don't.

We must replace indifference and discouragement with leadership and action.

Indifference arises from the fact that many of us do not know how bad the situation really is. Discouragement arises from the fact that some of us do know how bad things are.

Leadership

The first thing we need is leadership.

We must stop accepting failure. Ninety-five percent of all children are capable of learning to read. That must become the standard we aim for and achieve.

• That means all parents must expect their children to learn to read and must help them do so. Parents who do not know how to help must seek help, and we must help them get it.

• It means that every reading teacher must be qualified to teach and must be held accountable for how well his or her students read.

• It means that every principal must set measurable goals for improvement in the reading skills of his or her students and then be held accountable for meeting those goals.

• It means that the state of California must require and ensure that every student is tested every year in English. Biblical education must lead to early reading competencies in English.

• It means that administrators about the value and appropriateness of reading tests must be banned from publication. As flawed as they may be, current reading tests, as well as those being considered by the state authorities, are good enough. Holding everyone involved accountable for measurable results is the best guarantee we will actually see significant improvement.

Action

The second thing that is required is action.

• Parents should sit down with their children to begin to set expectations and reinforce progress. In early November, The Times will begin publishing stories, word puzzles and small essays contributed by children—things that parents can do with young children to build reading skills.

• Schoolteachers and administrators should set specific plans of action to ensure that every child has structured, phonics-based reading instruction. Teaching children to love reading in conjunction with a strong grounding in basic symbolic-to-sound-to-meaning skills is wonderful. The so-called "whole language" approach in the absence of phonics-based training is so ineffective for most students that it borders on fraud.

• Businesses, civic groups and others should seek ways to help. Some children need tutors. Some teachers need assistants. Families and libraries need books. Over time, we will publish information to help parents and groups know what they can do to be most helpful. But we hope you won't wait for us. The challenge is so massive we must all help—now.

Commitment

To do our part, The Times announces the launch today of a program we call Reading by 9. It is a multi-faceted effort designed to ensure that every child who is capable learns to read by the third grade.

As part of this effort, The Times will:

• Report in regular Page 1 articles what is working and what is not. It will spotlight those who make significant advances and the will profile guidelines, models, reading lists and other information that parents, community groups and others can use to promote improved reading performance.

• Publish the "Kids' Reading Room"—a full page of features, six days a week starting Nov. 1, that will help children and their parents build reading skills and have fun at the same time.

• Review children's books each week and provide special Times in Education materials for classroom use to help children learn to read.

• Publish reading test scores for every school in the Los Angeles area each year so every parent and educator can see and be held accountable for how well children are learning to read.

• Raise money to buy books, finance tutoring programs and recognize great teachers and students.

The Times itself, between what it will do in the paper and in community activities, is committing more than $5 million in the next five years. We hope other businesses, foundations and civic groups will join us so that we will have many times that to help solve this critical problem.

But it will be the process that will help solve the problem. And if children do not learn to read, the process will not work. We owe this to them, as they will then owe it to those who follow.

MARK H. WILLES, PUBLISHER and MICHAEL PARKS, EDITOR

Special Reprint Section • Page 3 • Los Angeles Times

APPENDIX J

Republican party platform 2000 (excerpt)
Real Education Reform: Strengthening Accountability and Empowering Parents

>"No child in America should be segregated by low expectations . . imprisoned by illiteracy ... abandoned to frustration and the darkness of self-doubt

The question is "Are our schools better off now than they were eight years ago?"

At a time of remarkable economic growth, when a world of opportunity awaits students who are prepared for it. American colleges and universities are offering remedial courses and American businesses are unable to find enough qualified or trainable workers to meet the demand.

< Worst of all, so many of our children, America's most precious asset, are headed toward failure in school, and that will hold them back throughout their lives.

< Republicans desire a better result.

< We believe that every child in this land should have access to a high quality, indeed, a world-class education, and we're determined to meet that goal

It is long past time to debate what works in education. The verdict is in, and our Republican governors provided the key testimony: strong parental involvement, excellent teachers, safe and orderly classrooms, high academic standards, and a commitment to teaching the basics -- from an early start in phonics to mastery of computer technology. Federal programs that fail to support these fundamental principles are sadly out of date and, under the next president, out of time. For dramatic and swift improvement, we endorse the principles of Governor Bush's education reforms, which will

> Raise academic standards through increased local control and accountability to parents, shrinking a multitude of federal programs into five flexible grants in exchange for real, measured progress in student achievement.

> Assist states in closing the achievement gap and empower needy families to escape persistently failing schools by allowing federal dollars to follow their children to the school of their choice.

> Expand parental choice and encourage competition by providing parents with information on their child in school, increasing the number of charter schools, and expanding education savings accounts for use from kindergarten through college.

Help states ensure school safety by letting children in dangerous schools transfer to schools that are safe for learning and by forcefully prosecuting youths who carry or use guns and the adults who provide them

*****************************************************************************

CA REPUBLICAN Platform – 2000 (Excerpt)

Recognizing the current crisis in California education, the Republican Party supports placing priority on basic competence and the ability to reason in fundamental educational skills (phonics-based reading, writing, arithmetic), through strong curricula developed by local school boards. Equally important is teaching the attributes of good citizens, including strong moral character and good judgment. A priority for the CRP is the safety of our students, faculty and staff.
The Inspirational and Empowering Conference Devoted to Teaching Kids to Read

September 18-19, 1999 - Los Angeles Convention Center-South Hall

SCHOOL TEAM BREAKOUT
SESSION TOPICS
Standards, Frameworks and Assessment

Innovation and expansion of how to teach to
start how the impact teaching, what administra-
tion can do to note support and embrace imple-
mentation, the challenges of the new assessment
methods, how to use teams as a tool to get
results.

ST Publisher Selections

Create to use for selecting the right programs
when to look for what to ask for developing a
consensus strategy and selection process for all K-3
classrooms, how to leverage better and ongoing
support from the publisher to ensure training,
development, implementation and follow through.

Effective Implementation

A panel will discuss modes of reading programs
that have been developed, implemented and are
getting results in reading student achievements.

SCHOOL TEAM MEMBERS
BREAKOUT SESSIONS
The Role of the Administrator

How to build creative and innovative work teams in
the school and in the community, building a strong
and cohesive infrastructure to maximize resources
and support through integrating teacher, parent,
community and volunteer efforts for reading.

The Role of the Teacher

Building a stronger K-3 teacher team and integra-
tion of teaching methods and support, how to
build ongoing support for continuous improve-
ment, how to get and integrate additional
resources to provide support for parents, volun-
teers and parents, how to develop natural leader-
ers. All teacher center/certification will be
processed at a booth in the Exhibit hall.

The Role of the Parent

How to develop parent involvement and
support in school and at home for greater student
achievement. Tools, workshops and resources
available (handouts, etc.) Developing plans for the
school year.

VOLUNTEER READERS
CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Volunteers can make a difference by devoting
the hour of time per week to our Southern
California classrooms.

Volunteers can attend remote sessions and a
specific volunteer training session. They will also
have opportunities to gain useful resources
from exhibitors, receive their TS (laminated)
tests and complete information for the required
background check.

The Reading by 9 Staff

Reading by 9 involves virtually every division of The Times. Non-editorial aspects of the program are being implemented by Jan Berk, director of community relations. Reading by 9, and Berta Lopez, who is the program's business manager, under the direction of Bonnie Hill, the newspaper's senior vice president of communications and community relations. The Times' ongoing news coverage and editorials related to Reading by 9 are being coordinated by a number of people at the newspaper under the direction of Editor Michael Parks.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

For more information, please call toll-free:
(877) READBY9

or visit The Times' Web site at:
www.latimes.com/readingby9

Michael Parks
Editor and Executive Vice President, Los Angeles Times

Mark H. Wilks
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Times Mirror and Publisher, Los Angeles Times

"Failure to teach our children to read is a catastrophe of epic proportions. But it is not inevitable. We can, in fact, teach them to read, and to read well, and shame on us if we don't!"

"Unless we dramatically increase the number of children who learn to read well, we will in the next five years consign nearly one million to lives of poverty and distress."

"We must stop accepting failure. Ninety-five percent of all children are capable of learning to read. That must become the standard we aim for and achieve."

"As California's largest newspaper — and one of the few institutions that touches all corners of the Southland — The Times has a responsibility to call attention to the challenges we face and to help our communities in their search for solutions."
Language, Culture: How Schools Cope

Influences Outside the Classroom Can Determine Success or Failure

BY ELAINE WOO

When Araceli High School student Araceli Johnson Lee gets home, her mother has vegetables inside and eggs waiting on the kitchen table. When she stays up late to write a research paper, her mother takes the finished essay. When she goes to the library, her mother arranges her schedule. When she takes a test, her mother helps her study. When she gets home, her mother makes her dinner. When she goes out, her mother makes sure she gets home. When she needs help, her mother helps her. When she needs advice, her mother gives it. When she needs love, her mother gives it.

School student Dorothy Watkins, the son of a petroleum company worker, waits to be a police officer or a nurse. Watkins, though, reads ideas and homework—"it's boring." Sure, his father will ground him for a week if he gets a B grade. But what about a B grade in this family? Down at San Diego's Hoover High, there's no B grade. There's only an A or a C. The culture of the school is tough. They wear heavy makeup—"grade hair." They call it—"the hair carrying schoolbooks. For their academically driven parents, they've created a special issue: "School Girls." What gives Lee her love? Why does Watkins kill off schoolwork? Why? Please see CULTURE.

APPENDIX N

NOVEMBER ELECTION PROPOSITIONS

INITIATIVE STATUTE—ILLEGAL AliENS—PUBLIC SERVICES, VERIFICATION, AND REPORTING

PROPOSITION 187

PROPOSED LAW

The People of California find and declare as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings and Declaration.

That they have suffered and are suffering economic hardship caused by the presence of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have suffered and are suffering personal injury and damage caused by the criminal conduct of illegal aliens in this state.

That they have a right to the protection of their government from any person or persons entering this country unlawfully.

Therefore, the People of California declare their intention to provide for cooperation between their agencies of state and local government with the federal government, and to establish a system of required notification by and between such agencies to prevent illegal aliens in the United States from receiving benefits or public services in the State of California.


Section 113 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

113. Any person who manufactures, distributes or sells false documents to conceal the true citizenship or resident alien status of another person is guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for five years or by a fine of seventy-five thousand dollars ($75,000).

SECTION 3. Use of False Citizenship or Resident Alien Documents: Crime and Punishment.

Section 114 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

114. Any person who uses false documents to conceal his or her true citizenship or resident alien status is guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for five years or by a fine of twenty-five thousand dollars ($25,000).

SECTION 4. Law Enforcement Cooperation with INS.

Section 834b is added to the Penal Code, to read:

834b. (a) Every law enforcement agency in California shall fully cooperate with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding any person who is arrested if he or she is suspected of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws.

(b) With respect to any such person who is arrested, and suspected of being present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws, every law enforcement agency shall do the following:

(1) Attempt to verify the legal status of such person as a citizen of the United States, an alien lawfully admitted as a permanent resident, an alien lawfully admitted for a temporary period of time or as an alien who is present in the United States in violation of immigration laws. The verification process may include, but shall not be limited to, questioning the person

...
Appendix O

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS-ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS-INITIATIVE STATUTE [Approved by the electors June 2, 1998]

This initiative measure is submitted to the people in accordance with the provisions of Article II, Section 8 of the Constitution.

Proposition 227 PROPOSED LAW

SECTION 1. Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 300) is added to Part 1 of the Education Code, to read:

CHAPTER 3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

Article 1. Findings and Declarations
300. The People of California find and declare as follows:

(a) Whereas, The English language is the national public language of the United States of and of the State of California, is spoken by the vast majority of California residents, so the leading world language for science, technology, and international business, being the language of economic opportunity; and
(b) Whereas, Immigrant parents are eager to have heir children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and
(c) Whereas, The government and the public schools of California have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of California's children, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society, and of these skills, literacy in the English language is among the most important; and
(d) Whereas, The public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children; and
(e) Whereas, Young immigrant children can easily acquire full fluency in a new language, such as English, if they are heavily exposed to that language in the classroom at an early age.
(f) Therefore, It is resolved that: all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible.

Article 2. English Language Education
305. Subject to the exceptions provided in Article 3 (commencing with Section 310), all children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. In particular, this shall, require that all children be placed in English language classrooms. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year. Local schools shall be permitted to place in the same classroom English learners of different ages but whose degree of English proficiency is similar. Local schools shall be encouraged to mix together in the same classroom English learners from different native-language groups but with the same degree of English fluency. Once English learners have acquired a good working knowledge of English, they shall be transferred to English language mainstream classrooms. As much as possible, current supplemental funding for English learners shall be maintained, subject to possible modification under Article 8 (commencing with Section 335) below.
APPENDIX P

SUPPLEMENTAL DECLARATION OF KENJI HAKUTA

(note: I am indebted to Diane August, Claude Goldenberg, Daria Witt and Mike Broom for their help in preparing this declaration)

1. I am a professor of education at Stanford University. I have previously filed a declaration in this case and a copy of my vita is attached thereto.

2. I was chair of a committee at the National Research Council (NRC), which is the operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine and the National Academy of Engineering, that examined the research base on the education of limited-English proficient children, referred to in the report as English-language learners. The nine-member committee was appointed by the NRC to represent knowledge from diverse disciplines. The NRC committee included notable scholars in the areas of linguistics, psychology, sociology, program evaluation, assessment, teacher education, and effective schooling. Committee members, as is customary with National Academy committees, also represented a diversity of perspectives regarding the most effective means of educating language minority children. To ensure that the report conformed to the highest standards of scientific rigor in an area that has been very politicized, the report was peer reviewed by nine outside experts prior to publication, and the review process was overseen by an external monitor (also appointed by NRC). Charles Glenn, in his deposition, identifies himself as one of the nine reviewers. In their declarations for the defendants, several experts refer to this report. These include Porter (paragraphs 9 and 10), Rossell (footnote 8), Gersten (paragraph 21), and Glenn (paragraph 9).

3. In this declaration, I will make four points.

Point 1. Declarants' citations regarding the NRC report misrepresent its main findings. They claim the NRC report indicates use of the native
language is an ineffective instructional strategy, whereas in fact, the report finds this technique to be an effective approach. Declarants espouse an extremely selective, narrow and limited view of the education of language minority students which fails to address access of students to academic content. They have focused on whether native language use results in better or worse outcomes than some form of English-only program, and within that, on evaluation studies that define outcomes as English language and reading, and occasionally, mathematics. They have not addressed the essential areas of subject area knowledge and skills across the content areas (e.g., science, social studies, etc.)

Point 2. I will address the question of whether there is a sound theoretical basis on which structured English immersion programs in California can be developed. I will examine declarants' claim as it relates both to programs in other countries as well as in the United States. My conclusion will be that there is no defensible theory base to the programs prescribed by Proposition 227.

Point 3. I will examine the extent to which programs resembling those proposed under Proposition 227 will be successful in ensuring that LEP students learn English and attain high levels of subject matter skills and knowledge. I will show that the outcomes for students placed in programs similar to those proposed by Proposition 227 are alarmingly poor, hardly worthy of state-wide prescription, and harmful to students.

Point 4. I will point to several major misrepresentations of research in the declarations offered by the defendants.

Declaration relative to Point 1: Misrepresentation of the NRC Report Findings.

4. On the question of effectiveness of programs that use the native language to educate English language learners, the defendants either misconstrue or fail to understand the NRC report's conclusions. Indeed, the NRC report found evidence in favor of native language use. It is inaccurate to characterize the report as inconclusive on this point.

The committee focused its review on the major evaluation studies conducted over the past 20 years including three large-scale national evaluations of programs as well as five key reviews of smaller-scale program evaluations.
Bars of the Mind

Prisons are filled with men and women who cannot read. Their reading difficulties cripple their possibilities upon release and also put their children at risk of becoming another generation of poor readers. The inability to read of course does not condemn one to a life of crime, but the correlation cannot be ignored.

This and other long-term consequences of illiteracy prompted the development of Reading by 9. The Times' effort to encourage all children to become competent readers by the end of third grade, or age 9. Nearly two out of three Southern California third-graders fail to read at grade level. Research shows that many problem readers never catch up after the fourth grade and are handicapped for life.

The Times' continuing commitment includes the debut in the Sunday Metro section of a new weekly Reading Page, which features advice from experts, tips for parents, reading events around the region, opportunities to tutor and recommendations for library books.

The best crime prevention investment is a library. Reading failure is one likely cause for the frustration and anger that result in delinquent behavior, according to a 1992 study of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice. Research also shows that when reading skills improve, recidivism declines.

The California Youth Authority, which incarcerates minors convicted of crimes, will not recommend parole for any ward who has not earned a high school diploma or passed the test for a general equivalency diploma, as the Times reports today. The Youth Authority teaches all of its wards, even those confined to a one-person cell for punishment. Most read far below grade level.

In adult prisons, 46% of inmates can't read well enough to hold a job, according to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey. The prison population represents the nation's single highest concentration of illiterate adults, says Jonathan Kozol, author of "PRaise of Slow". All California prisons offer literacy programs and classes, which are encouraged but not required. At the federal level, the U.S. Justice Department requires adult inmates to attend classes and earn high school equivalency degrees. Those who refuse face assignment to the lowest-paying prison jobs and perhaps disciplinary action or transfer. Similar incentives should be instituted at the state level.

At the Bedford Hills Women's Correctional Facility in New York, mothers and their young children participate in the federally funded Even Start Family Literacy demonstration project. The maximum-security prison, one of five in the nation where infants and preschoolers are allowed to live with their mothers or visit overnight, teaches mothers how to read and helps their children develop reading readiness skills such as learning the alphabet. Mothers also learn how to help their youngsters.

Mothers who are separated from their children are encouraged to tape-record stories. The tapes and accompanying storybooks are sent to their sons and daughters. Similar storybook projects are offered at prisons in New Jersey, Illinois, Florida and other states. California should expand a San Quentin project that allows inmate fathers to tape-record stories for their kids.

In some prisons, parents can help break the cycle of illiteracy. If they can learn to read, if they can learn to help their sons and daughters, their children can avoid becoming tomorrow's prisoners.

Comic books, once reviled by parents and teachers, gain credibility in schools as a way of motivating students and packing a wallop for literacy. The genre offers a surprisingly challenging vocabulary, one expert says.

**By DUKE HELFAND**

Hey, Mom, you might want to think twice before yanking that comic book out of junior’s hands. Sure, there are burning skulls, hacked-off arms and gun-toting goons. But here’s a piece of news that may give you pause. A researcher at Cornell University says that comic books have more challenging words than prime-time television shows, conversation between college graduates—and even some presidential discussions during Watergate.

Comics may be the Rodney Dangerfield of literature, but they also pack a superhero’s Kapow! when it comes to literacy.

“I think you’re getting pretty meaty stuff [in comic books],” said Donald P. Hayes, a Cornell University sociologist and expert on the content of reading materials, including comic books. Although most teachers might shudder at the thought of “Superman” or “Wonder Woman” as challenging classroom material, some educators are discovering the upside. They are using comic books—the wholesome variety, of course—to motivate their students and boost vocabulary skills.

For instance, one school librarian in South Los Angeles posts “Captain America,” MAD magazine and other flashy titles at the front door as a way of enticing students. And a sixth-grade teacher in the San Fernando Valley uses comic books to teach his students about plot structure, setting and other literary conventions.

“What if comic books are named comic books. They are a serious approach to expressing ideas and concepts,” said Sherry Kerr, an instructional consultant with the Los Angeles Educational Partnership, a nonprofit organization that helps schools adopt reforms. As part of her job, Kerr helps classes create comic books.

“The format is so valuable,” she said. “We need to seize it and bring it back to the realm of education.”

The research may provide the justification. Comic books fare surprisingly well in a computer analysis of written and oral language by Hayes, a...
**What Is the API?**

California's Academic Performance Index is the cornerstone of Gov. Gray Davis' push to hold schools accountable for student performance. The API includes both a numerical score for each school and rankings of 1 to 10 to show how the school compares with other schools statewide and with schools that have similar enrollments. This is the second release of the statewide rankings. In October, the state reported which schools had met improvement targets set when the initial rankings were unveiled in January 2000. The API summarizes the performance of 7,000 schools statewide on the 2000 Stanford 9, a standardized basic skills test that was given last spring to about 4.3 million students.

The scores will once again be used to set improvement goals and will form a base for determining whether schools qualify for future rewards or sanctions. This fall, schools will learn whether they met their academic goals. Starting in 2002, the API is expected to encompass the scores of tests based on California's English/language arts standards. The year after that, the state plans to add scores from math tests geared to the standards.

Under state law, the index in future years will also include a high school exit exam and attendance and graduation rates. For now, the only component in place is results on the Stanford 9, which were used to set improvement goals last spring and used a seven-step formula to obtain a score between 200 and 1,000. The national percentile rank (NPR) for each student tested was used to make the calculation. The percentages of students scoring within each of five NPR performance levels, called performance bands, were weighted and combined to produce a summary result for each content area.

**How the API Was Computed**

State officials took each school's Stanford 9 scores from last spring and used a seven-step formula to obtain a score between 200 and 1,000. The national percentile rank (NPR) for each student tested was used to make the calculation. The percentages of students scoring within each of five NPR performance levels, called performance bands, were weighted and combined to produce a summary result for each content area. To satisfy the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999, officials set a statewide API performance target of 800 out of 1,000. The annual growth target for a school is 5% of the range between a school's 2000 API and the statewide performance target of 800. That number is then added to the 2000 API to compute the 2001 API target. For schools with a 2000 API of 781 to 799, the annual growth target is 1 point. An asterisk (*) indicates that a school is at or above 800; any school that maintains an API of 800 or higher is eligible for rewards.

**How to Read These Tables**

- The first column is a statewide ranking, on a scale of 1 to 10, among schools statewide and with schools that have similar enrollment numbers. This is the second release of the statewide rankings. In October, the state reported which schools had met improvement targets set when the initial rankings were unveiled in January 2000. The API summarizes the performance of 7,000 schools statewide on the 2000 Stanford 9, a standardized basic skills test that was given last spring to about 4.3 million students.
- The second column is a numerical score for each school, with 1 representing the bottom 10% of schools and 10 the top 10%. All elementary schools are ranked together, as are middle schools and high schools.
- The third column is a second ranking from 1 to 10 comparing the school with a group of 100 other schools that are similar in certain regards, such as poverty rate, the number of English-language learners, pupil mobility, pupil ethnicity and percentage of teachers with emergency credentials. A school could have a statewide ranking of 4, below average, but a similar-schools ranking of 8, well above average.
- The final column lists the target score for the next API report, due in the fall. A school's growth target is calculated by taking 5% of the range between a school's 2000 API and the statewide performance target of 800. That number is then added to the 2000 API to compute the 2001 API target. For schools with a 2000 API of 781 to 799, the annual growth target is 1 point. An asterisk (*) indicates that a school is at or above 800; any school that maintains an API of 800 or higher is eligible for rewards.

**Main story, A3**

How the API Was Computed

State officials took each school's Stanford 9 scores from last spring and used a seven-step formula to obtain a score between 200 and 1,000. The national percentile rank (NPR) for each student tested was used to make the calculation. The percentages of students scoring within each of five NPR performance levels, called performance bands, were weighted and combined to produce a summary result for each content area. To satisfy the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999, officials set a statewide API performance target of 800 out of 1,000. The annual growth target for a school is 5% of the range between a school's API and 800. For example, a school with a 2000 API of 500 is 300 points below the statewide target; 5% of 300 is 15 points, so that school's goal for the 2001 API would be 515.

Of the state's 8,000 schools, 7,000 will be ranked in the API. Among schools not included were those with fewer than 100 students and alternative schools.
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**APPENDIX S cont.**
APPENDIX T

AJA CODE OF ETHICS [Excerpts]

Respect for truth and the public’s right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to

- Honesty
- Fairness
- Independence
- Respect for the rights of others

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.

2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.

3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source’s motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.

4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.

5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.

6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.

8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person’s vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.

9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

10. Do not plagiarise.

11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.

12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

APPENDIX U

Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

(Excerpt)

PRINCIPLE I
Commitment to the Student
The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the student, the educator--
1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning.

2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student's access to varying points of view.

3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.

4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.

6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, unfairly--
   a. Exclude any student from participation in any program
   b. Deny benefits to any student
   c. Grant any advantage to any student

7. Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

   Shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

-- Adopted by the NEA 1975 Representative Assembly

Source: http://www.nea.org/aboutnea/code.html
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