

# Bringing Voices Out of the Hall: The Voices Project

Nancy Newsom

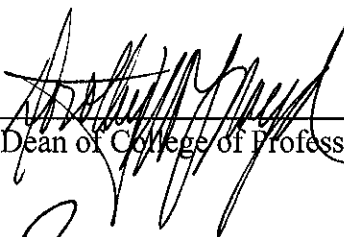
Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education

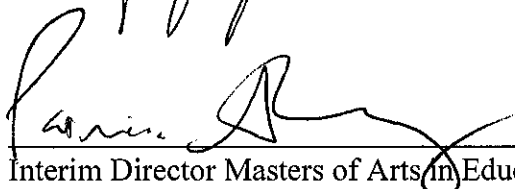
© Nancy Newsom, 2002

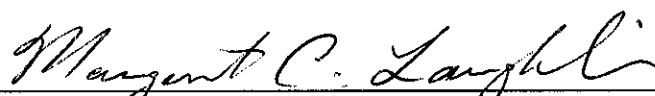
California State University, Monterey Bay  
May, 2002

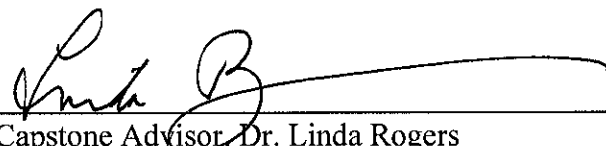
Bringing Voices Out of the Hall: The Voices Project  
Nancy Newsom

Approval signatures:

 5/31/02  
Dean of College of Professional Studies, Dr. Dorothy Lloyd

 May 30, 2002  
Interim Director Masters of Arts in Education Program, Dr. Patricia Whang

 May 29, 2002  
Thesis Advisor, Dr. Margaret C. Laughlin,

 May 29, 2002  
Capstone Advisor, Dr. Linda Rogers

## Voces en el Salón

(Maestra, como le digo)  
estas preguntas no aplican a mi  
    estás preguntas no son pertinentes  
    *no voy a responder a ellas*

Me esta preguntando las preguntas incorrectas de “poder”

Frustrados, nos cerramos, y damos las espalda  
los brazos cruzados sobre el pecho  
hombros concordad contra el origen.  
Pero “buenos estudiantes” dan atención al maestro  
sea lo que sea.  
Golpeada hasta rendir, y devolvemos la pregunta:  
*di nos, ¿que es la repuesta?*

Enséñanos de quien tiene el poder  
apresado hasta que entendamos  
“lo significado”  
de su discusión

¿me oíste decir que tengo dolor?  
¿me oíste decir que no creo en que nadie va a escuchar?  
¿me oíste explicar porque mi idea de poder  
    es diferente de suyo?

Yo tendré el poder cuando lo que digo  
les oirán  
sin que alguien me diga  
“eso no es lo significado.”

njb 10.01

## **Voices in the Classroom**

(Teacher, how do I tell you)  
these questions don't apply to me  
these questions aren't relevant  
*I'm not going to respond to them*

you're asking us the wrong questions about "power"

Frustrated, we close off, turning away  
arms crossed against the chest  
shoulders squared against the source.  
But "good students" give attention to the teacher  
no matter what.  
Beaten into submission, we turn the question back:  
*tell us, what is the answer?*

Teach us about who has power  
by pressing until we get  
"the point"  
of your discussion.

did you hear me say that I hurt?  
did you hear me say I don't believe anyone will listen?  
did you hear me explain why my idea of power is  
different from yours?

I will have power when what I say  
is heard  
without someone telling me  
"that's not the point."

njb 10/01

## Acknowledgements

Nothing of worth is accomplished by a single person. I feel this project is of great worth, especially because of the learning still forthcoming.

Above all, I give thanks to the forces of life that have led me to this joyful work.

Forever, I give thanks to my daughters, grown and flown, who have accepted me and encouraged my risk-taking for as long as they have known me. JulieAnne and Jesska, you will always be part of the energy that drives me to seek what is right.

To my mother, Phyllis Rayl, I give thanks for your endless encouragement and faith.

Personally, intellectually and professionally I thank Peggy Laughlin for her insight, patience, encouragement, and true friendship. Peggy, thank you for the sparkle, the smiles, and the winces that let me know I'd hit a nerve. You represent to me all that is good and worthwhile in the professional community, and your encouragement and enthusiasm have forever impacted my life.

In the academic world of CSUMB, I have appreciated the support of Kani Blackwell and Claudia Peralta-Nash, as well as my Capstone advisor Linda Rogers. For professional encouragement, I thank Mike Uppman and Paula Mitchell.

But without the honesty, acceptance, courage and vulnerability of the beautiful young men and women who come and go through my classroom door, I would not have known, or known to care. Thank you all, and bless you for your mark on my life. May you be blessed with a richness of spirit that will heal forever.

Bringing Voices Out of the Hall: The Voices Project  
Nancy Newsom  
California State University, Monterey Bay  
May, 2002

Abstract

A majority of incarcerated youth in California are members of marginalized cultures, whose experiences in schooling have left them with poor literacy skills. These kids deserve and need an aggressive, affirming, interactive literacy program in court school which draws upon their personal experiences and cultures. They need to discuss and explore their beliefs and values, write about their discoveries and experiences for the purpose of making themselves known (to themselves and others), and learn to strengthen their reading strategies using familiar language and common knowledge.

The purpose of my action research is to examine the feasibility of creating a classroom writers' workshop which includes dialogue and process-based writing, culminating in publication for a specific audience. I hope that the workshop will bring an affirmed sense of self to these kids at the same time that they get a glimpse of real purposes for literacy: emancipation and inclusion. I hope that the workshop will increase the literacy skills and strengthen the reading strategies of students who are in danger of being continually oppressed and marginalized in our literacy-rich society.

My findings were encouraging, even though the study was limited to a one-week workshop. Actual writing skills improved in terms of the sentence complexity attempted, while the use of computers provided extra challenge. The most noteworthy result was the gain in enthusiasm and confidence for writers who wanted to express their perspective to the target audience: the probation department. The participants expressed themselves very well, and the product inspired enthusiastic response from many adults in the probation and education fields. The enthusiasm and efficacy affected the classroom behavior of the participants, and some realized and verbalized new options for their own futures as adults: mentoring youngsters like themselves.

## Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1 - 18
Setting	2
Background	4
Purpose	6
Questions	7
Theoretical Framework	9 - 12
Critical pedagogy	9
Emancipatory pedagogy	9
Cultural relevance	11
Socially Meaningful Learning and the ZPD	11
Workshop Design	12
Origin and Influence of The Voices Project on the Method	13
Scope of Project	14
Defining Terms	15
Conclusion	17
Organizational Framework	18
 Chapter Two: Literature Review	 19 – 36
Court School Education	19
Research Paradigm	20
Goals	21
Pedagogy in Practice	23
Overcoming the Past: Bicultural Student Experiences	24
Bicultural Learners	27
Developing Language and Literacy	30
Personal Identity and Voice	32
Conclusion	35
 Chapter Three: Methodology	 37 - 60
Establishing the Workshop: When, Where, Who	38
Day One	40
Political Ideology	40
Housekeeping	41
Discussion	42
Developing Faith in Writing	43
Community Needs	45
Day Two	46
Discussion	46
Stimulating Writing	47
Community	48
Day Three	48
Discussion and Writing	48
Developing Writers	49

Day Four	50
Discussion and Mini-Lessons	50
A Writing Community	51
Participant-Instigated Mini-Lesson	52
A Contented Community	53
Day Five	54
Mini-Lesson	54
The Effect on One Participant	54
Ownership	55
Extensions	56
Community of Writers	56
A Larger Dialogue Begun	57
A Very Real Need for Voice	58
Considerations	59
Gathering the Pieces	60
 Chapter Four: Data Analysis	 61 - 81
Participant Writing	62
Structure and Mechanics	62
Table 1	
Content	64
Sense of efficacy (before)	64
How not to treat juveniles	66
Program designs	67
A shift in personal paradigm	68
Effect of the project (after)	70
Suggestions for the program design	71
Field Notes	72
Attitude and Behavior	72
Community	74
Teaching Writing	75
The Teacher's Role and Benefits	78
The Larger Dialogue	79
Fallout	80
Effects	81
 Chapter Five: Interpretation	 82 - 101
Addressing the Questions of this Study	82
Creating a Sense of Engagement in	
Incarcerated Bicultural Students	83
A learning community	84
Cultural relevance	85
A Relevant Writing Program for Adolescent Learners	87
Literacy and language skills	87
Adolescents in the zone of proximal development	88
Political and Public Writing Afford a Unique Opportunity	89
Codification	89



Language of hope	90
A sense of place in an impersonal space	92
Our stated goal	93
Implications for the Classroom: Critical and Emancipatory Paradigms	94
Teacher Preparation	96
Research Recommendations	99
Teaching (and Learning) as Political Choice	100

## References

Appendix A	Monterey County Office of Education Expected Student Learning Results
Appendix B	Informed Assent/Consent Document
Appendix C	Survey Instrument: Before- and After-Workshop Prompts
Appendix D	Before-Workshop Response Transcripts
Appendix E	Workshop Product Rough Draft
Appendix F	After-Workshop Response Transcripts
Appendix G	Field Notes
Appendix H	Walters' Cognitive Distortions

## Chapter One: Introduction

If traditional methods haven't taught Johnny how to read or write by the time he's fifteen, there has to be something missing. What does Johnny need that he hasn't found in his schooling, so far? If Johnny is spending a week to three months incarcerated in a juvenile hall in the United States, his court school teachers have a unique opportunity to make a big difference in his attitude about his literacy. How can this be done?

This study is based on an emancipatory approach to literacy that utilizes a meaningful classroom writing program, including a constructivist discussion model and the writing process, for incarcerated bicultural juveniles. It is hoped that this specific workshop process will provide students with a sense of the usefulness of literacy for personal emancipation, and an inspiration to develop their skills further.

The classroom methodology discussed is based on a critical paradigm, which requires an ongoing observation-reflection-adaptation cycle on the part of the classroom teacher, as well as an openness to discovering the learning needs and strengths of learners from a myriad of backgrounds, cultural and linguistic. The reflection is not only in terms of the efficacy of a lesson, but more importantly in terms of power and ownership. The necessary *control* of a teacher within the classroom must be separated from the political *power* the teacher holds as a member of a privileged group (educated, and most likely of a middle-class or otherwise dominant background). The critical paradigm demands a reflective political awareness and modeling on the part of the classroom teacher, demonstrating an equitable dialogue among all parties involved in learning and the exchange of ideas.

The purpose of an emancipatory approach is to encourage and facilitate learners in developing skills and strategies which will enable them to become actively involved in a changing, global society. A learner who understands that he or she owns his or her learning and has a right to a voice is empowered to explore, discover, and participate in any necessary social dialogue. For incarcerated bicultural juveniles this could be a life-changing awareness.

### *Setting*

Juan walks from his unit in juvenile hall to classroom three with his hands behind his back, following others with the same color shirt in a single file line. A uniformed staff member shouts, "No talking. I'll give you a check if I hear that one more time." A check would knock Juan one day backwards in a three-day progression towards a precious hour out of his cell – spent in the day room – and the right to call home, collect. As he steps into the classroom he quickly glances around to acclimate himself. Maps and file cabinets line walls, two large tables house six computers, and in the middle of the room fifteen desks are arranged in small groups of three or four. "Sit wherever you want," calls out a White woman who looks old enough to be a mother to any student in the room. She's sitting on her desk and greets most students as they enter, using names and asking questions that seem to be friendly.

When probation staff has guided all fifteen students into the room and locked the door, she begins talking loudly right away. "Okay, where are we? You're writing a letter of advice. Be sure to explain yourself clearly: remember, your reader doesn't have the same experiences or ideas that you do. You want anybody to understand what you have to say...." Juan watches her move, passing out paper and folders and giving directive

gestures with her hand as she talks. She directs students to turn toward the center of their groups, taps feet off of chairs and points to the floor; she reminds some students not to look at others across the room with a gesture of her hands at her face. The teacher stops at the group where Juan sits, and she squats down between Juan and Boyd, a student Juan recognized from school outside of juvenile hall. She asks Boyd if he is clear about the assignment. He says he is, reminding her of the work he'd done yesterday. "Good, that's what I thought. I need you to explain what's going on, to Juan." She turns to Juan. "You're Juan, right? Hi, I'm Nancy Newsom." She shakes his hand. "You're coming in the middle of an assignment. This class has been working on it for three days. Boyd will catch you up. Read what's on the chalk board, then ask these guys any questions you have, and make them explain themselves. I'll be back in a minute to see what questions you still have. You'll be doing a freewrite today – don't stress at all."

She proceeds with guiding the other fourteen individuals to a serious working period, and she keeps an eye on how Juan interacts with his peers and his blank piece of paper. Within minutes, she sees that Boyd has shown Juan what the assignment looks like, indicated the directions on the chalk board, and she smiles when she hears Boyd recite what was a hard-learned lesson for himself: "Don't correct anything, just write what you think. It'll be good, you'll see. Just start, and keep writing." Juan seems to be following what his peer is saying, and he looks at the board long enough to indicate that he's reading it. Then he sits with his blank paper, drumming his pencil on the desk and watching the others at his table.

*Background*

I teach language arts in a detention facility for juvenile offenders in the Central Coast area of California. A vast majority of the students are Latino males between the ages of twelve and seventeen who have been arrested for gang- or drug-related activity, or violation of probation (which can include the charge of “gangster rap music found in bedroom”). Most of these young men are fluent in English, but many have grown up in Spanish-speaking homes. Scores on commercial reading tests indicate that the reading levels are generally between second and sixth grade. Many of these students have not been in school regularly for most of their academic lives: they have been suspended or expelled, or they have opted for truancy and drugs, or their families are migrant and the kids slip through the cracks.

Within one class period I need to assess a student’s literacy levels, attitudes about school, and personal culture. If I do not have an understanding of all of these elements, I will not be educating the student; instead, I will simply be functioning as a curriculum fountain with no idea of whether or not a student is learning or can learn what I present. When I talk to a student in our first meeting, I find out about previous schooling and attitudes toward classrooms and teachers. I ask about their reading interests and accomplishments, and I have a writing sample of some sort to guide direct instruction. This information supplements the assessment information that was gained during the student’s intake session, which included a rudimentary language assessment score (PIAT).

Some of these young men claim that they can’t read, and their writing is labored, resembling chicken scratches in the dirt. I am told by far too many, “I haven’t been in

school in years. They won't let me in. They don't want me there." And yet if I pursue the conversation, I will uncover many hidden talents and abilities, strengths with which this young man has navigated through a life filled with tragic obstacles. It is primarily this type of young man to whom I address my research and concern. Our schooling structure has left him abandoned, isolated from the mainstream, and without literacy skills. I understand that expulsion comes only with certain egregious acts, but when he was first expelled, how old was he, and what brought him to make the choices and take the actions that he did?

I believe that any youngster in kindergarten through fourth grade who engages in dangerous or inappropriate acts which endanger the class or disrupt the learning environment is actually calling out for help. Some kids need help at home with abusive or neglectful situations. Some kids need protection from bullies at school, home, or in between. Some kids need help navigating the vast difference between what school expects of them and what their local community expects of them. And some need skills and assistance in translating from their home language to the one used at school. But as teachers are increasingly under pressure to guide their classes to good scores on standardized tests, this kind of help and support is hard to come by. Further, teachers who have been in the field for more than a few years were probably not taught about cultural competence and all the subskills that are a part of creating an inclusive classroom. We have classrooms filled with kids from a wide range of backgrounds, with anything but homogeneous needs. Yet teachers are under pressure to put the curriculum before the learners, so needs go unmet, becoming festering personal sores. And once the pattern of

disenfranchisement has begun, it can become a dangerous slope which leads some kids to a classroom in juvenile hall.

I believe that many of these kids have opted out of cooperation with more than one system, but for a common reason: they don't sense reciprocity between the larger culture and their personal or home culture. In this opting out they have opened themselves to dangerous social decisions as well as to important functioning decisions.

### *Purpose*

Given these conditions, I suggest the following:

1. All of these students are adolescents and thus striving to create a sense of belonging.
2. Most of these students are male, bicultural (see Definition of Terms) and poor and thus marginalized, not achieving a sense of belonging within the dominant "American culture."
3. Most of these students' overall literacy skills fall measurably below their grade level and thus are demonstrably not served by traditional literacy education methodologies.
4. Most of these students are involved in microcultures of gangs or drugs and thus identify with communities that include values detrimental to the individuals' futures.

Students in a court school classroom deserve and need an aggressive, affirming, interactive literacy program which draws upon their personal experiences and cultures.

They need to learn to strengthen their reading and writing strategies using familiar language and common knowledge, discuss and explore their beliefs and values, and write about their discoveries and experiences for the purpose of making themselves known to themselves and others.

The purpose of this action research is to examine the usefulness of creating a writers' workshop which includes such dialogue (within a discussion circle), writing, revision, publishing, and reading. At the outset of this study, I hoped that this workshop design would bring an affirmed, positive sense of self to these kids at the same time that they had a glimpse of real purposes for literacy: emancipation and inclusion. More practically, I hoped that such a workshop would increase the literacy skills and strategies of bicultural students who are in danger of being continually oppressed and marginalized in our literacy-rich society.

Of all educational institutions, a locked facility seems at first glance a strange or counter-productive place to invest energy in emancipatory education, but it is one of the places to find young people who most sorely suffer from the existing disparity between the dominant culture and the dispossessed. Incorporating their voices into a non-existent dialogue is impossible, but creating a forum within which they can experience and participate in an emerging or nascent dialogue is a start – and a start is what they need.

### *Questions*

Based on the fact that a significant portion of the adolescents in my classroom at juvenile hall are bicultural adolescent males, read at or below fourth grade level, cannot



write a developed paragraph, and have not had consistent schooling for eight consecutive years, it is worth considering that their literacy and educational experiences may be relevant to the choices that lead to their incarceration. More than 95% of my students are from marginalized groups: Latino, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, migrant, and/or low income homes. It is my theory that the low literacy levels and negative educational experiences are very likely related to their status as members of socially or politically oppressed or denied groups, and their illegal activities or arrests are directly or indirectly related to that status.

This is all far more than could be covered in any master's level study, and certainly not something that could all fit into an educational research work. But the background that I see in my classroom raises some questions that are addressed in this study:

1. How can I create a sense of engagement in bicultural students who are incarcerated and who have been unsuccessful in school learning?
2. Is there a relevant writing program to help bicultural kids to learn to read and write if they haven't learned by the time they are fifteen?

More specifically, my personal experience as a reflective and cathartic writer, combined with the work done by Henry Giroux, Paolo Friere and Lev Vygotsky, has led me to this culminating question:

3. Will a writing program which focuses on guided political dialogue among adolescent peers and culminates in a publication distributed to a specific public, increase the efficacy and writing skills of bicultural students who have previously not had such success?

### *Theoretical Framework*

Four key theories drove this study: critical and emancipatory pedagogies (Wink, 1997; and Giroux, 1997), cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

#### *Critical Pedagogy*

A constant, critical awareness of the why's and how's of our classroom teaching makes the classroom a productive, empowering, and relevant place of learning (Wink, 1997). Without such reflection and attention to the learners, the classroom becomes a place of struggle where one dominant paradigm (that of the instructor and the administration) overpowers the subordinates (students and their families and communities). With a willingness to reflect on the subject and method of delivery, classroom teachers remain able to meet the needs of the students, instead of only meeting the dictates of their curriculum.

#### *Emancipatory Pedagogy*

Giroux (1997) and Freire (1987) are contemporary advocates for emancipatory education, but it is not a new idea: Dewey's work at the beginning of last century outlined the need for an education which provides all learners with equitable access for the purpose of creating a democratic and just society (1964). Dewey explains that the role of education is to prepare students for full participation in a democratic society. In agreement with this the stated Expected Student [or Schoolwide] Learning Results (ESLR's) of most California school districts state, in some manner, that a primary goal of

the educational structure is to “enable all students to progress toward becoming ... global citizens who appreciate cultural diversity ... and participate constructively in the political process” (Monterey County Office of Education, Appendix A).

In contrast to this acknowledged role of public education, Giroux (1997) explores the current state of education, the traditional structure and curricular demands, and the socio-political hierarchy which is perpetuated in the traditional schooling paradigm. Our educational system has been designed to perpetuate the differences among classes, providing the lower classes (and minority learners) with skill-based curriculum and expectations of compliance, while the upper classes are provided with more challenging curriculum which encourages creativity and analysis. This disparity needs to change in order to provide an equitable education for our citizens, and to promote real participation in a real democracy. Without equitable preparation, we do not have a citizenry capable of dialogue. An emancipatory paradigm anticipates the need to prepare our students of all backgrounds to engage mentally and spiritually in creating an equitable and just world. A critical paradigm requires that we as educators question and challenge each curricular and methodological choice made for our classroom communities in light of our fundamental, stated, agenda.

According to Freire and Macedo (1987), the most important skill to teach a person is the ability to identify, label, and read his or her own world. Using the words provided in a discussion among peers about their situation and the dynamics sustaining it, Freire teaches how to write, read, and discuss socio-political realities. Using those same student-generated words, Freire extends the learning to relevant literacy skills such as

identification of sounds and so on. This is critical literacy: codifying, discussing, analyzing. This is liberatory or emancipatory teaching.

Emancipatory pedagogy can be summed up this way: When we discuss students, educational environment, and the larger role of schooling, we are discussing the future of our world. Our responsibility as educators is to prepare all of our children to be full participants in a healthy dialogue towards a more truly democratic future. Success in these terms is empowering our youngsters with a complete sense of belonging and efficacy when it comes to discussing and critiquing the social and historic situations we see around us. Success is a healthy and inclusive community within which people have a voice and do not have to resort to violent means to be heard. A successful school is one which prepares and enables young people to expect and to fully participate in such a community.

### *Cultural Relevance*

The importance of cultural relevance to the success and motivation of historically marginalized citizen-learners is solidly examined by Ladson-Billings (1995), Au (1993), Banks (1994), Freire and Macedo (1987), and Kohl (1991). Education which is built on a foundation of respect for and affirmation of home culture is more successful and motivating for the learner. Education which comes from a deficit paradigm alienates and turns off the bicultural learner, thus increasing an already dangerous chasm between the learner and the larger society within which he or she must learn to negotiate. In addition to this alienation, self-loathing and overt hostility are predictable by-products of a deficit paradigm in education and social intercourse. On the other hand, a culturally relevant

metacognitive foundation can help provide the bicultural learner with a bridge into managing the structures and requirements of a dominant, or “other” culture.

*Socially Meaningful Learning and the Zone of Proximal Development*

Vygotsky’s theory (1978) of the zone of proximal development indicates that learners need to explore new knowledge under the guidance of a more capable person, and participate in dialogue so that external or socially constructed knowledge (at the next level) can become internalized. Socially meaningful interaction motivates and engages the learner on many levels: skills, cognitive ability, and moral reasoning (Tappan, 1998).

*Workshop Design*

These theories work together to define the writers’ workshop approach that I have studied. Using the home culture and language to engage in dialogue about important issues, students encounter ideas and moral development at stages just within their grasp, thus maturing as they are able. They work together to write about their perceptions and experiences for a specific and formal audience, learning from their more capable peers how to conquer the next step of literary achievement. They read works published by peers with common experiences, needs, and idiomatic (street) usage; this proximity enables them to exercise successively more sophisticated reading strategies as explained by the teacher or peers. The respect demonstrated within the classroom community motivates learners to attempt increasingly challenging things, which in turn increase their sense of efficacy. Formalizing and publishing very personal sentiments add to that sense of personal efficacy.

*Origin and Influence of The Voices Project on the Method*

A brief background is critical to understanding the program design utilized in this study: The Voices Project is the name I have given to the specific type of workshop studied in this thesis, and the underlying agenda of enabling voice for the voiceless. The Voices Project is also the pseudonym I use to publish works written by incarcerated and otherwise disenfranchised youth on the internet at [www.voices-project.com](http://www.voices-project.com). The website includes short stories, poetry, essays and letters to specific audiences, such as letters of advice to sixth graders. It also contains artwork by adolescents.

The Voices Project design is a model I developed and have been using for a few years as a classroom teacher, in which a constructivist model of dialogue facilitates a spontaneous and insightful prewriting session. Constructivist dialogue relies on an agreement that each person in the group will have equal access to (and is expected to use) speaking time, and an agreement that the speaker's turn is solely for the benefit of the speaker, and no explanation is necessary for the benefit of the listeners. During a turn, the speaker examines and explores his or her ideas for the purpose of understanding them, not for the purpose of explaining or defending them. While there is a predetermined topic, a speaker adheres to it only to the extent that he or she wants to. A confidentiality agreement keeps all topics discussed within the discussion circle itself.

When the group is satisfied that the session has sufficiently met the needs of the participants, a writing session begins in which participants freely draft their ideas as they relate to the topic at hand. Participants then work individually and cooperatively to write something that will inform a specific audience. Writings from workshops are compiled

into publication and distributed to the intended audience, as well as being posted on The Voices Project website at [www.voices-project.com](http://www.voices-project.com).

The existence of – and the works posted on – the website have inspired many incarcerated students to consider what they might have to say that should be heard by the general public, and they request after-school voluntary workshops towards this end on a regular basis. Within the workshops students have demonstrated different attitudes than they do in classes with a structured curriculum. I have seen marginally literate students who refused to do any classroom work in my language arts class write multiple pages in a workshop, sharing the hopelessness they feel about their neighborhoods and their lives (with invented spelling and rambling sentences). After being encouraged, coached and published with their own ideas, they have returned to my language arts class with a more willing attitude, working more on developing literacy skills than at any time in our previous relationship. Since I have seen Voices Project participation affect student attitude (and subsequently skills) in a positive way, I decided to investigate the usefulness of a constructivist workshop within which participants explore and write about topics of importance to them.

### *Scope of the Project*

This project included 9 incarcerated bicultural male students, ages 15-18, in a volunteer writing class that met daily in juvenile hall outside of regular school hours. I worked with discussion, writing and literacy. I collected data from the participants in a before-workshop writing survey and an after-workshop writing survey which asked about their affective experiences with writing and their sense of efficacy. I also collected data

through my field notes which focused on group dynamics and observable patterns in the workshop. The finished product of this writing workshop was also considered data.

Although reading skills are an integral part of the long-term Voices Project plan, this study did not analyze any standardized test scores, whether reading or of another sort. The young people's criminal charges and length of sentences are not considered in any way. Teacher preparation was not addressed in the study, even though it, too, is a critical aspect to success of the strategy (as addressed in Chapter Five). Student educational history was not measured or addressed. We do not look at what happened academically in other subject area classes beyond the language arts classroom, but I have compared behavior and attitudes demonstrated in the language arts classroom setting to those of this workshop setting.

### *Defining Terms*

**Bicultural:** people who are from a background other than the dominant White middle class background and have adapted to this or another second culture; this includes people who have adapted their manner of speaking to the dominant form.

**Community:** a group of people who have a common goal, work together to create a safe environment within which ideas can be explored, and are in agreement about appropriate communication patterns.

**Constructivist:** a speaking and/or learning experience within which the speakers construct their own meaning, rather than relying on an outside authority.



**Critical Literacy:** the ability to recognize and utilize signs and symbols for the purpose of negotiation and discourse. This includes evaluating the context and source of such signs and symbols, recognizing and taking into account the bias present.

**Critical Pedagogy:** a norm of questioning and evaluating the relevance of curricula and methodologies for each student and each classroom community, with the ultimate goal of enabling and empowering lifelong learners.

**Culture:** the values, norms, and perspectives that guide a people's thoughts and behaviors

**Deficit Paradigm:** the assumption that people from poor, non-White, or non-dominant-English speaking families and communities are lacking a foundation for education and must be "remediated." This paradigm is often used as an explanation for classroom teaching which does not "produce" successfully standardized students.

**Dialogue:** includes spoken and printed words and images exchanged among community members for the purpose of communicating and clarifying ideas.

**Discussion Circle:** a round-table discussion method which includes a systematic beginning, requiring and facilitating input from all participants, and ends with a more freestyle exchange among volunteers.

**Dominant English:** the language form that is commonly referred to as Standard English: used by popular media, the business community, and lower academia.

**Emancipatory:** that which will encourage and enable participants to create a better society and a fuller personal life.

**Home Language:** the method of communicating which is most familiar to the learner, and within which he or she has been successfully negotiating through life. This

includes languages and dialects other than dominant English, as well as the other subtleties of language use, such as pragmatics.

Pragmatics: the linguistic relation between an utterance and its discourse environment.

Voices Project: the ongoing effort to encourage and facilitate writing in marginalized and adjudicated adolescents, including the website at [www.voices-project.com](http://www.voices-project.com)

Writers' Workshop: an interactive classroom experience within which participants discuss topics, draft freely to explore ideas, receive direct writing instruction in the form of relevant "mini-lessons," revise for the purpose of communicating core ideas to an audience, edit for publication, and then read the community-created works. A written dialogue between reader and writer follows, demonstrating more fully the value of the written word and the importance of writing for audience.

### *Conclusion*

I believe that a dynamic, interactive classroom approach which includes discussion and writers' workshop can benefit and motivate incarcerated bicultural learners toward more effective literacy. Findings from this study raise more questions, but that is welcome within the critical pedagogy that drives emancipatory teaching. A classroom within which all learners develop personal ownership of their learning, and within which they learn to participate in a community of learners, is most beneficial. Whatever the cost, the educational community must rise to the occasion to equitably and properly educate all of our citizens, regardless of age, race, socio-economic standing, language or origin.

### *Organizational Framework*

This chapter has introduced the socio-cultural and pedagogical concerns which drive the research study. Research questions have been explained, and the basic theoretical underpinnings described. A list of relevant terms has been defined, drawn from multiple sources and melded into terms that have particular application for this teacher/researcher.

In the following chapter I examine available literature which addresses issues relevant to the research questions, especially the importance of critical and emancipatory pedagogies, cultural relevance for the learner, and utilizing a community approach to maximize the zone of proximal development, within which learners can best advance in any chosen realm of learning. I also look at the research available regarding the experiences and needs of bicultural learners within our school structures.

The specific program design and methodology for the study are explained in Chapter Three, including the interactions between the classroom community and this teacher/researcher's critical pedagogy.

In Chapter Four I analyze the data collected in three writing samples from each of nine participants as well as the researcher/teacher's field notes, which extended far beyond the actual time frame of the project because of pertinent developments.

The final chapter describes conclusions drawn from this study, and relevant suggestions for further research and teacher development.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

I continue to look for literature that addresses my concern for students who are bicultural, under-educated, and sorely overrepresented in the juvenile court system. To my knowledge, no researcher has looked at court school needs through the lens of emancipatory pedagogy. I have worked, therefore, to use available theories, studies, and reviews to develop a theory as to what practices could be most effective for this learning population.

There are in existence a number of creative writing programs for incarcerated juveniles, but to my knowledge they are not directly related to the school structure and pedagogy. In her study of a creative writing program in the state of Alabama, McDonough (2002) explains that a writing workshop can create a strong sense of community for the participants, and those who have participated for some time gain a sense of mentorship and belonging. Also, the opportunity to explore one's own ideas creates an interest in reading and writing (p. 2). However, McDonough's study does not directly relate these findings to classroom success or behavior.

### *Court School Education*

A majority of the scant research done in the area of court school education focuses on the needs of special education youngsters within the incarcerated population: this is a legitimate concern given that, according to Judge Reed Ambler – a Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge who has worked in the juvenile court system in California – a large number of kids in court schools have at some point in their educational history been identified as special education or resource students (1998). Yet Wang and Reynolds,

in their introduction to a collection of papers presented at an education conference aimed at improving education for marginalized students (1995) indicate that it is noteworthy that a disproportionate number of students in special education nation-wide are from minority, bicultural backgrounds; that is, from a cultural or linguistic background that varies from a White, middle-class English-speaking norm. In this light it is significant also that dropout rates in public schools are much higher for bicultural students than for students from the dominant culture, as cited by Wang and Reynolds, and Darder (1991).

What this implies about the traditional educational structure is that there is a disparity between the requirements for successful participation in the system and what it is that students from diverse backgrounds bring to the school. Being a member of a minority culture places a student at some risk of “failure” within the traditional school structure: the students most clearly demonstrating the risk for educational and social “failure,” or problems of discontinuity, are those in the court school classroom. As Giroux (1997) and Cummins (2001) explain, the traditional paradigm must be exchanged for one which looks to the future, and empowers *all* of our students.

### *Research Paradigm*

Since there is no body of research available that addresses emancipatory teaching in court school classrooms, my research paradigm and this literature review are based on a population with the following identified needs: bicultural and demonstrating a tangible disenfranchisement, needing English language and literacy development, and old enough to necessitate socially and cognitively sophisticated curriculum.

This literature review addresses the following questions:

1. What is our stated educational goal?
2. What pedagogy is in place in court schools?
3. What do we know about the educational experience of bicultural students?
4. What do we know about English language development as it relates to literacy development?
5. What do we know about the learning needs of adolescents?

### *Goals*

In early work on the role of public education, Dewey (1964) described education as an investment in the country's future, through each and every student: "All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members" (p. 295). In the same vein, the stated Expected Schoolwide Learning results for some districts state that a partial goal of court and community schools is to "enable all students to progress toward becoming...engaged learners who read, write, and speak effectively, think critically, and ...[toward becoming] global citizens who participate constructively in the political process" (Monterey County Office of Alternative Education, Appendix A).

Many theorists and studies assert that the first steps toward this education are to be sure that every student feels a sense of belonging and acceptance in the school environment (Au, 1993; Banks, 1994); and that every student be encouraged and guided to reach high standards of critical inquiry and literate discourse (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Delpit, 1988). These authors and others have clearly established that these first steps can

only happen when each and every child is accepted as unique, capable, and gifted in his or her own way, and encouraged to maximize the strengths present to learn new skills and strategies for a successful life. But other theorists (Finn, 1999; Giroux, 1997) press us to consider how we can be sure that our students are learning transferable skills for engaged participation in a global society.

Banks and those who build on his work encourage us to reexamine such questions as an issue of preparing our students to live in a world of many backgrounds, many languages, many customs and practices. While it is our responsibility as educators to provide students with a sense of themselves as capable of being life-long learners and active participants in a just society, researchers such as Ladson-Billings (1995) and Delpit (2001) remind us that this involves much more than the 3 R's: it involves skills, vision, and a sense of place. Freire and Macedo (1987) clearly express that one of the first steps toward fully empowering our students is to help them to understand that our society involves many different cultures which exercise power in different ways and different places. The need for this knowledge to be directly taught is explained by many others (Delpit, 1988; Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Luke and Freebody's *Four Resources Model* (1999) describes the need for direct instruction regarding how the exercise of power includes but is not limited to discourse – the use of printed and spoken word to navigate through and create social situations.

The literature makes it clear that, ultimately, students need to be prepared to add their voices to the discourse which will change race, gender and class relations within our global society, creating a just and equitable world for the future of humanity. The next section addresses whether or not we are doing that in court schools.

*Pedagogy in practice*

Within court and community school districts in the central coast of California, a thematic curriculum is being adopted. Through this “Character Based Education” (CBL), court and community school students are taught what have been deemed appropriate character traits by the Markula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California (Markula). This standards-based, literature-based curriculum has utilized Glenn D. Walters’ work (1990) to guide a selection of core literature. Walters’ work proposes that 14% of the criminal population commits more than 50% of serious crime, and these 14% criminals utilize eight cognitive distortions to validate or legitimize their criminal choices. Each piece of core or alternative literature in the CBL curriculum has been selected from the California Recommended Literature (1990) to illustrate a specific character strength that is to be taught in opposition to a specific cognitive distortion. For example, in place of Walters’ identified mollification, a CBL teacher would use the adolescent novel *The Outsiders* to teach the concept of responsibility.

Rather than an emancipatory or critical paradigm, this curriculum is constructed from a pre-determined set of texts and concepts, and disregards the knowledge that students bring into the class. A principle obligation of any court school teacher is to guide the students through a curriculum which adheres to the state standards, especially now that the state high school exit exam and equivalency tests are designed around those standards. For the language arts classroom, this includes teaching students the skills of writing, speaking, reading and listening. While I do not advocate abandoning or ignoring the standards, I do not believe that the Character Based Learning curriculum is suitable as a solitary tool for the population of bicultural and under-educated students that fill many



court school classrooms. People learn new material to the extent that it can be related to prior knowledge (Smith, 1994): there are too many gaps between what many bicultural court school students know and what the CBL curriculum assumes.

In this context, according to the research done by Wang, et al (1995), filling in the gaps with remedial teaching will not work. As recommended by the California State Board of Education *Model Curriculum Standards* (1991), literacy-based curriculum should be augmented by meaningful reading and writing activities. Kohl's work (1991) demonstrates clearly the effect of hegemonic practices which demonstrate no regard for what bicultural learners bring to the classroom: a refusal to learn, or to cooperate. It is precisely this active not-learning that has detrimental effects on bicultural youngsters in and out of the school setting. The next section examines what is known about the disengaging effects of a traditional dominant culture paradigm on bicultural learners.

### *Overcoming the Past: Bicultural Student Experiences*

Representation in court school classrooms shows that a high percentage of incarcerated bicultural students read at or below the fourth grade level (Mike Uppman, personal conversation, 2002). In the court school, we have a brief time to affect a change in this dynamic and instill a belief in the bicultural youngster that it is to his or her benefit to improve existing literacy skills. Students are in a court school for anywhere from two days to three months; most for only a few weeks. What are the learning and affective dynamics at work within these students? How can we best determine what is needed for success in a court school environment? As explored by Wink (1997), an ongoing critical paradigm is the only way to effectively answer these questions. As we engage in honest

reflection as to our stated and hidden goals for our students, our own teaching and its effectiveness, and the needs and strengths the students bring with them, we provide a healthier and more effective learning environment within which learners can maximize their potential as citizens (Giroux, 1997).

Poplin and Weere's (1994) consideration of the affective elements of learning illuminates the fact that one of the most significant factors which impact student learning is the teacher-student relationship; students who have been viewed as deficient by teachers have been denied a critical step in building a self image as a competent learner. Even today it is hard to find truly inclusive classrooms, as is evident in the amount of literature still being published about issues relating to educating non-White and non-English speaking students. Many writers ask, "What does it take to be a successful teacher in a classroom with varied backgrounds?" But the underlying questions reveal an unwillingness to deal with new realities: How do we teach to a class with African Americans, Mexican Americans and Korean Americans? What needs do they have that differ from the *traditional* classroom teaching? Ladson-Billings might remind us that in our quest to transform education, questions such as these have a lingering odor of the deficit paradigm which has been so damaging to date.

Lack of success with traditional schooling approaches indicates that traditional methodologies are not effective (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and might even be counter-productive for these learners (Kohl, 1991). Viadero's (1996) review of statistics reveals that the first obstacle that many students have faced as learners was their status as minority learners: whether from a non-traditional culture or from a background based in a language other than English, these kids entered mainstream education with a condition

for which most classroom teachers had not been prepared (Wink, 1997). As recently as nine years ago, when the youngest of these students entered kindergarten, most teachers had not been trained in language development issues, nor had cultural competence been introduced as a teaching skill. As Ladson-Billings describes (1995), students from non-traditional backgrounds were viewed as coming from a deficient background, needing to be remediated. Au's work (1993) as well as others' demonstrates that students of color, those from lower-than-middle-class communities and homes, and those whose primary language is not *standard* (hereinafter referred to as dominant) English are done a disservice when educators approach them through a deficit paradigm (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Banks, 1994).

It is wrong to compare historical educational practices with the successful ones we need to learn, if simply for the fact that there soon will be no White majority, and the "norm" will be different. As Finn (1999) and Giroux (1997) remind us, we need to look toward the future. We need to expect great things from our bicultural youngsters, and we need to prepare them to transform society as they age.

Why do bicultural youngsters have higher drop-out rates and higher rates of being placed in special education programs than middle class Whites? Darder (1991) reviews how this dynamic has been examined from conservative and liberal angles, with both angles tending to focus the blame on the student with no consideration of inequitable distribution of power between the dominant culture and those subordinated. Finn's work (1999) reviews how the traditional educational paradigm has perpetuated hierarchical practices, in training and teaching upper class students to be aggressive and creative, and teaching the bulk of students (middle and lower class) to be passive, follow rules, and

simply do what is expected of them while applying functional skills they've been taught. These patterns are explored by others, including Giroux (1997) and Darder (1991).

Giroux and Finn both argue that expected characteristics of compliance do not equitably prepare youth for meaningful participation in a global society, much less prepare them for resistance to an oppressive situation or structure. If it is truly full social participation for which we are preparing our students, our classrooms and our educational paradigm must undergo a transformation (Giroux, 1997). Viadero (1996) illustrates how interactions among culture, language, and power serve as a series of obstacles and handicaps for bicultural students within the current paradigm, with varying degrees of ignorance (or hostility) about student culture and literacies preventing teachers from utilizing learners' strengths. Teachers who are educated, informed, and willing to work with people different from themselves will be a key to the future. This next section will look at the educational needs of bicultural youth in today's society.

### *Bicultural Learners*

Darder (1991) presents an argument for a cultural democracy which "is based primarily on the principle that every individual has the right to maintain a bicultural identity" (p. 61). It is within this paradigm that court school students will achieve greater success. Au (1993) and others remind us that the most successful educational paradigm for working with students from a variety of cultures is respect for the home culture and what each student brings to the classroom: the knowledge and communicative tools the student has used to navigate and negotiate within his or her home culture.

This inclusiveness can be a very problematic paradigm if a dominating culture at the school has determined what language forms and what topics of conversation are legitimate and acceptable (hooks, 1994). If it has been dictated that gangs, drugs, sex, prostitution, poverty, anger, and violence are not acceptable topics of conversation, then many of these incarcerated learners have very little to contribute to a dialogue. Essayist hooks illustrates repeatedly that if the use of dominant English *only* is allowed within a classroom conversation, many students will not be able to access or express true thoughts and feelings. Further, Cummins reminds us, "When students' language, culture, and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage" (2001, p. 2).

A learner must be accepted with the language and experiences that he or she brings to the classroom (Au, 1993). Kohl (1991) has shown that if such respect and acceptance are not present, it is predictable that some of the learners will opt out of cooperation and demonstrate a form of disengagement. One of the more common effects of this disengagement is an active "not learning" on the part of the student (Kohl, 1991), but there are more dangerous ways that some youngsters react to the alienation, such as drug use, acts of violence, and self loathing (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As Delpit (1988) and Banks (1994) have argued, this is not to say that learners should be encouraged to limit all of their language use and exchange of ideas to what is familiar and easiest: *all* learners should be taught how to bridge with other cultures, to learn to communicate with a wide variety of "others" and to learn to read or discern what would be the most effective and powerful communication tool to use at any particular time.

Many researchers have shown that the impact of teacher prejudice or judgment is significant on a bicultural student's learning experience. Katz (1999) examines the affective aspects of traditional education on eight immigrant students, all of whom had older siblings involved with gangs. Within this ethnographic study it is revealed that student perception can be completely different from teacher perception as to the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship. The immigrant students perceived racial discrimination on the part of the White teachers, while the teachers had no inkling of such problems. Instead, they were troubled by the behavior and attitudes of some of the students. This article's findings can be generalized, along with the work done by Kohl (1991) and Poplin and Weeres (1994), and statistics provided by Wang and Reynolds (1995), to indicate that there is a good possibility that traditional classroom dynamics can serve to alienate minority students without the awareness of classroom teachers who come from the dominant culture. Within a reflective, critical paradigm, a classroom teacher would strive to uncover and ameliorate these inequalities.

A positive relationship with the classroom teacher provides, according to Poplin and Weeres' study (1994), a positive sense of the entire schooling experience. Students who sense encouragement and confidence from the teacher achieve more, as Diaz and Flores (2001) have pointed out in their study regarding bicultural students and the zone of proximal development.

Ladson-Billings (1995) and other researchers have shown that we must be sure to provide opportunities for academic success at the same time that learners maintain cultural pride and integrity (Delpit, 1988, Au, 1993). The creation of a community of learners – within which knowledge is constructed and cooperatively evaluated –

strengthens the learning experience for all involved. “Rather than the voice of one authority, meaning is made as a product of dialogue between and among individuals” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 473). A great deal of literature shows us that culturally relevant pedagogy facilitates ownership and active participation within a community of learners. Finn (1999) describes that the creation of a safe community within which learners dialogue and explore personally significant topics not only strengthens self esteem, but facilitates ownership of literacy. Accessing personal language and knowledge to bridge into new language and literacy learning is the focus of this next section.

### *Developing Language and Literacy*

We understand that learners who are taking on English as a second language face a difficult task in learning to read and write, especially if they are learning literacy skills for the first time in their second language (Cummins, 2001). But what we do not acknowledge as court school classroom teachers is that many of our native English speaking students bring a dialect or usage pattern that is not traditional, that is not reflected in the dominant language patterns. As discussed in her 1983 book, *Ways with Words*, Heath’s work with the pseudonym neighborhoods of Trackton and Roadville reminds us that there are students other than immigrants who communicate in ways different from dominant English. Her discovery that social class and race both influence language usage helps to remind us that the classroom needs to adjust to and utilize student language competencies for the purpose of communicating and of scaffolding. As many of the researchers and theorists mentioned so far have established, students will benefit from an education which acknowledges and utilizes their communicative

strengths and their bicultural experiences, rather than approaching them from a deficit paradigm. They need to be encouraged to explore meaningful concepts in familiar language and to express it in salient terms to others.

Beyond the cultural theorists and researchers, there is scientific foundation for a curriculum which is linguistically and culturally relevant. In his extensive work in the area of reading and cognition, Smith (1994) informs us of the complexity of the brain's part in literacy skills. In reading, we utilize background knowledge to make sense of what we read, to relate new knowledge to stored knowledge, and to predict or extend the ideas in a meaningful way. The ability to utilize familiar experiences will facilitate a developing reader, and the freedom to explore new ideas and perceptions with familiar language will facilitate learning. If we do not utilize the language abilities that students bring to our classrooms, we are actually providing them with more obstacles than they need. Learning how to read, for older readers, needs to be based on language patterns and topics which are familiar (Smith, 1994). With a familiar language and topic foundation, learners can develop successful strategies which can then be transferred to learning to read in the dominant language.

Cummins (2001) explains that in acquisition or strengthening of language skills, we must remember the different aspects of language use and what it is that our learners need direct instruction with, where scaffolding will be the most appropriate, and where context-rich content is most useful. Thus, a socio-political awareness (Luke and Freebody, 1999) within the secondary classroom will serve as a literacy-strengthening tool, as the classroom community examines discourse elements such as pragmatics and other aspects of appropriateness.



Literature demonstrates that language, culture, and identity are undeniably intertwined. We need to provide our students with skills of self-identification, awareness and appreciation for their roots, for who they are and whom they follow. As Delpit (1988) explains, “[students] must be encouraged to understand the value of the code they already possess as well as to understand the power realities in this country” (p. 244). We also need to provide them skills for reading situations outside of their home cultures and languages, so that they can successfully adjust to a new paradigm or new language habits. Delpit, Ladson-Billings, and others speak to the need to provide students with the skills and strategies which will make them successful in the “traditional” society within which the competition for power and place occurs. By not providing students with a sense of the difference between their background cultural and linguistic patterns and those of a larger culture, we are doing a severe disservice and promoting class and racial separations and distinctions.

Further, as Freire and Macedo explain (1987), in learning how to recognize the difference between self and other, learners begin to have the power to navigate and negotiate. This is the ultimate skill with which we must enable our students, as Ladson-Billings and Giroux maintain. Nurturing the sense of self which is developed in adolescence is the focus of the next section.

### *Personal Identity and Voice*

The most important task of a human adolescent is that of identity building. Ladson-Billings (1995) and others assert that young people who are not provided a positive experience of their own culture experience self-rejection. Banks (1994) claims

that a negative self-perception can be ameliorated through positive culture development and cooperative or inter-group education. For all learners, even in heterogeneous groupings, a sense of community and cooperation foster a positive self-identity, which positively affects learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Au, 1993; Banks, 1994). While much has been written (Atwell, 1987) about the literary benefits of a workshop classroom, Finn (1999) stresses that such a methodology also helps to create a learning environment which cuts across the class lines established in the traditional classroom by eliminating the idea of a gatekeeper. Giroux (1997) speaks of the classroom which prepares young people as having the public space (as per Hannah Arendt) "where people come together to speak, to dialogue, to share their stories, and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken the possibility for active citizenship" (p.106).

Freire and Macedo have influenced many writers and researchers to understand the philosophy of using literacy and education as an emancipatory tool, in contrast to the training tool described earlier by Finn and by Giroux. Helping learners begin to relate their own life experiences to something that can be read and communicated is a critical step not only in developing literacy, but also in developing an awareness of the world around them, in which they take part either explicitly or implicitly (Freire and Macedo, 1987). Using student experiences and language can facilitate a developing vocabulary either by helping the learners *codify* their lives (identify and learn the vocabulary), or by helping them to learn diverse ways to say what it is that they already know. Freire and Macedo clearly delineate the need for cultural and socio-political self-awareness in marginalized people as a critical step towards real literacy that enables citizens to "read

the word and read the world." This discovery process comes through group dialogue which seeks to uncover the elements that create the group's status, and identify steps which can change the limitations, obstacles, and oppression (Freire and Macedo, 1987).

This process of identification and discussion is a social act, which Vygotsky (1978) states is natural to learning. Within the safety and reliability of a learning community, learners at different levels of ability are able to affect and influence one another for the best. With the guidance of an insightful mentor/teacher, groups of students can accomplish significant growth in many ways. Students learn to write better in interaction with peers at a higher level of proficiency, but "writing should be meaningful for children... and intrinsic need should be aroused in them and ... writing should be incorporated into a task that is necessary and relevant for life" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 118).

This philosophy of interaction is not unique to Vygotsky or to Freire and Macedo. Other authors assert that through guided dialogue, students learn to uncover their own interpretations of reality and identify another person's point of view (Banks, 1994). Within a social interaction with peers at more capable levels, learners utilize language and meaningful experience to develop to a new level of proficiency, whether in a discrete skill or in something as intangible as moral reasoning. Taking this idea to an interesting realm, Tappan (1998) argues that young adults can learn more sophisticated levels of moral reasoning in dialogue with peers who are at higher levels.

A specific formula for dialogue is *constructivist dialogue* (Weissglass, 1996), in which participants take turns speaking for an equal amount of time. The speaker uses the time for whatever he or she determines, for his or her own benefit. The value of

constructivist dialogue as explained by Weissglass is that each speaker has a unique opportunity to use the speaking time as a chance to make meaning for his or her own benefit, rather than the benefit of the listener. It is a powerful tool for discharging emotions, and uncovering issues that drive our choices and beliefs. In times of speaking aloud to explore and express intimate thoughts, the speaker begins to discover what the thoughts and the experiences mean, or how they are significant. In a very real way, this is an initial aspect of codifying as Freire has described it.

### *Conclusion*

While there has been quite a bit of research and development of theories around the sociopolitical aspects of dialogue (Gee, Bakhtin, Sidorkin, and others), those theories alone would provide inspiration for a study in the educational field; they are thus being set aside to consider in another work.

Beyond the development of skills for the sake of perpetuating our historical hierarchical structure, this must be our goal for all students, not in the least those who have been personally and culturally marginalized:

“An essential goal of a multicultural curriculum is to help students develop empathy and caring. To help our nation and world become more culturally democratic, students must also develop a commitment to personal, social, and civic action, and the knowledge and skills needed to participate in effective civic action” (Au, 1993, p. 27).

Within a critical and emancipatory paradigm I believe that bicultural court school students can learn to expand and improve their critical literacy, strengthen their self image, and learn through a cooperative community to work for social justice and equity.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

This research study is narrative in nature, using a case study approach combined with critical pedagogy to derive a deeper understanding of the educational experiences and needs of youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. Toward this understanding, I made daily field note observations and reflections on a variety of levels:

- I reflected on my classroom methodology and teaching pedagogy in search of more effective approaches to meet the needs of the student population.
- Dynamics of group participation were observed and examined as they related to and informed an effective pedagogy for this learning environment, through student participation in discussions and a writers' workshop.
- The structure and demands of this workshop design elicited a mentor-mentee relationship between participants and facilitator: in this role my field note reflections examined some of the socio-political dynamics which affected the participants.
- As mentor, I was privy to personal growth and struggle within participants, and my observations in this area were also included in the field notes.

Since I was a participant in the workshop in the role of mentor/ writing consultant, my actions and reflections (integrated as critical pedagogy) must be considered within the methodology, since my reflections and observations led to adaptations and subsequent effects on the methodology.

Data collected consist of three writing samples from participants, and my field notes as mentioned above. The field notes (data included as Appendix G) provide the

day-to-day information upon which this chapter is structured. I synthesize and analyze all of the data in Chapter 4: Data Analysis.

*Establishing the Workshop: When, Where, Who*

I secured permission from the administrators of a juvenile hall and of the school which operates at that facility to conduct a workshop two hours a day, for the five days of spring break. I had permission for ten participants. The administrator of the juvenile hall offered to hold consent documents for parents to sign on the weekends when they visited their minors, if I could not reach them through the mail. Since I teach at this site, I solicited volunteers from my language arts classes.

The day prior to spring break, I announced to two select classes that I was looking for volunteers to participate in a discussion and writers' workshop. These classes were selected based on the fact that one group is significantly more challenged when it comes to writing (with a 100% special education enrollment and extremely low literacy levels) and the second group because there were more new students who didn't already know about my after-school workshops. Before I finished my sentence soliciting volunteers, in each class at least six volunteers raised their hands. I encouraged volunteers who were reluctant writers, but since I had a reputation as a teacher with an interesting workshop, my volunteers were the more eager and involved. I had too many volunteers, so I could not take the extra step of trying to recruit the more reluctant learner that this project is designed for. Other classes heard about the workshop, and I had more than twenty volunteers, but I took the first ten who qualified as reliable or who were not likely to be released before the project was completed.

The first day of the workshop required some adjustment to the list of participants, because a lot of things happen over a weekend in a locked facility to affect attendance. On the second day of the workshop, I was informed by staff that one participant did not want to return, so we proceeded with nine. (I later found out that this was incorrect information, but nevertheless we proceeded without this participant.) All week long, students who were not included were trying to get into the workshop, but once the project began I did not open it up to new participants, since one aspect I was studying was the sense of community and its effect on participation and learning.

The workshop community consisted of four Black males ages 15 to 17; three 17-year-old Latino males; and two males who are mixed, Black/Latino/White, ages 15 and 18. And I, as the teacher/researcher, am a White 46-year-old middle-class woman (with a working class background). On any day, one or two of these young men were in court but joined the workshop after court. This added the interesting dynamic of being a place to share frustration from the court appearance. The workshop's stated focus topic was the differences among prevention, rehabilitation, and punishment, so the immediacy of their court situations provided passion for their writing.

Minors are housed in cells or dormitories in units A through E based on age and gender, severity of their charges, and behavior while incarcerated. I had participants from all units. Each morning I carried a notice to the units reminding staff which students were to come, and I listed the time for the workshop (9:30 to 11:30). It usually took at least fifteen minutes for all the participants to arrive, so there was a brief free period. I took a selection of music cd's into the classroom with me, and asked the first arrival to select the music to be played in the background.



*Day One**Political ideology*

On the first day, I began the workshop by explaining my political ideology as it relates to education; I explained that I was suspicious of the fact that a majority of kids identified in the United States as requiring special education were people of color, and that a majority of people incarcerated were also people of color. I stated that I thought that both of those statistics reflected a bias in the system that we needed to work together to change, and it is personal voices in unity which can affect change. I then briefly explained the influence that culture has on teaching and on learning, and pointed out that a majority of teachers come from a cultural background different from that of their students, and that if teachers aren't aware, they can create negative self images in their students.

I closed this part by stating that I was interested in establishing that the ability to address issues of importance to the learner, in the learner's own language, might promote more active learning both in terms of skills and in terms of critical thinking. I then reminded them that it was a voluntary workshop and if they were not interested they could leave. None did, but a pall had fallen over the group and I asked about it. Some said they were tired, but most said they were angry or sad. I interrupted and said that they were beginning to touch on what the entire workshop was about, and I would appreciate if they would help me get the "legal stuff" out of the way before we began a discussion. The group assented to a detour.

*Housekeeping*

I passed out and read the informed assent document (Appendix B). I explained that the data I was collecting would consist of their pre- and post-workshop writing, their final product, and my observation notes. The product would be a compilation of letters from the participants to probation with recommendations for good program ideas. Then I explained the difference between assent and consent, and asked those who wanted to be part of the data collection to please sign the assent documents and then address two envelopes to their parents (one being a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return the consent document to The Voices Project post office address). While they were all welcome to be in the workshop, I told them that the data I used in my research would only be from those for whom I had consent documents signed and returned. It would also be completely anonymous, and they shouldn't use their names or nicknames on anything they wrote in the workshop, either on paper or on the computer. All students signed the assent document.

I then asked them to write a pre-workshop paragraph in response to the prompt provided, and use a code number that I had previously assigned to them (data included as Appendix D). The prompt asked about how they felt about writing for a formal audience, their experience in doing so, and their sense of ability to do so. These will be evaluated according to a mechanics rubric as well as the general content (Table 1).

Finally, I introduced them to previous Voices Project publications and showed them the Voices Project website. Most of them were familiar with it, having been in a class where it was discussed. The printed publications remained available for reading for the rest of the week.

*Discussion*

Having finished all of the introductory work, I asked the group to please gather at the circle of desks. I reminded them that they had begun to talk about how they felt, and that I thought that was very important to talk about. The design of this constructivist discussion enables each speaker to use his or her time to explore ideas and feelings: each speaker owns his or her turn, and no explanation of ideas is necessary for the benefit of the listeners. Without interruption or being rushed, people find the opportunity to express personal perspectives *to their own satisfaction* very beneficial. A speaker's turn is not over until he or she releases it to the next person in the circle. (This is a modification of Weissglass' constructivist dyads. See Weissglass, 1997.)

I explained the rules of this particular type of round table discussion:

1. All that is said is absolutely confidential in that it does not leave the room and no one will refer to it at another time, including the facilitator;
2. Everyone takes a turn as we go around the circle, by either making a comment about the topic at hand, asking a question, or helping to answer a question;
3. When it is not your turn, you do not speak or respond to the speaker. This insures that people are listening to the speaker, and the speaker does not have to worry about editing to avoid reactions.
4. All people in the circle are equal participants, and that includes the facilitator.

I gestured to one young man who had begun to talk about a sadness earlier, and I asked him if he wanted to pick up where I'd interrupted him. When his turn was over, he chose which direction the circle would follow.

After we had all had a chance to share whatever was on our minds, I used one of my turns as an opportunity to pose the question, "What do you guys know or think is unique to adolescents?" And on a subsequent turn, "What do you think are the differences among rehabilitation, punishment, and prevention?" Some chose to address my questions, while some chose to talk about issues that were important to them and bounce thoughts off one another. A few veterans offered advice to "anyone in my type of situation." This discussion went on for over an hour, with no signs of impatience or boredom.

During the discussion, one young man made a generic offensive reference to a different gang, and a peer next to him leaned over and whispered (when it was his turn) that there was a member of that gang in the class. The derogatory reference did not ruffle the "object" of the remark, and I was relieved but not surprised that the group was self-monitoring. It would have been out of my place as an equal member of the group to have chastised the young man, and my turn had just passed, so I couldn't have said anything. But the environment in the classroom is solidly built on respect for differences, and most of the young men know that well and uphold it.

### *Developing Faith in Writing*

When the participants felt they were done with the discussion, we broke and I told them that the next step of the workshop was going to be writing, and that the final

product would be a publication of suggestions for what treatments would be the most effective with adolescents. I reminded them that we had touched briefly on the topic of what was unique to adolescence, and the topics of prevention, rehabilitation, and punishment. I said that on the next day we would look at those questions a bit more and then write. They were all attentively listening to me, seemingly eager to proceed, and enjoying the music in the background.

When I said that the publication we finished would be specifically for probation, all of them changed their demeanor. Shoulders dropped, torsos and knees turned away, smiles sagged. "They won't even read it; they don't give a fuck" came from all corners of the room, adamant. We used the term "probation" to include counselors (jailors) inside the institution as well as officers who supervise and arrest juveniles for violations of probation terms outside the facility (such as dirty urine tests, truancy, or association with others on probation).

I said that we already had the interest of the supervisor of the institution, and that I was certain they were wrong, at least to some degree. But if they had trouble writing for an audience they didn't believe in, they could write to me, or whomever they believed cared. They relaxed at that, and I reminded them that all identifying comments or situations would be taken out of the writing, so they were secure in their anonymity. The previous evening, I told them, I had received an email from a graduate student in Canada who wanted to use The Voices Project website in a presentation. "I'm going to put this on the website, too. All sorts of people from all around the world will be able to read your thoughts and your program designs." They looked interested and relieved that a larger audience was available. I reiterated that I believed they had a perspective that probation

needed, since these participants know best how teens are affected by different things. I asked them to look at it as if they were educating or informing probation about something they needed to know and hadn't yet learned.

### *Community Needs*

Throughout the week, important personal issues came up in one-on-one discussions, instigated by the participants, and impromptu group discussions around something pertinent to a court appearance or possible sentencing/placement. Each of the participants, in his own way and his own time, came to me to talk about personal issues and to hear what I had to say as a caring, non-threatening adult. This freedom and trust is a critical aspect to the construction of learning and to the building of community. Some of them asked for more time in the classroom after lunch, during which they could help me with mundane tasks, or to get help in writing a letter to the judge to be presented at a sentencing appearance. The needs for flexibility and personal mentorship drove this workshop.

Similarly, each day's workshop was truly a workshop, in that participants worked together in a dynamic and self-monitoring way toward a shared goal: a publication worthy of sharing. Drafting on paper led to revision as they entered their text into the computer and struggled with the spelling and grammar checker. Further revision came when they read one another's work (over the shoulder, as consulting partners) and made cooperative judgments and decisions about voice and wording. Seeing the ideas in print on the monitor also inspired further revision, and a printed draft drove yet another set of corrections, all within the timing of each writer. Writing questions were increasingly

addressed by peers as each member of the group developed or discovered his strength: writing, editing, revising, spelling, voice, and so on.

Each day's workshop was an exercise for me in critical pedagogy, as I reflected upon and analyzed the actions, work, needs, and abilities of the participants. Usually this reflection resulted in a mini-lesson for the next day, in which one demonstrated need could be addressed. The critical pedagogy also created an introspective analysis as to what I was doing to meet my own needs as teacher/researcher, in contrast to the needs of the learners. The needs of the learner must be paramount, and any unnecessary additions made to meet my teacher needs would detract from the ownership of the community.

### *Day Two*

#### *Discussion*

On the second day, we began with a discussion and mini-lesson about what is unique to adolescents. We brainstormed about what it is to be human – what needs we all have – and categorized them into *social, physical, mental, and spiritual* needs. We agreed that people need to be healthy in all of those areas to live a good life. We then looked at how those needs are expressed uniquely in adolescence, and came up with the *need for peers*, a need for help *adjusting to chemical imbalance and changes*, guidance in *creating a self-identity* and with *independent thought and action*.

Then I asked them to do a carousel activity on large sheets of paper. They moved in groups of three from poster to poster to write their thoughts about “Prevention,” “Rehabilitation,” and “Punishment” as they pertain to adolescents and children. They addressed *who* should get each one, *what* it would look like, and *why* it would be the

most effective or appropriate treatment. We then looked at their products and briefly discussed each one. We looked at what *re-habilit-ation* meant, in terms of what the word parts stated, and realized that one could not be rehabilitated to a lifestyle one had never known of before. This discussion and activity took more than an hour, and then it was time to begin some form of writing.

### *Stimulating Writing*

I asked the participants to set themselves up wherever they wanted to write: get pencil and paper and choose a desk, or go to one of the classroom computers and boot it up. I suggested that they write about anything at all that related to any discussion we'd had since the beginning of the workshop, just so they could get some ideas out. I reminded them that by Friday they would have a typed design for a program that they thought would be most effective for adolescents. But the starting point for effective writing is the heart, and they should write anything at all that was pertinent. A few asked for clarification, "Is a freewrite okay?" "Can I write a letter to my p.o. [probation officer]?" I responded that any writing at all was a good start, and told them that good writers are said to be people who "open a vein and write." After forty minutes of writing, one suggested that I should "correct the ideas" in his work, and I said that since they were his ideas, they were correct. He nodded in agreement and smiled. Tomorrow would be the day to worry about developing clear explanations of their ideas. The writing on this first day was full of anger, as they discussed the way they'd seen cases handled, the different sentences that were meted out for similar crimes, and anger toward a system that didn't seem to know them as human beings, but judged them by paperwork.



*Community*

Each day when our time was over, the young men helped me clean up and get the room in order according to what they knew was the norm. This is not usual behavior for them; it's usually up to me and my classroom aide to locate the pencils and erasers and make sure all the papers are accounted for. There was clearly a sense of ownership and community in this workshop.

*Day Three**Discussion and Writing*

The third day began with a review of their discoveries of the previous day: that for prevention or rehabilitation to occur, all facets of a healthy person had to be attended to. I reminded them that their anger and other feelings were important and completely legitimate, and that they should keep in mind as they developed their works that the purpose of the final draft was to inform and educate probation staff. They agreed that in this light, angry and antagonistic words might not be productive, but that there were other ways to communicate powerful feelings. They continued with their writings, or began new ones. As the writing developed, partnerships began to blossom among people with shared backgrounds. They discussed what they'd grown up with, the conditions in their neighborhoods and families. Some grouped up in threes and used the language that was familiar to their neighborhoods and experiences. It was a language that was unique to their group, and from time to time I asked for translation as I supervised the room or read over their shoulders.

On this day, all of the personal discussions were relevant to the topic at hand. From time to time participants would talk about the sentencing they were facing, and interaction about the severity would create a large group discussion. I stayed out of these discussions, since I have no expertise to offer; they do.

### *Developing writers*

Usually, in language arts classrooms where there is freewriting as part of an assignment, students (especially some of these particular young men) hide their drafts from me, putting their hands or books over as I pass. But there was absolutely none of that in this workshop: they were as open to my reading as to anyone else. Most even asked me to read what they'd done so far and ask me for specific feedback about the placement of a word or sentence.

Each time I heard someone ask about the spelling of a word, I wrote the word on a large sheet of paper for an ongoing vocabulary list. I also added some words that I'd seen misused or misspelled in the writing I'd read the previous day. I did not tell specific people which word was in their work, but I did ask them all to look at the vocabulary sheet and consider whether or not one word was misused in their writing. I explained the differences between misused words such as "adolescents" and "adolescence." When I made comments or provided mini-lessons such as these for the benefit of the whole, they all turned to look, attentive and respectful. This is not normal behavior in my language arts class: it usually takes me at least a minute to get attention of the group, and then there is usually one student who still doesn't look at the information I provide on the board.

Some students who have communicated a “leave me alone, I did your damn assignment” attitude in the past were taking their writing in this workshop very seriously, and instead of talking about off-task topics, were engaging others in a cooperative bid to improve their products. It was clearly important to them that they communicate their ideas to the target audience, as they engaged in countless discussions about voice and format.

I told the group that we would start the next day with a read-around of drafts, looking only at ideas and not the mechanics.

#### *Day Four*

##### *Discussion and Mini-Lessons*

We began as promised. I had noticed that the drafts contained a lot of hostility and accusations toward probation, and some name-calling, so I decided a mini-lesson on libel and slander would be appropriate. We talked briefly about voice and audience, and about how certain things could be communicated without slandering someone or a department by making accusations as to their intent. I cautioned the writers to watch for such problems, and left it at that.

I asked the group to give feedback about whether or not each writer was considering the audience, and if there was something more that should be described in depth. Each participant’s work was read aloud, and the peer group gave feedback. This went well, with actual feedback in the affirmative (“He really has passion in that, and he’s clear about what probation should get.”) and in the cautionary (“You can’t call your probation officer a bitch, cuz, she won’t listen if you do that.”).

When this sharing session was over, I provided another mini-lesson based on another problem I'd seen in the drafts. One writer had dismissed his criminal activity with a sort of *entitlement* (the concept that 'other people have it and I deserve it, too'). I did not want to put him on the spot, nor was this kind of direct intervention part of the workshop design. But a sense of entitlement often clouds the minds of adolescents, and I decided it was a worthwhile investment of our workshop time. I had created a chart of Walters' eight cognitive distortions (Walters 1990), and I briefly explained who Walters was and what his work was about: that roughly 50% of criminal activity is rationalized by eight misticings, or cognitive distortions. Walters' eight cognitive distortions (Appendix I) were briefly translated, and then I cautioned the writers against using any of that kind of thinking in their writing. I addressed no one in particular, but I was hoping that one particular writer, especially, would see what I was saying. He must have, because in his writing he went on to explain the logic and sentiment behind the entitlement, rather than just leaving it to stand on its own.

### *A Writing Community*

Participants dove into their revisions after this mini-lesson. Each computer has a cd player, and students chose what music would most motivate them. The room was filled with a cacophony, and participants regulated one another's volume so that it would work within the community. One student in particular was assigned the use of the only set of headphones, since his tolerance for volume was much higher than anyone else's.

Some participants expressed discomfort and inadequacy in working on a computer, but I reassured them that they had until Friday at noon, and what they didn't

finish transcribing on their own, I would finish for them. This comforted them, and I didn't have to do any transcription at all; they even had sufficient time to benefit from the spell and grammar checker, engaging in argument with the grammar checker when it wanted to oversimplify their thoughts.

### *Participant-Instigated Mini-Lesson*

One writer, striving to inform probation staff as to how they could improve their services, asked me about a probation officer's job description. The emancipatory paradigm relies on student ownership of learning, and the critical paradigm relies on unfettered access to information, so it was my responsibility as facilitator to help him find the answer. Since I had no answer for him, I called an authority on the phone and asked if he would have time that morning to come address some questions in the workshop. He was the director of programs for probation, but I did not tell the participants that. He was simply a familiar authority figure at the juvenile hall, the person they would call on if they had problems with any staff. He assented, and would arrive within forty minutes. I suggested to the participants that they prepare a list of questions for him, if they were interested, and to avoid making it personal (since so many of them had been expressing anger about their own probation officers). When he arrived, they politely turned off their music and turned to face him. A few had questions, which he addressed directly. He informed us that when they had questions, he needed to know whether they were talking about staff inside the institution or outside, because there were different expectations and job descriptions.

For every question, he provided clear background so that we would understand what he was saying. He informed us of the ratio of probation staff to clients, and the reasoning behind some of the actions that probation officers took. I mentioned to him that the group participants seemed to have no faith that their words would be heard or heeded by probation. He responded that he was the person in charge of programs, and he was extremely interested in what they had to say. He recommended that they make sure to address who should be in the program, how it should be done, and why it would work. He said that the “why” was critical. He then gave them a recent example of a program design that was a result of his working with minors. At one point he felt that he’d gone on too long, but the participants told him to continue because they were getting a lot out of his talk.

#### *A Contented Community*

After he left, a few jumped to their computers to address what was on their minds, while a few packed up and enjoyed their music in their own little corners of the room. Since the next day was to be our last, and all the participants seemed to care about their product and were involved in the writing, I asked if they wanted to extend the next day’s session by half an hour, added on to the early morning. They assented so eagerly that I asked if they wanted to start an hour earlier; they said they wanted to start as early as possible and work as long as they could. Since lunch was a consideration (with probation staff needing to do a body count and secure the units before providing lunch) I knew that we would have to add any time in the morning, and that staff had the kids doing

housekeeping tasks in the morning. So I told the participants that we would begin at 8:30 if it was okay with the supervisor. They were happy with that, and left to their units.

### *Day Five*

#### *Mini-Lesson*

The final day I wrote a sample topic outline on the board, showing how paragraphs might be developed. It was to demonstrate a possible organization, but more specifically to show that paragraphs are organized around logic, not the number of sentences as they'd been taught in some elementary classrooms. This and every other time I asked for their attention for a mini-lesson, they were prompt, respectful, and communicated through their body language that they thought what I was going to deliver would be worth their while. I might deliver the same thing in a language arts class, but it's not received as well when it's in a structured lesson.

#### *The Effect on One Participant*

One of the participants has been a particularly difficult and recalcitrant student for me every time he's come into the juvenile hall. He has been adamant about maintaining personal control over his productivity, deciding for himself when he was done with an assignment. He has approached school work as something that needed to be finished, not particularly done well, but just finished. I have never been able to get him to do revision in my class; his reply to my suggestion was always, "I did the thing, I'm done. Leave me alone." So I was curious as to what his participation would be in this workshop. He showed me every paragraph and was open to each suggestion for further development.

He would show me the latest draft and ask me, “What do you think of that?” When I would give a suggestion for a topic to be explored in more depth for the benefit of the audience, he’d say, “Okay,” and turn to the task, showing me the next revision and asking what I thought.

On this last day, he was one of the first students in the class, and I ventured an honest question. I asked if he’d seen a difference in his attitude, and he said, “Hell yeah.” I asked him what he attributed it to, and he said that he felt more comfortable, that he could write about what was on his mind, and the fact that it was volunteer made a big difference to him. He thought it made a better community than the forced class groupings we have. During our last session, he revised and finished his draft early (with a quality of description I have never seen in his work) and willingly wrote a thoughtful response to the “after” prompt. While he was writing it, a student next to him was struggling over the paragraph breaks that he needed to make, and my recalcitrant student leaned over and said, “That’s easy, cuz, it’s like this” as he showed him where to make paragraph breaks.

### *Ownership*

As our time came to an end, all of the drafts were completed, and each student gave me an after-workshop writing sample (data included as Appendix F). All but one wrote it on computer. They helped to organize, to be sure I had all my data organized and in one place for the benefit of my study. Then they sat and listened to music until staff came to take them back to the units for lunch. They asked me how the final publication was going to be organized, and I asked them if they wanted to be part of that, because I need to do as little of it as possible. One participant wanted to be in charge of design, and



the one that had the best flow in his writing and the best sense of organization and voice, I solicited to be the editor. He said he would be glad to come after school the next week to work on it. Before I went home that day, I put all the drafts together onto one document, ran it through the grammar checker and made the changes that were appropriate with the computer's help, then I printed out nine copies and took them to the units, asking each participant to look over it that weekend to see what he thought it might need (this is the data in Appendix E).

### *Extensions*

In light of the intent of emancipatory education (to encourage and facilitate in the learners a true ownership and commitment to one's own education) it is not really in the hands of the teacher or facilitator to decide when the learning or the lesson is done. Because of this project's commitment to the learners, the project was extended to meet and attend to some of their needs and demands, as follows.

### *Community of Writers*

Even though the project was officially over on Friday, the participants weren't done. Six of them requested to come to the classroom after lunch and edit the publication. (One participant had been released, one was in court, and the final student didn't want to miss an activity in his unit, even though he did want to be part of the editing.) Each one had noticed errors in his own work, and some had thought of overall corrections to be made. The sense of cooperation and productivity continued for the hour that they were allowed to work that afternoon. They requested to come back the next available day, as

well, but I elected to give their marked copies to the participant who had begun entering their corrections onto the computer file. The project was officially over, but I had gained a new club. Other students were clamoring to be in the group, as well. I will begin an after-school workshop to meet the demand.

More final editing was done during the lunch hour by the selected editor on the following Thursday, and on that Friday I had permission from the institution supervisor to have the group in the classroom for a three-hour session after school during which I would show them the movie The Hurricane with Denzel Washington, as they had requested. While the movie was showing, the final editing was done and copies were passed out for their final approval. No one demonstrated impatience with little interruptions; they were interested and concerned with the quality of the final product. I designed the cover and the introduction page (absent a volunteer) and passed them around, soliciting specific feedback from each and every participant on different aspects (to honor their strengths and interests). With final approval from the group, we declared the project completed.

#### *A Larger Dialogue Begun*

For the following week, I was receiving requests for copies from teaching and probation staff. I had passed out eighty copies, and more were made from those. There was interest in the work the participants had done, and acknowledgement that they had some legitimate ideas.

One participant told the prosecuting attorney that he'd been involved in this workshop, and when he appeared in court the juvenile court judge mentioned his respect

for the participants and their clear thinking. He informed the participant that he wanted to hear more about the minor's involvement in the project at his next court appearance.

### *A Very Real Need for Voice*

In the ensuing weeks, participants who had been sentenced in adult court to five or more years in a high security facility came to class very depressed. One asked if he could write about what was on his mind in place of the activity the class was engaged in. I consented, and he wrote on paper for the entire period. The next day he asked if he could type it. Again, I said yes. On the second day of his typing, I asked him why he had wanted to do it on computer (since he usually is averse to using the computer). He responded, "So I can read it." I watched as he used the spell and grammar checker on his work. When he was finished and ready to print, he came to my desk, and while he was printing it, he explained, "When I write on the computer, I'm thinking about it and it helps me think it through."

Watching his focus and reading his finished product inspired others in similar situations to seek paper to work through their fear and anger regarding their impending imprisonment, and reflect on their needs for personal change. Despite the fact that they were working on something other than the class assignment, they were not providing a distraction because they were focused and intent on their own work.

This control over one's own learning and ability to use one's voice began to affect two Black participants who have historically had many conflict issues with staff at the school. These two young men (who turned out to be cousins) began to demonstrate more personal comfort in classes, and this turned out to cause discomfort for the teaching staff,

who sought to separate the two so that they would not cause so many “problems” with their interaction.

Whether it was because of a comfort level in school, a lashing out after having been sentenced, or a defense mechanism as he faced time in a serious institution, one of the participants began to claim his colors – making it known which gang he was affiliated with by tagging or marking school property. Since the two adolescents were almost always together, and gang activity is against the rules in a locked institution, this tagging caused both of the minors to be removed from regular school classes and placed in a restricted-access classroom until they are moved to their next institutions.

I had not had any problem with these students since the workshop, and I had enjoyed watching them slowly begin to interact with more of the students in classes, sharing what they knew with confidence and grace where there had once only been shyness and anger. I am afraid that anger will once again take over one of these young men, and I visit him a few times a week to remind him to “stay up” and hang on to the better parts of himself. I tell him I’m afraid he’ll slip back into the angry kid he was. He shrugs, as if he doesn’t know what he’ll do. He’s my recalcitrant learner, still.

### *Considerations*

My responsibility as a researcher has been to protect the students involved in this study. This protection has fallen along several lines. First, I must protect them from any possible repercussions of discussing issues relevant to their incarceration. This has been addressed in the confidentiality and anonymity designed into the writing process, and agreements within the discussion.

No less importantly, I accepted a responsibility to the participants for the mentorship that they allowed me to begin. I may not abandon it before the participant does. I have also accepted responsibility for the possibility that they may doubt the value of their blossoming voices: I continued to encourage them to write and publish their own thoughts, and provide outlet for that through The Voices Project website. I made every effort (short of absolute brainwashing) to help them remember the domain name and address of voices-project.com. Through the website, they could not only reach me as a mentor, but also could send finished works for publication and apply for a college scholarship.

I was also responsible to tell them, numerous times, that with power comes the responsibility to use it wisely, conscious of the costs and benefits of using personal voice for the purpose of creating a more just society.

### *Gathering the Pieces*

I gathered all the pre-workshop writing samples, post-workshop samples, the letters to probation, and my field notes as data to decode and analyze. It was hard to stop the field notes, and to prevent new occurrences from affecting my analysis of the data I'd gathered. The results of the workshop were extremely surprising to me, as I show in this chapter and discuss in depth in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Four: Data Analysis

In this study I was hoping to uncover that an emancipatory writing workshop design would create for incarcerated bicultural students a sense of purpose for their own literacy, and within that a drive to improve their literacy skills. I believe that this study has shown just that, and much more. The data show only a mild change in student writing skills, but given that this study included a short, week-long program, the change is sufficient for me to postulate that a longer, sustained and regular workshop approach (used as an adjunct to other curricula) would provide students opportunity and motivation to develop increasingly sophisticated writing skills. More significantly, the study clearly illuminates – through concrete data – that this emancipatory writing workshop approach provides bicultural students the opportunity to explore topics and ideas which are of life-changing importance to them, in ways that affirm their developing sense of self. Data establish as well that this workshop approach provides them an opportunity to examine and alter for the better their sense of place and potential in this large and changing society.

The data collected consisted of three writing samples from each of the nine participants, and my own field notes, which were written every day during and immediately after the two-hour, week-long workshop. Field notes (Appendix G) focus on the creation of community and its effect on participant product and attitude, participant attitude as compared to their usual classroom behavior, the activities of the day, the development of a mentor role within the workshop, and my own attitudes as a participating mentor/writing guide. The field notes were extended for a month to document significant things that happened in the participants' lives as a consequence of

what they had gained in the workshop. The before-workshop writing sample (Appendix D) addresses the participant's sense of efficacy in writing for a formal audience as well as writing experience. The workshop publication (Appendix E) is a compilation of letters recommending appropriate programs for prevention, rehabilitation, or punishment with adolescent offenders. The after-workshop writing sample (Appendix F) addresses the effect of the workshop (if any) on the participant's sense of efficacy and writing skills.

### *Participant Writing*

While the workshop provided large benefits to the participants, as the data from student writing and from my field notes will show, it did not provide the type of improvement in writing skills that I believe are possible given a longer workshop period.

Three pieces of writing were contributed by each of nine participants: a before-workshop paragraph (Appendix D); the product created within the workshop (Appendix E); and an after-workshop paragraph (Appendix F). In this section I evaluate the communicative content of each piece as well as the mechanics aspects. Mechanics are compared among the three pieces from each author. Content is discussed thematically within each writing task, across authors.

### *Structure and Mechanics*

Two four-point rubrics are used (see Table 1). One rubric evaluates sentence structure and paragraph development, and one addresses mechanics, thus each writing sample has two scores: the first score of the pair is structure; the second is mechanics. All

Table 1.: *Writing Mechanics and Grammar*

<u>Writing sample date</u>	<u>3/25</u>	<u>3/27</u>	<u>3/29</u>
<u>Appendix reference:</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>
Participant 1	2/2	3/2	3/2
Participant 2	2/2	3/2	3/2
Participant 3	4/4	4/2	4/3
Participant 4	4/3	4/3	4/3
Participant 5	4/4	4/4	4/4
Participant 6	4/3	3/3	3/3
Participant 7	4/3	3/2	3/3
Participant 8	4/4	3/3	4/3
Participant 9	3/3	3/3	3/3

Each writing sample was scored with both rubrics: scores are presented as sentence structure/ mechanics.

### Rubrics

#### *Sentence structure and paragraph development*

- 4 developing paragraph; some complex or compound sentences used or attempted
- 3 paragraphing, but undeveloped; sentence structure mostly simple, but controlled
- 2 seminal sentence structure
- 1 no sentence control

#### *Mechanics*

- 4 mechanics add to reader's understanding
- 3 mechanics don't attract attention
- 2 mechanics distract reading
- 1 mechanics obscure reading



three pieces contributed by each writer are evaluated and the number ratings on the rubric are compared across the author's work, to evaluate any change. (See Table 1.)

A notable change, albeit slight, was in the complexity of the sentences attempted. While the punctuation is not under control completely, if a writer attempted a compound or complex sentence and was only lacking a piece of punctuation, I attributed credit for the complex sentence. As Table 1 shows, one writer shifted toward using more simple sentences, which had the effect of strengthening the voice and tone in his work. No direct instruction was provided regarding sentence structure, so any change came from the cooperative effort on voice or from the writer's own focused judgment.

Four of the participants' scores declined at some point across the three pieces in the workshop, as shown in Table 1. This leads me to the conclusion that a week long study does not provide enough time or information to come to a clear and valid evaluation of the effect of the workshop on writing skills, as much as it clearly shows the effect on the affective realm, as is discussed in analysis of my field notes (which begins on page 72).

One writer's longer work, which was done on computer, scored lower on mechanics than his first, handwritten, piece. This was most likely because, as he stated, he is uncomfortable with using a word processor, and his energy focused on editing the sentence-level errors in order to present a stronger idea. The mechanics did not get completely addressed within the workshop. His final piece scored one point higher in mechanics, even though it was done on word processor, too.

While this one-week workshop did not bring about significant improvement in writing mechanics, there is evidence that meaningful writing for a real audience in a

While this one-week workshop did not bring about significant improvement in writing mechanics, there is evidence that meaningful writing for a real audience in a cooperative writers' workshop inspires an interest in learning writing conventions, as documented in my field notes, and in developing writing fluency. A workshop which lasted longer would provide the teacher with more time and opportunity to give direct instruction in the form of mini-lessons which would address writers' needs as they became evident.

### *Content*

#### *Sense of efficacy (before).*

The prompt for before-workshop writing (Appendix D) asks about participant experience and sense of efficacy in writing for a formal audience. I had originally anticipated a group of students who dreaded writing, or had a negative opinion, so that the workshop would provide an impressive change in the affective realm. But because the study necessitated a voluntary workshop, I did not have the opportunity to work with reluctant students who would miraculously improve in writing skills. However, I was to be very surprised with much deeper changes and effects on the participants, as I will explain in the section on field notes.

Eight of the nine participants wrote in the before-workshop sample that they were willing to write for a formal audience; seven stated that they were confident with their ability, and only two mentioned the anticipated negative attitude about writing. In describing their attitudes, these two young men wrote that: "[Writing] is what I call 'Agonizing torture'," and "I honestly felt this writing thing was all just a waist [sic] of

my time.” Both of these writers cited physical pain, either in a cramping hand or a headache, that accompanies writing. On the other hand, the majority expressed a more positive attitude at the start of the project.

One young man wrote of his willingness to write for a formal audience in this passage, which I cite verbatim (as I do with all subsequent quotes):

“I like writing to a certain extent, but mainly when I writing for a grade. I never used to like to write at all, I thought it was for people how liked school and I’m not one of those people. I started to enjoy writing when I got to the 9 grade. I wrote an atobygraphy about my self, for a proficiency test and past it with flying colors.”

In terms of a sense of comfort with writing for publication, another young man expresses a general sentiment when he writes, “I do have some interest in writing for a formal audience, but I do get kinda shy. I’ve never had experience in publishing or formal writing, but I do feel that I am capable of writing if I put my mind to it.”

The force behind this willingness was a sense of purpose: “[Writing for an audience] might help people to know how I feel about being where I am at,” said one.

Another participant summed up a common sentiment when he wrote:

“I feel that writting for a serious purpose like this will help me get some shit off my chest to probation. I really have a lot to say so I think this workship will help me. Writting for a formal audience will help them see what its like being locked up and how it makes me and my family feel, They can also see how many family + emotional proplems come along when your in the system.”

Overall, the opportunity to write for a real-life reason and a real audience stimulated these young men and drove the impressive cooperative effort that unfolded over the week.

*How not to treat juveniles.*

In this section I present the themes addressed in participant writing. Within the letters there is a harmonic call for help for teens, instead of punitive approaches that don't acknowledge an individual teen's needs. But that harmony is created by strong voices, unique to each writer and reflecting his own experiences. While the drafts had begun with anger, they were finished with sincerity and respect, as the writers discussed the need for treating juveniles with respect for their unique needs and problems. It is the changes in the participants themselves, more so than their writing, that becomes striking, as will be shown in the section of field notes. But the words and the ideas that come across clearly in the letters are poignant.

The Voices Project letters to the probation department (Appendix E) were to have discussed an appropriate program design for prevention, rehabilitation, or punishment, addressing who should be in the program, what it should look like and why it would work. While all nine writers did address this topic to varying degrees, they were equally focused on cautionary comments about what shouldn't be done with adolescents who are arrested. Most of these comments discuss the negative effects of certain treatments on the adolescents. As one writer wrote, "Please read [this] and carefully because what they are doing to juvenals is wrong."

The pain inflicted by an impersonal system is a recurring theme. A few writers spoke of their own probation officers: "I think he finds it easy just to send me away for a while and take away my freedom when I know he's never been in the situations I have to face every day." Or this young man: "Our probation officers don't know how we stress and when they make recommendations they're not aware of the affect and emotional damage." Others addressed their specific situations, explaining them in a way that could be generalized to youngsters similar to them: "That goes for all Probation Officers who take teens away from there home. What they should do is get us some real help."

While the participants' pain and frustration with the system was palpable, the desire to have it understood by the target audience motivated the writers to find socially acceptable ways to express themselves: the sense of what might be acceptable came from within the group itself as they discussed voice and purpose.

#### *Program designs.*

Participants wrote of program designs that they believed would be effective with adolescents. Program designs included mentorships (7 writers), job counseling (3 writers), and after-school activities (1). One program design included round table discussions and a writers' workshop within which participants could communicate their feelings and ideas to others.

Effort went into describing the benefits of mentorship. What would mentors provide? As one writer has experienced with his mentor in the juvenile hall, "He asks me what I can do so I won't have to deal with a situation like this anymore." Another says, "Everyone needs someone to listen to them," or as another says, "help us find jobs."

Who could the mentors be? “Responsible young adults that could also be looked upon as role models,” or people who “teach us how to live and get along with our peers.” Working with the existing system, one young man suggests that “probation officers should set up a big brothers and sisters program for the kids who get locked up.”

I don’t know what the effect will be in the long run, but at least for a month or so these young men realized that a caring adult figure most probably will have a positive influence on a developing child’s life. I hope they will remember this as they become fathers and uncles, or as they return to their own communities.

*A shift in personal paradigm.*

Three participants mentioned (either in person or in writing) that they could see themselves contributing to a program as mentors or facilitators. In the middle of our week together, one participant approached me and said that he would like to do a Voices Project type of workshop in his community, “but deal with drugs, ‘cause that’s what I know.” In his writing, he stated, “It makes me feel better to talk about it and I learn something every new about what people have to say and think.” I have provided this young man with a way to contact me when he is free to mentor within a Voices Project workshop in his community: time will tell whether or not he fulfills this goal.

A second wrote that now that he’s realized that adolescents need to talk to someone, he admits that he should take his own advice and be that someone.

If a recreation center were set up in the third young man’s neighborhood, he states that “I wouldn’t mind working there with children cuz I’m really good with kid’s and I

would love for my little brother & my little sister come to this recreation center. If this was to ever come true I would donate my nintendo 64 and my playstaion to the center.”

This young man had begun his draft with a rationalization of his crimes, stating that he had been seeking what “would make me feel like I was a regular middle class person.” By the end of the workshop, he had added reflective thoughts, connecting his situation to a larger community:

“If there was a lot of people that would donate some money here and there I think that the little kid’s might have a better chance of having a normal life instead of being posted on the blocc slangin drug’s, risking their freedom for fast money not realizing that it could be there last money. My main idea from the money that people would donate would go toward creating a nice recreation center....”

The concept of having something worth contributing to a larger society has not occurred to these young men in their lives: they have been engaging in classic destructive and anti-social behaviors, but now they have had a glimpse at a different self-image and purpose. This ability to engage in analysis and transformation begins with the chance to codify, or identify a situation. The process of becoming increasingly aware of one’s situations and aware of ways to create change (*conscientizacao*, as Freire names it) is gradual, yet life-changing (Freire and Macedo, 1987). This workshop design offers bicultural adolescents the opportunity to engage in that process of *conscientizacao*. This is emancipatory education in action.

The extent to which this study revealed the transformative aspect of the workshop design was a surprise to me, especially in terms of how much the participants became

engaged in actions that they understood would transform their situations. These actions are discussed in the field notes.

*Effect of the project (after).*

In the after-workshop prompt, participants were asked to comment on the effect of the program on themselves as writers, in terms of critical thinking, and in terms of their self image (Appendix F). One writer's words expressed a few shared sentiments:

"The Voices Project has helped me in several ways as a writer and as a person. It made me want to write all my feelings towards the probation department. Also it made me realize how I can express my self as a person, and doing it in a non-violent manner way. I have been doing more critical thinking in making suggestions on how to let the probation department know how we feel. I would like the judge to ask me why I was apart of this program and why I feel this way."

These words indicate a growing sense of empowerment, and a need for those in power to have an awareness.

Eight of the nine participants stated that they are aware of doing more critical thinking as a result of the workshop. As one wrote, "This program has also made me think critically about all the things that come out of my mouth and out of led or ink." Another mentions that this project "has also taught me how to think more under the surface."

Six mentioned either an appreciation for what the program provided them, or stated that they felt they had gained something personally from the experience. One wrote, "The experience did add to my self image because by expressing my thoughts about



probation made me feel good saying theres got to be better programs instead of keeping us incarcerated.”

Four identified that they felt they were getting an important message sent to the right audience. Four felt that either their writing or their typing skills had improved as a result of the project.

The written responses were supportive of what I'd hoped to discover in terms of the affective realm, since it is so critical that students feel a sense of efficacy and ownership in their learning. But the truly inspiring result of the workshop was in the development of attributes the adolescent learners had not previously identified in themselves: a strong sense of maturity, cooperation, and community building. These aspects will be discussed further in the analysis of my field notes.

*Suggestions for the program design.*

At the bottom of the page containing the post-workshop prompt, suggestions were solicited for changes to the program. Only two participants had suggestions, the rest said it was “perfect.” Suggestions were to provide more of the round table discussion time and work longer than one week; another participant suggested that I add the use of music to the official program design. A number of participants had orally stated that listening to music of their choice helped them to write better. A final, unsolicited note from one participant stated: “We need to have more workshops in the Hall like this one. It would help others express themselves pretty much the way they want to.” This encouragement echoed what I have heard from students in the past, when we've had round-table discussions about serious and imposing situations. Adolescents can deal with stresses and

issues much better in a cooperative setting, and an accepting adult facilitator provides a necessary guidance and validation.

### *Field Notes*

I was seeking a group of bicultural participants who are extremely challenged in basic literacy skills, for the purpose of establishing that this kind of workshop would inspire them to higher literacy levels. Instead I got a group of moderately literate bicultural participants who knew me well as a classroom teacher, and who were interested in the aspect of the project that would serve them. While I was slightly disappointed that I wasn't facing an extremely challenging group, I can honestly say that I was looking forward to working with the group of students who volunteered. I hadn't anticipated that any student would look at an activity through the lens of how it could benefit him or her. This is the first step of ownership which can bring about very powerful things, I discovered.

### *Attitude and Behavior*

The difficulty I had enlisting a group of extremely low-literacy participants is due to the fact that students at the juvenile hall where I teach were enthusiastic to participate in the kind of workshop that I have a reputation for: thus, the volunteer list was overflowing before more reluctant students could be approached. This speaks to the fact that adolescents, as a whole, are eager to be heard, in their own voices. One of the workshop volunteers brought some poetry into the first meeting, hoping to get time to type it up for submission to The Voices Project website.

Ability to address issues of personal relevance and importance engaged the participants to such a degree that they invested more, took more risks, and willingly pursued the project to the end. During the week's workshop, writers' thinking expanded from finger-pointing hostilities to reflection and constructive suggestions, including their own possible contributions. One participant was offered a placement in a group home during our week together, and he asked that his move be held off until he'd finished the workshop, "because there's something I want to say."

I was surprised with the cooperation and work level of some of the participants: they have been particularly shy or recalcitrant in classroom settings, and I had anticipated manipulation and a lack of cooperation from them. I figured that a lot of the participants just wanted to get out of their cells during a week which promised no variety. (This was a week-long spring break, during which school was out of session. Aside from school, the schedule in juvenile hall does not provide many opportunities to get out of the cement cells where these kids spend their days and nights.) I was wrong in my assumption. There was a level of productivity and involvement I never would have imagined from some of these students. Others did not surprise me, as they've made it clear they want to be heard.

Participants who had been reluctant classroom writers became fully engaged, stimulating small group discussion for the purpose of improving their understanding and expression in the final product. A group of Black males discussed their neighborhoods and living conditions, in a language that only they fully understood. When I asked them for translations of some words or terms (such as "slangin' on the block"), they happily provided what they thought I could understand. Their smiles and laughter made me feel as if they were happy that I wanted to understand them, on their terms. The terms and

topics they discussed showed up in their drafts. It is noteworthy that these young men conducted a self-led discussion for the purpose of improving their work, since in the classroom their quiet conversations are almost always off-task, and what writing they do is done to simply get the assignment completed.

The participants each took advantage of time to create a mentoring position for me in their lives. They talked to me about personal issues during or after the workshop, and some of them asked for extra time in the classroom after the workshop. One of the reasons for this is that they want to be out of their cells, which is where they would have spent a majority of the time during our break from normal school. But during the time they were with me, they used me as a sounding board; I was a caring adult and they needed to be heard, to be known.

### *Community*

There was a more homogeneous grouping among the Black males than I have seen in the classroom, to the extent that they shared language while discussing shared experiences. But they were not exclusive, nor were the Latino participants. Aside from discussions which relied on a shared and exclusive experience, the community crossed all boundaries. Editing and revision were done by a heterogeneous group of willing participants.

The community of volunteers with a shared objective and shared understanding created a mutual willingness and work ethic that transcended any heterogeneity within the group. Further, the differences among participants (in age, experience, and moral development or ability to reflect on personal responsibility and social norms) provided a

field of possibility and interpretation that each participant took advantage of; either by soliciting advice from someone more experienced in the justice system; listening to correction from someone with a more experienced background in any number of areas; or asking peers for help with writing mechanics, voice, and style. Sense of community was strengthened by establishing the researcher/facilitator's role as a guide and mentor rather than the authority, thus providing a degree of ownership among participants that inspired uncommon demonstrations of maturity. These participants knew the basic needs of any cooperative community, being sophisticated human beings, and the teacher/researcher behaved as a facilitator, leaving the role of regulator open. These young men filled the role of regulator when it was necessary, calling for quiet, or answering a question posed. Within any group that has a basis of respect and community, I believe the participants can rise to meet nearly any challenge.

### *Teaching Writing*

This workshop included a series of mini-lessons that were based on what I observed in participant writing. The participants were an extremely willing audience for the small interruptions I made to the group dynamic: there was none of the whining or avoidance that is common during classroom mini-lessons or interruptions for housekeeping. I can only speculate that it was because of the sense of commitment to the goal, and ownership of the medium.

This same ownership inspired quick growth as writer/mentors. One-on-one assistance was sought from me by the writers, and at first I provided the kind of guidance that a fellow writer would provide. However, when one writer seemed to have a grasp of

a concept, I referred others to him. Each participant became the seat of some particular knowledge, to which questions were directed.

Participants learned the most important lesson about writing: write from the heart, no matter what the heart says. Otherwise, that passion might constipate the writing, so to speak. The writing didn't flow out on the first day of writing (see Appendix G, March 26, 2002). Participants were blocked by their anger. Every participant sat before a page that contained a brief sentence or paragraph with angry words, such as "fucked up," "shit," and so on. I suggested that they explore that anger, that good writing comes from the artist in the heart and then is introduced to the editor in the head, not the other way around. I would look at a first line and suggest that the writer explore some particular thought that seemed to be bursting at the seams. Direction (or permission) seemed to be their need, because they flowed after that first obstacle. It was important that their anger and their hurt be acknowledged and heard. Through their initial drafts, they were provided that ear, that validity. With that need out of the way, they were evidently freed to communicate about what was underneath the ire, because the anger doesn't show up in the final drafts, even though no one told them directly to take it out. I provided information; the choice to access and incorporate that information was made by the writers.

I explained in a mini-lesson that language is forceful, and their choice of language could determine how willing their audience was to listen. One young man had referred to his probation officer as a "bitch who just sits on [her] lazy ass." I mentioned that since we usually don't learn well from people who call us names, his audience might not, either. In his final product he took the high road, deleting all direct references to his probation

officer. Other mini-lessons focused on a similar skill: communication. Participants needed to have their emotional ideas heard, but they wanted their audience to hear their intellectual ideas, as well. They worked in pairs and small groups to decide how both could happen. The round table discussion and small group talk seemed to be the place to meet the need to feel heard; the writing was a place where their audience's interpretation was primary.

On a basic literacy level, this workshop provided opportunity to share vocabulary building in a "word wall," the butcher paper on which I wrote every word that needed to be spelled or needed some explanation. Because the words were from their own work, they attended to them and asked for clarification as they wrote. They used the papers as reference for one another through the week, as well, "Look, it's up there. You don't put a 't' on it."

An early session which called for shared reading set the stage for writers to interact about the works in progress. During this session (see Appendix G, March 28), it was required that each person's draft be read aloud, whether by him or by me. Participants gave feedback about the writer's awareness of the audience. This initial opening of drafts to accept input from others kept the doors open: the participants demonstrated for the remainder of the week that the workshop was for the purpose of polishing everyone's draft. Peers willingly let others look at their drafts, and all feedback was expressed and accepted, even if not used. For some participants, this attitude was no less than amazing, since I had not seen them cooperate with or accept criticism from anyone in the entire duration of our classroom relationship. The safety of the community

and the facilitator's modeling that all ideas are worth consideration might have been the key to help them accept input: I can honestly say I'm not sure.

### *The Teacher's Role and Benefits*

While I was a participant in the round table discussion, bound to the same rules of constructivist listening as everyone else, there was some sort of power that resided in my seat. The young men clearly wanted me to hear what they felt: in the round table discussion they talked to me more than to the circle. But they had ownership of the process; when it came to regulating within a discussion, they took that upon themselves, reminding me to "be quiet," if it was not my turn. The *power* I had was that I was providing the participants a sense of a caring, adult audience, which they could then transfer to their written product.

As a teacher during the workshop, I felt free of the controlling and suspicious vibe that I tend to get in classrooms with a dry curriculum. Since the learners were engaged, their interpersonal communication was for the benefit of what they were learning. When they are not engaged, their interaction is off topic, and more often than not it contains the type of gossip that creates problems (like fights) in juvenile hall.

Engaged in active learning, the participants asked for help; they were honest about their limitations and they wanted to expand. When the students were engaged, I found that as I cruised around the classroom I had less and less to do, because they were working more and more independently or cooperatively to locate and overcome gaps in their skills or their knowledge. I do not think this is an ability these participants would have identified in themselves prior to the workshop because traditional classroom



methodology does not provide the opportunity for complete ownership on the part of the learner.

Participant responsibility freed me to be a co-writer, less of an authority figure, and just glance at someone's work and give him an affirmation. Participants were more likely to ask pointed questions about their work than the old, "Read this and fix it for me." Instead I was asked, "What do you think of this sentence here, instead of in that other paragraph?"

### *The Larger Dialogue*

During the week of the workshop and the week after (before we'd published the work), some probation staff at the hall gave me an unusually wide berth, avoiding any casual interaction, as if they were not comfortable with the fact that these kids were being given an ear and a platform. However, affirming responses came from all areas after we published the work. Over forty copies of the publication were made available to staff at the facility: forty more were delivered to the probation office mailboxes, the juvenile court judge, the chief of probation, and teaching staff. Participants were receiving positive comments for weeks: staff supervising the units had access to a unit copy, and read them and responded in the presence of all the juveniles. Many said, "You guys really thought this through, this is good." Some participants made it known that they were the authors, others did not (while others had been moved to other facilities).

I received a phone call from a teacher at another facility, seeking permission to make copies for the probation personnel who work at her site. She also asked if she could

share the publication with her students, as well as asking if they could submit work to The Voices Project website.

One young man had shown the work to his mother on visiting day, and she was very impressed with the quality of thought that had gone into it. He mentioned this numerous times over the next month: it obviously mattered to him that his mother was proud of what he'd done. He also told the prosecuting attorney that he'd been part of a confidential workshop which had created a publication for probation. During his court appearance, the judge told him that he'd read the publication and was very impressed with the quality of thought that it contained: he told the participant that he had a good future ahead of him, with this kind of thought. This is the participant who said he wanted to conduct Voices Project workshops in areas outside of the juvenile hall.

### *Fallout*

Emboldened by positive response to their independent thought, some of the participants began to engage in this independent thought in other classrooms at the institution, which met with resistance from staff who have a more traditional methodology. After being chastised publicly for changing his seat so that he could have better access to the instructional materials, one participant told the teacher that if more of the teachers "taught like Newsom, we could all learn better." Teachers at the hall are responsible for student safety with the constant threat of gang-related fights erupting, so it is critical that they control all classroom movement: this participant's comment flew in the face not only of good manners, but of that teacher's right to determine the appropriate classroom management.

Learners who had begun to see themselves as capable of strengthening their own literacy began to chafe at some of the skills-based literacy instruction, and this dissatisfaction caused further conflicts in classrooms and between teachers and students.

### *Effects*

The evidence is clear that the participants gained perspective and some personal power through the emancipatory nature of the workshop: the lesson not directly taught or internalized was the importance of calculating the gain versus the cost of making a stand. The possible consequences of raising a teacher's ire could be lock-down on the unit, loss of privileges on the unit, and a negative note sent to the judge or the prosecuting attorney. And yet making a stand for a student-based methodology might have been calculated by a youngster as a worthy risk.

These down-the-road consequences of an emancipatory pedagogy raise many questions, not in the least the ethical dilemma of whether emancipatory education that may result in a loss of physical freedom is truly emancipatory. This question is considered in light of all other things gained, in the next and final chapter.

## Chapter Five: Interpretation

This study has revealed more about the effects and politics of emancipatory education than I had anticipated. My experience in conducting the study and in writing this analysis has helped me realize how fundamental a critical paradigm is to emancipatory classroom teaching, and how effective an emancipatory classroom design is for incarcerated bicultural learners. This chapter addresses what has been discovered in answer to the study's three guiding questions (see pg. 8), and the implications for teachers, including teacher preparation. Although I began this study focusing on the needs of incarcerated bicultural students, I believe the findings address needs of all adolescent learners.

### *Addressing the Questions of this Study*

Given that a majority of students in juvenile hall are bicultural and have limited literacy skills, a fundamental assumption of this study was that traditional methodologies have not been effective, and something new must be discovered. While I was looking at a strategy that would be useful in the classroom, I have discovered that it is the underlying beliefs, the teacher's paradigm, that has the greatest effect on learners. The teacher's willingness to engage in a critical pedagogy and work towards an emancipatory classroom environment have proven to be most profitable for participants in this study. This section evaluates why that assessment is true, and illustrates how my discoveries can benefit other teachers. This chapter ends with suggestions for teacher training and further research.

*Creating a Sense of Engagement in Incarcerated Bicultural Students*

Students who have low literacy levels, and who have had negative or brief experiences in schooling, bring a negative attitude to the classroom. Not all students in this situation are bicultural, but a majority of the students in court school classrooms are bicultural and have had negative or abbreviated experiences in schooling. Darder (1991) and others argue that traditional schooling methodologies are not effective for bicultural students, and to the extent that is true, I would hope that teachers would be able to generalize and learn from this study. All students need to have positive experiences in schools, whether court school or comprehensive schools.

Generally, a negative attitude is expressed in avoidance and acting-out behaviors, which do not bring about learning for the student. Further, such behaviors affect the other students in the classroom, distracting the energy of the teacher from effective teaching practices. Given a classroom full of such students, a court school teacher often resorts to individualized hand-out type of teaching, leaving each student struggling to learn from a piece of paper that is either incomprehensible or is written at an offensively low level (with large print and childish pictures). Neither of these approaches will help the learner to develop strong learning skills; instead it reinforces what Finn (1999) and Giroux (1997) refer to as a hierarchical class-structured education which teaches the lower class students to simply sit in their seats and follow directions. These skills do not facilitate a successful, engaged and involved life, nor do they facilitate active learning.

Incarcerated low-literacy students who are accustomed to this type of schooling need to learn to practice critical thinking, especially so that they might be able to build on their own learning more rapidly, leaping from concrete to conceptual thinking in order to

maximize their learning opportunities. An emancipatory classroom design facilitates the development of critical thinking and self-empowerment. This study has demonstrated that a culturally relevant classroom environment which encourages cooperative learning and critical skills motivates reluctant learners by providing them ownership of the learning.

*A learning community.*

This workshop study demonstrated what was postulated by Banks (1994), Ladson-Billings (1995), and others: cooperative learning can foster a sense of self worth in youngsters who have been alienated and who have developed a negative self image. Through participation within the learning community in this study, adolescents who have demonstrated that they were reluctant to share ideas elsewhere were empowered by the experience of discussion, writing for an audience, and publication. Each participant expressed in some manner that this experience will affect his future expression and sense of efficacy.

This study uncovered that differences in age, race, culture, class, experience, faith, and gender can all contribute to a richer learning experience rather than serving as divisive points; thus, a heterogeneous community is a model for learning and contributing in a larger global society;. Youngsters who have been treated as if they were less important or less capable than others see that they have skills, ideas, and knowledge to contribute and that others in the learning community value their contributions. A teacher who demonstrates personal respect for differences can establish a caring and safe classroom community within which such practice will take place.

Working within an interactive community of learners can be a very powerful experience for many kids, for many reasons. The isolation and limited life experiences of many of incarcerated kids have limited their vision; often, they haven't considered other life experiences, or other solutions to their personal problems. Very poor or otherwise isolated children have a small horizon, and when they are motivated to listen to and explore other possibilities, they can begin to see other options for themselves. (The benefits of such listening and exploration are immeasurable for a teacher. A respectful community dialogue provides *the teacher* the opportunity to begin to understand lives and situations through the experience of others, just as I gained the opportunity for insight into the lives and language of the participants of this study.)

It is important in any cooperative classroom lesson that the teacher be a facilitator, and must be someone who is convinced that the youngsters in the classroom or workshop are capable of working to a higher level through the cooperative experience. What the teacher believes bears fruit: a teacher who believes that a community will rise to the occasion will find success, while a teacher who does not believe in the ability of the community will not be patient enough to wait for the success to come.

#### *Cultural relevance.*

As Ladson-Billings (1995) and others have established, it is important that what is addressed and discussed in classrooms must have some relevance to the learner's home culture or life experience. Such relevance provides not only an essential foundation upon which a trained teacher can scaffold the learning, but classroom acknowledgement of a student's home culture also demonstrates a respect which is motivating. Students who

have felt isolated or marginalized in school communities need to feel as though they and their home cultures are valued.

In this study, the respect for participants that was communicated in the culturally and linguistically relevant basis of the lesson transferred into a respectful community, and then into individual participant respect for the learning atmosphere. Freedom to use familiar language and work with familiar concepts provided the participants a sense of being valued, which they then used as a stepping stone to meet their larger need of communicating with an alien audience. But it was the beginnings, couched in familiar language and shared experience, which provided the participants with the wherewithal to attempt a communication in which they had little faith.

This personal and cultural relevance was a critical element in gaining full involvement of the participants, especially when combined with the innate need to make oneself known to others. Social or ethnic micro-communities grouped together to codify what was unique to them, in order to communicate it to the larger community and to the dominant structure. These micro-communities then unified to create a presentable argument for a specific, powerful, audience. As Freire and Macedo (1987) have identified, this ability to codify and communicate are essential elements to an education which is liberatory: the emancipatory education that helps us to create a "language of possibility" for our lives.

Further, the micro-communities, each with their own reality and "discourse," experienced a unification and managed the difficult: that of cooperative discourse. This goes far beyond the promise that was made by Banks (1994) and Ladson-Billings (1995) that a cooperative and heterogeneous group experience would "ameliorate" the negative



effects of being marginalized: these kids experienced *and created* a unified multicultural community in an extremely divisive environment.

Within a locked facility, such bridging can ameliorate some of the dangerous segregation and alignment which bring about gang-related violence. Further, bicultural learners strengthen self esteem and efficacy when they see themselves flourish as members of multiple cultures. When faced with the opportunity to cooperate with members of any particular group with which they identify, or as a member free of a specific identification, they are more likely to stand strong with a personal identity.

*A relevant writing program for adolescent learners*

Through meaningful writing activities, adolescents can work to discover more of their own beliefs. This study has demonstrated that in wanting to write to a real audience, adolescents are inspired to learn and master more of the conventions of writing.

*Literacy and language skills.*

I had hoped that the workshop would increase the literacy skills and strategies of bicultural students who are in danger of being continually oppressed and marginalized in our literacy-rich society. As we have seen, the workshop experience increased the strategies that marginalized learners knew of and relied upon independently for non-workshop related needs: in writing for their own reflection, to make themselves understood to themselves, and to make themselves understood by others. It also effectively strengthened their sense of voice and appropriateness in writing for an audience.

This study clearly illustrated the benefits of an interactive and cooperative workshop for language development. Through shared vocabulary development and rich oral interaction around sentence structure and paragraph development, the participants gained hints and modeling from the more able members of the group, as well as the opportunity to practice certain forms of expression with one another before putting them in print. A workshop provides opportunity for learners to learn from more able peers, and to develop an understanding of voice, purpose, and audience which can be carried over to other writing and speaking needs.

*Adolescents in the zone of proximal development.*

The zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; Tappan, 1998) becomes accessible and flexible within a community of learners. In this study, each participant's abilities shifted and flexed as the needs of the group and the focus of the shared task changed. No one person remained the learner, as no one person was consistently the instructor. Every participant touched each other participant, in some way or another, simply because they were engaged in a culturally responsive heterogeneous community effort. Within a structured and/or hegemonic lesson, there is no way that multiple parts of multiple learners could have been tapped and stretched; yet within this workshop, each participant stretched himself and his peers in ways no one expected.

Since we only had one week together in the actual project workshop, writing mechanics did not measurably and reliably improve: but a classroom approach of this manner would be ongoing and I have no doubt that the writing skills measured on the rubric would improve, given the student interest and ownership that is encouraged by a

responsive and flexible methodology. The benefits of the writing workshop went far beyond the discrete skills that my rubric evaluated: this workshop provided participants with a new sense of self and of the value of learning, as is discussed in the next section.

*Political and public writing afford a unique opportunity*

This study has shown that an emancipatory pedagogy – classroom interactions designed to strengthen and develop each learner’s individual empowerment – can have striking effects within a short period of time. The freedom to discuss and discharge powerful emotions lifted some burden off young shoulders, if only for the duration of the constructivist dialogue sessions. But the fact that young adults seek and appreciate this type of session bespeaks their innate wisdom as to what they really need: to maintain an emotional balance.

*Codification.*

Constructivist dialogue and the need to codify certain sociocultural situations for the purpose of explaining them to an audience provided the participants a greater understanding of their roles in the situations and in the solutions. Freire (and Macedo’s) work in this area (1987) turned out to be more pertinent than I had anticipated: there is an immediate and direct connection between codifying one’s world and seeing it from a more objective perspective. In discussing and writing about personal situations, these participants became at least momentarily separate from – and able to judge – their worlds. They were reading (and writing) the *word* in order to read (and create) their *world*. And to the extent that they were able to do that, they were emancipated from

previous limitations. One participant was able to evaluate his history this way: “this program has gave me a chance to relect [sic] on the past and how all that slangin got me was the return of bad carma (being incarcerated for two years).”

In terms of providing participants with an opportunity to see themselves as capable of participating in a dialogue for the purpose of creating change, we can see that the young men in this study gained a sense of pride, ability, and interest in such political dialogue. Unfortunately, some of the participants did not avoid learning about the costs of emancipatory action (refer to the section *Fallout* in the previous chapter): there may be a price to pay for codifying what a dominant structure does not want codified. Having seen oneself as a capable member of a worthwhile dialogue, it is not likely that one will return to a mute condition, unless the costs are too great. This conundrum is part of the struggle we face in creating a just society.

#### *Language of hope.*

Giroux’s work around the politics of hope reminds us that “there is a link between knowledge, power, and domination” (1997, p. 43). Personal knowledge (codification) made public and acknowledged gains us power, and we can then begin to stand against domination, whether political, psychological or sociological. As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the subordinated social standing of these young people may have been their first imprisonment in a very unequal society: choices to violate laws or take risks with drugs and violence are very likely byproducts of frustration and anger about their status as subordinated citizens. While it is ludicrous to imagine that literacy will free incarcerated students of their present bonds of incarceration, emancipatory

education might very well provide the opportunity to address the underlying causes of destructive behavior and to gain a language of possibility to build upon and use for the remainder of their lives.

The immediacy of the community's need (the jailed speaking to the jailors) creates an almost allegorical quality to what is clear from this study: we need to have a dialogue with that which imprisons us. Whether focusing on bad habits or fears of success, an emancipatory and constructivist writing workshop in juvenile hall could provide many adolescents an opportunity to write their own version of this necessary dialogue between (as yet unidentified) *self* and *other* (that which keeps us imprisoned in our present perceived limitations). The practice of such reflection and analysis was demonstrated by one participant in the study (see pg. 58), and presumably he will continue to benefit from this practice.

Through the discussion and the writing process, participants developed a more complex understanding of their situations and their choices. In identifying themselves and codifying their situations, they began to perceive themselves as separate from the situations rather than victims of their circumstances. While this may help them to plan for more productive futures, it provides them with a great deal of short-term frustration, since they are really in no position to exercise any personal power or self determination, unless they are very creative. Historical figures such as Malcolm X, Hurricane Carter and others provide the example of what to do when self respect is born in an institution: make the most of your literary skills until you are physically free.

*A sense of place in an impersonal space.*

These young men have demonstrated that their sense of self is much stronger after the workshop, through their desire to exert self-determination in their educational setting and goals. Some of the participants have begun to exercise their personal voice for what they perceive to be pedagogical justice within the court school: this has raised some problematic issues, and I am confronted with a very real dilemma. If an adolescent is inspired by an open and critical dialogue in my room to critique and challenge another teacher's methodology or pedagogy, the cost can be very great, even to the point of being put on lock-down. How does one teach critical thinking when it comes to standardized expectations such as classroom behavior, language usage, curricular direction and inquiry? What do classroom teachers do with the questions raised? We cannot decide for our students what questions will be raised: that would be hypocrisy. But what do we do when questions challenge our peers, as they are guaranteed to do?

By providing students with the opportunity to gain self respect and personal empowerment in my classroom, have I turned their educational experience in other places into something dangerous? I obviously need to remind them to engage in critical reflection as to the appropriateness and profitability of certain types of personal freedom: think about what is expected in a situation, decide at what personal cost you might comply, and then decide if the cost of non-compliance is worth taking the risk.

In future classroom practice within the emancipatory paradigm, I will spend more time talking with the students about the impact of critical thought and social dialogue, and the possibilities of running afoul of those in power when engaging in such dialogue.

Examining cost and benefit of speaking out will be part of our dialogue, as will lessons about culturally appropriate ways to speak out, in various settings.

*Our stated goal.*

What is our stated educational goal? It is the goal of this emancipatory classroom approach to provide adjudicated youth a chance to see themselves as capable learners, with a personal understanding of the value of literacy skills. Au (1993) and Banks (1994) stress the importance of learners feeling accepted in the learning environment. Clearly, that sense affected the learning attitude of the participants in this study, and affected their own sense of ownership in other situations.

I want learners to see themselves as capable of being self-directed and of contributing to a larger dialogue, in whatever realm they feel drawn to. I want them to see themselves as capable of contributing, and the world as needing their contributions. Further, once they see themselves as capable of developing and expressing personal and political ideas, it is hoped that they can more fully participate in creating and sustaining a healthy global community (Banks, 1994).

This workshop had an emancipatory effect on the participants to the extent that they saw their own voices as worthy of contributing, even if they did not trust the target audience; based on the promise of a larger audience, they were inspired to think critically and express their ideas clearly and with consideration of the audience's linguistic *and moral* needs. They extended this self respect into other realms, such as other classrooms where they attempted to gain some ownership over their own learning. Clearly the experience was inspiring for them.

*Implications for the Classroom: Critical and Emancipatory Paradigms*

What is clear from this study is the effect of teaching on student attitudes and self-perception. As Giroux points out (1997), teaching is a political act, and an effective teacher must be aware of the play of power within the classroom, and assumptions about voice and knowledge. While emancipatory teaching (designed to empower the learners in every personal and social aspect) is a more overtly political act, all teaching is political, since it relies on the transmission of knowledge. Is it a two-way transmission model, or one-way? What is *knowledge*? Who decides the answers to both of these questions? Critical pedagogy, which relies on such reflection, is necessary in every classroom.

In order to fully enable and facilitate student ownership of the learning, the classroom teacher must engage in constant attentive reflection as to the dynamics within the classroom community. A critical pedagogy (Wink, 1997, and see discussion, page 9) is absolutely necessary for this type of teaching, and it takes a great deal of energy: physical, mental and intuitive. It is the critical pedagogy that keeps the learning experience relevant to the needs of the learners rather than only to the expected outcome, as the teacher observes and queries students as to their progress and obstacles. It is through critical pedagogy, as well, that the teacher strives to be aware of and to temper power struggles inherent in the classroom.

This element requires a watchful eye and willingness to let go of some arbitrary controls that we as teachers come to rely on: within classroom dialogue, does a student's opinion carry as much weight as the teachers? Does the text book's *truth* carry more weight than any other sources'? Do the teacher's needs outweigh those of the learning community? The willingness to engage in such questioning benefits the teacher as an



individual, as well as the community he or she is facilitating and guiding, not to mention providing a very human role model for youngsters who need to develop the skill of self-reflection. A teacher, in order to help students learn about power, voice, social justice and democracy, must be willing to constantly reflect on his or her own experiences and beliefs around those topics.

My critical pedagogy is not only in how I reflect on my teaching, but in what and how I encourage my students to examine and question. For example, the structure of my round table discussion forces students into a different paradigm about classroom discussion, about who has something to say, and about who is worth listening to. This study provided participants the opportunity to challenge their beliefs about who has voice, and whether or not voice has power. A similar type of questioning can easily be carried into any number of other situations as one level of critical literacy, as explained by Luke and Freebody (1999) in their discussion of The Four Resources model.

On the part of the teacher, critical pedagogy requires a willingness to be unsure, to be surrounded with questions and a certain amount of disquietude. A great degree of it, as a matter of fact (Wink, 1997). As incredibly beneficial as the critical pedagogy may be for the disenfranchised learner, it is a taxing approach which fills a teacher with self doubt. Those who engage in critical pedagogy must have a network of support; ideally a group which engages in regular constructivist listening sessions for the benefit of the participating teachers. Such networks are the focus of the work of Julian Weissglass (1996), which is well worth examination by groups of teachers who want to engage in emancipatory education with a critical paradigm. The constructivist dialogue provides

each participant the opportunity to verbalize and then construct the meaning of his or her own ideas and experiences.

Considering the price that has been paid in the past by marginalized groups — evidenced in their disproportionate representation in special education programs and locked facilities throughout our country, as well as their disproportionate under representation in positions of power — the effort and the risk are worthwhile.

The findings of this study raise many questions about teacher preparation: a teacher who hopes to prepare students for full participation in a successful life which includes personal fulfillment and active social involvement must be guided to skills far beyond those covered in traditional methodology courses. Teachers working with students who have been marginalized and misunderstood must especially examine the dynamics of power within the classroom and the larger institution of the school. The power resident in the role of teacher must be used for the benefit of the learners, more so than for the benefit of either the teacher or the institution. A teacher must be a facilitator for independent growth and development of each unique learner in the classroom.

How can this come about? Regardless of the setting a teacher-in-training is bound for, it is clear to me that there are certain concepts and issues that teacher training must address.

### *Teacher Preparation*

While it is absolutely important that teachers have excellent training in their subject areas, they must remember that they are educating *learners* more so than teaching *subjects*. Every classroom teacher must demonstrate respect for self, for learning, and for

individual ownership of self and learning. This is not a set of natural skills, in our society.

All teachers must be trained for and demonstrate the following understandings:

- a learner's relationship with the teacher is the single most powerful influence on that child's learning
- every member of the classroom community (regardless of age) brings a life of his or her own into the classroom that may affect the learning
- we all have prejudice and preconceptions which affect our interactions with others
- a learner's home culture is a key to his or her learning needs: learn how that culture educates its young and incorporate that into the classroom environment
- home language is valuable, and reflects a part of that learner's *self*
- every learner has something of value to contribute to a classroom community
- every child is capable of learning, given respect as an individual

With these understandings, teachers can become the agents for positive social change that they are so well positioned to be.

While my focus is teachers in alternative settings with students who have individual and community histories of being marginalized, I hope the findings and the questions raised will also inspire the traditional school community to some pedagogical adaptations. Adolescents need to be actively involved in their own lives, and need to be honored and respected for the wisdom and knowledge that they bring to the table. Every table of discussion should have a seat for the adolescent perspective, and education at its best is a dialogue.

The methodology and paradigm in my classroom (as represented by the workshop presented in this study) conflicts with most teacher's approaches, in my experience.

When a student leaves my class or when a substitute comes into my classroom, there is an immediate pedagogical clash: students are not usually trusted to exercise judgment as to their best learning approaches. The traditional paradigm is that it is the teacher's job to tell students how to learn, and to insist on their compliance. If a student's personal learning style or interest is at odds with the particular demand of the teacher, it is the student who is expected to adjust, not the teacher.

I believe that teachers must be taught to examine their beliefs about learners as well as about classroom delivery: are students capable of determining the most appropriate personal approach to a learning task? I believe that with a bit of guidance, a student who learns to identify his or her own best approach will become a life-long learner. My students are encouraged to tell me when a lesson plan is not working for them: we then sit and analyze the different aspects of the lesson and evaluate what the learner wants to adapt to his or her own needs. The ability to engage in this type of dialogue comes from my faith in students as individual human beings living unique lives, and my own realization that I don't know everything, but I do know how interesting learning can be when it's personalized. Teacher training should include a strong foundation in understanding why a lesson has been structured the way it has, so that adaptations can be made without abandoning the objective and goals of the lesson.

Teacher training must also address how to set up and facilitate cooperative learning: it is common for young learners to fall into the trap of relying on the skills of a particular student to pull the weight of the group. An insightful and watchful facilitating teacher will be able to draw strengths out of each member in a group, and help students who have been misled into thinking they only had one strength, find and develop more

skills. For example, many times a student who is adept at reading quickly might not be as adept at finding the more subtle meanings in a text: this skill can be developed by modeling from a student who isn't such a fast reader, but is more insightful. Or a student who is an excellent writer might not have very good social skills: interaction with peers at different levels of writing ability might strengthen his or her interactive skills, especially under guidance from a caring adult who models respectful social skills.

### *Research Recommendations*

Further research needs to be conducted to determine the effect of constructivist and emancipatory workshops on the literacy skills of those who are severely challenged in literacy development. What effects do such workshops have on English language learners? If it is determined that such a workshop approach positively affects literacy skills in a measurable way, then this type of delivery and learning method should be used for court school juveniles in more locations.

If our primary ethical concern in the juvenile court school system is the rehabilitation of young offenders, what effect does emancipatory, constructivist pedagogy have on student attitudes, behavior and perspective while in the locked facility? The ultimate goal of any education is to maximize the potential of the learners to participate fully in a global community: in this light, a longitudinal study which addressed a critical emancipatory paradigm's effect on recidivism (return to criminal activity) would be very helpful and informative.

*Teaching (and Learning) as Political Choice*

I find it interesting that Darder (1991) and others set the stage for critical democracy by pointing out that the oppressive structure in place takes complicit participation from all parties, yet their discussion for emancipatory education only focuses on oppressed groups. In my opinion, we are all oppressed by an unfair system as long as we are ignorant about it. I am bothered by the idea of biculturalism being a coping tool for bicultural kids without acknowledging that it is something that our entire society needs in order to move forward to a true democracy. Darder's work argues for the rights of bicultural students to maintain non-dominant identities and still be true to "American ideals." But this is a contradiction in itself, since "American ideals" are not in place; it is only through a true dialogue and dialectical philosophy that we will be enacting the American ideals of equity and democracy.

Toward this end, we must all take the risks inherent in changing the societal power paradigm to one which benefits each and every part of the whole, rather than protecting and perpetuating an existing hierarchical structure which only benefits those fortunate enough to find themselves holding the gavel, or inheriting native stock in the controlling entity.

Giroux (1997) explains a fundamental aspect to critical, emancipatory education:

"The language of critical pedagogy needs to construct schools as democratic public spheres.... in which the knowledge, habits, and skills of critical rather than simply good citizenship are taught and practiced.... providing students with the opportunity to develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms, rather than simply adapt to them. It also means

providing students with the skills they will need to locate themselves in history, find their own voices, and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage....(pg. 218)”

Professional educators must take the risk of critical reflection as to their hidden agendas, and the extent to which a hegemonic agenda serves them as individuals. Administrators and site educators must take the risk of being alienated from the “safety in numbers” that the corporate mentality of education has inspired. The “numbers” with which we might ally as union-protected teachers might not be the same “numbers” with whom we need to ally: the numbers of students who are not receiving the respect and relationship that are the foundations of real learning opportunities.

My professional growth will continue to be in the critical pedagogy within which I strive to provide learners the best opportunities for personal growth that are possible. I will continue to work on a suitable approach to emancipatory education for incarcerated juveniles, as I will work to find ways for those in power (including those in the classroom) to hear the voices of those over whom they have power.

I believe it is more my job to educate youth to be participants in a democratic dialogue than it is to educate them for *success in the field of work*, as Giroux and Finn refer to it. This democratic dialogue begins with respect for unique and varied perspectives. Without respect for human differences, there is no success. Anywhere, for anyone.

## References

- Ambler, R. (1998). Early help can save learning disabled kids. *The Gram*. Learning Disabilities Association of America. Retrieved April 28, 2002 from <http://www.ldaca.org/gram/ambler.htm>.
- Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.
- Au, K.H. (1993). *Literacy instruction in multicultural settings*. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Banks, J.A. (1994). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- California Department of Education (1990). *Recommended literature for grades nine through twelve*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.
- California Department of Education (1991). *Model curriculum standards*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.



- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society (Second Edition)*. Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Darder, A. (1991). *Culture and power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education*. Westport, Connecticut; Bergin & Garvey.
- Delpit, L.D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58:3. 280-298.
- Delpit, L.D. and Kilgour Dowdy, J. (Eds.). (2002) *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 29 - 47). New York; The New Press.
- Dewey, J. (1964) *John Dewey on education: Selected writings*. Chicago; The University of Chicago Press.
- Diaz, E., and Flores, B (2001). Teacher as sociocultural, sociohistorical mediator. In de la Luz Reyes and Halcón (Eds.) *The best for our children: Critical perspectives on literacy for Latino students*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Finn, P.J. (1999). *Literacy with an attitude: Educating working-class children in their own self-interest*. New York; State University of New York Press.

Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Westport, CT; Bergin & Garvey.

Giroux, H.A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope*. Boulder, CO; Westview Press.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York; Routledge.

Katz, S.R. (1999). Teaching in tensions: Latino immigrant youth, their teachers, and the structures of schooling. *Teachers College Record*, 100:4 (32). Retrieved November 22, 2001, from EBSCO database on the World Wide Web.

Kohl, H. (1991). *I won't learn from you!* Thistle Series of Essays. Minneapolis; Milkweed Editions.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32:3. 465-491.

Luke, A. and Freebody, P. (1999). Further notes on the Four Resources Model. *Reading Online*. Retrieved November 22, 2000 from the World Wide Web:  
[www.readingonline.org](http://www.readingonline.org)

Markula Center for Applied Ethics. Accessed April 28, 2002 at:

[www.scu.edu/SCU/Centers/Ethics/publications/cblp/homepage.html](http://www.scu.edu/SCU/Centers/Ethics/publications/cblp/homepage.html)

McDonough, S.K. (2002, April). *Creative writing in a juvenile correctional facility: A qualitative study*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA.

Poplin, M. and Weeres, J. (1994). *Voices from the inside: A report on schooling from inside the classroom*. Claremont, California; The Institute for Education in Transformation at The Claremont Graduate School.

Schumacher, M. and Kurz, G.A. (2000). *The 8% Solution*. Thousand Oaks; Sage Publications.

Smith, F. (1994). *Understanding reading*. Hillsdale, NJ; Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Tappan, M.B. (1998). Moral education in the Zone of Proximal Development. *Journal of Moral Education, June*. Retrieved November 22, 2001 from EBSCO database on the World Wide Web.

Viadero, D. (1996). Culture clash. *Education Week, 4/10/96, Vol. 15 Issue 29, p39*

- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge; Harvard University Press.
- Walters, G.D. (1990). *The criminal lifestyle: Patterns of serious criminal conduct*. Newbury Park; Sage Publications.
- Wang, M.C. and Reynolds, M.C. (Eds.) (1995). *Making a difference for students at risk*. Thousand Oaks; Corwin Press, Inc..
- Weissglass, J (1997). *Ripples of hope: Building relationships for educational change*. University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center for Educational Change in Mathematics and Science.
- Wink, J. (1997). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world*. New York; Longman.

## Appendix A



### Monterey County Office of Education

Dr. William D. Barr, County Superintendent of Schools

*Alternative Education Programs*

901 Blanco Circle, Salinas CA 93901

Telephone: 831 755 6458

Facsimile: 831 758 9410

### Alternative Education Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Alternative Education Program of the Monterey County Office of Education is to prepare our students for future success by providing a supportive school environment that focuses on increasing academic and pro-social behaviors and skills, while providing functional life skills instruction. We respect and value the unique contributions of each of our students and our role in assisting them in becoming responsible, stable, and contributing members of society.

### Alternative Education Program Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs)

The goal of the Court and Community Schools and Home and Independent Studies Program of the Monterey County Office of Education is to enable all students to progress toward becoming:

1. **Engaged learners** who read, write and speak effectively, think critically and use technology efficiently for lifelong pursuits;
2. **Pro-social individuals** who demonstrate respect, compassion, cooperation, integrity, and responsibility;
3. **Independently functioning adults** who recognize and use their talents and demonstrate daily living skills in pursuit of vocational and interpersonal development;
4. **Healthy human beings** who understand the elements of a healthy lifestyle, engage in positive recreational activities, and practice habits that strengthen body, mind, and soul
5. **Global citizens** who appreciate cultural diversity, work to strengthen community through service to others, and participate constructively in the political process.

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent/Assent Document

Project title: Bringing Voices Out of the Hall

Researcher: Nancy Newsom

“Bringing Voices Out of the Hall” is a Master’s of Arts in Education project designed to motivate incarcerated students at Wellington Smith School in critical literacy. It is the project of Nancy Newsom, a teacher of language arts at Wellington Smith School.

I am asking for student volunteers for an after-school program which will last two weeks. They will earn transferable school credit (in Language Arts/ English) for their participation. The program will include three main parts, all of which will be confidential:

1. Participants will engage in a round-table discussion in which they will freely talk about prevention, rehabilitation, and punishment as they relate to juveniles in trouble with the law. Some of the discussion will likely deal with drug and other substance abuse issues, at other times the discussion may touch on issues of gangs and violence. Participants will be encouraged to discuss solutions, programs, and practical application of their ideas. All comments will remain confidential: this will be an agreement within the group, and each day’s session will begin with a reminder of this agreement. No one except the teacher and participants will be in the room during these discussions.
2. When participants have fully discussed the issues of prevention, rehabilitation and punishment as they relate to juvenile needs, they will engage in a guided writers’ workshop. They will work individually or in small groups, under the guidance and tutorial of the teacher to communicate their suggestions about either prevention programs, rehabilitation programs, or punishment approaches they believe would be the most productive with juveniles in trouble. Each participant will be encouraged and taught how to communicate his or her own individual ideas to a specific audience. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, code names will be used on the rough drafts.
3. All final revised drafts will be typed on computer, and the participants will improve the strength of their writing through use of the word processing program and peer review. Finalized anonymous drafts will be printed in a booklet and distributed to probation staff and interested parents, for the purpose of sharing well-thought-out ideas with those in power and those who have a personal interest.

The principle benefit of participating in this project is the opportunity to critically reflect on designs of prevention, rehabilitation and punishment which might best serve the individual or others. A second but no less important benefit is the opportunity to write for an interested audience about something that is important to the writer. This opportunity will most likely strengthen or improve the student’s thinking and writing skills. A third benefit is school credit for a voluntary project. Another hoped-for

consequence of the publication of student ideas is that those in power will give some consideration to well-developed suggestions for improvement of the system.

There will be no identifiable names or situations mentioned in the publication. With complete confidentiality designed into each step of the project, participants are not in any risk of repercussion.

If at any time there is a question relating to this project that cannot be answered by the principal researcher, a third party has been designated to address concerns. Please contact

Dr. Christine Sleeter at California State University, Monterey Bay: (831) 582-3641.

I have read and understand the Informed Assent Document, and I voluntarily enter into this project.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Document, and I give consent for

( \_\_\_\_\_ ) to participate.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to minor: (Circle one)

Parent

Guardian

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Survey Instrument

Project title: Bringing Voices Out of the Hall: The Voices Project

Researcher: Nancy Newsom

#### **Before the project:**

Please write a paragraph in which you describe how you feel about writing for a serious purpose. Please include answers to these questions: Are you interested in writing for a formal audience? Have you had experience in publishing or formal writing? Do you feel you are capable of that type of writing? Why or why not?

#### **After the project:**

Please write a paragraph explaining how participating in this project has affected you as a writer and as a person. Do you write better? Do you think more critically? Did the experience add to your self image in any way? Please explain.

If you care to, I would be interested in your answer to this question: What would you add to or take away from the program design?

Thank you for your participation, and all that you have added to this experience for me and others. Don't forget to stay in touch with The Voices Project through the website: [www.voices-project.com](http://www.voices-project.com)



## Appendix D

### Transcripts:

1

I like write cuzz I write a lot raps all the time and I write my woman and my family so I don't really have promblems writing.

2

To describe the definition of writing to myself is what I call "Agonizing torture." I've never really liked writing thing's down because it cramp's up my hand and it take's to much thinking and when I think to much I start to get migranes which make me feel like I'm going to throw up and my vision start's to get blurry and thing's start spinning so that's pretty much how writing make's me feel and not to mention that my lexicon does not have a wide or various vocabulary. My mother always used to make me reead book's and after I was done she would make me write a page summary so I guess you could tell why I hate writing huh. 1. Yes I am interested in writing for a formal audience. 2. Nope 3. Yes 4. Because I like having people read my shit & I like the look on there face when they enjoy it.

3

How I feel about writing for a serious purpose all depends on how its gonna help me out. If I think its really for a good purpose I would happily write about it. It also depends if I will enjoy writing about it. I am interested in writing for a formal audience, I look forward to it.

4

I honestly felt this writing thing was all just a waist of my time. For one I would get these big ass head ache from trying to think of the right words to put down. Then there is this paragraph shit, I don't think I'll ever get it. No, I am not interested in writing for any audience. One time I had to write an article for school and I fucken hated my teacher for making me do it. It took me 3-weeks. I don't think I could ever make any sense of this shit, Because I can't write, and my hand herts after a while, shit my hand herts right now, peace.

5

I feel that writing for a serious purpose can benefit you especially if you're trying to earn credits. I do have some interest in writing for a formal audience, but I do get kinda shy. I've never had experience in publishing or formal writing, but I do feel that I am capable of writing if I put my mind to it.

6

Yes, I am interested in writing for a formal audience, because it might help people to know how I feel about being where I am at. I have written some stories and poems that were put on my old schools web-site. I have also written some poems that were put on my English/Language Arts. class website. Yes, I am capable of doing this type of writing

during this project. Because I believe in myself to do what I need to do, and I know that I am very capable.

7

The way I feel about writing for a serious purpose. I feel that I should have the capability to write about different purposes. I really don't have a problem in writing for an audience. And I have never had experience in publishing or formal writing. I feel I have the capability to do anything I put my mind to. It's just the way I feel I don't have an answer to why but I think I can.

8

I like writing to a certain extent, but mainly when I'm writing for a grade. I never used to like to write at all, I thought it was for people who liked school and I'm not one of those people. I started to enjoy writing when I got to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I wrote an autobiography about my self, for a proficiency test and passed it with flying colors. Ever since then I've been in to it, and I have also written short stories for kids in elementary schools for fun at home. I am more interested in creative writing now more than ever!!

9

I feel that writing for a serious purpose like this will help me get some shit off my chest to probation. I really have a lot to say so I think this workshop will help me. Writing for a formal audience will help them see what it's like being locked up and how it makes me and my family feel, They can also see how many family + emotional problems come along when you're in the system.

## Appendix E

#1

There's a staff I met when I first came to juvenile hall three months ago. I told him about the situation I'm in. He's been motivating me to keep faith in God and just do good because some people in here see me as a bad person and just want to see me incarcerated.

He talks to me about the mistakes he made in life and how he pulled through and stayed strong. I asked him about being my mentor. He didn't have a problem with it but you have to be court committed, you can't be going to C.Y.A. So he said we have to wait till after I get sentenced. He's always telling me "silence before violence" and he asks me what I can do so I won't have to deal with a situation like this anymore. I have learned to think before I act. I could have got in a couple of fights in here, but I thought about it and I talked to the dude about the situation between him and me. We got along after that.

I think they need to have the staff come up with good programs for the minor's not just drugs because a lot of us have problems with violence. The reason why a lot of get sent up is because they think that C.Y.A is a good place for us because of the programs that CY.A has. I wouldn't know but all hear about it is bad shit people stab rape set up by the guards why are they gonna send us to a place where there is staff we can't trust them how could we go to them for help?

#2

I think that prevention is best for adolescents for the simple fact that they should try to prevent young people from doing things they'll regret before they happen. Prevention is important for adolescents, they should teach them the right way to prevent foolish acts. Most young people find that what other people do is cool or in other words "Unique". Adults should be more involved in adolescents' lives so they can teach them prevention the right way.

The society should form groups to teach teens about real life stuff, like what goes on in the streets, the good and bad. If we could get young people to understand violence, and all the above it would help to get adolescents to understand the true meaning of life. We need to talk to churches and schools, or maybe city hall to ask for a little time to talk to the youth; we could start programs there to tell our story and let the kids know the truth about life and what really goes on. Two or three days out of the week we could do that and have a little lunch and activities to keep them occupied.

Let people speak out and say what they feel and how they feel. We also have round table discussions. A round table discussion is we sit in a circle and take turns talking about what ever they feel freedom of speech so to speak. Let them express them selves and to let adults know ware they're coming from. They should have workshops like the ones we do. The workshops are about writing essay type papers talking about how they feel about probation, punishment and rehabilitation. Have them jot down notes then put them in paragraph form. We will send letters to the office of probation to let them know how we feel about the system. What I get out of all this is it makes me feel better to talk about it and I learn something every new about what people have to say and think. I really get something out of this class like every thing I wrote. Thank you for giving me a chance to express my self and how I feel about prevention.

#3

Probation is sending adolescents to placements that don't deserve to go. I know that you are trying to help but you guys are doing some things wrong. There are so many more alternatives than placement. You can put teens on the placement intervention program (P.I.P.), Drug court, and Youth Complex. Which are all excellent programs that benefit adolescents. There's counseling, which I've seen help a lot of teens. Teens are supposed to rebel; it's apart of adolescence.

As teens we develop independent thought it's apart of growing, healthy adults have already gone through this phase of life. Probation doesn't let teens develop independent thought, which is crucial for successful adulthood. Many teens on probation do not become successful adults, which is not a statistic it is what I've noticed. I think its because they were stripped of there independent thought therefore robbed of part of there adolescence. I'm going to try my best to see that it doesn't happen to me.

Probation should have programs to help teens develop there independent thought not take it away. One way I feel that you could help teens is to offer more programs that will help teens develop independent thought and help them create their identity. You could help teens get a job and get of probation both of which will help develop independent thought understand that some teens need to go to placement because of there environment. You should consider what removal from the home does to some teens. When you go to placement you have to do what they say again affecting our independent thought. I hope you take in to consideration to what I said.

#4

I think probation officers (P.O.s) should try different alternatives before the greatest punishment like the California Youth Authority (CYA). For violent crimes there's youth center, or boot camps. But putting kids in CYA is just making them better criminals. Probation should also look at the minor's background with his family and see what he has going good for him, and if there's a chance of change for the minor.

Also probation should look at the environment they're sending them to, like CYA. The environment is so messed up like gangs say a minor don't gang bang he goes up and he's going to click up, Or he's open for what ever gang wants to do with him/her . So I feel that it should be the last resort, CYA really messes with your head. They should also remember some kids can change but It's all in them, They all just go by the booklet and it makes CYA look like the best program but they don't know about the bad stuff that happens, like getting stabbed gang raped and all that.

And the thing about adolescence is if they get locked up in a little room they begin to lose their social life. Adolescence are in a point of there life where they want to experience many things. A good idea would be to provide them with more programs like job opportunities they should try helping them not corrupting there mind in CYA.

The way they get there mind corrupted is by the things that happen in CYA. Like stabbing and having to watch there back and practically sleeping with there shoes on. They become just like some gladiators always fighting . Instead of sending so many young kids to CYA, invest the money in some basketball leagues, football leagues and many more things ,also life benefiting trainings. There are a lot of other resources than just punishment; punishment prevents the uniqueness of adolescents creating their identity.

#5

When the probation officers send kids to placement and it isn't fair, for the kids to be sent far away from their homes. When the probation officers send the kids far away, that prevents them from talking and seeing their families more. The probation officers say that the program is going to help the kid, but how do they know what's going to help kids. The probation officers don't even know what we need because they don't even know the kid. The probation officers are always judging us by what is written on paper; basically probation officers are judging a person by what people are saying. Why do placement probation officers send use to a drug rehab placement when we don't even have a drug problem or even use drugs?

Before probation sends kids to placement and say that they know what's good for the kids, the probation officers should try to get to know the kid before they decide what's best for them. If the probation officers got to know their clients a little better, that would

help the probation officers to place them in a placement that suits them. Therefore, the probation officers should design a big brothers and sisters program for the kids who get locked up. That would help them get to know their clients better. Most of the kids need somebody to look up to as a roll model in their life.

I think that this would help the kids because they would have someone to work with them one on one. If the probation department had a program like that, those people who volunteered would go and do fun activities with the kids. For instance: take the kids camping, biking, fishing, skating, help us find jobs, and just to be there when we need someone to talk to.

This would help the kids in so many different ways. If there were a program like that it would keep the kids off the streets. That program would also prevent kids from getting locked up and using drugs.

#6

It seems that the Probation Department is trying to rehabilitate us, but some probation officers are quick to charge minors with a violation of probation, but hesitant on helping us get jobs and seeking help. A probation officer should counsel us, assign classes that will actually help, and give us advice when we need some. Some probation officers do take the time to talk to us, but on the other hand some just think they know what's best for us.

Our probation officers don't know how we stress and when they make recommendations they're not aware of the affect and emotional damage. I feel that the probation department needs a better understanding of what a juvenile goes through. Probation officers should try being more lenient when it comes to simple violations such as family problems, drugs, associations, and

I understand that when minors are doing drugs, and associating with others on probation that they are in danger of breaking the law, but sometimes minors are association and they are not doing anything wrong but talking to friends who they have grown up with and known their whole life. In the other hand if a minor commits a serious offense like rape, child molestation, and even murder then let them get the max.

Adolescents need to be rehabilitated and should be given an opportunity to try other alternative programs like some counseling, mentors, and maybe an adult that we can just talk to. We need help, and our faith lies in the hands of our probation officers.

I honestly believe that the probation tries to do what they think is going to be the "best option" that the state has available for us. But sometimes they are blind to see the difference between punishment and rehabilitation. They think that by sending a kid off to some placement, Youth Center, or the California Youth Authority, etc., is going to rehabilitate the miner. When in reality it is just going to make the miner mad and angry at society. The reason I say it just makes miners mad or angry at society is because I was one of those miners that the probation just sent away to the Youth Center because I had a drug problem. They said, "don't worry, the Youth Center has a very good drug treatment program," but I got there it was nothing like they said, it was more like a military program, a boot camp sort of thing. They did not have any drug class or any thing that might help with my addiction.

I know that I was not the first nor am I going to be the last person that the probation really screws up their life. Now, I understand that we should not have been doing the thing that we were doing, but feel me when I say that no one is perfect and everyone will experiment. The reason I am saying this is because they don't know us they just read what is on a dam piece of paper and are quick to judge us by it. They don't know what is really happening in our life. For example, before I was sent to the Youth Center I was about to be introduced to the most beautiful life experience, I was about to be a father. Knowing this I knew I was doing wrong by using drugs but I was too deep into my addiction that I could not help myself, I wish I could have gotten the help I needed, now I am going to the C.Y.A and still don't have the help I need.

A good program for miners with addiction problems would be something similar to a mentor program. A mentor will be appointed to a miner to help with any kind of problem the miner has which include school, girl/boy stuff, problems at home, drugs, and pretty much anything the miner might need help with. Say the miner might be tempted to relapse he or she can call the mentor for advice, and the mentor must be on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

I know that a mentor is really what some miners need because everyone needs someone to listen to them. A mentor should also understand the type of background most of the adolescents are coming from, what kind of family the miner is living with, the type of barrio that the miner has grown up in all his/her life. Sometimes a miner is looking for answer to questions and they think they could find them with the "HOMEBOYS", or through drugs. But only if a miner had someone with the right answer and the right advice I think it might just make a difference in the way a miner views life's problems.

I know that a program like this is what some miners need because it will help a lot of people, not only the miner. It will help his/her probation officer understand better what the miner is going through. It will also help the parents to get closer to their kids and know what is bothering them and what they can do to help. This program is a good way for not only the miner to understand what is going on with his/her life but it is also a way for us to express our self without getting into trouble. A mentor can help us to get a job to keep us busy.

Thank you for taking the time to acknowledging this letter of concern, and I hope that you do take some of what we are saying into mind and not just read this and say, "yah sure".

Sincerely,  
A concerned young adult.

#8

Being on Probation has really affected my life. I am now in the hands of my probation officer. He recommended for me to do 6 months at a placement. He says its going to help me with my involvement with gangs and with my drug problems . I think he finds it easy just to send me away for a while and take away my freedom when I know he's never been in the situations I have to face every day. Maybe if he would put himself in my position I'm sure he wouldn't be so strict.

That goes for all the Probation Officers who take teens away from there home. What they should do is get us some real help. Teenagers need some one to talk to and share their problems. Some counseling will do us some good. Some one to guide us to take the right path.

I live in a small town and the truth is there's not much to do there but roll with your homeboys and go look for trouble. I can pretty much say all my friends are on probation and we always have to look around for the cops when we are walking because they are quick to pull us over and search us. Then your probation officer finds out and he violates you for gang association.

Probation just sees us as a bunch of gang bangers so they want to keep us locked up cause they think we are bad for the community. What they don't know is that by locking us up they are only filling us up with more hatred and more knowledge towards being in a gang. Being locked up only makes a criminal more violent and wiser. And what happens when we get released? We go out and commit another crime without any cares because we are so use to being locked up for a long time it became part of our life. So before locking us up consider other options before you get a teen so use to being incarcerated.

There should be a program where teenagers meet at least 3 to 4 times a day. There should be at least 2 counselors that we can sit with as a group and talk about our problems and what we can do to make them better. Something positive for us to be doing instead of being in the streets causing trouble. Teach us how to live and get along with our peers. If this essay gets out to anyone with authority please read it and carefully because what they are doing to juveniles is wrong.



#9

In my eye's punishment should take place on those youth's that commit serious crimes such as murder's, home invasions, and robberies.

Now see as for me & my homiez, slangin shouldn't be taken as a serious it is cuz they don't understand that people in are situation's live in poverty and are struggling to get by so there for I felt that I had to rob and the money I needed in order to buy the OZ'S to slang so I could get paid even if it's the illegal way cuz I just want to have other thing's that other people would call luxurious such as nice clothes, jewelry and whatever else would make me feel like I was a regular middle class person.

I know that what I've done done in the past was wrong and I shouldn't have done that but I was carrying out the character traits that I got from my homiez.

If there was a lot of people that would donate some money here and there I think that the little kid's might have a better chance of having a normal life instead of being posted on the blocc slangin drug's, risking their freedom for fast money not realizing that it could be there last money.

My main idea from the money that people would donate would go toward creating a nice recreation center with TV's, pool tables, couches, computers, a gym and a weight room.

The people I would have working there would be responsible young adults that could also be looked upon as role models.

I wouldn't mind working mind working there with children cuz I'm really good with kid's and I would love for my little brother & my little sister come to this recreation center. If this was to ever come true I would donate my nintendo 64 and my playstaion to the center.

The reason I really want this center to happen is cuz sometimes my little brother and sister would disappear from the front when my mom would tell them to stay in front, now see if we had this center they would be supervised and that would make me feel a lot better.

## Appendix F

1

this project has made me write to people I thought I would never haft to I hope the letter I wrote helps me and send's people a messege. Im thankful to have a great teacher like Mrs. Newsom She help's us a lot and care's about what we go threw.

2

Since particapating in this program I have learned to be more careful about what I write and how I would write it.

I think that my life encounters with the law have helped me to more understand why myself and my homiez alwayz get caught up but off of that subject this program has gave me a chance to relect on the past and how all that slangin got me was the return of bad carma (being incarcerated for two years). This program has also made me think critically about all the things that come out of my mouth and out of led or ink. I think that my self-image has risen a little bit through out writing and rewriting over and over again.

I think that your program is  
Perfect.

3

By participating in this project I feel it helped me physically and mentally as a person . It didn't help me with my writing much but it did help me with my typing and it helped me think wiser . The experience did add to my self image because by expressing my thoughts about probation made me feel good saying theres got to be better programs instead of keeping us incarcerated.

The program design is perfect , I would leave it just as it is .

4 After project:

I think I enjoyed writing this because it gave me and he rest of the kids the opportunity to share what needed to be said. Yes, I do write better and faster, maybe because I have had past experience in your class. If what you mean, by thinking critically, that if I think more opened minded, yes I do. I think that this experience has added to my image because thinking of a program I also realize that if I say the thing I wrote should be done, I should lead by example. I would not add or take anything away from the program design.

5

The Voices project has helped me in several ways as a writer and as a person. It made me want to write all my feelings towards the probation department. Also it made me realize how I can express my self as a person, and doing it in a non-violent manner way. I have

been doing more critical thinking in making suggestions on how to let the probation department know how we feel.

I would like the judge to ask me why I was apart of this program and why I feel this way

6

Yes, I do write a whole lot better, since I have been in here working on this project. Yes, I do think a little more critically then I did before I came into Mrs. Newsom's class. This experience helped me with my typing and it has also helped me with my choose of words when I am typing and writing. When I am typing on the computer I type faster and better.

7

Well this project helped me think more about punishment and how probation officer's should try giving kids chances. And as a writer it helped putting detail on my work. i think I do think more critically than before. Not really, I see my self in the same way I was. The program should include music.

8

This project has changed my writing as a writer, and a person. I've learned to think more when I write. I look at this program with appreciation.

I would add a little more round table conversation to the project so we could be more open. The project could also be longer than a week to get to know how people really feel.

We need to have more workshops in the Hall like this one. It would help others express themselves pretty much the way they want to.

9

By participating in this project I am more aware of how minors and probation feel toward their conflicts. It has also taught me how to think more under the surface. I understand more how probation works and why they do what they do. The speaker helped my understanding of probation. There's nothing I would like to change in the program.

## Appendix G

### *Field notes*

*March 25, 2002*

I had a list of volunteers compiled last week, but today I found that there were some who were gone and others who had gotten into trouble, so I included the next group of students who had expressed interest. Unfortunately for the project, I have earned a reputation as a teacher who has a really cool workshop, so the volunteers weren't the reluctant writers I had hoped to create a difference with, but rather enthusiastic and cooperative kids who know what to expect in my room. Thus a bias is introduced, and the objective of my study undermined.

But I have a group of willing, thoughtful young men with whom I get to work all this week, and I am happy. I anticipate that they will gain insight into their own lives, and create a good publication with information that may be useful for "the system."

The workshop began a little late, since it took a few minutes to get the ten that I needed to proceed with. I have five black and five Latino males. Wait, four black, four Latino, and two mixed. We began today with a brief introduction of my political ideology and the question behind this project. After I talked a bit about this, I asked them for feedback. I said that they looked glazed over, and I was wondering if what I'd said depressed them. Two students stated that they were tired, and that they were a little depressed and angry. I said that their comments were going in a direction that would be great for the workshop, and if they didn't mind I'd like to get the legal things out of the way so we could proceed with their

ideas. We read through the assent/consent document and they signed it. I reminded them that they did not have to sign it. They will fill out envelopes for their parents tomorrow.

Next they did the pre-workshop paragraph for me, and then read through some Voices Project publications. I showed them the website and then we went into a round table discussion. I explained the rules and asked the young man who'd mentioned that he was angry if he wanted to continue with what he'd been saying. The round table discussion continued for about an hour, touching on topics including punishment, rehabilitation, and prevention. I asked them to consider ideas for each of those three approaches, including who should get each. During the discussion, one student mentioned something about "scraps, or surenos." The term "scrap" is derogatory, but since it was a round table discussion I did not say anything as a teacher should. However, the person sitting next to him leaned over and whispered to him that there was a sureno in the room. The offender did not apologize, he just shrugged. The sureno let it slide by, since he's used to being in a minority position in mixed groups here at the hall.

Then we spent a few relaxed minutes listening to music, freely moving about the room from discussion to discussion, or writing on the computer (poetry which had been brought in last week to contribute to the Voices Project website).

I want the kids to talk about what is on their minds, and the round table discussion format requires that I participate simply as an equal. But we know that is not really happening, because when they are talking, they talk to me, for the most part. When it is the end of one

person's turn, and time for the next, the second person looks to me before talking. So obviously there is a power I maintain. I wonder what that power has to do with what they choose to reveal. Some of what is said is directed toward peers as direct advice, some is directed to "anybody that's like me." But I wonder how my presence affects what they have to say. It feels as though they really want me to hear what they feel. I think they trust me as a caring audience, and this motivates things to say. So this talking experience is the precursor for the written piece.

I got requests from a few to come back and work on free writing, or to help me with cleaning the room. Anything to get out of the units. I brought one in to help me with books, and while he was working with me a staff member came to get him and take him to a placement interview. I gave him a good luck hug. He came back in about twenty minutes, all smiles because he's going to placement this week. He said he wants to stay in the workshop as long as he's here, because there's something he wants to say.

So much of this is about relationship. Both the teaching and the writing.

*March 26, 2002*

I was told by staff that one student decided he didn't want to return, so we added a female to keep the number at ten. After today there will be no substitutions; we'll just let the number drop.

We began with a discussion about the unique needs of adolescents: social, physical, mental, spiritual. They need to be able to explore their own identities, spend time with peers, come to grips with their chemical changes, and explore their independent thoughts. Then we did posters of rehabilitation, punishment, and prevention, with each group of people moving to each poster and adding their ideas as to who should get the treatment, what it should look like, and why it would be the best for them. After an hour or so with this we put the posters on the wall and discussed them.

Next I told everybody to get themselves set up where they wanted to write: if they wanted pencil and paper, to get it, and otherwise sit at a computer and turn it on. Then I asked them to write whatever it was that would get them writing. I reminded them that our final product was going to be a publication for probation. They all expressed that they had no faith that probation would even give their words a glance. I told them that I thought there was more chance than they did, and at the least it was going to be given to a lot of people beyond probation, since it's part of my thesis. I also told them about email I got last night requesting permission to use the website in a presentation. I said to write it to me, if that was the way they would have faith in the audience. When they started writing, some chose to write to the DA or their PO, and some just preferred a freewrite. One asked me to "correct" his ideas if they needed it, and I said that since it was his, it was right. He agreed. The writing didn't flow out, and with each person I gave suggestions to direct the work. They responded positively to the suggestions, as if direction were their need. One is writing in anger about his cousin's case, another is writing passionately about staff in the hall (because they are the closest thing to a family this kid has).

*March 27, 2002*

Life is wonderful. At the beginning of the workshop I reminded the kids about the importance of remembering all the parts of being human and how these aspects should be considered in order for rehabilitation or prevention to really occur. I reminded them also that if they were writing a letter from their heart, with anger in it, that was a legitimate point of view, and that the final draft was going to be a letter or essay which was designed to inform and educate probation about the most suitable approaches. In this light, the angry words might not be useful. But getting it out was important. Then they proceeded with the work they'd started yesterday. The female did not come because she is sick, and I dropped her from the list because her participation is too irregular.

The group was involved in talking about the problems they see in their communities, and since there was a significant group of black males, they had good communication. Three of them speak together in a language that they don't usually use. They are sweet and translate for me if I ever ask. The freedom to communicate in a shared language about a shared background brought more writing and more willingness to revise from one student than I've seen in two years of having him as a student. He can be a very hostile and recalcitrant young man, but he was making sense of the situation and the assignment with his friends. The grouping is not segregated at all, but there is one person who can communicate with this young man better (deeper) than anyone else, so they tend to pair up. They are not exclusive; others join in and share from time to time, with no hostility or distinction made. It seems that the ability to be with a person who is similar makes the willingness rise. When class is over



these two share a neighborhood shake, as do all the blacks and one Latino, but these two also share a brother hug. [I found out later that they are cousins.]

In the past, this young man has repeatedly told me that he refuses to revise, because “I wrote it, I’m done.” But in this workshop he is showing me his work as he goes, and when I make a suggestion about what might need further clarification or description, he says, “Okay,” and starts writing. Then he shows me his paper when he’s finished with that section.

A lot of these pages have started with anger about how probation treats them, either with no apparent consideration for the effect of probation’s recommendations, or for the needs of the family for help, or how these “clients” don’t feel as if their probation officers even know they exist. I have acknowledged the anger and the hurt, but then point out that if the purpose of the letter is to inform and instruct the probation department, it needs to be done in a manner that won’t antagonize. I remind them that they don’t learn when a teacher calls them names, and that their readers are going to be the same. Acknowledge the intent that probation might have behind each action, and inform probation as to the effect and a more suitable recommendation. I guess we’re working on some basic communication skills here.

I am keeping a running vocabulary wall; every word I hear being asked about, I write on a sheet of paper. Today when I read through their drafts, I’m writing what I see misspelled, but I’m going to take the passive approach and make them look to see if their words are up there. Tomorrow I’ll just announce that I saw misuse or misspelling of words, and wrote them up on the paper. It will be up to them to see if they are guilty of the misuse.

I told them that tomorrow we are going to start with a read-around of drafts to get feedback about the ideas, not the format or the mechanics. Just the ideas, and whether or not people think something should be added or explained more.

One student's writing is about how setting up workshops like this would be a good step toward prevention because it has a good effect on the participants. Go ahead, make my day. He said that if he could, he would do stuff like this in the community. I told him that my goal is to do the Voices Project in the community, and I would be able to do it if I had other people who were interested. I reminded him that he can always get ahold of me through either the PO box or the website. I told him to get ahold of me when he was ready to do it, because I was interested. He told me a little more about how he sees himself doing this kind of work in the community, but talking about drugs with people.

*March 28, 2002*

We started with a read-around of works as they stand so far; I asked for feedback in terms of whether or not the writer was considering the audience, and whether or not there were things that the writer should elaborate on. One of the writers didn't want to read his own work, but had no problem with me reading it. Interestingly (it was Mr. Recalcitrant), he had me read a draft that was not the one he was working on: it was the one he'd abandoned at the beginning of yesterday's session. They gave affirmative feedback, and even ventured into constructive criticism about voice and the audience. Only one student did not share his, because at the

end of yesterday's session he had begun a new piece to replace the piece in which he used foul language in reference to his probation officer.

Before the students came into the room, I had begun a chart about Walters' eight cognitive distortions. I shared it with the kids so that they could watch out for any of those kinds of thinking in their writing.

As soon as the read-around was over, they jumped into action, straight to the computers (each of them has a cd player and free selection of my music). One of the participants asked me a question about a probation officer's job description, and I am not the source for those answers, so I got on the phone and asked the supervisor of probation if he had time to come and answer some questions about probation staff. He assented, and promised he'd come within forty minutes. I told the group he was going to come and I recommended that they prepare questions to ask him. I clarified that the session was not going to become personal, that they should prepare questions about probation staff in general and not ask anything or say anything personal. When the officer came in, he sat and they turned off their music and turned to face him. A few had questions, and his answers were very informative and clear. He also provided some background information so that we would understand his answers. After about forty minutes he asked if he should continue or if he'd taken up too much time. The group promptly answered that it was very informative and good, so he continued.

When he was finished and left, the group turned back to their computers and either wrapped up their work (because we had a short time left) or continued working because they had things bubbling through their heads.

I asked the group if they wanted to extend the next day's class by a half hour, and they jumped on the idea. Then I asked if they wanted to extend it by an hour, and they eagerly accepted that. Their enthusiasm was similar to what they'd show if I'd offered to take them out to lunch. Tomorrow (our last day) we are going to work from 8:30 to 11:30.

*March 29, 2002*

Mr. Recalcitrant was one of the early arrivals today, so I braved an honest question. I said that his attitude about writing seemed different in this workshop, and he acknowledged that it was. I asked him what it was that made a difference, and he said that he felt more comfortable, that he felt like he could write about anything, and that made him have a willing attitude. The other early student chimed in, saying "We can write about things that are important to us."

Mr. R. finished early and wrote a thoughtful response to the "after" prompt. He was sitting near another student who was struggling with paragraphing, and he leaned over and said, "That's easy, cuz, it's like this." Then he began to show him where to put paragraph breaks.

The young men all helped me stay organized, they looked for items that were misplaced without any of the antagonism and blame that usually happens in a class.

As a teacher, I have felt free of the controlling and suspicious vibe that I tend to get in classrooms with a dry curriculum. When the learners are engaged, their interpersonal communication is for the benefit of what they're learning. When they are not engaged, their interaction is off topic, and more often than not it's the type of gossip that creates problems (like fights) here in juvenile hall. When young people are engaged in active learning, they ask for help, they are honest about their limitations and they want to expand. But when the classroom activity is for the benefit of the state or the teacher, they tend to be more defensive about weaknesses, and do what they need to do in order to avoid those weaknesses.

When my students are engaged, I find that as I cruise around the classroom I have less and less to do, because they are working more and more independently or cooperatively to locate and overcome gaps in their skills or their knowledge. This frees me to be a co-writer, less of an authority figure, and just glance at someone's work and give them an affirmation. They are more likely to ask pointed questions about their work, than the old, "Read this and fix it for me." Now I get, "What do you think of this sentence here, instead of in that other paragraph?"

This has been a wonderfully fulfilling week for me. I've asked two of the better writers if they will be willing to come and edit after school next week. We'll see. I printed out copies of the drafts so far, and asked them to look over the drafts over the weekend.

*April 1, 2002*

Six of the participants approached me to see if they could come in after school and work on editing. One has been released, one is in court, and one doesn't want to miss the poetry competition on his unit. The six came in and sat comfortably with pen in hand to mark their copies. It was funny, because they sat back to back in a sort of circle, and they were all editing the same things at the same time. Once in a while an editor would go to the writer to work on revision, instead of reworking the piece for him. This was only when a large chunk was unclear to the reader. I was amazed at the willingness to revise with another person. The sense of cooperation and productivity continued for the hour that they were allowed to work before they had to go back to the units. They all asked if they could come back tomorrow, but I elected to give their marked copies to the editor who had begun entering their corrections onto the computer file. The project is officially over, but other students want to be in the group, as well. I'll start an after-school workshop as soon as I can.

*April 4, 2002*

The editor came in during lunch today and worked to finish the draft. He was very respectful and cautious, and through our dialogue he learned a lot about protecting a writer's voice while clarifying content.

*April 5, 2002*

I got permission from the supervisor to have the group in the classroom for a three-hour session after school to show them The Hurricane, as they had requested. While the movie

was showing, the final editing was done and I passed out copies for their final approval. Nobody seemed impatient with little interruptions; they were interested and concerned with the quality of the final product. I designed the cover and the introduction page (since nobody would volunteer) and passed them around, soliciting specific feedback from each and every participant on different aspects (to honor their strengths and interests). With final approval from the group, we declared the project completed.

#### *Week of April 8*

All this week, I was receiving requests for copies from teaching and probation staff. There was interest in the work the participants had done, and acknowledgement that they had some legitimate ideas.

A teacher from another site called and asked if she could share it with her students as well as making copies for the probation staff that works with her. She wondered if her kids could contribute poetry to the website, and I said “absolutely.”

#### *Week of April 14*

Two of the participants who have been sentenced to up to seven years in the CYA asked if they can use class time to write about what’s on their minds. Yesterday one asked if he could type it up on the computer, and today I asked him why he wanted to do that (since he’s usually had an aversion to the computer). He said, “So I can read it.” He was using the spell checker to make sense of his own words. When we went to print it, he said, “When I write, I’m thinking about it, and it helps me think it through.” He’s writing about the difficulty

facing him in quitting his illegal pattern, and he's working through what his dad has said versus the reality he's facing.

When other students facing tough situations see this student writing, they ask for the same opportunity, or are more likely to accept my suggestion that they write for themselves. In the language arts class, I don't see this as a waste of time at all. Further, they engage other students in momentary help with editing.

When the curriculum is "self" there is less resistance.

*April 19*

I've been having a great time with "my guys" in class: they're comfortable and they push it from time to time, but they push it like they would with a mom or a friend. Today I told one of them to get back into his seat and stop pushing it, and he asked, "Why you got to be so hard on me?" I told him that he needed to set the example for new kids in the class. He asked, "Why ain't you on those guys?" (indicating an incorrigible group across the room) and I said, "Because you're a friend, and I can count on you." He smiled from ear to ear, gave me props, and sat down, telling his cousin that they had to set a good example.

Considerations: These two participants, black males, have been "causing problems" with their "bad attitudes" in other classes. Teachers are having problems with the fact that these two seek each other's company, and with the fact that these two men argue with teacher demands regarding pace and direction of class work. In addition, one teacher said of one, "I



am threatened by him. I feel he could get violent at any moment.” I wondered what frightened her about him aside from the fact that he’s black. And tall. And hovers behind one like a big puppy dog, wanting to see what’s going on.

Another student, whose personal learning style has been in conflict with one teacher’s management style for a month, moved without asking first (in order to have access to the video being shown) and the teacher gave him a public admonition, moving it into the realm of power and out of the realm of education.

I have been aware of racial confusions at this institution for some time, wherein the white teachers aren’t aware of or interested in learning styles which might be unique to different groups. Instead of working toward understanding the needs of youngsters, teachers discipline the youth until they demonstrate the “right” learning style and classroom behavior. Example: African American students who learn through social interaction, or Hispanic youth who learn through cooperative learning in a mix of English and Spanish. Both of these groups are suffering from paradigm shifts as they go from room to room, and it is my classroom which is out of step with the dominant paradigm.

By providing students of minority backgrounds with the opportunity to gain self respect and empowerment in my classroom, have I turned their educational experience in other places into something dangerous? I obviously need to remind them to engage in critical reflection as to the appropriateness and profitability of certain types of personal freedom. Think about

what is expected in a situation, decide at what personal cost you might comply, and then decide if the cost of non-compliance is worth taking the risk.

The price of conflict in a locked institution is much greater than in the outside world. While a student in a mainstream class might be chastised and the parent called for a conference, in a locked institution the adolescent is placed on disciplinary lock-down, with all privileges rescinded and a negative report presented to the judge or to the placement committee. All these consequences, if the result of a miscommunication between minor and faculty, create in the student an anger which will then be expressed in self-destructive ways, such as arguing with probation staff, hostility and vulgar language. If the punishment has come as a retaliatory act on the part of the teacher to impress upon the student that he was not demonstrating the “right” learning or behavior style, the cascade of consequences is incredibly out of proportion. But it’s the reality we need to deal with.

With this in mind, I have to question what I do, the value of the emancipatory approach. If emancipation leads to further and more serious loss of freedom, is it emancipation?

Ultimately we need to teach court school staff about cultural differences, and about reflecting on one’s own power. But we can’t teach staff to engage in emancipatory or even participatory education: people do what they choose to do.

This has been very difficult for me to write, because I haven't wanted to cross a line from "researcher" to "Nancy" but I really do care about these kids. There's a lot I haven't written because I wanted to be scientific, but the personal stuff is a huge part of this kind of learning. I'm going to have to learn how to do that for the next works I do.

## Appendix H

Walters' Cognitive Distortions (1990)	
Mollification	Blaming circumstances or conditions for illegal behavior, rather than taking personal responsibility.
Cutoff	A method of disassociating oneself from the worry of consequences of crime
Entitlement	A sense of being deserving of the profits or fruits of a crime.
Power Orientation	An obsession with gaining control over people or one's environment.
Sentimentality	Expression of tender feelings about others, but in a self-serving and fickle manner.
Superoptimism	Confidence that "everything will be all right," even in the face of disastrous possibility.
Cognitive Indolence	Continually searching for short-cuts to help achieve unrealistic (criminal) goals.
Discontinuity	Fails to follow through on commitments and promises: vacillation.