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ABSTRACT

This report explores ways in which instructional conversations between a teacher and her students contributed to building an academic community in a transitional bilingual fourth-grade classroom. Through an analysis of reading lesson transcripts, classroom events, and student essays and journal assignments, the report shows how classroom experiences fostered the development of students' understanding of the concepts of sacrifice and responsibility. It describes how, at both the individual and the classroom community levels, instructional conversations deepened student understandings of the texts they read in class by encouraging students to make connections between particular text concepts and their own experiences. In addition to tracking student gains in understanding, the study shows how the conversations helped build a classroom community that incorporated the cultural beliefs and concerns of the students. (SE)

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE REPORT: 15

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARSHIP WITH INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATIONS IN A TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

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Creating a Community of Scholarship with Instructional Conversations in a Transitional Bilingual Classroom

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Creating a Community of Scholarship with Instructional Conversations in a Transitional Bilingual Classroom

Overview

This report explores the ways in which instructional conversations between a teacher and her students contributed to building an academic community in a transitional bilingual fourth-grade classroom. Through an analysis of reading lesson transcripts, classroom events, and student essays and journal assignments, this report shows how classroom experiences fostered the development of students' understanding of the concepts of sacrifice and responsibility. This report describes how, at both the individual and classroom community level, instructional conversations deepened student understandings of the texts they read in class by encouraging students to make connections between particular textual concepts and their own experiences. In addition to tracking student gains in understanding, this report shows how the conversations helped build a classroom community that incorporated the cultural beliefs and concerns of the students.

Introduction

Teachers describe each class of children they teach as unique and different, as if they were talking about communities—small communities formed each autumn and evolving over the course of the school year. Some classes settle in from the first week; others never quite move from the hectic, slightly disorganized atmosphere of early September. Some years, the classroom evolves into a genuine community of scholarship.

Using "community" to describe classrooms is consonant with a view of individual development as rooted and unfolding in social contexts. Sociocultural theory adds a more radical proposition: Not only do *"individuals* change through their involvement in one or another activity," but the *community* is shaped by the ways "people communicate and coordinate efforts in face-to-face and side-by-side interactions" (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995, p. 46). The structural properties of cultural-historical systems are "both the medium and the outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens, 1984, pp. 24-25; q.v., 1987, pp. 60-61). Applying this idea to elementary schools means that daily routines, such as sharing time, reading circles, and saluting the flag, express and display classroom values and practices. This serves to construct classroom communities as well as to orient newcomers to the values and practices of their new community.

We explore in this report the idea that teacher-student conversations about text in reading comprehension lessons are one origin of a classroom community. The materials describing this process were generated by a study of reading comprehension lessons in a single classroom. The original purpose of the study was to examine the features and effects of teaching reading comprehension through open, conversation-like dialogues between a teacher and her students. This teaching—described by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) as "instructional conversation"—is the focus of several related articles (Goldenberg, 1992/93; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Patthey-Chavez & Goldenberg, 1994, 1995; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Hamann, 1992) and of a recent demonstration video (Echevarria & Silver, 1995).

This report describes the process through which ideas and concepts were co-constructed by the students and the teacher during reading lessons. We show how these jointly constructed and conceived ideas continually re-emerged and were renegotiated throughout the course of the school year, contributing to the building of a classroom community in part by creating intersubjective understandings between the teacher and students through references to previous conversations and experiences they had shared. Through an analysis of reading lesson transcripts, classroom events, and student writings, this report will show how past conversations and experiences fostered the development of student understandings of concepts as reflected in their essays. Specifically, we describe how instruc-

tional conversations (ICs) deepened students' understanding of the texts they read by encouraging students to make connections between concepts embedded in these texts and their own experiences. In addition to gains made in comprehension skills, the ICs gave the teacher and her students a tool to elicit student knowledge and incorporate divergent student backgrounds into the classroom discourse.

In turn, the discussions facilitated by ICs enabled the teacher to gain a deeper understanding of her students and provided the students greater access to the complex cultural assumptions behind concepts presented in classroom readings. In more formal terms, the discussions provided for the building of intersubjective and cross-cultural understanding. In this regard, we believe that instructional conversations can contribute to building communities of scholarship that draw on student cultural backgrounds—on their funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990)—as a source of strength for improving both teacher-student communication and student reading comprehension (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Patthey-Chavez & Clare, 1995). ICs were an indispensable part of an entire, coordinated, programmatic effort to raise student achievement (Fuller & Gallimore, 1992).

To illustrate the community-building process, this report presents a chronology of classroom events and reading lesson themes from about midway in the school year, when ICs were becoming integrated into the class's weekly rituals. The latter part of this report will focus specifically on the process by which cultural understandings, classroom events, and conversations in reading lessons informed students' understanding of the concepts of sacrifice and responsibility as illustrated in the essays of individual students written in January and February.

Method and Sources of Data

This report is based on the experiences of a veteran teacher who joined with university researchers as part of the work of the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning after 16 years of elementary school teaching. For 10 of those 16 years, she worked with kindergarteners or first graders; the other six years she taught fourth or fifth graders. During her IC project year, Mrs. Fiske taught a fourth-grade class in which 27 students were making the transition from Spanish to English instruction. There were also three African-American students, one child with a Navajo mother, and one Tongan child.

Mrs. Fiske continues to teach in the same district, serving a small, predominantly Latino community within the Los Angeles metropolitan area. A port-of-entry community, this is the first U.S. residence of many of the district's inhabitants. Mostly working-class families occupy small houses

and compact apartment buildings in one of the county's poorest areas. Many residents are employed in light industry and in service jobs in hotels, restaurants, and firms surrounding the nearby international airport. As is true in other parts of California, the district has witnessed an explosion in its Latino population over the past 20 years.

Many of the children in the district speak Spanish as their first language. Those who enter kindergarten and the primary grades speaking only Spanish are instructed in Spanish. As their second language fluency develops, they gradually make a transition into English instruction.

Mrs. Fiske had an explicit plan to turn her classroom into a "community of scholarship" founded on four principles: community, caring, cooperation, and creativity. She called these principles "the four C's," and their influence was very apparent in the physical arrangement, affective climate, and frequent bustle of activity in her classroom.

Over the course of the year that we worked with Mrs. Fiske, she gradually added a fifth "C" to her list: conversation. Working with the UCLA research team, she sought to generate instructional conversations and to integrate them into her teaching as a way to capitalize on her students' oral fluency and achieve a fuller collective sense of reading—a sense of reading that tapped into the vast and variegated meanings lying beyond and between lines of decoded words. ICs provided the verbal and instructional keys to these communicative dimensions of reading and eventually influenced all aspects of the children's emerging literacy, including their writing (Patthey-Chavez & Clare, 1995). In addition, the IC reading event developed into one anchoring ritual for the joint construction of Mrs. Fiske's community of scholarship.

Over the course of the year, Mrs. Fiske gradually refined her ability to conduct such lessons, and her growing command of the format in turn seemed to echo in her students. Their reading, their writing, and their participation in discussions changed, with change usually appearing first in the interpersonal discussions. Talk about text, and ideas elaborated in that talk, developed over the course of the year and shaped the community of scholarship that Mrs. Fiske and her students constructed. The instructional events that she made into conversations contributed to the students' increasingly sophisticated grasp of concepts in their talk. This was reflected in their writing and helped develop the classroom community.

The data we use in our description of Mrs. Fiske's classroom community-building effort were collected in participant-observation fashion throughout the IC-project year. We draw primarily on transcripts from audio- and videotaped ICs and on five representative student portfolios nominated by a researcher (William Saunders) who worked with Mrs. Fiske on student writing and was familiar with the range of writing of all the students. Mrs. Fiske and Dr. Saunders also contributed ethnographic interviews about the classroom context in which these writings occurred.

The writings in the portfolios were transcribed as written, including invented spellings and punctuation. Not all of the students completed all the writing assignments. Expository essays regarding sacrifice, written by three students, and journal entries from four students about responsibility were chosen for in-depth analysis. In these focal texts, we trace ideas generated in earlier reading lessons by either the teacher or the students, as well as ideas influenced, if not sparked, by critical events in the year.

Following Newman, Griffin, and Cole (1989), the process of co-constructing ideas was examined by analyzing the specific contributions of teacher and students during IC lessons, by analyzing topics of class discussions tied to critical events, and by tracing the (re)emergence of ideas in student writings. Specifically, the topics of sacrifice and responsibility generated a series of exchanges between teacher and students that found their way into student writings, or turned into our "tracers." In addition to these tracers, we also identify themes or ideas in student writings that were linked to larger societal events, as well as some that appeared to be individual experiences and were not necessarily part of the classroom discourse.

Chronology of IC Lessons, Key Writing Assignments, and Critical Events

In September 1990, Mrs. Fiske joined a weekly instructional conversation group composed of a facilitator (Claude Goldenberg) and three other teachers in the school. Once a week, a teacher videotaped a reading lesson, which became the subject of conversation and review at the group's weekly meeting. The teachers would also use this time to plan and prepare for the coming week's lessons.

In November 1990, Mrs. Fiske began teaching IC lessons. One of the earliest lessons she taught was based on the *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*. This story has a prominent theme of sacrifice, in particular the sacrifice of one's most valued possession for the greater good. The whole class, divided into four groups, participated in this IC cycle, and all of the students from this point on received IC instruction for each class text.

Table 1 presents a time line that maps out some links between IC lessons and writing assignments and other critical events in Mrs. Fiske's classroom. Although it was not intended to function as a catalyst for community building, the impact of the IC lesson on *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* rippled throughout the year, in both subsequent lessons and in what the students wrote.

TABLE 1. A CHRONOLOGY OF IC LESSONS, KEY WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, AND CRITICAL EVENTS FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Mo.	Critical Events	IC Lessons	Writing Assignments
Sept.-Oct.	Mrs. Fiske begins participation in IC project.	Begins weekly meetings with UCLA research team & other teachers working on IC lessons.	
Nov	Mrs. Fiske implements ICs in her class	*The Legend of the Bluebonnet* -The theme for this lesson was sacrifice and what one would consider one's most valued possession.	
Jan.	Persian Gulf War begins. Responsibility unit begins.	*Starfish Island* - The theme for this lesson was family and responsibility *Matt and the Black Cat* - The theme for this lesson was also family and responsibility	Students did a directed writing assignment based on the theme of responsibility in their journal.
Feb	Persian Gulf War continues. Responsibility unit continues.	*B is for Bicycle* - The theme for this lesson was responsibility and a renewed exploration of sacrifice.	Students wrote an essay on the theme of sacrifice Students wrote a directed journal assignment about their most valued possession

In January 1991, the Persian Gulf War broke out. This event was a source of much concern for the students, some of whom had family members overseas. A lot of class discussion at this time returned to the November theme of sacrifice. This theme was broadened to include the idea that U.S. soldiers were sacrificing for their country, a connection that re-emerged when students began to explore the meaning of sacrifice in later writings. At about that time, Mrs. Fiske also began a unit on family and responsibility, a theme first explored in IC lessons about *Starfish Island*, and subsequently in lessons about *Matt and the Black Cat*. At the end of the month, the students completed a directed writing assignment in their journals on the meaning of responsibility.

In February, the students read *B is for Bicycle*, a story in which a boy works hard and sacrifices his play time to earn money for a much-coveted bicycle. The Persian Gulf War continued to be discussed nearly every day. Toward the end of the month, the students wrote an expository essay about the meaning of sacrifice and a directed journal assignment about their most valued possession.

How Conversation About Text Affected an Individual Student and Led to a Community Theme

We begin our discussion by focusing on the development of an individual student, Danny, as he struggled with the concept of sacrifice the first time Mrs. Fiske broached that topic. Starting this way not only allows us to illustrate how the conversation about *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* and its theme of sacrifice affected Danny, it also captures a key event in the evolution of the classroom community.

In November, Mrs. Fiske taught her second IC lesson, addressing *The Legend of the Bluebonnet.* In this story, a girl burns a doll given to her by her family, the only reminder she has of them. She burns it as an offering to the Great Spirits to end a drought afflicting her people. Two important ideas are presented: First, the doll is valued because it reminds the girl (was symbolic) of her family, and second, she gives up something for the benefit of other people, for the greater good. The theme of sacrifice that emerged from talking about this story was to resonate long after this day, in what students discussed and wrote.

Mrs. Fiske opened the *Bluebonnet* lesson by activating her students' prior understandings of the word *sacrifice*, which she had written on a large IC poster used to record and keep track of key ideas. She succeeded at eliciting a few first tentative ideas. (Excerpts taken from Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991. See the appendix on page 23 for an explanation of transcription conventions.)

(1) LESSON OPENING, INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE

01	Tchr	before you start reading, . . . I want you to think about this word. we talked about prize possessions yesterday. ((writes the word "sacrifice" on chart)) think about this word as you are reading.
02	D	sacrifice.
03	Tchr	can everybody read it?
04	All Ss	sacrifice.
05	Tchr	tell me what sacrifice is to you.
06	K	when, like, something you want, and you say, like somebody is gonna buy a candy but they gonna buy you, they want to buy you too
07	D	((raises hand vigorously)) [I know! oh, I know!]
08	K	[but they don't have] enough money, so they buy you.
09	Tchr	okay, they don't have enough money and you have enough money for one candy bar? (.)
10	K	well, like, this umm, your best friend says, umm, "do you want a candy bar?" and you say "okay" and she wants one too, but she doesn't

		have enough.
		she buys it for the other person.
11	Tchr	okay, so the person with the money, ((diagramming story on the board))
12	K	uh-huh, ((nods head))
13	Tchr	does what?
14	K	gives it to his friend.
15	Tchr	shares with the? (.)

Mrs. Fiske tries to clarify her students' input by diagramming the elements, but this stops temporarily when Danny offers a new idea based on a popular television cartoon (beginning in turn 16 below). Danny and the others struggle to articulate how the cartoon story exemplifies their concept of sacrifice, but they also must resolve differing memories of the plot and action of the episode Danny is retelling. After some attempts to help them clarify these facts, Mrs. Fiske resets the task in turn 34.

(2) SACRIFICE AND BART

16	D	I know what it is!
17	Tchr	what's your idea Danny?
18	D	like in the Simpsons, Bart Simpson had to go to school the next day,
		but he had a test so then at night he prayed and then it rained.
19	K	snowed.
20	D	no, snowed, yeah, then Lisa, his sister, goes, "you oughtta do something for him."
21	Tchr	for who?
22	D	for God, 'cause of what he did.
23	Tchr	oh.
24	D	and then he did do something, he got an "F" but then he said "now I know how George Washington felt," and something . . . and a day . . . and then he changed it to a "D". ((students laugh))
25	Tchr	so tell me who's doing the sacrifice?
26	D	Bart.
27	Tchr	what did Bart do?
28	D	he got a "D" instead of, (.)
29	M	he studied.
30	D	no! he didn't study he got a "D".
31	All	he studied! ((said together, and at different times))
32	D	NO
33	K	nah-ah, he was like this, ((slaps her face repeatedly in a funny way))
34	Tchr	but go back, but what was Bart's sacrifice in that?

Mrs. Fiske is unwilling to let stand the students' disordered and messy statements and uses leading questions to try to draw out more complete

constructions (e.g., turns 38, 40 below). In turn 46, she offers a mildly challenging alternative idea that what Bart had done was not a sacrifice, but something else.

(3) CHALLENGING BART'S SACRIFICE

35	D	to get a, to pass the fourth grade, and he did 'cause he got a,
36	Tchr	okay. why did he- how did he, uh, what was he sacrificing? she says it's a giving up of something. is that what you said, Josie?
37	J	yes.
38	Tchr	how did he do that? ((points to Danny))
39	D	'cause God made rain for- for- Bart, and made it snow and Bart had to do something for God.
40	Tchr	and so, what Bart did for God was? ((trailing off, waiting for Danny to finish utterance))
41	J	passed.
42	M	studied.
43	D	and he passed the test.
44	Tchr	okay, by studying, ((writes on chart))
45	D	he passed the test.
46	Tchr	by studying he was giving a sacrifice. was it a sacrifice or maybe a thanksgiving?
47	J	((shows some disagreement by shaking head; C raises her hand))
48	Tchr	a sacrifice? oh, okay,
49	D	((protesting the disagreement from others)) because he passed it for God!

In line 49, Danny is insistent: His understanding of sacrifice, for the moment, is what Bart did. Bart studied—that is, sacrificed—for God, since God had let him off the hook temporarily by making it snow. A new line of argument then appeárs (turn 50). It seems the Bart example has played out, and now Kit offers a promising new take on the concept of sacrifice. She is drawing on another set of experiences and on knowledge somewhat closer to her personal experience. Mrs. Fiske's probes (beginning in turn 51) suggest that neither Kit nor the others can quite put together a coherent statement of their idea or express what they are thinking. Mrs. Fiske does not give up, and some progress appears as Danny ponders the issue.

By turn 67, Danny has worked his way from the cartoon material to material that could very well be drawn from his own life. Moreover, his statement reveals a clearer understanding of sacrifice, an understanding apparently informed by the ongoing discussion, since Danny picks up on the idea of buying a coat, first articulated by Kit 17 turns earlier:

(4) SACRIFICE AS GIVING UP SOMETHING

50	K	if somebody wanted to buy a coat or something and they didn't have enough money, and a sacrifice tried to get it and a- like to make enough money to get that coat.
51	Tchr	so, they- they-, something that they want they either-, are you saying that they wait for it or they work harder?
52	K	they work harder for it.
53	Tchr	((repeats and writes)) they work harder for it, okay, while they're working harder, they're not getting to play and where's the sacrifice there?
		((...))
61	Tchr	like they're not getting to do something they want to do?
62	M	yeah.
		((Tchr writes on board and Danny raises his hand excitedly))
63	D	oh I (know one)! I have a sacrifice!
64	Tchr	okay Danny, what's your idea?
65	D	it means when your brother wants a coat, or whatever, and you want one too, and you're the one who has a better chance to get it, but your little brother gets it
66	Tchr	so why does he get it?
67	D	because you told your mom to give it to him.
68	Tchr	okay. so you told your mom, "hey, I want to give up my chance to have a coat to let my little brother have a coat." is that what you said?
69	D	yeah.

Danny has now moved from an understanding of sacrifice confounded with the idea of relief and gratitude to an understanding of sacrifice related to not getting something you might want (turn 65) or having to give up something you do want (turn 67). Mrs. Fiske (turn 68) restates Danny's idea to clarify it.

At this point, Mrs. Fiske is ready to move on to reading the story, because the pre-reading discussion of sacrifice seems to have come to a satisfactory conclusion. She invites others to suggest other examples, but eventually proceeds to tackle the story. In the next portion of the lesson (not presented here) after the children read the text, teacher and students establish the essential facts. Mrs. Fiske ensures that her reading circle understands that the girl in the story has given up a prized doll, and that they understand her reason for doing so. She works to clarify that, in this context, the "people" for whom the doll has been sacrificed means everyone in the tribe. Finally, she is ready to return to the theme of sacrifice, the subject of the first part of the lesson. She wants the students to relate the text to their pre-reading discussion, including the thought expressed by Danny in turn 67.

(5) RETURNING TO SACRIFICE

111	Tchr	so, let's think about what goes into sacrificing, what was she doing?
112	K	sacrificing her doll. ((Mrs. Fiske nods))
113	Tchr	she sacrificed her doll, right. and when she did that, what did she think of?
114	All	((together and separately)) parents (.) father and mother (.) tribe (.)
115	Tchr	((writes on board)) so she sacrificed, what did I say?
116	All	((adding together)) her father and grandparents.
117	Tchr	what? ((looking to M))
118	D	she was giving
119	M	thinking of others.
120	Tchr	thinking of others ((writes on board again)) okay.
121	D	giving something that you- you, like,
122	Tchr	okay. ((writing)) giving something that is important to you.

The group has woven an emergent understanding of sacrifice into their comprehension of this story. Most notably, Danny's understanding of sacrifice has undergone a genuine transformation. He now understands, based on his statement in turn 121 above, that sacrifice involves "giving something that you like." It is an understanding, moreover, that reflects Kit's earlier contribution of sacrificing to buy a coat for someone who "didn't have enough money" (turn 50), an idea Danny is able to expand into the more complete "when your brother wants a coat, or whatever, and you want one too, and you're the one who has a better chance to get it, but your little brother gets it." Danny's example, moreover, anticipates the story's sacrifice of the doll for the greater good of the tribe.

The group's understanding is forged in the context of a discussion encompassing the students' own experiences and understandings in addition to the text they were working to comprehend. Through the intersubjective experience of wrestling with different examples of sacrifice—examples grounded both in the textual sphere represented by *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* and in the experiential sphere brought to the event by Mrs. Fiske's students—different meanings of the notion are constructed and shared. More importantly, the rules of interpretation are laid out: The teacher's opening invitation, "tell me what sacrifice is to you," is genuinely open ended; the notion can and does apply to different examples. However, while Mrs. Fiske's initiation does not have a pre-determined answer, and in that sense invites genuine student authorship (Poole & Patthey-Chavez, 1994), student examples must correspond to a wider sense of sacrifice, one acceptable to the larger discourse community surrounding the school. Learning to navigate such rules of interpretation, learning to understand the relationships between personal sense and interpersonal meaning, is one of the central tasks of acquiring literacy.

Community Plane of Student Development

Exploring the Theme of Sacrifice in the Students' Writing

Though we feature only one lesson in this article, all the students in the class received IC instruction for the *Bluebonnet* story and for all subsequent stories read in class. In the months that followed the *Bluebonnet* lesson, both Mrs. Fiske and her students made frequent references back to their jointly constructed understanding of sacrifice. After January and the breakout of the Persian Gulf War, sacrifice re-entered the daily discourse of the class as a central theme, and this time, both the term and the notion of a greater good were re-defined.

To explore the impact of ICs on the classroom community, we analyze essays, written at the end of February, that reflect multiple layers of co-construction. The essays thus include ideas that emerged in the November lessons, in the classroom discussions occasioned by the Persian Gulf War, and in explorations of the topics of family and responsibility in other lessons. In addition, these essays reflect individual student ideas and experiences. We hope to demonstrate the relationship between emergence of a classroom community and the growth of individual students, a growth mediated by ICs and the free flow of discourse and ideas they facilitated.

We begin with an analysis of expository essays by Danny, Jose, and Roberto about the meaning of sacrifice. In November, when the idea of sacrifice was first broached in the *Bluebonnet* lesson, many of the students had not been clear about the meaning of sacrifice. In the intervening months, Danny's individual development in the course of one lesson appears to have spread and tied back into the worlds of meaning from which he drew his coat example in November. The three essays in their original form are presented in Table 2. The analysis is arranged according to general themes that emerged in the writing.

Table 2. Expository Essays by Three Students on the Meaning of Sacrifice

Danny - Sacrifice means to give up something and millions of other reasons like this to give up you'r life their are lots of people in the Gulf. Their are lots and lots of books and that have someone or something sacrifing. Our parents sacrifice all the time and especially in Christmas. They sacrifice by taking the whole day in there job. They buy us cloths, toys food and we got to sacrifice for them to. God sacrificed for us. He gave up his life for us. People all around the world sacrifice once in a while.

Jose - Sacrifice means to me working, giving things that you want to keep. War is sacrifice. Young men ofen died. Sometimes they dont want to go to war but they stile do. Sacrifice is sharing. Sacrifice is very important to me. Sacrifice is in school. Sacrifice

is hard. Sacrifice is death sometimes. When you work (and) Christmas comes you sacrifice for the tree, presens and food. Sometimes you sacrifice your play time. And sacrifice is doing your job. And learning is a sacrifice of play time.

Roberto - Sacrifice mean's to give up something and the reason to give up something is that you sacrifice like our father. He sacrifices for you. He works to get you clothes, shoes and food. Your mother, too, sacrifice for the family. They sacrifice alot especially at Christmas. Your mother and father have to sacrifice alot. They have to work harder at Christmas because they have to buy presents for your cousins, aunts and uncles. They have to buy lights, Christmas tree and the things you hang on the tree. God sacrificed for us, God gave up something. He gave up his life for us. I think everyone sacrifice with their work.

Defining sacrifice. The definition of sacrifice established in the original lesson reflected Mrs. Fiske's concern that her students understand that to sacrifice means to give up something "that is important to you," as she herself finally put it (turn 122). The essays written three months later make it clear that the students appropriated and internalized this definition. Both Danny and Roberto write that *Sacrifice means to give up something.*[1] Jose similarly defines sacrifice as *giving things that you want to keep.* But that is no longer the only idea the students have come to associate with the concept. The concept has become real to them in a number of ways, in terms of working, in terms of war, and even in terms of the more mundane sacrifices of childhood duties and obligations.

Working and sacrifice. One issue that came up in the students' essays that had not been explicitly emphasized by Mrs. Fiske in the November IC lesson was the relationship between working and sacrifice. Danny writes, *Our parents sacrifice all the time and especially at Christmas. They sacrifice by taking the whole day in their job. They buy us clothes, toys, food.* Jose begins his essay with, *Sacrifice means to me working*, and later, *When you work Christmas comes you sacrifice for the tree, presents and food. And sacrifice is doing your job.* Roberto similarly writes, *and the reason to give up something is that you sacrifice like our father. He sacrifices for you. He works to get you clothes, shoes and food. Your mother, too, sacrifice for the family. They sacrifice a lot especially at Christmas . . . . They have to work harder at Christmas because they have to buy presents for your cousins, aunts and uncles.* He later concludes his essay with *I think everyone sacrifice with their work.*

In the *Bluebonnet* lesson, the relationship between working and sacrifice had not been elaborated, though it had been introduced into the discussion by one of the students. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

(6) WORKING AND SACRIFICE

50	Kit	if somebody wanted to buy a coat or something and they didn't have enough money, and a sacrifice tried to get it and a- like to make enough money to get that coat.
51	Tchr	so they- they-, something that they want they either-, are you saying that they wait for it or they work harder?
52	Kit	they work harder for it.

It is thus possible to trace this reference back to the *Bluebonnet* lesson in which sacrifice emerged as a key concept. This is also a good example of how the other students in the class, as well as Mrs. Fiske, participated in creating an understanding of sacrifice that later emerged in the students' essays. Once the class tackled *B is for Bicycle*, moreover, students once again encountered connections between work and sacrifice. In that story, Carlos works a number of weeks to save up money for a coveted bicycle. While not put in those terms in the story itself, Carlos is sacrificing all his play time in his pursuit of the bicycle, a sacrifice which ties into the next theme explored by Mrs. Fiske's students.

School and sacrifice. Jose, in his essay, also makes a connection between sacrifice and school. He writes, *And learning is a sacrifice of play time* Like the relationship between work and sacrifice, it is possible that the relationship between school and sacrifice was originally inspired by student contributions to the November IC. The reference to learning as a sacrifice of play time bears more than a passing resemblance to Danny's original understanding of sacrifice based on popular cartoon character Bart Simpson's tardy attention to his homework, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

(7) SACRIFICE AND STUDYING

36	Tchr	okay. why did he- how did he, uh, what was he sacrificing? . . . ((...))
38	Tchr	how did he do that?
39	D	'cause God made rain for- for- Bart, and made it snow and Bart had to do something for God.
40	Tchr	and so, what Bart did for God was?
41	J	passed.
42	M	studied.
43	D	and he passed the test.
44	Tchr	okay, by studying, ((writes on chart))
45	D	he passed the test.

Though that understanding was later challenged by Mrs. Fiske, and though Danny then went on to develop a different understanding, Bart's

"sacrifice" may have inspired what to an 11-year-old *is* an important sacrifice, that of play time for learning.

Religion and sacrifice. Religion was not a general topic of discourse within Mrs. Fiske's classroom. Two of the three students, however, make a connection between sacrifice and religion in their essays. For example, Danny writes, *God sacrifice for us. He gave up his life for us.* Roberto similarly writes, *God sacrificed for us, God gave up something. He gave up his life for us.* The emergence of this idea in the students' essays can be seen as evidence of the students bringing their non-school experiences to bear in defining this concept, thus making meaningful connections between ideas that emerge in school and their daily experiences in their other communities, which in Danny and Roberto's case most likely include religious experiences.

Reciprocity, sharing, and sacrifice. The connection between sacrifice and reciprocity was touched upon only briefly by one of the students in the November lesson. With regard to parents sacrificing for their children by working hard in order to buy presents at Christmas, Danny wrote that *we got to sacrifice for them too.* This was an idea we could not trace back into the discourse of the classroom available to us. It appears to have been generated by Danny independently.

The relationship between sharing and sacrifice, in contrast, could be seen as emergent in the class discussion of sacrifice. Jose's statement in his essay that *Sacrifice is sharing* was an emergent idea in the November discussion, part of initial attempts at defining sacrifice, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

(8) SACRIFICING CANDY

10	K	well, like, this umm, your best friend says, umm, "do you want a candy bar?" and you say "okay" and she wants one too, but she doesn't have enough. she buys it for the other person.
11	Tchr	okay, so the person with the money.
12	K	uh-huh, ((nods head))
13	Tchr	does what?
14	K	gives it to his friend.
15	Tchr	shares with the? (.)

The Persian Gulf War and sacrifice. Both Danny and Jose wrote about the connection between sacrifice and war. For example, Danny writes, *and millions of other reasons like this to give up your life there are lots of people in the Gulf.* Jose writes, *War is sacrifice. Young men, often died. Sometimes they don't want to go to war but they still do.* Later in his essay he writes, *Sacrifice is hard. Sacrifice is death sometimes.* These references to war most probably emerged from class discussions about the Persian Gulf War, a frequent topic of discussion and concern.

The emergence of this topic underscores the links between classroom talk and student texts. Clearly, the war made an impression. Student explorations about sacrifice, however, point to January and February ICs, ICs that dealt with a related topic, that of responsibility. Student essays, in fact, appear to weave together the different threads broached in class from November to February.

Exploring the Theme of Family and Responsibility in the Students' Writing

At the beginning of January, the students read two books, *Starfish Island* and *Matt and the Black Cat*. During IC discussions of these books, Mrs. Fiske emphasized the theme of family and responsibility, and students contributed several key ideas to the joint development of this topic. In particular, students brought to the discussions their understandings of family responsibilities, which included taking care of siblings and doing chores, and they reconnected an earlier notion—that parents sacrifice for their families by working—to the idea of responsibility.

At the very end of January, before the students wrote their essays on sacrifice, they did a short journal writing assignment on the meaning of responsibility. Though not as long or as developed as the essays on sacrifice, student journal writings also reflected a range of ideas that could be traced back to classroom discourse, as we shall see presently. The students' journal entries are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. DIRECTED JOURNAL WRITING BY FOUR STUDENTS ON THE MEANING OF RESPONSIBILITY

Danny - Responsibility means to be responsbe for something. You need to take care of something. Responsble and responsibility don't mean the same thing. You do lots of it when you grow up and a little when you'r small. Responsibility you do when you babysite or clean all you were asked to.

Jose - Responsibility is an porten jobe some one. you so posto take quer way they tell you to do like take guer of your baby broder some thing hapen to him like he brock his lig or some body stolom.

Roberto - I am sow Responsibility in my house because I have to take care of my brother and I am Responsibility and I am Responsibility in school because a always have to breng (my) homework.

Karla - I some times don't be a responsible girl. I lost my dictanary how much is it? Tell me please teacher. Is your grandater baking a cake for each holiday?

Caring for younger family members and responsibility. One of the key ideas generated by students during a first IC lesson about respon-

sibility and family roles was that responsibility means to care for younger siblings. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from an IC lesson held on January 29, 1991:

(9) FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

85	Tchr	how do you- how do you define, tell me what responsibility means.
86	Std	it's to to k- if you wanna take care of your brother, you have to, taking whatever, if um like if you want, you promised your, your friend you're gonna go out with her, and you have to take him because you have to babysit! him.

This idea is reflected in both Danny's and Roberto's entries. Danny writes, *Responsibility means to be responsible for something. You need to take care of something.... Responsibility you do when you babysit.* Roberto similarly writes, *I am so Responsibility in my house because I have to take care of my brother.*

Jose also writes about responsibility in terms of taking care of younger siblings, but elaborates on the dangers that can befall children who are not properly looked after. Specifically, he writes, *Responsibility is an important job (for) someone. You (are) supposed (to) take care (the) way they tell you to do like take care of your baby brother (in case) something happen to him like he broke his leg or somebody stole him.* His brother potentially breaking his leg or being kidnapped are not ideas discussed during the IC lessons. According to Mrs. Fiske, however, she emphasized safety issues in her classroom and reports that the school district as a whole emphasized children's safety. In fact, household fire precautions were an important enough instructional unit to emerge as an extended side sequence during one audiotaped IC. Jose is also most likely aware of these dangers through exposure to the media (especially the part about children being kidnapped).

Age and responsibility. During the first IC lessons on responsibility, the idea of caring for younger siblings developed into the idea that older family members have more responsibility than younger family members. In our writing samples, only Danny explicitly integrated this hierarchical re-casting into his exploration. He wrote, *You do lots of it when you grow up and a little when you're small.* In doing so, he parrots Mrs. Fiske, who went to great pains to establish the relationship between age and increasing responsibilities, as our next excerpts attest.

(10) AGE AND RESPONSIBILITY 1: FROM 8 JANUARY LESSON

73	Tchr	what happens to responsibility
74	Std	(they need a lot of work) (inaudible)
75	Tchr	when you're young, do you have much?

76	Std	no
77	Tchr	when you're older, do you have more?
78	Std	[yeah
79	Std	[(inaudible) diapers
80	Tchr	someone has to take care of (you) all the time, so (that you grow up)
81	Std	the biggest
82	Tchr	aha, the biggest is the most responsible? I think I'll put that down.
		the biggest is the most resp- has the most responsibility,

(11) AGE AND RESPONSIBILITY 2: FROM 29 JANUARY LESSON

96	Tchr	you think, in a family, there are different LEVELS of people who are responsible?
97	Stds	yeah:
98	Tchr	who should I put at the top, as MOST responsible
99	Std	sister, MOTHER, MOTHER!
00	Std	no DAD!
		((...))
37	Tchr	okay let's, let's go back to (steps,)
		okay after parents, what
38	Std	big brother, or big sister.
		((...))
53	Tchr	(who comes next responsibility)
54	Stds	little brothers
55	Tchr	okay, little or s,
		((...))
58	Tchr	what if you have a tiny baby,
59	Std	you have to be REAL careful,
60	Tchr	huh? can a tiny baby take care of herself at all?
61	Stds	NO!
		((...))
64	Std	you have to give her milk, I hate that job.
		((...))
72	Tchr	anybody else in the family who has responsibility?
73	Stds	MEDIUM BROTHERS! MEDIUM BROTHERS!
74	Std	that's my job, I have to babysit.

Though the hierarchical relationship between age and responsibility is only echoed by Danny in the journal writing assignment, Roberto's *I have to take care of my brother* and Jose's *take care of your baby brother* clearly connect back to the fairly extensive treatment of family responsibilities the class entertained in January.

Chores and responsibility. Also discussed in the January IC lessons was the idea that responsibility means to do what you have to do, as well as the idea that responsibility means to do your job (as stated by the students

in the above excerpts). This may be reflected in Danny's essay when he describes responsibility as *clean(ing) all you were asked to.*

School and responsibility. Roberto's comment in his essay, *and I am Responsibility in school because (I) always have to bring (my) homework*, reflects what most probably is a prominent idea in a classroom, but in addition, it can be traced back to a student contribution during the early IC lesson about responsibility. Karla's essay may also reflect a similar concern with the emphasis in school that students are responsible for bringing in their homework and their books. She writes, *I sometimes don't be a responsible girl. I lost my dictionary how much is it? Tell me please teacher.* The following excerpt shows how this idea was also discussed in the reading lesson on January 8.

(12) SCHOOL AND RESPONSIBILITY

64	Std	is like when you're being responsible you have to bring your homework every day, to school,
65	Tchr	okay so you're saying that, that as you-, what happen wh- how do you get to be, who is the most responsible, the baby or the- kid in school.
66	Stds	kid kid
67	Std	kid in school
68	Std	all of them are in school
69	Tchr	the kid in school.

Finally, not all of the statements in the student entries could be traced back to ideas generated and facilitated by IC lessons. For example, Roberto writes, *and I am Responsibility*, and Danny writes *Responsible and responsibility don't mean the same thing.* These statements may more likely express Roberto's struggling with some aspects of English and Danny's expressing his more sophisticated grasp of the language; he was one of the earliest students to transition from Spanish into English. Karla's question to Mrs. Fiske, *Is you granddaughter baking a cake for each holiday?* is even more clearly an off-topic commentary, one in some ways typical of her contributions in both talk and writing.

Text, talk, and community. The topics of sacrifice and responsibility allowed us to trace a fairly wide-ranging web of connections between talk and writing in Mrs. Fiske's classroom, a web that spun out into the worlds of home and home front during the Gulf War. They also serve to map out the ways in which a particular classroom ritual, the IC reading lesson, served to bring together different perspectives into coherent, class-generated, intersubjective discussions about the topics. These jointly authored perspectives appear to have become one source to draw from in later written explorations of sacrifice and responsibility by individual children (Patthey-Chavez & Clare, 1995).

We have shown elsewhere that the intersubjective exploration facilitated by ICs often encompassed what we have called "friendly conflict," an exchange of differing and not completely reconcilable opinions between teacher and students where neither side yielded, and where, moreover, no such yielding was required (Patthey-Chavez & Goldenberg, 1994). This was due to the same "rules of interpretation" to which we have alluded above. In simple terms, differing interpretations of readings and experiences are acceptable as long as they find a warrant in those readings and experiences. Through IC discussions, Mrs. Fiske and her students were encouraged to present differing interpretations and to back up those differing interpretations with the kinds of explanations and examples that could serve as warrant for them. Acquiring the rules of interpretation in literacy activities is paramount if we are to take seriously the sociolinguistic notion that meaning is negotiated. In ICs, those rules were enacted and re-enacted as the participants negotiated mutually acceptable views about discussion topics.

Taken to a different level of analysis, intersubjective exploration and joint textual interpretation can be seen as important processes for the larger class task of community building. The IC became the medium for joint productive activity, one resulting in language socialization for the novices, who were acquiring the rules of interpretation through their participation in the activity, and resulting in the weekly enactment of fourth-grade scholarship for the classroom community as a whole.

Conclusion

We have traced threads between student writings and a host of discourses permeating their lives, both in and out of school. Most of the students in this class began their school careers speaking Spanish and being taught in Spanish. Most of the ones whose words are presented here had only recently transitioned into English instruction. Through instructional conversations and a jointly constructed community, Mrs. Fiske helped her students through the transition by bringing together what they learned in school with what they knew from their home community.

We have seen that student essays embody a range of voices and modes of discourses. Collectively, they contributed to student understandings about two developmentally appropriate topics of fourth-grade scholarship: sacrifice and responsibility. Across our data, statements made by Mrs. Fiske and class peers blend into personal opinions informed both by reading lessons and ongoing class discussions. These connect back not only to the real world of home responsibilities and the imaginary worlds of class readings, but cross into the world of war half a globe away. In addition,

student essays reflect ideas informed by experiences with religious institutions or moral discourses, as well as by interactions with the popular media. It is thus possible to see student essays as co-constructed texts reflecting classroom discussions and events as well as student experiences outside of school. In that sense, students were able to bring their cultural experiences into the academic mix in an instructionally useful fashion.

Like an ill-planned hike, exploring the connections among talk, community, and culture in classrooms can lead one into briar and bramble. After a while, the hiker is going in circles, never getting anywhere, just as we often do when we get caught up in the briar and bramble of theories and abstractions. The idea that classroom talk can construct a community—which we called a radical proposition—is not so unfamiliar to experienced teachers: The talk and manner of comprehension lessons can influence the whole tenor of an academic year in a classroom.

All of us who have taught have realized that the ways we talk to our students and what we talk about with them can come back to help or haunt us—just as Mrs. Fiske found. In more formal terms, this is an example of the principle that a social community—small or large—is a product of individual behavior as well as a shaper of it. There is an even more radical version of this idea—that community structure itself *does not exist* absent the daily round of activities of individuals (Giddens, 1984, 1987). The daily routine is composed of joint efforts with others, sometimes in relative isolation, which have some productive purpose. These activities vary in terms of personnel involved, the reasons they are present, what they are doing, and the rules of participation the participants construct or impose. They are major building blocks of community; they are the observable features of it, just as the facade of a building can be seen and evaluated, whereas the sustaining fabric and framing cannot always be discerned without digging and drilling.

These are more than abstract social science concepts. They can be a source of genuine innovation in classrooms, because they place in the hands of teachers and students the tools to create scholarly communities. What we have illustrated here is the contribution of talk in joint activity to the development and nature of the surrounding classroom community. We have tried to show that structuring that talk in such a way as to invite and welcome novice input and novice authorship in joint activity can become an important means to assist novice performance in an emerging fourth-grade community of scholarship. Through their participation in instructional conversations, students were acquiring the rules of the literacy game. In their case, that game did not divorce scholarship from community, be that the small community they enacted and constructed through their daily school rituals, or the larger communities contributing to the differing funds of knowledge the class could explore together. Mrs. Fiske's community of scholarship found itself modeled and implemented in an activity—instructional conversation—that fostered the caring, cooperation, and creativity she believed in.

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Note

[1] For ease of reading we have corrected the students' spelling and punctuation when we quote from their essays. This is indicated by the use of italics in lieu of quotation marks.

Appendix
Transcription Conventions

[	Overlapping utterances
=	Contiguous utterances
-	Self-interruption, cut-off
?	High rising intonation, questioning contour
!	High rising intonation, emphatic contour
,	Low rising intonation, continuation contour
;	Level intonation, completion contour
.	Falling intonation, closure contour
WORD	Increased volume
<u>word</u>	Stressed speech
wo:rd	Lengthened or stretched vowel
(word)	Transcriber doubt
( )	Unintelligible utterance
(1.2)	Timed pause (in tenth of a second)
(.)	Untimed pause (in quarter-seconds)
(( ))	Contextual information
. . .	Deleted word(s)
((...))	Deleted turn(s)

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