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ABSTRACT

Unofficial, vernacular literacy of four diverse sixth-grade groups in a midwestern area was explored using naturalistic, direct observation in classrooms, informal interviews, and literacy survey. Research spanned the 1991-92 through the 1994-95 school years. The focus group, which was studied all 4 years of the research period, attended an inner-city "Chapter-One" school that served primarily low-income African American students. The 3 comparison groups were located within a 40 mile radius of the focus group: one group attended another inner-city "Chapter-One" school that served primarily low-income, White Appalachian children; another group was primarily made up of students of working class families, was 100% White, and attended a rural school; and another group attended a school in a primarily middle-class community, and was 95% White. Findings seem to reveal a great similarity in the use of unofficial, vernacular literacy, and general attitudes toward literacy among all four groups. Gender difference in students' literate communication, both in form and content, was common to all four groups. An ethnic difference was suggested when boys in the focus group were found to exhibit a heightened sensitivity to gendered material. In particular, the study provides evidence for generative creativity among some of society's weaker students, and argues that the texts created by students of the focal group indicate considerable untapped language ability and unrecognized literate skill. (Contains 68 references; appendixes contain data, survey instruments, field notes, and samples of students' "unofficial" writing and drawing.) (Author/RS)

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Treasure from Our Trash:

A Study of Unofficial, Vernacular Literacy among Six Graders

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Abstract

Unofficial, vernacular literacy of four diverse sixth grade groups in a midwestern area was explored using naturalistic, direct observation in classrooms, informal interviews, and a literacy survey. Research spanned from 1991-92 through 1994-95 school years. The focus group, which was studied all four years of the research period, attended an inner-city "Chapter-One" school that served primarily low-income African American students. The three comparison groups were located within a 40 mile radius of the focus group: one group attended another inner-city "Chapter-One" school that served primarily low-income, White Appalachian children; another group was primarily made up of students of working-class families, was 100% White, and attended a rural school; and another group attended a school in a primarily middle-class community, and was 95% White. Findings seem to reveal great similarity in the use of unofficial, vernacular literacy, and general attitudes toward literacy among all four groups. Gender difference in students' literate communication, both in form and content, was common to all four groups. An ethnic difference was suggested when boys in the focus group were found to exhibit a heightened sensitivity to gendered material. In particular, the study provides evidence for generative creativity among some of society's weaker students, and argues that the texts created by students of the focal group indicate considerable untapped language ability and unrecognized literate skill.

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Treasure from Our Trash:

A Study of Unofficial, Vernacular Literacy among Six Graders

A study by Ruth Hubbard (1989) revealed various kinds of unofficial, nonacademic (Hubbard's terms) uses of literacy by one sixth grade class. In her study, student generated literacy events served to establish the students' "underground culture." However, based on Hubbard's description, the sixth grade she studied was evidently a suburban-type classroom. A question, then, emerges in response to both Hubbard's study and the increased need to respond to the multiethnic nature of our classrooms: Would a study of the nonacademic literacy events in an urban, low-income, ethnically diverse sixth grade class generate similar data?

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First and primarily, the study sought to systematically study and describe the range of unofficial and vernacular texts used by sixth graders attending an inner-city elementary--the focal school in the study--in one midwestern area. The study spanned four years in the focal school, which was a Chapter One school serving primarily low-income African American students. For comparison/contrast purposes, the study also included two months of observation in three additional classes of sixth graders from three other schools within a forty mile radius of the focal school, for comparison/contrast purposes. Studying unofficial uses of literacy provides a way to examine how literacy is used by different groups of students to establish and maintain relationships, and to mark relational and material boundaries. Second, the study

sought to better understand students' latent abilities through the examination of unofficial literacy events and artifacts. Both goals are related in that each seeks to contribute to the discourse on the social construction of literacy.

Studying unofficial literate events provides a window on student literate-communicative skills as they are manifested during peer oriented literate activities; such a study may have some important consequences for the development of effective learning environments. Better understanding of the forms and functions of student generated literacy events may aid educators in constructing authentic literacy tasks in school. The importance of making literacy tasks meaningful, functional, and authentic is well documented (Atwell, 1987/1991; Chew, 1991; Clay, 1991; Cochrane & Cochrane, Scalena & Buchanan, 1984/1991; Delpit, 1995; Gallas, 1994; Goodman & Wilde, 1992; Pappas, Kiefer & Levstik, 1990; Smith, 1986; Weaver, 1988). Authentic uses of literacy help students make critical connections in the process of literacy acquisition. Studying nonacademic uses of literacy is one means of discerning "literacies alive" (Nichols, 1989) within students: the dynamic interplay between sanctioned literacy tasks learned at school and the inherent social and creative impulses of children.

The next section reviews the literature, and suggests the need for continued investigation and the testing of ideas. This section also defines terms related to literacy, based on the literature review findings, that will be most frequently used in the remainder of this document.

Review of Literature

Unofficial Literacy or Literate Play

Literature pertaining to unofficial uses of literacy by elementary students is scant. In addition to Hubbard's (1989) work, Gilmore (1983) relates some thoughts on her observations of nonacademic literacy events in context of studying black street rhyme in a low-income neighborhood in Philadelphia. Gilmore studied preadolescent African American students chanted talk in their neighborhood, as a part of a larger study, with the purpose of demonstrating their language ability. She reports that while teachers decried that students did not write, her observation of students in school revealed that, to the contrary, they wrote all the time. But because students' unofficial writing was concerned with peer relationships rather than sanctioned class assignments, their prolific writing activity was not recognized as representative of literacy skills.

In a study of fourth graders in another urban classroom, Brenda Miller Power (1992) explored how students used texts in order to learn how students viewed the functions of literacy. She observed that students used literate play to signify membership in peer social groups. It was interesting to note that even in a classroom setting described as holistic, where the teacher encouraged student choice, Power found there was still conflict between student and teacher agendas. Power, as did Hubbard (1989), observed that students' unofficial literacy seemed to reflect the social hierarchies and gender-defined roles of the "implicit texts" of adult culture (p. 82). How a particular play sequence (based on the use of literacy) broke down, appeared to demonstrate some of the implicit rules of children's

group interaction; for example, though social hierarchies were in place during a literacy oriented game, some implicit rules involved the balance between leadership and some semblance of equality and acknowledgment of other students' views in order for the game to continue.

Gendered Writing

A study by Susan Fleming (1994) explores gender differences in writing, this time among 21 second graders of a primarily White, middle-class to upper-middle-class suburban school. She found that the writings of boys and girls differed markedly in content. The content of boys' writings was primarily about conflict and violence, and concerned with problems based afar, whereas girls' writings were usually about home, relationships, and reconciliation. Though Fleming's study focused on academic, teacher directed learning tasks (assigned and unassigned topics), rather than a study of unofficial writing of students, her conclusions relative to gendered writing informs the present study. Other researchers have found similar results concerning gendered writing (Roen & Johnson, 1992), even as young as three year olds (Sheldon, 1993), and gendered speech (Goodwin, 1993; Keroes, 1990; Tannen, 1993).

Other research mention briefly observed instances of unsanctioned, unofficial literacy events (Atwell, 1987/1991; Shuman, 1986), or mention the activity in passing in context of prose (Kozol, 1995), but unofficial use of literacy by students was neither the focus of the research nor the main topic of the prose. Later, Shuman (1993) expands on the theme of unofficial collaborative writing of junior high students in Philadelphia. In this later article, Shuman argues that the

vernacular-official opposition (or, unofficial-official) is better understood if viewed as not only an issue about varieties of writing, but also as "...privileged channels and/or genres of communication" (p. 267).

The research discussed above indicates its usefulness. However, the bulk of literacy research by educational researchers reflects a primary concern with "official" writing; that is, sanctioned writing students overtly engage in during school. A descriptive, systematic study of how children create and utilize various unofficial texts to negotiate social meaning and peer relations remains largely unexamined in educational literature.

Vernacular/Unofficial Literacy

The discipline of anthropology reflects a growing interest in "...the role of literacies in the construction of ethnicity, gender and religious identities..." (Street 1993, p. 1). Street uses the term "vernacular literacies" to refer to the creative and original ways people have transformed literacy to meet their own cultural interests. Street proposes a new theoretical model, the ideological model, that recognizes the central role of power relations in literacy practices. Whereas the old model (autonomous model) placed emphasis on how the apparently neutral and universal character of literacy impacted on supposedly passive recipients, the new model attempts to understand the active construction of literacy as embedded in various social practices and power relations of every day life.

Both Hubbard (1989) and Street (1993) refer to Heath's definition of "literacy event." Heath (1983) describes a literacy event as "one in which written materials are integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their

interpretive processes" (p. 386). Hubbard uses this definition as a conceptual tool in her work. Street (1987, 1993) elaborates and extends Heath's definition into "literacy practices." According to Street, literacy practices involve "a higher level of abstraction...referring to both behavior and conceptualizations related to the uses of reading and/or writing. 'Literacy practices' incorporate not only 'literacy events,' as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral, but also 'folk models' of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them" (p. 12). Street attributes Grillo in extending this idea even further to "communicative practices." For Grillo (1989), literacy is just one type of communicative practice within a larger social context. Grillo relates this concept as "the social activities through which language or communication is produced...the way in which these activities are embedded in institutions, setting or domains which in turn are implicated in other, wider, social, economic, political and cultural processes...and ideologies..." (cited in Street, 1993, p. 13).

One study contained in Street's edited text relates a similar interest to the present study. Camitta (1993) was part of a three year study that looked at the writing of high school adolescents living in Philadelphia. Texts produced by these students were not essays, the official genre of academia, but forms of vernacular writing, such as, "...lists, notes, diaries, journals, and poems" (p. 230). Taken as a whole, she says, the vernacular texts she studied were the discourse of adolescents' social life and culture. The literacy she observed and studied was "...as social discourse comprised of meaning and expressions of experience that

are negotiated in the context of social interaction or 'performance'." Therefore, she suggests, "...meaning is not a function of form but of process" (p. 229).

Unfortunately, Camitta does not describe her sample other than that they lived in the Philadelphia area and "...were white, black, hispanic, male and female...[and] ranged in age from fourteen to eighteen" (p. 229), making a comparison/contrast analysis difficult. Even so, it is of interest to note that some vernacular texts, in particular Slam Books (though she doesn't describe them), which Camitta had observed, I also observed in urban sixth graders during the research period. Such accounts seem to indicate certain vernacular texts have very broad appeal. But, little is known about how vernacular texts differ. An exploratory, descriptive study of students' vernacular literacy practices offers some insights.

Youth Genre

While considering vernacular literacy as a broad category encompassing all creative literacy practices that serve in the social construction of ethnicity and gender identities, Daiute (1993) offers an additional concept particularly appropriate in the study of unofficial literacy used by early adolescents. Daiute suggests the term and concept, "youth genre." Youth genre is a concept which considers both sociocultural factors and developmental factors. Developmental theory relates the importance of considering literacy as a general growth process, rather than viewing literacy of children in deficit terms as a result of being compared to adults. Youth genre presents the view that children write the way they do, in part, because they are children. Youth genre, then, as a term and concept,

captures the unofficial literate activity of sixth graders in the present study within the larger concept of vernacular literacy.

The next two reviews relevant to the social construction of literacy are organized in two categories. The first category of literature addresses local, every day uses of literacy. While the two studies considered in this first category do not use the same terminology as Street (1993), the content of their research falls under vernacular literacies. The second category or body of literature concerns itself primarily with language processes and speech communities of various ethnic and cultural groups with the purpose of implementing literacy programs more compatible with their natural language use. While neither category makes unofficial uses of literacy by students in school its primary focus, both categories of literature locate language and literacy in social and cultural processes.

There are at least two studies which examine "vernacular literacies" practiced in families and communities. These ethnographic studies include observations of students in their classrooms, but the main focus is on families and immediate community literate behavior. Fishman (1988) was able to become a participant observer of an Old Order Amish family she and her family had known for ten years. As she got more acquainted with the Amish community, she learned that the claims and standards she had learned earlier about the literacy of academia, as being the most valid and useful, were untrue. Fishman found that in the world of the Amish it was she who was the less literate. Anna, the Amish wife, knew the Bible much better, and could speak and read Dutch and German in addition to English. Anna was able to make sense of quilting, sewing, and farming

periodicals; 'texts' that were nearly incomprehensible to Fishman. Literacy used by members of this community--the 'reading' of cultural elements and products relevant to their lives--demonstrates the importance of 'authenticity' in the process of literacy acquisition. It demonstrates, as well, the part background knowledge plays in the construction of meaning. Fishman states that it was through Anna that she realized literacy was truly a cultural process.

A second study, by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), also looks at every day use of literacy. In their book, Growing up Literate, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines relate in their study the part family and neighborhood play in literacy acquisition, in particular, the common, every day use of literacy by four inner-city families. While the study emphasized literacy in context of a larger community, the researchers spent some time in the focal children's classrooms. But discussions concerning classroom observations did not include any mention of unofficial literacy. However, concerning literacy use found in the families and neighborhood, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines find that "sex, race, economic status, and setting cannot be used as significant correlates of literacy," (p. 201) and despite the common stereotype, they found these families were "...active members in a print community in which literacy is used for a wide variety of social, technical, and aesthetic purposes..." (p. 200).

The present study uses the concept "communicative practices" (Grillo, 1989) of youth genre to include vernacular literacy practices embedded in culture, the subject of Fishman's (1988) and Taylor, Dorsey-Gaines' (1988) research. But

unlike these two studies, the present study examines how these practices intersect with the school environment in various forms of unofficial literacy events.

Sociolinguistic Studies

Another body of literature, tangentially related to the current study, are those ethnographically based, sociolinguistic studies endeavoring to understand the chronic underachievement among various ethnic and cultural minorities by using the match/mismatch paradigm (Boggs, Watson-Gegeo, & Mcmillen, 1985; Heath, 1983; Hoover, Politzer, & Taylor, 1987; Nichols, 1989; Ortony, Turner, & Larson-Shapiro, 1985; Philips, 1972; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). Rather than focusing on material and economic status of communities, these researchers focus on factors more intrinsic to the language process. The one general conclusion drawn from these studies is that classroom instructional methods often do not consider the diversity of discourse patterns represented in the classroom.

In one of the above cited studies, Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987) examined matches/mismatches between students' language community and school environment among the Navajo. They note: "It is possible to specify major proximate causes for academic underachievement in terms of relatively narrow-range mismatches...at points that are critical for school success" (italics, original; p. 276). The common theoretical perspective which underlies this and the above category of studies is that all groups of children are equal in their capacity to learn, despite economic status of the family, and therefore disparity in achievement between groups can be accounted for by identifying mismatches. Incongruence between ways of speaking at home and those required at school tend

to result in the devaluation of children's intellectual abilities. These researchers argue that the familiar language pattern of children's respective speech communities needs to be acknowledged and used as a basis for children to learn school (sanctioned or official) literacy and subject content. The strength of some of these studies can be measured in improved achievement scores subsequent to changes in respective curriculums. For example, when the Hawaiian "talk-story" was implemented as the basis for teaching reading to low-income children, Boggs, et.al. (1985) report that scores rose from thirteenth percentile to sixty-seventh.

The above category of research helps to build a case for the need to create and implement authentic learning tasks that will connect with familiar elements in students' life, using children's background knowledge as scaffolding for academic learning. The present study is theoretically located in the pedagogical imperative of this latter group of studies: literacy practices of a student's communicative-community needs to be acknowledged and utilized for school related learning.

Equity Issues

Soon after the inception of the present study, it became evident that a study concerning an inner-city, Chapter One elementary, primarily composed of low-income African American students, would require that the issue of equity be addressed. James Collins (1988), in an essay, stresses the need for considering macroanalysis of social and historical context as well as microanalysis of discourse. What is not well understood, Collins contends, is how "...linguistic difference becomes linguistic disadvantage" despite the strong claim made by scholars of the linguistic equality of all languages and dialects (p. 320). By

necessity, therefore, this study must also consider issues of ethnicity and race in order to understand broader social meanings that obtain in youth genre.

Though vernacular literacy introduced by Street (1993) considers ethnically derived literacy, complexities of class and ethnicity are fleshed out in the work of Devalle (1992), DeVos (1995), Gordon (1988), and Ogbu (1991)). Devalle uses communities in Jharkhand, India as a case to demonstrate ethnicity as a dynamic process, not just a phenomenon of fixed ethnic forms. Both Devalle and DeVos relate the importance of recognizing that the origin of ethnicity is located within a historical framework (colonialism), and was originally used to maximize indigenous differences in the process of domination. Devalle emphasizes the necessity of understanding ethnicity as originally a method of domination in order to understand "...cultures of protest [as] counter parts of a culture of oppression..." (p. 15; emphasis original). Of particular use to the present study, are discussions on the interrelationship between class and ethnicity.

Gordon (1988) and Ogbu (1991) specifically address American ethnicity. Gordan relates that due to the influence of mass communication and migratory tendencies, regional and rural-urban influences have declined in importance as sources which help form social values and networks. What remains is ethnicity and class, an intersection of factors he calls "ethclass." Ogbu discusses the cultural and language processes of involuntary immigrants (e.g., African Americans) as a secondary cultural system that arose after the group had become an involuntary minority (p. 15; emphasis original). Involuntary immigrants not only perceive themselves as different, but they also "...interpret these differences

as symbols of identity to be maintained" (p. 15; emphasis original). DeVos (1995) also describes the United States as a mixed class-ethnic society with caste-race features. DeVos relates the criteria comprising ethnicity as it relates to African Americans as: territorial origins (Africa); territorial (urban) and economic strongholds in present American setting (nonsanctioned survival strategies; and a more sanctioned activity, sports); old folk and religious practices; and features of life-style, family relationships, and artistic traditions (p. 29).

With greater emphasis, the current study is also informed by the work of Delpit (1986, 1988, 1995) and her seminal discussion on the conflict between differing codes of power, which, even on an implicit level, continues to have a detrimental effect on students of color. Both Delpit and McIntosh (1989) address the issue as one that also impacts working relationships of teachers from different race and class backgrounds, an issue which the present study must also consider. Concerning teacher relations, Delpit relates the problem of implicit beliefs held by White professionals in their superiority, which is manifested in not taking seriously the concerns and advice of minority educators. McIntosh (1989) similarly states, that Whites reveal a subconscious attitude of superiority when they exercise "White privilege in ignoring the language and customs of those with lesser power" (p.11). When considering these and the above comments, it is evident that one cannot, then, step into the field of literacy and not become aware that the subject is enmeshed with issues of power.

The above scholarly research and commentary provide a background to the interest of the present study, both in terms of cited confirmations of the existence

of unofficial literacy, and by providing a theoretical basis for the social construction of literacy and the dynamics of power which underlie its occurrence. Yet, the specific topic of vernacular literacy practiced by elementary students has not been the prior subject of any extensive exploration. A systematic descriptive study, then, of vernacular texts used by students may be able to contribute insight into inherent abilities of children, and both immediate socio/cultural processes and broader contexts involved in the production of their texts.

Method

Researcher Stance

Maxine Greene shared the following at a 1995 AERA Winter Training Institute on Artistically Based Approaches to Educational Research. Constructing a text is always our "take" on what was observed and studied; it always involves selective perception. However, there are ethical obligations to one's informants that must be considered. Reconstructing what they are involves the process of creating. The moral meaning, as perceived by those we study, is important, "because without them I couldn't construct mine." We must always ask ourselves: is my interpretation, as a researcher, at the expense of my informant?

Ethical representation of those we study has been a growing concern for over a decade. Because of economic class, race, and other differences, there is a need for the reader to be aware of the mental material with which I weave observed perceptions of others, which subsequently shapes the fabric of my analysis and the construction of my text. There is a need, as Peter Woods relates (1992) on the nature of symbolic interactionism, for awareness of both the

distinctive and complementary relationship between the "I" and the "me." The "me" is a product of this society, a social culmination of historical and cultural hegemony. "Doing" ethical research means taking stock of known and unknown personal biases. It means providing a reader of my report with enough information about myself that would enable him or her to judge the veracity of my text. Bearing all this in mind, then, the following should be known about me: I am female, white, married, a mother, with economic experiences which range from working-class to, presently, upper middle-class. My value system is influenced by middle-class ideals, but probably more greatly, by my Christian faith.

Though self reflection aids in the effort for ethical research, there is also a need to devote equal time to relating informants' own perspective in the construction of a text. To facilitate this, a narrative will be constructed which will include multiple voices of informants (from interviews, or conversations overheard) as well as the researcher's (Heath, 1993; LeVine, 1996; Van Maanen, 1988). With respect to the researcher's voice, this is a tentative, cautious position, one similar to that described by James Clifford (1986) when he related an account of a Cree hunter who, "...when administered the oath, hesitated [and said]: 'I'm not sure I can tell the truth...I can only tell what I know" (p. 8); to this, I would add--I can only tell what I think I know.

Data Collection

Studying vernacular and unofficial literacy practices in classrooms requires using a naturalistic approach to direct observation that would allow the observation of covert student-generated literate behaviors. Patton (1990) states:

"A qualitative design unfolds as field work unfolds. The design is partially emergent as the study occurs" (p. 61). Such is the nature, and strength, of naturalistic observation; it may better reflect the sometimes obscure pulse of life. Using such methods in the current study, initial field survey work (Appendix A) was accomplished using one sixth grade class in the focal, inner-city elementary during the 1991-92 school year. Initial survey work revealed that the neighborhood, school, teacher, and students would be amenable to further study and was particularly rich in data relevant to literate creativity.

Qualitative methods, Patton (1990) claims, allows the researcher to study selected issues in great depth. Though generalizability of data is considered a weakness of qualitative methods, some "logical generalizations" are possible depending on sampling purpose and methods, and descriptive characteristics of the sample (Patton, 1990, p. 175). Sampling in this study was partially serendipitous and probably falls under what Patton (1990) calls "opportunistic sampling" (p. 179). The following is an account of events that preceded the initial field survey period.

I was intrigued by the question: in what form/s and contexts would the "underground" (unofficial, nonacademic) literacy events emerge in an urban, low-income, predominantly African American sixth grade class? With this question in mind, I set out to find a cooperative classroom; at this point, I found personal history would meld with the formal research process. The urban school system I was interested in did not enjoy a good reputation. A few years prior to the initial field survey period I had tried to become a volunteer at one of the schools, simply

because I knew their need was great; but, the school system declined my offer. An administrator explained to me that some schools are just a little leery about having outsiders. But a year later I started helping a few social workers who were tutoring students at local housing projects and I became acquainted with some children from a project who went to a near-by elementary school. In 1991, when I wanted to observe an inner-city classroom for research purposes, I made an appointment with the principal of the above school which many of these students attended. In person, I explained to the principal what I wanted to do, and gave her a copy of Hubbard's article. Perhaps it was the tutoring experience and being able to relate names of some of the students, along with graduate student credentials, which gave me more credibility, because this time I was given permission to enter. Establishing entree into this school, then, was a culmination of a number of social networks at work. And it was this school, Urban-One/Ellington Elementary (pseudonym), serving primarily low-income, African American students, which became the focal school for this study.

For the data narrative (part of the analysis as well as data display) to be a fair reflection of the typical sixth grader who attended the focus school, the research process needed scope and depth. To achieve scope, the study used three other sixth grade classrooms from three other schools within the same region to observe for vernacular literacy practiced respective to students in those schools. The three other sixth grade classes in the three other schools were used for comparison-contrast purposes to test ideas and emerging patterns (a total of four classes in four schools). The other classrooms also provided a stratified sample in

which certain variables could be held constant (e.g., income) while varying another variable (e.g., ethnicity). Eventually I gained permission to enter and study a total of four sixth grade classes from four different elementary schools.

To achieve depth, my research spanned 1991-92 through 1994-95 academic years. Two to three months in each single year were spent doing fieldwork in one of the three comparison schools, whereas, two to three months in each of the academic years of the study were spent doing fieldwork in the school of primary focus. According to Fetterman (1989), long term continuous fieldwork may not be necessary for work conducted in one's own culture. However, he states, it needs to be long enough to see patterns of behavior over time. With this in mind, a bounded time frame of two to three months within each year in which to conduct observations was used. The depth of time described above helped preclude hasty conclusions regarding the nature and life span of particular vernacular texts. It became possible to abstract the embeddedness of some literacy practices, to enable the identification of particular texts as ephemeral or sustaining, and to identify the idiosyncratic from an apparent pattern.

A brief summary of data sources is offered here, with further elaboration to follow under appropriate headings. Data gathered in over 226 hours (excludes survey administration and some interviews) of fieldwork includes: initial field survey information on each of the four schools and classes (Appendix A), 204 pages of fieldnotes on unofficial literacy events (Appendix B) gathered from one to two days a week observations for two to three month span on each of the three comparison schools and four years on Ellington, the focal school. Sources of data

also include 152 literacy artifacts either given to me by students or teacher, or found on the floor and halls, in addition to examining the contents of trash cans. Information was gathered and/or verified through informal interviews with students and teachers. Additional information was gained in this exploratory study through further interviews with two students and their parents in their homes (specific criteria for selection described under Urban-One/Ellington in 'participants and research setting'). And finally, a literacy survey (Appendix C) exploring various forms of vernacular literacy and communicative practices of students inside and outside the school setting was devised, tested, and administered in each of the four schools. The table below gives an over-view of the time line involved in the research:

Time Line Summary:

Hours:	School: Urban-One/Ellington Date:	Urban-Two Date:	Rural Date:	Middle-class Date:
31	Spring 1992			
38	Winter 1993			
59	Spring 1994			Spring 1994
98	Spring 1995	Spring 1995	Winter to Spring 1995	

Participants and Research Setting

There is no claim as to the sample of this study being random; rather, the sample deliberately was stratified to include a range of incomes and possible ethnic backgrounds thought typical of this particular midwestern area.

Ascertaining incomes was obtained with the aid of the 1990 Census (via zipcodes provided by students) and information on family backgrounds was provided by students and teachers. Basic descriptions of the four schools and participating sixth graders are the following:

1. Urban-One/Ellington: The first, and focus school of the study, resides in a low-income, predominantly African American community. The school is a "Chapter One" school, largely composed of children who have been identified by testing measures as "at risk" for academic failure. Most students who attend this school qualify for reduced or free lunches; in fact, in 1995 the school district changed its policy towards administering free meals based on documented need, to making all students qualified for free lunch. (This policy change was justified by the district by arguing that it cost more to do paper work than it would to feed all the children.) Examination of zipcodes using the 1990 Census confirms that a large majority of the participating sixth graders were from low-income to working-class households. Of the 24 participating students from this school, 62% were either from a single parent home or living with a grandmother. Eighty three percent of the participating sixth graders were African American and 50% were males.

The following is a comparison of Ellington and another school in the same district that may help situate Ellington students within a larger context. Students at Ellington have the lowest test scores in this particular urban school district, thus the Chapter One designation. When a request was made for sixth grade achievement test scores on Ellington, a request for test scores of the highest

achieving elementary in the same school district was made at the same time. Some salient features of each school are offered below.

1995 Demographics and 1996 Test Scores:

	Ellington:	Comparison School:
Minority %	83.1	83.6
Student Poverty %	89.1	85.4
Writing:	47	62
Reading:	44	79
Math:	3	64

A total of four years of fieldwork was spent at Ellington observing for unofficial literacy events, initially using naturalistic, direct observation, and later, using informal interviews to expand my understanding of students' unofficial literate activity. The sixth graders in Ellington were also important in the development and testing of the survey instrument. The final version of the survey was administered to six graders in this school in the final year of the study, spring 1995.

At the end of the fourth year of the study, one student was selected from the participating class at Ellington (and the Urban-Two School) in order to be interviewed with his parent in their home with the purpose of obtaining more additional background information and to verify some of the student's literate practices and attitudes relative to gendered writing. Selection of the student was based on two criteria. First, the student's use of unofficial literacy appeared

typical of the observed vernacular literate behavior present in the participating classroom. Second, the student needed to exhibit comparable traits and/or abilities to that of the student selected from the Urban-Two School. Though student from Urban-One/Ellington School was of African heritage and the student from Urban-Two School was of White Appalachian heritage, the two selected students share the following traits: both students were male, with at least average intelligence; both were considered by their respective teachers to be average academic achievers; both were from single parent homes, but had concerned fathers who remained active in their daily lives; both were from low-income households; and, both students exhibited a predilection for using art as a medium for expression.

All four years were spent in the same classroom with the same teacher, Ms Mann (pseudonym). All the sixth graders in this school were grouped by ability for reading and math, involving the exchange of students among the three sixth grade classrooms. Ms Mann appeared to use a traditional based instruction method, made evident by the predominant use of school mandated texts in all subjects. Most seat work assignments were limited to the use of texts and required responding to questions at the end of a text chapter. However, in two out of the four years, close to the end of the school year, there was a larger cooperative social studies project in which all three sixth grade classes participated.

2. Urban-Two: The second school was also a Chapter One school and was in the same school district as the first, but located in the opposite side of the city. The immediate location of the school is set within a working-class, White neighborhood, but adjacent concentric neighborhoods from the school are

increasingly low-income, still predominantly White. According to the principal's estimation, a large majority of the students who attend this school are from poor Appalachian backgrounds. Of the 27 participating students, 44% were either from single parent homes or were living with another relative. Sixty seven percent of the participating six graders were White and 48% were males. Racial integration in this school (as well as Ellington) was achieved by busing. Particular to these two urban schools, integration was achieved largely by exchanging children between the two residential areas in which the two urban schools resided, effectively resulting in two schools being racially integrated while holding income/class constant.

Two months in 1995 were spent observing for unofficial literacy events in a single sixth grade classroom in the Urban-Two school. The sixth graders in this school also were grouped by ability for reading and math. Traditional based instruction was also the predominant method observed in this classroom, though this teacher also initiated some unique literacy assignments, such as a poetry writing contest involving several classes.

Research proceeded in this school in similar fashion as Ellington: initially using a naturalistic approach to direct observation, and later, by using informal interviews with students to elicit additional information on their unofficial literate activity. One student from Urban-Two was selected, using the same criteria described under Urban-One/Ellington, for an additional interview session with a parent. The fourth and final version of the survey was administered to sixth graders of Urban-Two in the spring of 1995.

3. Rural: The third school was located in an area devoted to farming, and served children from a nearby village and surrounding area of largely working class families. This sixth grade group of 27 students was a self contained classroom. It was the only six grade class among the four schools where all special education students in the sixth grade (all identified as learning disabled) attended the same classroom and the special education teacher and regular classroom teacher shared lesson and teaching responsibilities. This class was also the only class in which the primary teacher claimed to use a "whole language" instructional approach. The emphasis on language and literature was evident in the appearance of the classroom: students' work was displayed from the ceiling and all over the walls. Themed, hands-on projects of the past year remained on view. The most recent theme, Africa, was evident with a display of Swahili words, student-made African ceremonial masks, and student-made information books.

Of the students in this rural classroom, 78% were from two parent families. One hundred percent of these sixth graders were White and 59% were male. Two months in 1995 were spent in this school observing for unofficial, vernacular literacy events, initially using naturalistic, direct observation, and later, using informal interviews to expand my understanding of students' unofficial literate activity. The final version of the survey was administered to these students in the spring of 1995.

4. Middle-class: The fourth school resided in a small and only city of a basically rural county, but it was the largest community and county seat. Though a full range of incomes could be found in this community, a majority of the

population fell within a middle-class income range, with a considerable number of people commuting 30 to 40 miles to work in a larger metropolis. A single school district served the city and the surrounding rural population. The sixth grade classrooms in this school were self-contained and used a traditional method of instruction. Of the participating class, 29% of the students (participating in the survey) were either from single parent homes or were living with another relative. Ninety five percent of the participating students were White and 48% were males. Two months in 1994 were spent observing for unofficial literacy events, initially using a naturalistic approach and direct observation, and then later, using informal interviews with students. A third version of the survey was administered to these students in the spring of 1994.

The Survey Instrument

The final survey instrument (Appendix C) was developed over the four year research period. Many of the questions that found their way in the final version of the survey came as a result of observing students and inquiring further into their activities. Each year, students attending Ellington Elementary were able to think of some literate activity they enjoyed which was not included in the survey, and so, the survey would be revised, with the subsequent version reflecting their suggestions. For instance, at the conclusion of the second section of the survey the last year of the study, a boy in this school asked if he could write in (on the 'other' line provided on the survey) that he liked to make up riddles. Had the research been extended another year, I would have added "riddles" to the list of options.

The fourth and final version of the survey consisted of 111 questions that covered a) personal and family history of literate behaviors, and subject matter they enjoyed reading that was not school required reading, b) various voluntary writing activities that were not school directed, and c) the creation and use of one alternative text--art. Students in schools one through three took the fourth and final version.

The third, or 1994 version, was very similar. The third version contained 84 questions, the content of which was divided up into the same three sections as the final version. The main difference between the two versions was the elaboration of certain questions. For example, under the question "please mark the kind/s of writing you do at home or away from school (or if done at school, you don't want the teacher to see) that is not homework related," version three offers as one option in a list, the following:

...(4) I write musical lyrics (if so, use back of page to answer: what kind? Do you throw them away? save them? share them? [with whom? friends? family?]...)

In the fourth and final version the question and answer format was expanded:

...(1a) I write musical lyrics: No or Yes <u>If "yes"</u>, what kind?_____

(1b) <u>If</u> you answered "yes" above, please answer the following: do you save most of them? No or Yes

(1c) Do you ever share them with someone? No or Yes <u>If "yes,"</u> with whom? friends? family? other?

Another difference between the two survey versions is that the final version expands the number of questions concerning personal and family literate history. For example, while the first question--Do you remember seeing your parent/s or guardian reading at home?--is the same in both versions, the question--Do you remember someone reading to you when you were younger?--appears only in the fourth and final version.

The most regrettable difference between the two survey versions is a series of questions which attempted to further understand gender attitudes with regard to student "notes." By the fourth and final version of the survey, 5 questions had been developed to investigate an apparent attitude difference towards notes between girls and boys. Although I asked similar questions of the middle-class group during a collective interview with them in 1994 following their taking the third section of the survey, the analysis process would have been better served had the answers been recorded individually rather than just collectively. However, such differences between the two surveys did not serve to alter general conclusions drawn at the end. The main purpose of the literacy survey was to provide another means of revealing any possible patterns or themes in the students' use of unofficial literacy. Given the theme of the study, unofficial literacy, the survey only played a small part in the attempt to view literate behavior from more a 'gestalt' perspective in later analysis. However, general survey results are provided in Appendix E for those interested in knowing the range of literacy use by sixth graders in this midwestern area.

Procedure of Survey Administration

After I had spent a couple of months with them, students grew accustomed to my presence. Once I was able to prove myself as an 'atypical' adult--that is, an adult without any real authority, but one who showed great interest in their nonsanctioned activities--I gradually was able to establish myself as a friendly, nonthreatening observer. Many students enjoyed including me (as an observer) in some of their nonacademic literacy events. My showing curiosity in how some of their literate games were played was answered by numerous enthusiastic demonstrations. By the time I administered the survey, the majority of the students seemed to understand that the survey was simply an extension of my interest in their creative activity.

Administering the survey in each class followed the same process. Each of the three sections of the survey was administered on three separate days, with each section taking 20 to 25 minutes to complete. The students already knew that I was both a student and a researcher from the first day of fieldwork when I introduced myself to them. On the day I initiated the survey I told them how much I appreciated their helping me to understand better all the ways they chose to use reading and writing that were not homework related. Perhaps, I told them, what I learn from them might make me a better teacher.

Despite earlier reassurances and our informal relationship, I still found it necessary to alleviate students' anxiety on the first day of the survey by again reassuring them that this was not a "test" or anything that would be graded. Even then, it wasn't until the end of the first section before it became apparent they

were comfortable with the format of the survey. By the third year of the study I learned that students responded with less confusion if I administered the survey more in the manner of a collective group interview rather than mimicking a formal test-taking format. Each session, therefore, was prefaced with some variation of the following basic instruction: "First, I'm going to read each question and if anyone has a question about it, feel free to ask. We're going to do this together, so please don't jump ahead. I want you to feel free to ask questions about something you don't understand, but when it comes to answering on the paper I want it to be what you really think and do. So, please don't answer out loud, and please don't check out how your neighbor answered."

Careful communication turned out to be a critical element in eliciting appropriate student responses to some questions. At points in the process it was necessary to display previously collected artifacts as examples of the content of a particular question. This proved necessary because some literate activities students took part in did not have a name, or a name given to an activity could change from year to year. The degree to which an activity can be identified by a label or name is apparently commensurate to the extent an activity exists on a metacognitive level. Limited metacognitive awareness concerning some of their literate activity could have created an insurmountable obstacle if the survey inquiry process had been limited to a very controlled paper and pencil procedure.

Data Analysis

Triangulation aids in validating information (Fetterman, 1989). In addition to the survey, triangulation of data was achieved by observations, artifacts

collected, and informal and semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and parents of two students. By using multiple approaches, both perspectives, scope and depth, offers insight as to how unofficial literacy events in school are socially constructed and contextually situated within vernacular literacy practices.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) organize analytic procedures into five modes: "organizing the data; generating categories, themes and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and the writing of the report" (p. 114).

Field notes generated from observations and interviews are highly descriptive, full of detail and contextual depth (Appendix D, for example). According to Patton (1990), the purpose of observational data is "to take the reader into the setting that was observed" (p. 26). Organizing field notes was accomplished through repeated readings and recursive study. Through repeated readings categories emerged, and salient sections were marked and coded. Analysis of fieldnotes was further aided by entering data in a spreadsheet using relevant categories as variables. Having the data available in a spreadsheet format made the data amenable to SPSS crosstabs and the creation of contingency tables which created frequencies based on two to three variables. During this time data were reduced, yet with the goal of retaining the power to describe daily events.

The literacy survey was also entered on a spreadsheet, by coding and entering student responses as variables. Analysis of the survey was also accomplished with the aid of SPSS crosstabs and contingency tables based on the variables of income, sex, school, achievement, and race.

Concerning coding and variables, I need to make clear the distinction this study made between the terms sex and gender, and race and ethnicity. Sex and race are terms referring to observable physical distinctions; whereas, gender and ethnicity are sociocultural terms, applicable to the task of describing thoughts and behavior. As variables, sex and race may have demographic purposes, but the goal of the study was to describe thoughts and behavior of students. In this study, then, race was thought of as a type of ethnic marker, one means of establishing group social identity. Using DeVos (1995), I believe I can justify using ethnicity for race. DeVos describes the United States as a mixed class-ethnic society with caste-race features. Black Americans, according to DeVos, have been trying to recreate their identity on the basis of cultural continuities (real or myth generated, it doesn't matter when it comes to ethnicity), rather than passively accepting the simplistic and imposed caste-racial criteria used in oppressing them. By using an ethnic definition of themselves, African Americans enhance their chances to improve their status, because "Ethnic relationships remain as potential sources of identity and of social participation in America" (p. 29-30).

Initial manipulation of both fieldwork and survey data resulted in an "analyst-constructed typology" or taxonomy (Patton, 1990, p. 398). The taxonomy which resulted from this "etic" perspective was compared later to a more "indigenous typology" or "emic" generated taxonomy. The purpose of the "emic" taxonomy is to represent the underlying organization of an informant/participant's cultural knowledge through a set of categories related by inclusion (Spradley & McCurdy, 1988). On the other hand, the purpose of the "etic" taxonomy is to

discover patterns and themes that appear to exist, but remain unperceived by those studied (Patton, 1990).

The need to test ideas and explore alternative explanations was understood to be an on-going process, even into writing the narrative. Each contributing body of data--observations, artifact analysis, interview, survey--was analyzed for recurring themes, within and across each data set. In particular, observations were discerned for a possible key-event. All the above methods aided in the primary research goal to describe, in depth, Ellington students' unofficial vernacular literacy or youth genre.

The last stage of analysis is the actual writing of research results. Because the subject of interest has much to do with the creative powers of sixth graders, the best medium for further analyzing and communicating forms of literate creativity is through a highly descriptive narrative. The narrative which follows will be partially fictionalized, in that the most revealing events/data gathered in the four years of observation will be condensed into one school day in the life of students from the focal inner-city, Urban-One/Ellington School. Every event that is related, however, will have data reference from fieldnotes that can be found in Appendix B. Again, the only purpose for studying other sixth graders in the other three schools was to have a means by which to describe, in depth, sixth graders in the focal school. Having comparative groups enabled me to discern what literate activities are common to many sixth graders in this midwestern area and what activities may be unique to the sixth graders of this particular inner-city school, Ellington Elementary, which would reflect their use of vernacular literacy. The

narrative will describe patterns of socially embedded unofficial literacy without giving cumulative frequencies in the text of the narrative. However, actual numerical frequencies on each school is provided in Appendix B for reference. In like manner, results of the literacy survey will not be referred to directly in the narrative. The main purpose of the literacy survey was to provide another means of revealing any possible patterns and themes. When a pattern appeared consistent from one data source to another, if a pattern seemed to shape relationships, as became the case regarding gendered writing, then this pattern became a part of the narrative data display. Actual survey items and their relative frequencies used in discerning salient patterns are displayed in Appendix E. The purpose of displaying the data in both forms--creative narrative, and frequency tables in appendix--is to provide enough data to invite alternative explanations by others (via tables), while maintaining (via narrative) the subject of the study's most vital component--vernacular literate creativity.

The following is a partially fictionalized account of one spring day in the Ellington Elementary, and a later meeting I had with the father of one of the students from this school. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the school, teachers, students, and parents. For some readers of this report, the extent of the use of personal reflection may not appeal as being appropriate for academic writing. But in keeping with the goal of the previously stated "Researcher's Stance," personal reflections are offered as one means for a reader to assess my perceptions--the primary basis of my analysis. To those readers for whom apparent mixing of genres create anxiety, I can only ask for your patience.

One Narrative Account: A Day in the Life of...

This is the fourth spring I have been coming to Ellington Elementary School. Today I drive to the school with much the same mind set I drive to any familiar place: arriving as if set on 'automatic drive,' not consciously aware of how I got from one point to another. But I remember the first time I made my way to this school. Making my way to the school that first time, I had to drive through areas of the city that I had been taught from childhood, directly and indirectly, to avoid. I am sure that every city of moderate size has such an area with a similar reputation, an area associated with high crime. Ninety four percent of the residents in this area are African American, the majority of whom are low-income. The frequency of vacant lots and dilapidated buildings attest to an official government report that the median household income in this area is $12,480 (1990 Census). The figures are even more dire in the case of families; the majority make between $5,000 to $9,999 a year. And yet, here and there, sometimes in isolation, sometimes in small groups, are homes that are obviously well tended. In the midst of one primarily residential area, Ellington Elementary stands, the most imposing of all buildings in the area. Looking back, I can remember the one thing that most caught my attention as I walked up to the school the first time: the large, black security bars that covered the windows, giving an impression more of a prison than a school for children. On this spring day, however, I notice tulips in bloom as I walk up to the school. Someone has taken care to trim away stray grass from the beds and has even propped up a few blossoms too heavy for their stems. With a

twinge of dismay, I wonder if the flowers have been there in previous springs. Probably, but I just hadn't noticed.

As I walk up to the school, the school custodian, keeper of the building (and of flowers) holds the door open for some children entering as he is exiting. Spying me with my arms full with a crate of notes and surveys, he holds the door wider for me. We greet each other as I enter. Though I am probably a familiar face to him by now, I doubt he knows my name. But I know a little about him. He and his ex-wife, a cook in the same school system, have a daughter in Ms Mann's sixth grade class, the class in which I spend most of my time. Their daughter, Carmilla, is a sweet, pretty girl, well liked by her peers. She loves to write. Knowing that I was interested in reading and writing that was not directly related to school tasks, Carmilla has been one of the students who has eagerly shared her work with me on a regular basis.

Carmilla is a living testament to what dedicated parents can do if they have access to informed networks and armed with the right kind of information. Having been long term employees of the school district, both Carmilla's parents have learned how to operate within the system to their daughter's advantage. Not only do both parents show up at every parent-teacher meeting, but they both vigorously intercede with informal 'chance' meetings with teachers and administrators. Teachers have always responded to their interest by providing them with extra learning materials for Carmilla to work on at home after school and during summer vacations. Both parents apparently take Carmilla's education with equal seriousness; Carmilla spends as much time on school work when she visits her

father as she does when she is with her mother. But despite her parents' and teachers' dedication, Carmilla has struggled to achieve in the classroom. Concerned with her slow progress, everyone agreed this year that it was time to have Carmilla tested. Sadly, the test results identified Carmilla as having developmental disabilities (DH). Interestingly, the test results hasn't functioned to diminish anyone's efforts; rather, it has served to increase everyone's respect for Carmilla's efforts. According to test results, Carmilla is actually functioning far over what her supposed intellectual ability, as measured by a test, would predict. Presently, Carmilla is being affectionately referred to by teachers as "our little over-achiever," an expression I have never heard applied to any other sixth grade student in the four years I have been here.

But most students who come here don't have the same mediating forces working for them; either they don't have parents with similar devotion, or, more frequently, their parents don't have the same access to formal and informal networks of information. This school is considered a "Chapter One" school, a school designated for children testing high as at-risk for academic failure. Such an official designation has given the school access to extra state and federal funds. With extra funds the school has been able to hire additional teachers, a social worker, and full time nurse. As I stand in the foyer, now, I can see several students already sitting outside the clinic on my right, waiting for the nurse.

I enter the office on the left to sign-in and then continue the familiar passage to Ms Mann's sixth grade classroom where I spend most of my time. I enter a large gathering hall decorated with student art and science fair projects. By

the time I reach the far end of the room, I can hear the din of children's voices coming from the cafeteria. As usual, except for a few harried adults, the cafeteria is full of children receiving a free breakfast. I pause at the cafeteria door to witness a little of the mayhem. The sea of children is in constant motion and so it is impossible to get an exact head count, but at least 90% of the children and the two adult monitors are African American. One of the adult monitors happens to notice me at the door and we greet each other. She rolls her eyes in exaggerated weariness and then continues her attempt to quiet the roar. The unrestrainable delight of the children, revering in food and camaraderie, is infectious. However, in deference to the adults with the odious task of keeping order, I try to hide my smile as I walk on.

Getting to Ms Mann's sixth grade class still requires some conscious thought. It has been explained to me that Ellington used to be two buildings. The tangled, maze-like hallways are as a result of later annexes that combined the two buildings into one. Never having been one with a good sense of direction, I initially spent a good amount of time four years ago roaming the halls a little dazed and confused. After having to find someone to ask for directions three times in three days, I finally drew myself a map with the hope of preserving some appearance of modest intelligence. However, the following day as I was walking, concentrating on my map, my toe caught a ragged edge of carpet, and, much to the delight of everyone (everyone, that is, but the teacher), I nearly fell to my knees in front of a classroom. I quickly gathered myself and went on, but the look of reproach from the teacher remained in my mind. Later, I was introduced to this

teacher. She must have recognized me, because her initially polite but distant expression quickly dissolved into one of gentle amusement. She shook my hand and continued to smile. Ever since that day three years ago, I make it my practice to stop and greet Mrs. Harris on my way to Ms Mann's classroom, though in a less ignominious manner than the first time.

This day I find Mrs. Harris, who also teaches sixth grade, especially busy preparing lesson materials. As I stay to help awhile, she explains that a group of men, organized from local churches, is coming in later to have an anti-drug talk with the boys. Mrs. Harris has always appeared in favor of community involvement, even when it meant having to quickly realign her plans for the day. Yet, academic learning by her pupils holds high priority for her, made obvious by her worried conversation about what she wasn't going to be able to cover that day. I remained a while to help.

Mrs. Harris is the kind of teacher I would have liked to have spent more time observing had my research agenda been different. An African American woman and veteran teacher of 20 years, Mrs. Harris is both tough and tender towards her students. She has an intriguing stylistic manner of communicating to a class, reminiscent of the speak-response style of Black preachers. This stylistic manner of speaking was sometimes the subject of mimicry by students behind her back. But in one informal student group conversation I over-heard, one boy said he didn't think he learned anything in this school till he got in Mrs. Harris' class; the rest of the students in the group agreed.

Demanding as she was of her pupils, Mrs. Harris was also protective. One morning I entered her classroom to hear her privately steaming out loud over a classroom incident involving a substitute teacher managing her class the previous day. Noticing my presence she continued, more loudly: "...I don't even know why I bother to make out a lesson plan, they never go by it...who she think she is...little Miss Muffet sits on her butt all day and then wonders why the children act they way they do...sends out one child after another to the office...but all she does is sit there on her butt..." It took awhile before she calmed down.

"Sitting on one's laurels" certainly is not Mrs. Harris' style. From the few times I have been able to observe her, she seldom ever sat down. Even as students were silently doing seatwork she was always either watching them, or more often, walking slowly up and down the aisles, all the while verbally, in her characteristic style, encouraging or correcting. Ms Mann and I reflected one day on the way Mrs. Harris could almost 'read' students. To us, it seemed as though Mrs. Harris could recognize what she perceived to be undesirable behavior while it was yet at a 'germination' stage and 'nipped' it, so to speak, before it could continue to grow. Such on-going interaction with her pupils may account for the sustained on-task behavior I observed in her students, even from students many thought of as chronically disruptive.

In addition to providing an example of one method of classroom management, Mrs. Harris has played a critical role in expanding my understanding in other ways. First of all, she has helped me understand some of the issues surrounding the education of economically disadvantaged students. Somehow she

could speak frankly about some students and their families, yet without applying the added burden of pejorative judgment that frequently accompanied opinions expressed by others. Second, she has helped me see the need to reconsider some of my idealized theories in light of everyday challenges of the classroom. In retrospect, I realize now how subtle she was. Usually in the context of our morning visits, a topic of conversation would emerge in which she would inquire of my opinion. After I voiced my opinion, she would casually introduce some aspect of the problem not addressed by my more conventional response. In this manner, her contribution did not come in the form of alternative proposals to problems, so much as making me realize the complex nature of problems she daily encountered in the classroom.

As helpful Mrs. Harris was in expanding my knowledge of everyday complexities of the classroom, she was not helpful when it came to my need to observe for students' unofficial literate activity. The discipline and structure she provided in her classroom precluded instances where the students could be observed communicating through the use of notes (a common form of unofficial, vernacular literacy used by girls) in frequencies required to discern patterns of behavior (though the absence of such behavior is, in itself, a notable pattern). She explained to me that she felt that 'notes' were disruptive, both because they distracted students from classroom tasks, and because the content of the notes frequently caused fights on the playground. So, other than our brief visits in the morning prior to school, I spent little time in Mrs. Harris' classroom.

After my visit with Mrs. Harris, I continue to make my way to Ms Mann's room. I pass the third and last of the sixth grade classrooms, and go up a set of stairs before arriving at Ms Mann's classroom at the end of a short hallway. As I enter the room I side-step a bucket placed strategically to catch errant spring rain that leaks slowly from the ceiling. Ms Mann is already present, arranging papers on her desk. She greets me pleasantly as I enter and we engage in small talk for awhile. Today, however, our chat is brief because it is her turn to gather the sixth grade students outside the school and escort them in.

This is my fourth year in Ms Mann's classroom. My first year here was also her first year to teach at Ellington after three years of teaching in other schools. Ms Mann is probably in her early thirties. She is White, a divorcee, and mother of three girls. Her personality could be described as 'easy going, laid back'. We have maintained a good relationship. She has been very helpful in supplying additional background information on children and families, and alerting me to forms of unofficial literacy she has observed through the year. In retrospect, I realize she has altered her stance regarding unofficial literacy in deference to my research goals. In my first year at Ellington, she was actively confiscating artifacts she saw being passed and would briefly berate the students for their unsanctioned literate activity--often a typical teacher response. Now, she seemed more a colleague in my pursuit to understand the nature of the students' literate activity, frequently bringing to my attention to different forms of unofficial literacy events in which she thought I might be interested. She offered me considerable flexibility and freedom in her classroom, even to the extent of examining the students' desks and

notebooks when they weren't present. Though, for ethical reasons, I declined to investigate students' desks and belongings without their permission, I didn't hesitate to sort through the trash can and "trash desk" (an unoccupied desk used by students as an extra trash receptacle), the floor and shelves, and to look at anything of easy view on students' desks. She also turned her class over to me for purposes of administering the survey or a collective interview without evidence of hesitancy or resentment. In my second year at Ellington, when I suggested to the students that they could bring in samples of what they did at home for me to see, Ms Mann offered to set out a box for the material and suggested that I write a reminder on the blackboard. In return, I volunteered to grade papers, sort paper work, help with special projects, and tutor some students. Over-all, our relationship has been satisfying and equitable.

I can hear students making their way to the room now, with an occasional admonition from Ms Mann for them to be quiet. As the children enter, some greet me pleasantly as they hang their coats in lockers at the far end of the room. I have appreciated Ellington students' spontaneous overtures of friendliness over the years. Earlier this year, on my first day, three girls actually walked up to me after hanging up their wraps, shook my hand and introduced themselves to me. Later, one of these girls, Katrina, would be one who liberally shared her creative literate work with me.

Soon after the students enter, the first bell rings at 7:40. At this point in the day, before the final bell, the students are supposed to be engaged in silent reading. However, the main purpose of this activity seems more a transitional

time, giving students time to quiet down and become acclimated to the classroom. Seldom have I actually seen students reading. While some students appear to work on homework, most visit quietly among themselves. Among the movements in the group are students accomplishing their assigned tasks for the week: feeding the class hamster, setting out bird seed on the window ledge, cleaning the blackboard, and changing the day's date. During this time students continue to enter the classroom. Students are not considered late until after the second bell rings.

This is one time of day (among other times) when I can observe girls working on their favorite unofficial, vernacular texts--notes. I have developed the practice that after determining the nature of their writing, I sometimes approach and ask them if I can read it. Now, after having been with them for two months, this request is greeted with conspiratory snickering. But, as always has been the case, asking the first time earlier in the year predictably always evokes nervous looks and furtive movements. I always reassure them that they won't get into trouble and they don't have to let me see it if they don't want. Most of the time the girls have let me read their notes and have allowed me either to reproduce them, or sometimes, even let me keep the originals. Today, I recognize the now familiar collaborative literate activity among three girls and I approach them. But today, after friendly consultation with cohorts, one of the girls declines my request. Okay, I think to myself, maybe later. Indeed, later they do change their minds and allow me to read the note and even reproduce the text.

The television in the room is turned on, soon followed by the sounding of a second bell at 7:50. The school principal appears on the television screen to give

announcements: "...popcorn will be available today...daily behavior awards...no birthdays today, but happy birthday to those on Saturday and Sunday...after sustained reading, conflict managers, [two students], come to the office..." And then she announces, "Students, faculty, and staff stand for the Pledge of Allegiance." Everyone in the classroom stands. We first listen to a student recording of O Beautiful, for Spacious Skies and then all recite the pledge. Silent reading resumes and late comers continue to straggle in until shortly after 8:00, and then for a few minutes Ms Mann has the class practice for upcoming California Achievement Test (CAT).

Soon the students regroup for math. Some students from the other two homeroom classes enter and a few of Ms Mann's leave. Math and reading are grouped by ability, and this year Ms Mann has the highest math group and the lowest reading group. Ms Mann likes to teach math and science, but she admits she does not like reading and writing. As Ms Mann hands out calculators, I hear her tell someone to put a deck of cards away.

Today, students work on long division. I decided three years ago that the most ethical thing for me to do during math was to temporarily cease my role of researcher taking notes and help students with their work. Math seems to generate a lot of frustration for students, especially, it seems to me, among the brightest students who appear to really want to understand. Stephen, an African American student, is a good case in point. Ms Mann had "warned" me about him; when he didn't understand something he would become angry, demand to be helped, and if not quickly helped, would act out. After several days of being absent, Stephen was

present today. I could see him become increasingly agitated--working on his paper, erasing and working again, several times raising his hand or asking questions out loud. I decide it is time to intercede, and I kneel beside him and offer to help. It is difficult to describe Stephen's response without fearing that the description will seem patronizing, but students like Stephen deserve to have their efforts described in order to defuse the stereotype that African American students don't care about academic learning. Even after several days of absence, Stephen wasn't far from being able to do the problem; after reassuring him of this and demonstrating one step he was having difficulty with, he quickly masters the procedure. Though I was with him for only a few minutes, he thanked me twice while I was at his side, and again as he left the room.

Stephen is a type of student with whom Ms Mann seems to have difficulty. I suppose some students are more compatible with a teacher's personality, while others are not. For example, because Ms Mann seems to have an easy-going kind of personality, she appears less inclined to evoke explosive behavior in certain children. Probably because of her showing higher tolerance for certain behavior, an informal system of student exchange has evolved between Mrs. Harris and herself. The exchange has always involved boys; Ms Mann takes a boy from Mrs. Harris--one who continues to react with hostility towards Mrs. Harris's confrontational style--in exchange for a boy Ms Mann has difficulty managing.

It has been difficult for me to identify what aspect of a particular boy's personality Ms Mann finds frustrating, but it seems to have something to do with unrealized ability she can see in a boy, but cannot reach. With Stephen, it was a

combination of having a bright and demanding student, but not having the resources to meet his need. Jerome, a boy from two years ago, is another example that comes to my mind. Like Stephen, Jerome was obviously bright. I also suspected by his demeanor and conservative dress that he was either from a working-class, traditional family or perhaps middle-class. At any rate, from the outset that second spring, Ms Mann made clear that she didn't like Jerome, "he's got a bad attitude." (I later realized what Ms Mann meant: because Jerome was a good student she wanted to use Jerome as a sort of role model for the others; a role Jerome made evident by 'attitude' he wasn't willing to accept.) I was able to make the connection between the 'boy' she was describing and 'Jerome' the following week when I observed the first unofficial literacy event involving boys.

Jerome played a central role in the event I was able to observe two years ago. The occasion of the event was timely; it came just as I was considering switching my research focus due to the fact that I hadn't observed the boys participating in any unofficial literacy. Though girls appeared prolific in their literate activity, I had not as yet observed any comparable activity among the boys. Fearful that a report relating negligible use of literacy among boys would serve only to perpetuate an already poor academic image many have of low-income, African American males, I was beginning to entertain the idea of changing topics. And then, I saw it happen.

They were so slick; little wonder I missed it before. As Ms Mann stood in front of the class presenting a lesson, I noticed what seemed to be a natural shuffling of papers down a row of boys. From back of the room, I sat on the edge

of my seat, literally and figuratively, and watched. One boy would draw and write on something half hidden under books, occasionally looking up as if totally engaged in the lesson; then, perfectly timing "a pass" with Ms Mann turning her back, he would quickly slide the paper to the next boy. Each boy repeated similar movements. But the participants apparently were not chosen randomly, because at one point in the process, one boy's (African American) pass skipped a boy (White) next in line to engage the following boy (African American). At the end of the row, the last boy made some brief contribution to the piece and then pushed it off his desk onto the floor. At this point, I got up and retrieved it from the floor.

Later, during a less structured time of class, I asked the boys about the event I observed (Appendix F). After reassuring all of them that they were not going to get into trouble about it, they gave me brief, hesitant responses to my questions concerning the origin and process of the piece. Jerome relates that he had originally drawn and labeled the piece in pencil at home. He brought it to school and gave it to Dan (who is White), "one of his friends," at the beginning of school. (I had noticed boys congregating around Jerome at that time, but they must have hidden the paper from my view when I approached.) Jerome said that Dan asked him for it. Dan claims he didn't do anything to it (he also claimed he didn't ask for it, that Jerome just gave it to him), but gave it to Leonard (African American). Leonard then wrote the caption and the other two identifiable words in red pen as well as the two side figures in red, then gave it back to Jerome. Jerome then passed the piece on to Richard (African American) who looked at it and colored the ball red (it's likely the red pen was also passed, but I didn't see it).

Richard, swiftly by-passing Willard (White), then passed it to Demitrius (African American) who goes over the word "Ballin'" with black pen. When Demitrius was done with his contribution, he flipped it onto the floor.

After we're done talking I ask Jerome if I can keep the paper, and he says I can. Though I have made an effort to point out in the description above the race of each boy involved, it is with the purpose of demonstrating that communicative activity of this kind, which evidently serves to solidify relationships, is not necessarily ruled entirely by racial group identity. Jerome and Dan would make good case studies of individuals who demonstrate an exceptionally high ability to mediate between multiple groups by virtue of certain personality traits. Jerome, for example, seemed particularly adept to deal with potential threatening behavior by more verbally and physically aggressive boys with self effacing humor. Furthermore, Jerome demonstrated an apparent meta- awareness of this tactic, evidenced by a comment I once heard him say under his breath, that "when those guys hassle me, I just laugh." Encounters which for others would have provoked a physical altercation, Jerome could skillfully defuse.

As a result of observing the above event, I began to hypothesize that the boys who chose this medium of communication did so because they were fledgling artists. But during a collective group interview at the end of the year, I asked the students: who were known as the "artists" among them? Unanimously, they responded: Leonard. I had a hard time believing this; after all, it was Jerome who had initially drawn the figure that became a major communicative event among the

boys. So, I asked them again, rephrasing the question, but they answered the same: just Leonard. This nonrelationship between what I came to refer to as 'obsessive' (nonclinical use of term; used only to describe the extent of drawing activity by a student relative to other students) drawers and preferred modes of communication was to be repeated in the three other schools. First, without exception, the obsessive drawers I observed in all four schools were always boys, regardless of teacher assessed academic abilities of boys. Except for the rural teachers, who said one of their girls also drew well (but I never saw her drawing), all teachers affirmed this gender-related behavior. In fact, Mrs. Harris added that when it came to collaborative group work, girls tended to help the boys when it came to writing while the boys helped the girls when the project required drawing. Secondly, obsessive drawers don't appear necessarily to have communication as their primary purpose; this seemed particularly true in the other three schools, where the boys drew in isolation, and never were seen to offer their work voluntarily to someone. Here, there seems to be a subtle difference in practice at Ellington. Of all the obsessive drawers I observed in the four schools, Ellington boys tended to treat their artistic endeavors differently, in that their drawings seemed to have an attribute of public, rather than just private consumption. Leonard is the best case in point. I could find his sketches and detailed drawings all over: on the floor, in the trash, in the "trash desk." In the other three schools, I was hard pressed to find drawings discarded by obsessive drawers; they tended to save them. In fact, with the middle-class students, I had to ask them to recreate some art work in order to have a sample of their pieces. But Leonard was different. I once noticed Charisse

had a drawing while she sifted through her notebook. Thinking that I had identified a girl drawer, I asked her about it. It turned out to be a drawing that Leonard had done to give to her (they sat next to each other). And she had other drawings by Leonard, as well.

In regard to Ellington's obsessive drawers, I recently read an article in a local newspaper which helped position Ellington's artists in broader context. The article, highlighting the life's work of a local African American male artist, seems to suggests that the attribute of sharing art observed at Ellington may characterize the African American community at large. In the article, the artist was variously described by others as behaving differently from other artists, as not isolating himself, as not being a recluse, as one who opened his home (which remains not far from the school, despite his national renown) regularly to fledgling artists, and as one who works with local disadvantaged children. He is quoted in the article, concerning that isolation is not an option for Black artists, "You won't survive as a people that way...All my work is about me understanding who I am, and whose I am [emphasis, original]" (Jesse, 1997; p. 4c).

So, art is apparently a medium for public consumption in this African American community, in both process and product. However, literate drawings by Ellington boys are used to circumscribe and celebrate relationships between selected boys, and in the context of this intended purpose, 'drawing' is a closely guarded activity. This year, I have made it a particular goal to further explore the relationship between boys and their favored form of unofficial literate text,

pictorial representations--which include the use of script, but which primarily depend on drawing. I needed to know whether the event I observed among Jerome and his friends two years ago was typical or not.

By 8:25 the students have returned to their original homeroom classes, and Ms Mann's class is preparing for a spelling assignment. One of the three girls I observed earlier reading and writing notes approaches me smiling and leaves a paper with me. As she returns to her desk, she smiles and says over her shoulder, "We changed our minds." I look at the piece of paper. It's a note written to one of the girls by a boy. Although they say I can't keep it, they give me permission to reproduce it.

Girls' notes seem to fall into two broad categories: running-notes and letter-notes. The one I presently held in my hand was a letter-note. Contrary to Shuman (1993), who feels that students are simply parodying adults when they assume a more standard style in note writing, I find that a more formal style is common when girls and boys write notes to each other, or when writing an informal communication to adults (Appendix H). This indicates to me that they consider it appropriate to use a more standard form when communicating with someone with whom they have an uncertain relationship, whether it be an adult or a member of the opposite sex. It may be that the use of a more standard form under these conditions diminishes some of the anxiety generated from venturing into the unfamiliar. A letter-note (Appendix G) also appears to be appropriated when the communication to another is not immediate, but must traverse space

and/or time. The criteria, though, still appears to be 'distance', whether it be in terms of relationships or in terms of space and time.

Running-notes, however, differ in form. I've come to call them 'running-notes' because they seem to mirror an on-going conversation between two or more girls. Just as face-to-face verbal communication between friends includes aspects of personal style, so also running-notes are punctuated with the personalities of their authors and qualities which signify group affiliation. The use of dialect is an example. In a case of one running-note I once found written by two White girls, one girl actually parodied an Appalachian dialect within the text of the running-note (Appendix I, at arrow). Consider, for a moment, the writing skill this reveals in a twelve year old: the level of metacognitive awareness of language that translates into commiserate writing skill, enabling written expression which plays off a speaking style. Despite the low opinion teachers seemed to have regarding this particular girl's ability (she was considered a behavior problem), this deliberate play on dialect appeals to me as indication of high language ability.

African American girls use dialect as well in their running-notes. Though some adults may take this as an indication of their lack of working knowledge of Standard English Dialect (Baugh, 1990; regarding use of term), their academic writing does not reflect the same heavy use of dialect and expressions particular to their verbal language use, such as, "Hey, girlfriend...," a common form of salutation heard between good friends as well as found written in their notes to each other. While I'm not claiming that the proficiency of Standard Dialect by these children at Ellington is at a level desired, one none-the-less can recognize by

their language use--one which distinguishes between written forms relative to choosing between dialects--untapped academic potential.

The letter-note I held in my hand now offers a number of interesting indications and contradictions. First, the note was written by someone with considerable writing skill. Second, it was written by a boy and boys at Ellington have stood firm in their assertion that they don't write notes (despite girls saying, with a knowing smile, that they do). Here was hard evidence that boys indeed write notes, at least to girls. Third, the note contained a poem, a love poem no less. I look up and catch the girls, all three smiling, watching me as I read the note. One of the girls, as if she could read my mind, whispers, "My friend wrote the poem and he just copied it." Oh, really.

I copy the note and return the original to them with many thanks, and continue to observe the students from different vantage points in the classroom. Ms Mann, who had been looking over English papers at her desk, gets up in front of the class and begins to talk about common problems she has found with regard to an earlier grammar lesson. While she speaks, I begin to notice purposeful movements among some of the boys. I watch as some item of literate communication circulates among four African American boys. The process of passing the literate communication also includes two African American girls and one White boy, but these students appear to be peripheral to the intended purpose of the communication and are spontaneously recruited only to aid 'the pass'. (Though this continues to intrigue me. The swiftness with which these students pass the item, never whispering or looking around, seems to imply that they know

the nature of the communication and its intended destination.) Finally, Bryon, who apparently began the circulation, gets up and sharpens his pencil. But on his way back to his seat he deftly lifts the piece from one boy's desk as he makes his return. All this time, Ms Mann is talking about prepositions in front of the class. Then, while looking up attentively at his teacher, Bryon hands the item under his desk to the boy next to him. The boy briefly writes something on it, while occasionally glancing up towards the front of the class, and then returns it in like manner to Bryon. When Ms Mann finishes and returns to her desk, I take this time to speak to Bryon about what I just observed. He actually has two 'notes' (for lack of a better term) in his possession. I look at the top note resting in my hand and begin to ask him questions about it. Though he is very polite, he appears uncomfortable with my questions and I find it is difficult to follow the logic of his replies.

Concerning the note with a picture of a dog, I ask, "What is this about?" To which he responds, "Do you want to be in our crew?"

"Is this a club?" I ask.

He looks down and around, and replies, "Uh-huh...I don't know..." shrugging his shoulders.

"Where did this start, Bryon?" I'm referring to the note, but I'm not sure by his reply if we are thinking about the same thing.

"Ms Inland [another sixth grade teacher]...no...Chris at home...the guy not here [at this point he asks a girl if Dontae is here and she responds, no]...well,

Dontae in lunchroom...[he's mumbling, looking down]...ask, and he does a movement with hand..."

The seeming change in the conversation confuses me, but I try to follow along with the flow of his verbal text. "Can you do it?" I ask him, referring to the subject of hand movements.

"No, but Chris can, I seen him..." Clearly I am encroaching on terrain that makes him uncomfortable, but my curiosity over-comes my ethical sense.

I ask him if I can keep the notes. He takes them from my hand, then after briefly looking at them, he returns the one with the picture of the dog.

"I can keep this?" I ask. He shrugs his shoulders apparently indicating that I can.

"Can I at least read the other one?" He complies by handing it back. Though his manner is still very polite, he never makes a move to sit back down, and we both remain standing together as I study the second note.

The second note remains a puzzle to me. I couldn't have been more perplexed faced with trying to make sense out of a message written in Latin. I have to depend on my memory for the following description, because I neither had the time to copy it (students were getting ready for a bathroom break), nor, I believe, would he let me have copied it. The note is written on the same type of small loose-bound, notebook paper as the first. It contains a series a words, all legible and spelled correctly, but strung in a sequence that does not resemble a sentence. Vaguely, it seems to be referring to how to recognize others in their

neighborhood; here and there, script refers to colors and stockings (and there's a small drawing of a striped sock).

I am nearly over-come with curiosity. I want to sit him down and ply him with questions. I glance at him and try to catch his eye, but he seems to avoid looking at me. Stoically he remains standing before me, though his peers are leaving. I look at this child, and for the first time I really see him: still a small boy, yet on the precipice of adolescence and an uncertain manhood, all the more uncertain for him due to his class and ethnic loyalties. He is obviously bright, with a talent of recruiting cooperation and organizing activities on multiple levels. But if statistical probabilities hold true, he could well be dead in a few years. If an early death is his fate, I imagine it will be while still standing his ground, both literally and symbolically. I can feel my chest constrict, a familiar preface to tears forming. More from the desire not to embarrass myself than out of any ethical good sense, I hand back the note, and he leaves. I remain in the classroom, alone.

"Well," I think to myself, " I believe I've found enough evidence for boys' unofficial, vernacular literacy to suit me." I look at Bryon's note (Appendix J) as I carefully put it away in my notebook. It is such a frail artifact, and if not for a timely interception by an interloper, it would have come to the same end of like artifacts--eventually to be discarded. But I know now that the material substance of the piece is only a shallow representation of the value it assumed while it played a symbolic part in the construction and celebration of social life of some children--who briefly held it, individually, and systematically shared it, collectively. Indeed, without seeing the life it assumed when held and shared by

those who gave it life, it most certainly would be devoid of any value and relegated to trash.

Ms Mann has left to escort the class to music and I still remain alone in the classroom. A little more soberly now, I begin to scan the floor and desk tops for unofficial literate artifacts. I find that while boys easily discard pieces containing drawings, girls seldom throw away notes, especially letter-notes, or leave them out in easy view. Most notes I have collected over the four years have either been given to me temporarily by girls to read and copy, or have been given to me by teachers who have confiscated them earlier.

Before Ms Mann returns from escorting the students to music, I also take this time to scan her classroom. It hasn't changed much in four years. Posters on the walls remain the same, as does the basic arrangement of furniture. Books and various math manipulatives are in disarray on the shelves, some learning tools look as if they have never been opened. Soon Ms Mann returns and we begin to discuss some unofficial literacy she has observed.

Boys are still drawing and passing the pieces among themselves, she says. However, there's been a new "phenomenon" she observed earlier this year: the boys are constructing 'Nintendos' out of cardboard. She regrets now, she says, that she didn't think to save one for me. This is indeed unfortunate, because I never did see one during my stay. Girls, however, are still doing or making Slam Books, she reports.

Slam Books (apparently a name coined by children) made their first appearance, or caught our notice, the previous year, in 1994. During that year, this

particular vernacular text was so common among older students that it gained a rather notorious reputation among the teachers, who began to confiscate them right and left. In fact, a Slam Book was the first thing Ms Mann handed me the first day I entered her classroom that year. Considering the bulk of the text, it is easy to understand how teachers were able to observe students passing it, unlike a note which students can deftly move unnoticed in the palms of their hands. A Slam Book resembles a book in that it consists of multiple pages, sometimes numbered, and sometimes stapled down the left side. It frequently has an outside cover that usually has a few designs on it and frequently contains a title, 'Slam Book'. The most consistent pattern in the content of Slam Books (Appendix K) I have seen is a series of questionnaire-like statements, followed by several blanks. The brief statements serve to elicit a response, entered on a line beside a number, from each student who participates. The topic of the questions can vary slightly, probably depending on the degree of sexual precociousness of the originator of the piece, but in general it seems to offer an exercise in the use of various identifying descriptors students use to rank or group themselves and others.

Of all the unofficial texts produced by Ellington six graders, the Slam Book seems the most vernacular, in the strictest sense of this term. Certainly, the locus of use of this particular text in this midwestern area surely resides in this low-income, African American community of children. I base this statement on two contingent observations. First, in 1994 the middle-class students had no knowledge of the text, and among the rural students in 1995, only one girl was somewhat familiar with it (interestingly, she was known as the highest achieving

student in the class). Although in 1995 the Urban-Two students responded higher on the literacy survey to the question on Slam Books, the difference between the two urban schools is small and can be explained by the apparent cyclic nature in which vernacular texts seem to occur, which is the second observation. In each of the four years I was present at Ellington a particular unofficial, vernacular text emerged as the most favorite, if one can assume favoritism by high frequency of its use. In the first year, 1992, it was "True Love," a literate game of romance played by girls that also made use of math (Appendix L) to predict the compatibility of a girl and boy. The following year it was "MASH" (Appendix M, for demonstration of 'M'), another literate game predicting the future. MASH is apparently an acronym, explained to me by students to stand for Marriage, Age, Sex, and Home. While MASH was the most frequently observed text used (other than notes, a 'staple' among unofficial, vernacular texts) in 1993, True Love could still be observed being used. In the Spring of 1994, Slam Books had replaced MASH at Ellington as the most frequently observed text used, though several students still knew about True Love and MASH. Now, in Spring of 1995, Slam Book seems to be on the wane and I'm not certain what text is in the process of replacing it, but it seems to be one called "Love Test" (Appendix N), a game Karlita demonstrated for me last week. But also in 1995, while Slam Book peaks in use among the Urban-Two students with True Love and MASH remaining familiar with several students, True Love peaks in use by rural students, while MASH is familiar to several, and only one student is familiar with Slam Book. Meanwhile, the middle-class students in 1994 had no knowledge of any of these

texts. So, observing the cyclic life span of Slam Books among and between these four groups of six grade students seems to indicate that the birth, or at least the initial appropriation, of Slam Books in this mid-western area to be among the children at Ellington.

At 10:20 Ms Mann leaves to escort the students back to the classroom. They all return a few minutes later. Apparently all did not go well during music, and one boy, Dontae, is very vocal in his protest. Ms Mann hushes him and then adds, "Later, privately. But an apology to Mr. Land is still in order." It takes awhile for the students to settle down.

From 10:40 to 11:35, students take one trial math test after another, commercially published tests designed to help prepare them for the CAT. Apparently grant money for extra resources is contingent upon seeing improvement in test scores, and so there is considerable serious worry on the part of faculty and staff around this time. It's difficult for me to assess how the students feel about this, other than they obviously become weary with all the test-taking practice. But finally, after almost an hour of grilling, they're finished.

Ms Mann asks Michael to hand out Jr. Scholastic to the other students. As they receive it, most students begin sifting through the pages; some boys make humorous remarks to each other about something they see or read. During this time, Mr. Land, the music teacher, enters the room and asks to see four boys out in the hall. In a few minutes, though, they return and Mr. Land announces that the conflict is resolved and he won't require that lunch detention be served.

The students begin to take turns reading out loud from the Jr. Scholastic. In all four years, I have always taken special interest in noting how well students read in class. Though it is clear that some students are more skilled readers than others, I have never observed a nonreader in Ms Mann's class at Ellington. During this time of oral reading there are two students obviously not engaged in the lesson. Larry was writing something, but then wads it up and then puts it into a plastic watch container. (Students seem to do a lot of paper wadding.) Dorian is drawing and is not, in any apparent manner, attending to the subject. Though surely Ms Mann is aware of this inattentive behavior, she doesn't say anything. I'm beginning to suspect Ebony is writing a note. Her Scholastic is open on her desk, but there is a piece of notebook paper showing under it and she is writing on the paper. Her activity is probably obscured from Ms Mann's view, since she leans her left side on her desk and rests her head low on her left hand. Girls hide their note writing from Ms Mann even though Ms Mann doesn't seem ever to intervene. No doubt the covert behavior has been learned earlier in other classrooms. My suspicions are confirmed a little later, when students begin to get ready for lunch and I see Ebony fold the piece of paper in careful series of triangles, a clear indication this is a note. Not that all notes are folded in this style; running-notes especially aren't usually folded in this studied manner (Appendix O). Still, within the genre of unofficial vernacular literacy, it is only notes that assume this characteristic form, and at Ellington only girls do this. (Both boys and girls in the rural and middle-class schools similarly fold notes.) Folding notes is presumably a preparatory process undertaken with the ultimate

purpose of facilitating 'the pass'. The intricate folds transform the unwieldy 8 by 11 note into a single, small triangle with all edges tucked in, including the last corner. The folding technique also probably precludes an easy read if snatched from their hand, as it takes even a practiced hand (as I can attest) to undo all the folds. Although folding notes may have practical logistical purposes, the obvious care given to the folding and some of the design work on the remaining visible space on the small triangle (which sometimes includes artistically enhanced names), suggests that a folded note can also bear the identity of its author. With students at Ellington, a folded note in such a prescribed manner signifies, at the very least, that the author is a girl. I also suspect it signifies relative social status, as the most popular girls fold and design with more flair.

As Ebony leaves with the group for lunch, the note she carries is skillfully hidden from view, no doubt to emerge again somewhere in the hall or lunchroom when the appropriate recipient nears.

After lunch the students have recess. By noon I join Ms Mann and other teachers in the faculty room. I have spent several lunches in the past in the students' lunchroom with the expressed purpose of looking for unofficial literate activity, but I have observed only one instance of it. However, this may not be a fair reflection of the true frequency in which it occurs because, I confess, it may be due to my becoming too distracted with visiting with students. The one literate event I did observe in the spring of 1992, I had been alerted to by Ms Mann of its existence. From her description, I knew to look for a spiral notebook girls were carrying around. As far as anyone knew, there was only the one notebook and it

was being circulated among members of a group of six grade girls. The contents of the notebook was still a mystery, so apparently the notebook didn't rest with one girl for long, otherwise I'm sure it would have been confiscated. I finally spotted it during one lunch period. Three girls were sitting at the next table appearing to study or read something in it. I began craning my neck this way and that while eating in an attempt to get a better view of the contents. One girl spotted my contortions and laughed, then related my show of interest to the other girls. As best I could, I tried to assure them that I wasn't a teacher and I had no interest in their notebook other than curiosity, so--couldn't I please, please, please just see it? I begged a little more, and they finally relented. They let me see one page. What I saw on the page were drawn hands in various positions with what appeared to be brief explanations or labels underneath. They tried to explain to me what it meant--something to do with a rap singer's movements during a song. My confusion was clearly a source of delight to them. Though I know the page held meaning for them, I still have no real clue as to the meaning of the hand gestures. As far as I know, that year was the only year a notebook of this kind made an appearance.

Today I eat a fast lunch with the teachers in the faculty room. Ms Mann has introduced me and my purpose to the teachers a couple of times in four years. Because I find it interesting to listen to their talk, I have never reminded them of who I am for fear this might alter the content of their conversations. There are five teachers present at this time, all White. Very seldom is there an African American staff or faculty member present; when there is, she doesn't sit at the table with the

rest of us. On this occasion, which is typical, teachers are not speaking very highly of the children. Today they express some fear of them, in that when they receive a threat from one of them, they apparently take the threat very seriously. I want to blurt out--but, they're just children! Now, as several times in the past, I struggle to remain quiet. Once I deliberately lagged behind in order to engage a teacher, who had been particularly vocal that day, in further conversation. She had remained to finish eating when the rest had left, so there were only the two of us. With only my presence, her manner of speaking about the children immediately gentled. Apparently it was really the students' parents with whom she found fault, but unfortunately, it was the children who received the edge of her frustration and anger. I have since concluded that this time in the faculty lounge is a time when teachers feel free to vent the worst of their acrimony, and now I find it is a little easier to remain uncontentious.

As we clean up to get ready to leave the faculty lounge, Ms Mann tells me she thinks the best time to give the survey would be when the students come in after recess. By 12:30 all have returned to the classroom. After 20 minutes of physical play, it takes awhile before all the students take their seats and are reasonably quiet. Raishawn asks if she can hand out the surveys and I let her while I get other materials in order. Today they will respond to questions concerning forms of alternate literacy (art), notes, and literate games. By now they are familiar with the procedure; I even over-hear Johnny tell Damion not to turn the page--a request I made to them during the first session. I know the construction of

several questions will generate confusion among the children; hence the requirement that we would approach each question together.

Though in the past I have experimented with different formats, including a more informal group interview, a pencil and paper questionnaire format seems to work best. Having their responses in hard copy form has allowed me to reflect better on their answers and even follow-up on some unclear or seemingly contradictory responses. Still, my greatest challenge in developing the survey was how to communicate through conventional means about activity that was not considered conventional, or at least was not tied directly to academic requirements. But such is the dilemma when one inquires of students about uses of literacy that is not directly tied to school demands, but rather is something that 'lives' in constant flux and emerges naturally as a part of who they really are--a child, a member of a family, a friend, an enemy, a member of one and more communities. It is the kind of literacy that they're unaccustomed to having someone inquire about within a school setting, and even the very familiar can become unrecognizable when framed in an unfamiliar context.

It is gratifying now to see their eagerness to begin. This was not the case, however, at the beginning of our first session. Despite my repeated reassurances that first time, that this was not a test and not anything they would get a grade for, worry and weariness surfaced on their faces. It wasn't until half way through the first section that I could visibly see them relax and begin to take more personal interest in the questions. We have had fun together. And I believe it has been mutually satisfying: for them, it has been a time where the tables have been

turned, and it is this adult who is ignorant and her ignorance is a source of hilarity among them as she attempts to relate what she means by some question on the paper. And for me, it has been a satisfying process, to not only evoke their laughter, but to finally arrive at an understanding, made evident by their widened eyes and exclaimed "Oh's" heard across the room. But most satisfying of all, always to be remembered, has been then to see the heads of these children turn downward, pencil in hand, and with earnest eagerness, write.

They seem to be enjoying the present topic. The art and note questions are relatively straightforward, so there is minimal confusion. But I plan to try a different technique with them today in an effort to come to a better understanding of the boys' version of unofficial literate communication. After they're done and I collect the surveys, I plan to ask them again about notes. I want to be able to later compare their answers on the survey, which are safely private and personal, to verbal and behavioral responses they know will be publicly open to review by their peers. It seems to me that Gumperz (1982/1996) advances a similar technique with the following statement: "Where... direct recording is not possible, actual situations can be recreated through play to gain an insight into the subconscious communicative phenomena. Experience with a wide range of natural situations can serve as the basis for recreating socially realistic experimental conditions where individuals are asked to reenact events...in which they have become familiar in everyday life. ...rhetorical strategies will emerge automatically...as such strategies are so deeply embedded in the participants' practices. Since it is these rhetorical devices that we want to analyze, eliciting such constructed texts does not

necessarily entail a loss of validity" (p. 11). While Gumperz is directly referring to verbal rhetorical devices, I believe the technique can be transferred to the subject of vernacular literacy, as vernacular literacy is a form of literacy that has been bound to everyday concerns and language use.

The last thing I ask them before picking up the surveys concerns the one literate game I've seen played by girls in all four schools. When I first saw it played by two girls at the Middle-class School, I had recognized it as the same game I played in my youth. I asked the two middle-class girls if the game had a name and they had indicated with a shrug of their shoulders that it didn't. I asked them to give it a name. After talking briefly with one another, they said they would call it the "Hand Puzzle" game (Appendix P). This game has been the only text (aside from note-writing) that I've recognized as having a quality of interest to be intergenerationally sustained. It is also the only literate game that both Ellington and Middle-class girls both play. I hold up a sample of the Hand Puzzle game now and the girls immediately recognize it. Everyone seems to be in agreement that it is a game girls make and play, but boys sometimes participate in upon invitation. The girls seem genuinely amused and a little surprised to learn that other girls in other places play the same game, "You mean, country girls do this too?" someone asks.

After taking up the last of the surveys, I tell them that I'd like to ask a few more questions. "I know you've answered some questions about notes on the survey, but I'd like to understand better how you feel about this. I'm going to hold up a few pieces produced by students similar to you, but not you. And I'd like for

you to tell me whether a girl or boy made it. Okay?" I hold up a letter-note in which I've removed all obvious sex identifying words, but I know was written by girl. "A teacher gave this to me after taking it from someone. Did a boy or girl do this?" I ask them.

The students look at it as I hold it up. Though no one asks to see it for its contents, the quick response I hear from all is "girl."

"How do you know that?" I ask. But I don't hear an audible answer, I just see a lot shoulders shrugging as if to indicate they don't know. I pull out the artifact (Appendix F) of a sports figure that was produced by Jerome and his friends two years ago and hold it up.

"Who did this; a boy or girl?" I ask again as I hold it up. I can hear only one quick response from the students: "boy."

"Well, then, let me ask you this." I prepare myself to scan the class quickly in an attempt to compare boys' responses to that of the girls'. "Do boys write notes?" The immediate class response to this, seems to be girls smiling and the boys responding, "no."

I consider for a second how I might approach this differently, then I hold up Jerome's (Appendix F) piece again, explaining that I saw this circulated once among four boys. "If this isn't a note, then what do you call it?" I ask, directing the question towards the boys.

They squint at it and I hear responses from different boys, some shrugging their shoulders, "Ballin." I hear another response, "Boxin."

"But why isn't it considered a note?" I ask.

The response is a little slow in coming, but I can make out, "... cause we don't write notes."

"But why?" I respond. "Why don't boys write notes?" All this time several of the girls are smiling.

Again, the response is a little slow, but finally I can discern among the audible comments from boys, "...it mean they a homo..." The only divergent response at this point comes from Shawn, a White boy, who reacts a little incredulously and mumbles, "...news to me."

Ah...now I think I understand a little better. Later, I would recall Ellington boys' reactions a couple years previously, while viewing a sex education video in class. All the students had been attentive, but at one point a few Ellington boys made some brief disparaging comments after one White boy in the video elaborated on his views during a group discussion occurring in the video. A superficial observation might have resulted in the conclusion that the Ellington boys made such comments from purely racist sentiments. But, almost intuitively, I didn't think then that was the case. I was certain of it now. In the video there were other students, mostly White and probably near the same age of Ellington students, who made good reflective comments concerning the subject without evoking such a response from Ellington boys. But, upon reflection, I recall it was mainly girls who did the talking in the video. The only difference I could discern with the White boy in the video, who had spoken in the same articulate manner as

the girls, was that he--was a boy. The Ellington boys had responded by parodying the White boy's talk by using unmistakable effeminate speech and manner.

Probably some of the gender distinctions made by these boys reflect economic class attitudes. Next to Ellington's African American boys, Urban-Two, also largely comprised of low-income students, ranks second in making such deliberate gender distinctions. Though the Rural group exhibited the strongest gender distinctions when it came to reading and writing preferences (per literacy survey, Appendix E), they did not make gender distinctions when it came to notes, and were more likely to say that literate games (True Love and MASH) were played equally by both girls and boys (rather than just girls). The middle-class group made even fewer gender distinctions in their observed use of literacy, particularly when it came to notes. It appears that the use of, or attitude towards literacy among middle-class students is more androgynous.

Though there were similarities in attitude between Ellington's African American boys and White boys in the Urban-Two school, there were also differences. Minimally, the difference could be thought of as a difference in degree. Fewer Urban-Two boys compared to Ellington boys responded on the survey that boys didn't write notes, and even fewer would admit it during a class questioning. There was also a greater tendency for these two groups of students to perceive literate games as mainly girls' games.

But there appears to be a substantive difference too, though this is more difficult to describe. After one class interview session, Ms Mann allowed me to take three boys aside in order to question them further. First, I picked a White boy

who seemed very vocal in his resentment towards what he felt to be girls' domination over one unofficial literate text--notes. The second boy I picked was an African American boy who seemed willing during the class questioning to offer his opinion. The third boy was also African American. This last boy was very quiet during the earlier session, and sat apart from most of the other boys, but he was one whom I saw respond to a note passed to him earlier by a girl. Together we discussed the topic of notes. Andrew, the White boy, continued his complaint concerning gendered literate behavior, comparing attitudes toward notes to "girls can wear pants, too, but can guys wear dresses?" Though the other two boys didn't take issue with Andrew's observation, their contribution seemed to reflect different concerns, more towards a substantive difference between male and female notes that seemed to indicate rules which they recognized and obeyed. The third boy, Brandon, explained that the only time boys really write notes is when girls write them first. Girls, as he related to me, talk about other people and themselves in their notes, but boys don't. Boys sometimes write to other boys they know they can trust, but even then, the only purpose is to relate information. Though Brandon did most of the talking, Raymond, the second boy, concurred at each point.

Now, after understanding a little better the boys' attitudes toward notes, it appears to me that Ellington boys make an important distinction between sexes, reflected in their use of language in speech as well as in literacy. Language use figures strongly as a social group marker, identifying them as members of an all important group: real men. Should there be one who would infer from this, that

this is an ethnic marker based purely on racial distinctions which serves to dictate exclusive rights to group membership based on race, I can enter the case of Dan as evidence that this is not confined to African American students. Please recall that Dan was the White boy who was claimed as a friend by Jerome, a relationship confirmed through verbal assent and demonstrated by his being included in the boys' literacy event. Dan was the only White boy in my four years at Ellington who appeared completely comfortable socially relating with African American boys. He was friendly, out-going boy who easily engaged in verbal banter (using, it seemed, a variation of Black English) and rough physical play. To all appearances, the other boys felt equally comfortable socializing with him.

After concluding this time of questioning and the last of the survey, we celebrate by consuming the cookies I had brought in this morning. By 1:15 Ms Mann has the students start questions in their science text, and I check out the box I'd left earlier in the Spring for students to leave any work they had created at home for me to look at. I've never gotten many students' literate work this way, but today there are three pieces. One is from Charisse, who has been saying for the last two months that she would bring in a sample of her lyric writing. The other, also a lyric, is by Cheronne. The lyric by Charisse is actually typed, while the other is hand written in pink ink (Appendix Q). I'm not experienced in assessing quality of lyrics, but they seem good to me. When I ask, they both say I can keep them.

The third piece is a poem, offered by Tamika (Appendix R). This particular
e work is intriguing in light of the fact that teachers hold a very low view of literat
ility. I talk to her awhile about it. She says I can copy it, but she wants the her ab

"real" one back. By its worn appearance, I would guess that the poem is something she cherishes and likes to carry around. The poem indicates some skill, but she assures me she wrote it. But while asking a little more about how she wrote it, she shares that she and her brother's girlfriend wrote it together. Her brother's girlfriend is sixteen years old. How did they do this together? I ask. She explains that they took turns making up lines while the other wrote. Later when I look at the poem more closely, I can identify two different hand writing styles which seems to confirm what she described. It occurs to me that the social process by which the poem was created is the kind of cooperative work about which researchers of group collaborative learning would love to have a better understanding.

At 1:48 I am barely able to hear a voice on the intercom announcing bus numbers over the sound of the children getting ready to leave for home. I hear the faint voice on the intercom, repeat twice: "...and don't forget your jacket, it's raining." By 1:55 only two students remain, walkers who wait for the announcement giving them permission to leave.

I go to the office to see if I can get Tamika's poem copied. Mrs. Harris is also there and we begin to talk about some of the kids I had asked her about earlier. As she goes behind the counter to copy Tamika's poem for me, we continue to talk.

"You know, Jonah's father might be a parent you'd find interesting to talk to," she volunteers. I express interest in this and she offers to call Jonah to ask his

permission for me to call his father. A few minutes later she reappears to tell me that Jonah said it was okay for me to call.

When I return to Ms Mann's room to gather my things to leave, I tell her that it looks like I might be able to visit with Jonah's father soon.

"Really?" She responds a little surprised, or perhaps it was with amusement. "That could be interesting...the scuttlebutt in the faculty room is that he's a pimp." She smiles, and then looks down and says more softly, "But, I don't really think he is...even if he does walk around in a fur coat. Really, he's always seemed nice to me, but Jonah's mother--now there's a strange bird for you." How so, I ask. "I don't know. She just never shows any emotion, nothing...but Jonah's dad always seems to have time to come to school for meetings or watch his kids play sports...last year, when Jonah and my daughter were on the same basketball team I don't think he missed a game." She laughs. "Once, when Jonah's older brother got into trouble--Jonah's older brothers and sisters all have different mothers--but, once when his brother got into trouble his dad came in for a meeting with teachers. He and some other teachers discussed that what they thought Raymond needed was a good paddling. He told them to go ahead and then he would do the same...and, he wouldn't tell [administrators] if they wouldn't." Ms Mann laughs again. "And I think they did, too."

Before I leave, I express my thanks again to Ms Mann, and she wishes me luck. As I leave I hoist a bag of 'trash' over my shoulder, Santa Claus style.

When passing the office, I notice Mrs. Harris is still there, and I go back in to say good-bye. Before I leave she tells me that next year the school will

implement Direct Instruction. Though I don't say anything to this, she must have read dismay in my face. She adds, almost consolingly, "You know, we don't have to teach these children how to be creative. They already know how; you know that maybe better than some do." She reaches out and places her hand on a school textbook, and adds, "What they don't know, and what we have to somehow teach them, is this."

With a crate full of research notes and surveys in one arm and a bag of 'trash' in the other, I leave the school building. On the way back to my car, I pass the same school custodian I first crossed paths with this morning. He nods to me, and then returns to his business of caring for flowers.

A few weeks after school is dismissed for the summer, I make arrangements to visit Jonah's father. Despite his careful directions, I realize I'm lost. I reflect on my childhood teachings and warnings about avoiding areas such as this as I drive around trying to retrace my way. I begin to worry about being late when I spot two young adolescents, a boy and a girl, sitting along side an alley way. I feel a little silly, but I stop and ask them if they know where Jonah Brant lives. The boy responds that Jonah is his brother, and he'll show me where he lives. I follow him just a short distance around a corner when he points to a building. It is a veteran's building, just as Jonah's father described, but it was hidden amid larger buildings and set off from main thoroughfares. After parking my car, I enter the door next to where the boy is standing.

As I enter a large room, an older African American man stands and introduces himself as Butch, Jonah's father. After offering me a seat, he introduces the only woman present as his oldest daughter, Jessie. (He also introduces me to another man, but I don't recall his name or relationship.) He then introduces me to the two adolescents; both of whom are his children. The boy's name is Raymond.

The room we are in appears to be a large meeting room or party room. We sit at a round table where apparently they have been playing cards. After briefly asking me about my studies and inquiring what I thought of Ellington, Butch informs me that Jonah isn't here, but went to his mother's earlier to swim. "You know how kids are," he says smiling, and then phones Jonah to make arrangements for his return. It is interesting to listen to some of his banter with Jonah: "Hey, my man...I've got some woman here looking for you...never told me your teacher was so fine...what you up to..." After he hangs up I volunteer to pick up Jonah. Butch and Jessie give me directions to Jonah's mother's house, which is located within another school district. Apparently Jonah primarily lives with his father during the school year, while he splits time between his father and mother during the summer. A little while later I return with Jonah.

Jonah is a strikingly handsome boy, well liked and/or respected by his peers. He has attended Ellington since kindergarten and in the ensuing years has been one of the students teachers perceived to be promising. His behavior, as well, generally has been exemplary, that is until the sixth grade. I had heard Ms Mann mention a couple times his recent displays of anger, bordering on rage. And once he was suspended after getting caught making suggestive thrusting movements

behind Ms Mann's back. Still, as any observer of adolescents can attest, much of this behavior is within limits of typical adolescent behavior, except perhaps for the suspension provoking event which seems a little more sexually precocious.

We join the adults at the table, though Jonah periodically gets up to visit his older brother and sister at the next table and then returns. The purpose of my visit is to get a better idea of Jonah's earlier experience with literacy, as well as better understand what seems to be a natural connection Jonah makes with art and literacy, and the nature of his understanding of gendered writing. I ask Butch whether he read to Jonah when he was little.

"Oh, all the time." He responds. This isn't surprising, given the fact that Jonah does exhibit average proficiency with academic material, an indication that someone in his life has shown interest in his school work. Still, Jonah has been a source of frustration for his teachers, who see in him a student who does not work to his much higher ability.

When I venture into the topic of art, Butch is obviously pleased to talk of his son's accomplishments. He tells Jonah to fetch a photo taken at an awards ceremony. Jonah disappears through a door and then soon returns with the photo. Butch explains that when Jonah was in first grade, the air force base sponsored an art competition with the theme of flight, and they awarded Jonah's picture first place. The photograph pictures a younger Jonah and his father among air force officials.

On the subject of art, Butch seems eager to include his older son, Raymond. In fact, I sense in his inclusion of Raymond in most of the topics of conversation,

a deliberate deference to maximize the importance of the older son. Raymond leaves by the same door and soon returns with various awards his art has won. Butch urges me, several times, to go see one of Raymond's pieces still on view in a display cabinet at one of the local schools. Raymond, his father points out, is really a better drawer than Jonah. He suggests that Raymond draw something for me now. Without comment, Raymond begins to draw on sketching paper.

While the attention of others are diverted to various other things (except Jessie, who appears to watch Jonah and me carefully), I take this time to talk with Jonah. Earlier at Ellington, Jonah had given me a picture to look at which I found out later was actually a collaborative product of his and Antwon's (Appendix S). The picture was primarily composed of drawing, but there were also identifying terms applied. Jonah tried to explain to me the alternating process by which the picture was created, pointing out the parts he had done and the parts by Antwon. Jonah's description reminded me of the process Tamika described when she and her brother's girlfriend composed their poem. I wanted to understand more about the collaborative process.

First, I ask Jonah about his relationship with Antwon. Yes, they "hang together," he tells me, and Antwon lives around here. Do they like to draw together like this outside of school? No, he responds, they just do that when they're in school; at home they just like to hang out or play basketball or something. On this point the two sets of students operate differently; the girls had composed the poem away from school.

The second thing I came prepared to question Jonah about involved a series of student composed work, both script and art, in which I would ask him to identify the sex of the author. With this, I sought to investigate how skilled he was at identifying gendered work. If Ellington boys were indeed sensitive to gendered material on a substantive level (the content of students' unofficial, vernacular literacy) as I suspected they were, Jonah should have little trouble identifying the sex of the various authors, thereby possibly indicating an ethnic difference of particular salience for educators. On the other hand, if Jonah was no more astute at identifying the sex of the authors than the boy I had interviewed earlier from the Urban-Two school, then perhaps the sensitivity Ellington boys had exhibited was a difference only by a matter of degree.

The inquiry included 15 pieces of student generated unofficial, vernacular literacy (though one picture of a face contained no words). The procedure simply involved my placing one piece at a time before Jonah, asking him whether he thought a girl or boy had composed the piece. First of all, whereas the Urban-Two boy, Adam, made five errors, Jonah correctly assesses all 15. There was also a difference between the two boys in the level of interest they exhibited during the task. Adam frequently shrugged his shoulders and responded as if the task was a game of guessing, and he was not able to verbally justify his decision. But Jonah seemed to take on the task with air of seriousness. Of particular interest, was the relative speed with which Jonah could identify some pieces, and his qualifying statements he made when I asked him to explain some of his answers. With regard to one note (which did not begin with "Dear____," an omission that I thought

might fool him), he responds thoughtfully, "...looks like girl's handwriting...it would be, 'What's up Dude' if a boy." To another note, which also had no salutation and which seemed to me rather neutral in content, he responds, "...when a boy writes, he get straight to the point..." And about one drawing of a face without words (drawn by a girl, also something I thought might fool him), and one of the pieces to which he also had responded quickly, he responds, "...how they drew lips...boys don't do mouth."

All this time Jessie has been watching me, while others seem to be involved in other activities or subjects. Though she seemed friendly in the beginning, and remains polite now, she seems to look at me with slight suspicion. I wish I could know what she's thinking. There are many questions I would still like to ask Butch: questions concerning his life in general and his relationship to his children. But I fear the questions would be too intrusive.

It begins to rain in torrents and water leaks swiftly from under a garage door. Butch tells Jonah to get the mop and mop up the rain, and Jonah complies swiftly without verbal response. In the meantime, several different people come and go. I think it's time for me to leave, but I wait a little longer hoping the rain will subside.

I walk over to Raymond who has completed a realistic, detailed picture of a well known athletic shoe. He gives it to me. Jonah, in the mean time has also drawn a shoe, a thong version, also with a famous label. Butch good naturedly teases him about it. "What the hell is this," he asks Jonah while affectionately

pushing him. Jonah looks a little chagrined. I ask both Jonah and Raymond if I can keep the pieces, and both say I can.

The rain has subsided slightly and I gather my things to leave while expressing to all of them many thanks for their help. I have stayed nearly all afternoon, longer than I thought I would. The other man I had been introduced to earlier opens the door for me and I walk quickly in the rain to my car. The man is still at the door as I turn out of the small parking lot. As I turn from one alley onto another, I happen to glance in the rearview mirror. The man is still by the door, but now standing in the rain, watching me as I drive away. For the first time it occurs to me: it was not by chance Butch's children were sitting beside the alley earlier. They had been stationed there to watch for me.

Further Discussion and Conclusion

This descriptive study explored unofficial, vernacular literacy of sixth graders attending Ellington Elementary, a pseudonym for a mid-western, inner-city, Chapter One school. The study reveals some ways students use unofficial literacy to maintain their relationships and mark relational and group boundaries, similar results found by Hubbard (1989) and Power (1992). The study also reveals considerable literate skill of many students in their uses of unofficial literacy which suggests latent ability perhaps not manifested through more conventional means, an observation also made by Gilmore (1983).

The study used multiple approaches in examining unofficial literacy, making triangulation of data possible. Data acquired over the four year research span primarily came from direct observation and informal interviews with students

and teachers within a school setting. The study also made use of a literacy survey designed to better understand students' range of literacy use, conventional as well as alternative forms, outside school. In order to provide scope, the study made use of three other classes of sixth graders in three other schools, stratified by income and/or ethnicity, in order to better understand the social processes and uses of literacy by Ellington children. Depth of study was achieved by studying the focal school, Ellington Elementary, for four consecutive years, from spring of 1992 to spring of 1995. Another source of data was a collection of artifacts given to me by students and teachers, as well as artifacts found lying around and in the trash can. Finally, the study interviewed two students and a parent of each in their homes to better understand the gendered nuances exhibited by Ellington boys which seemed to surface by afore mentioned methods.

Validity of data and findings in this descriptive study is considered high for two reasons. One, as a descriptive study, data and findings represent the same phenomenon--general uses of unofficial literacy among four sets of sixth graders. Second, there is no doubt that the primary research instrument, direct observation, measures (or relates) what it claims to measure (or observe): unofficial literacy of sixth graders. In particular, as the study narrowed to the gendered knowledge of the two boys interviewed in their homes, the study has considerable face validity. Bernard (1989) relates an example of face validity which resembles the testing technique I used with Jonah. In Bernard's example, an anthropologist tested women's knowledge of manioc by planting a field of different varieties and then later asked the women to identify the varieties. The use of this technique--in the

above case, being able to identity manioc--is a valid indicator of cultural competence in a domain (p. 51). By the same token, Jonah showed cultural competence in the domain of specialized gendered literacy.

Fieldwork, due to its depth of study, has the power to generate insights, but it does not have the power to prove (Babbie, 1995). Because traditional fieldwork is low in the area of reliability, generalizability of this study is very limited. But, because the sample was stratified, some reasonable inferences can be made. Descriptive findings in this study, therefore, could be said to be representative of typical youth genre used by six graders within a forty mile radius of Ellington Elementary in this mid western area.

The data narrative served as an additional tool for analysis. But primarily it served as a means of displaying data most salient to the study: the creative use of literacy by children to achieve their social agenda. The data narrative that was constructed sought to provide contextual depth, a necessary precursor to evaluating the findings of the study. The text of the narrative also represents an approximation of the frequency of students' use of unofficial literacy and the various forms and processes in which texts were produced (and reflected in the literacy survey) to be typical of students' at Ellington.

Conceptual Findings

In general, findings seem to reveal great similarity in the use of unofficial literacy between the four diverse groups of students, even to the extent of the use of one intergenerational text, Hand Puzzle, by girls in all four groups. Literacy survey results in particular reveal remarkable similarity in use and attitudes

towards reading and writing, as well as students' memories of early experiences with literacy. Direct observation, as well, revealed many similarities between the four groups, particularly among girls within and between the four schools.

In particular, the present study provides evidence for generative creativity among some of society's academically weaker students, and argues that the texts that these students create indicate considerable untapped language ability and unrecognized literate skill. The statement made by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), that despite the common stereotype, inner-city families they studied were "...active members in a print community in which literacy is used for a wide variety of social, technical, and aesthetic purposes..." (p. 200), applies equally to students at Ellington.

In addition to Street's (1993) concept of vernacular literacy, Daiute (1993) provides a theoretical framework particularly appropriate to the study of unofficial, vernacular literacy among early adolescents. Daiute suggests "youth genre" as a useful referential term and as a concept which recognizes children's daily experiences with literacy within the context of developmental as well as sociocultural factors. Daiute relates that recent developmental research on the impact of context and purpose on children's academic performance which finds that children perform at higher levels of competence when they perceive a salient purpose in the tasks. But even when accommodating context, children exhibit broad differences in their understandings as they mature. For example, Daiute relates that while younger children focus on physical features of script which influence the appearance of the text, older children focus more on conceptual

aspects. This emphasis on conceptual content was manifested in unofficial literacy in all four groups of students. Among the early adolescents I studied at Ellington, dealing with thoughts and relationships characterized much of the content of their unofficial literacy.

To a lesser degree, Hubbard (1989), as well, suggests development as a factor: "When adolescents write, what is the cultural context that surrounds their literacy?" (p. 291; emphasis original). She also states, "Adolescents appear to have a need for this unrecognized involvement with literacy to thrive just below the surface of their classroom" (p. 306). This "need" was very apparent in the sixth graders I observed, in that their unofficial literate behavior persisted despite possible detection by teachers. Due to the pervasive use of unofficial literacy, perhaps this "need" Hubbard refers to is best understood in developmental terms: a point of maturing consciousness, a level of self consciousness in the lifespan of a person, with unofficial literacy reflecting the tension between individual expression and the need for group identity, in this case, age related peers.

Though Daiute (1993) does not address unofficial literacy, but uses the term "youth genre" to recognize the developmental aspect of children's classroom talk and writing, I find the term useful in situating early adolescent's use of unofficial literacy within the larger concept of vernacular literacy by also reflecting on the literate behavior developmentally. In the following quote, I omit Daiute direct reference to "classroom writing" to illustrate the appropriateness of "youth genre" as a means of considering the relationship between adolescence, as a stage of development, and unofficial literacy: "Children have characteristic types of...talk

and writing that could be considered in the same ways as ethnic and domain genres. Children integrate cultural information...in their own terms, with these terms defined, at least in part, by the fact that they are children" (p. 406). Consider also: "Youth genre is kind of speech [and writing] genre, influenced by children's status as children and by their interactions with other children. Children spontaneously construct their...[unofficial texts] based on their own developmental perspectives..." (p. 406). In the remaining discussion, then, I appropriate Daiute term, youth genre, to consider unofficial literacy in light of both developmental and sociocultural factors.

In general, youth genre reflects subjects that most absorb students' interest. When considering students unofficial literacy in a developmental context, one is able to view dominant themes common to all four groups of six graders in this study. These early adolescents' notes display a strong interest in the opposite sex, and sex in general. Within the topic of sex, though, a difference denoting general attitudes towards sex appears to be associated with economic class. While all four groups would be reprimanded by teachers for simply writing notes, Ellington and Urban-Two students experienced double jeopardy in some of the sexual explicit content of their confiscated notes. Notes exhibiting strong sexual content were frequently turned over to the principal, precipitating a call to the parents. I never observed a teacher requesting the intervention of a principal when the contents of a confiscated note were confined to informational or relational content. In considering alternate methods of dealing with a note rife with sexual content, one possibility might be talking to the author of the note privately (which saves face,

an important status preserving device), or using the subject of the note (but preserving author's anonymity) as an opportunity for class discussion, such as the dangers of unprotected sex.

Perhaps teachers could deal with notes with more patience, if they could recognize the relative skill with which these children are communicating. Translating emerging concerns into script or alternative formats manifests an intellectually maturing mind. In this, Ellington and Urban-Two students were no less skilled than the middle-class students. Though we may take issue with certain domains of expertise, we none-the-less need to recognize the abundance of background knowledge and literate skill which comes to bear in their production of unofficial, literate texts.

Another attribute which characterizes youth genre across all four groups of sixth graders is gender difference, both in content and in form. Fleming (1995), as well, found this to be the case among second graders she studied who were primarily white, and from middle-class to upper middle-class families. Since Fleming studied content of academic writing, features described were confined to the use of script for stories. It is particularly interesting, then, to note that the same historically based "gendered metaphors" (p. 590) found in second grade stories are also found in the unofficial writing of sixth graders. Both, stories created by second grade girls and content in notes of sixth grade girls, celebrate relationships and emphasize events near to them and home. Hubbard (1989) too, in her study of "underground culture" of her sixth graders, found that girls' notes

were full of relational concerns. Boys, on the other hand, were fascinated with conflict based afar and constructing a resolution through use of a male hero.

In Fleming's (1993) study of academic gendered writing, boys' themes were fleshed out through the use of script. But the theme of conflict in boys' academic writing is paralleled in boys' unofficial literacy. With youth genre, it can be assumed that children use a medium of their own choosing for communicating. Given a choice, boys choose to draw; this held true in all four schools described in the present study. The prevailing theme of conflict was manifested in the contents of boys drawings, sometimes to a gruesome degree, whether it was basketball players or characters reconstructed from television or comic books (Appendix T).

Drawings or uses of script by boys which were the exceptions to the conflict theme, still appear gendered in content. Particular to this latter group of unofficial texts there appears to be differences in content based on economic class and ethnicity. For example, Hubbard's middle-class boys used literacy to mark territory and to reveal admission of some girls and boys to certain groups based on particular behavioral criteria. One boy, in particular, emerged as a leader of great influence. This boy's use of literacy in structuring informal student social life permeated the entire classroom and tended to dominate the direction of unofficial literacy engaged by the students. While I never observed middle-class six grade boys in my study to use literacy to mark territory in this manner, the content of drawings of some boys, none-the-less revealed their class origins. Again, many of the drawings among boys in the middle-class school did not differ in content from Ellington boys, probably illustrating the pervasive influence of media. However,

there were drawings by middle-class boys which appeared to reflect their material passions (Appendix U): pictures of speed boats, motorcycles, cars. Ellington boys' drawings also seemed to convey their material passions: pictures of sports figures, basketballs, and most interesting--athletic shoes (Appendix V). Ellington's boys' interest in athletic shoes, an interest never found among other sixth grade groups, is puzzling until one considers ethnicity.

Ethnic identity involves group claims to occupying a particular economic niche (DeVos, 1995). Ellington boys' preoccupation with sports related material in their drawings could be seen as an expression of group allegiance in staking claim to the one avenue they know can bring economic success, as well as measure of status. The unofficial writing and drawings of middle-class boys reflect no less a similar aim. Youth genre, then, reflects the developmental stage of adolescents that is common to many, but it also reflects the daily reality particular to its ethnic bearers.

Girls' unofficial literacy in all four schools, on the other hand, never exhibited a similar material fascination in their unofficial texts. Instead, literacy appeared to be used to negotiate status among them in a way different from boys. Though girls' notes were highly relational, some quite conciliatory, their notes were also riddled with concerns about looks, who was invited to whose party, and assessment of various relationships and individuals. In general, girls seem to manifest an over-all ability to be 'bi-ethnic', a feature that Fleming (1995) also mentions.

This 'bi-ethnic' ability could be observed not only in the similarity of form and content of girls notes in all four schools, but also in how Ellington girls socially related to one another. On any given day at Ellington, I could observe a quiet 'separateness' White boys maintained by their aloofness and relative isolation (Dan being the notable exception). However, Ellington girls, African American and White, appeared comfortable relating with one another: sitting together during collaborative work, talking and joking among themselves.

When considered together, typical content of boys' and girls' youth genre as well as social behavior, it is easy to construct a world view largely composed of male and female dichotomies. But, Tannen (1993) introduces the idea of a similarity/difference continuum which seems a useful concept for considering not only gender and ethnic affiliations, but also for understanding apparent pschodynamics reflected in youth genre where literacy is used to express both individualism and group membership. In describing this tension, she comments, "In some ways, we are all the same. But in other ways we are all different. Communication is a double bind in the sense that anything we say [or write] to honor our similarity violates our difference, and anything we say [or write] to honor our difference violates our sameness" (p. 171). Citing Becker and Oka (1974), she adds, "...one deals with the world and the objects and people in it in terms of how close (and I would add, similar) they are to oneself." She further emphasizes the tension created by the similarity/difference continuum, "As a result of these dynamics, similarity is a threat to hierarchy [and hierarchy a threat to similarity]" (p. 171).

Children at Ellington could be observed traversing such a continuum through use of various forms of unofficial literacy. Their unofficial literate behavior seemed to serve at least two purposes, purposes that seem to demonstrate the tension in Tannen's similarity/difference continuum. For example, Hubbard (1989) relates the use of unofficial literacy by individual children in "presenting" a desirable image of themselves to their peers. In the present study, the most apparent way 'presenting' was manifested was by boys' art work, which tended to portray strength and power through illustrations of sports figures and muscled men in war gear (Appendix W). There does not seem to be an equivalent female version of this; the closest expression of 'presenting' among girls appears to be the artistic manner in which some fold and design the outside of their notes. But even here, there seems to be different elements involved that make their notes dissimilar to 'presenting' by boys. The salient difference, I think, belies the essential purpose of girls' notes: an invitation to share. Hubbard seems to affirm this distinction, by referring to "sharing" as the other end of the scale from "presenting."

Ellington boys, however, also displayed the element of sharing when they participated in male, collaborative, unofficial literacy events particular to them (see p.48 and p.55). Though they would protest the labeling of their literate behavior as note passing, their literate behavior, considered within the context of youth genre, merits such an etically imposed category. And, despite boys' unofficial literacy event differing in appearance by virtue of drawing as being the primary medium for communicating, it qualifies for the basic category of notes

based on the same attribute of girls' notes: sharing, on a highly discriminating, relational basis. In this manner, the similarity/difference continuum is traversed by Ellington boys, albeit, very covertly so as not to transgress their projected tough image and male sensibilities. Of further note, Ellington boys were the only group among the four groups of sixth grade boys who exhibited this particular literate behavior which involved collaborative drawing. Here, then, the issue of gendered literacy narrows in focus to an area dense with intersecting properties of class, race, and ethnic attributes.

Apparent perceptions by Ellington African American boys toward gendered literacy could be labeled as 'specialized,' in that they were more skilled in discriminating substantive gendered content and form that was not attended to by the other three groups of boys. This skill at discriminating gendered content was confirmed by the interview with Jonah (pg. 77), and to a lesser degree is reflected in some of their responses to the literacy survey. These specialized perceptions exhibited by Ellington boys may be partly explained by class, in that there were a few White boys in the Urban-Two group who also manifested similar attitudes toward gendered literacy. I found no boys, however, in the rural and middle-class schools who expressed concern and/or interest in discriminating between 'proper' gendered literacy practiced between girls and boys. Therefore, youth genre, as a subcategory of vernacular literacy, appears to: 1) reflect the cognitive and (indirectly) physical development common to most early adolescents; 2) indirectly express the social reality of groups (whether it be gender or ethnic) in literate

form; as well as, more directly 3) represent a personal struggle to negotiate a place within a more immediate social environs.

Implications for Research

This study explored youth genre, as a subcategory of vernacular literacy, that includes texts such as, notes, various literate games (e.g. Slam, MASH, Hand Puzzle), art, and other student initiated reading and writing (such as, diary keeping). Findings in this study suggest that some of the apparent collaborative processes by which some of these texts were created is worthy of additional investigation as to the possibility of facilitating similar processes in the classroom to better achieve school related learning.

This study is limited to unofficial literate behavior of sixth graders, and in particular, literate behavior among low-income students. On a broader level, this study invites investigation of at least two more questions. First: when does this literate behavior first emerge? A study which includes students at different grade levels, economic class, and ethnicity may aid in identifying the critical juncture where writing skill meets social need; an area in which developmental researchers may have an interest. Such an intersection, made evident in created texts of sixth graders, demonstrates a genuine appropriation of academic formulae by children to meet their social agenda in a way particular to them--an area in which social scientists may have an interest. Second, do middle-class, African American boys exhibit the same specialized gendered literacy as Ellington boys? Is the gendered literacy expressed by Ellington boys particular to them as members of racially defined caste, or is it reflective of a more generalized perception by African

Americans, regardless of class? Again, the term youth genre, which reflects simultaneously sociocultural prescription and developmental stage, seems to capture such complex factors at play.

Applied Findings

As data accumulated the last two years of research, I initially thought that youth genre was a literate activity primarily among academically weaker students. But closer analysis of fieldnotes later revealed that the difference was not in frequency of unofficial literate behavior, but the timing of unofficial literacy within the context of a teacher's structure of the classroom. Over-all, the frequency of youth genre was affected by teacher attitude and classroom management style, rather than the academic ability of students. For example, while the rural classroom had a 'whole language' emphasis, the teachers there were the most strict in enforcing a policy of no note-writing. Consequently, the rate of occurrence in the rural school was the lowest of the four schools. On the other hand, in the two schools with the highest rate of occurrence, Ellington and Middle-class, the respective teachers in each responded differently to youth genre, which did not effect the rate of the occurrence, but could be perceived as possibly effecting the efficacy of the learning environment. At Ellington, Ms Mann was relatively permissive, under all observed circumstances, in allowing unofficial literate behavior to proliferate among the students. In the case of the middle-class school, the teacher was very strict with regard to enforcing a 'no note' policy during instructional periods or assignments. However, the structure the middle-class teacher provided in the classroom allowed for unofficial literate activity

during transitional periods. Several times this teacher could be heard saying to the class, when she needed to conference with a student, "work quietly at your seat on something of your choosing...." This verbal 'cue' seemed to signify to the middle-class students that they were free to indulge in various forms of youth genre without fear of reprisal. Probably as a result of these two different management techniques, the main difference in occurring behavior between the two schools with the highest frequency of occurrence, Ellington and Middle-class Schools, was that the academically stronger (relative to students at Ellington) middle-class students, wrote and passed notes only during transitional or low structured times. Students in Ms Mann's class, on the other hand, did not appear to discriminate as to the timing of their unofficial literacy.

The above findings seem to suggest that a careful structuring of classroom activity, as evidenced by the middle-class teacher, may aid in developing a learning environment that is both conducive to conventional learning as well as allows room for unofficial literate activity. Youth genre does seem to be an activity that adolescents need. An absolute prohibition of the activity may only serve to evoke an adversarial environment, thereby increasing student resistance. Whereas, cultivating a "blind eye" towards youth genre during transitional periods may enhance student-teacher partnership--a relationship highly valued in whole-language classrooms.

At this point I am tempted to suggest that unofficial literate texts produced by students could also be a means of expanding students' understanding of genre as well as provide material for mini-lessons on grammar. But considering the

pejorative attitude most teachers take towards notes, I fear this would be misused, resulting in scenarios which, at worst, could serve to intimidate and humiliate students, or, at the very least (providing it is unintentional) violate the privacy of authors. Until teachers' awareness is raised to the inherent value of students' unofficial literacy, its potential value as an educational tool will remain untapped.

The remaining discussion will focus on the topic of the specialized knowledge of gendered youth genre exhibited by Ellington boys, and on Ellington as a Chapter One school. It is on the topic of specialized gendered literacy that the findings of this study can contribute to the present body of knowledge concerning the social construction of literacy, in particular, vernacular literacy. It was not one of the goals of this study to investigate the locus of Ellington's boys' conceptions of proper gendered behavior. Nor is it, I believe, my place to seek to become a part of such scholarly pursuit. I lack, and will always lack, the implicit and facile knowledge that only an insider can have, knowledge that surely must be brought to bear to the subject if it is ever to be understood. DeVos (1995) also relates the need "...for a psychological or emic approach to the question of ethnic identity " (p. 25). But given the fact that the majority of elementary school teachers are female and White, I think it is appropriate to comment on concerns that have emerged over my four years of study at Ellington. Since Ellington provided the larger context in which youth genre of its students was considered, the discussion necessitates the involvement of issues surrounding ethnicity and the teacher's role in providing a emotionally 'safe' environment, as well as issues that influence the efficacy of a learning environment.

Gender and racial equity issues are held in equal importance in teacher education. But a more complicated case is evident on the subject of education of economically disadvantaged children of color. In cases such as Ellington's African American boys, gender, race, class, and ethnicity merge in complex ways. Given that the typical early adolescent male at Ellington exhibits an over-all 'persona' of 'machismo', how does the typical White, female teacher respond? Which issue holds precedence in her mind? It would be convenient if the issues of gender and race could be conjoined as a means to an equitable end, but the complexities of ethnicity disallows simplistic thinking. The whole concept of ethnicity, especially as it pertains to the African American community, revolves around ways a people garner strength in response to a perceived threat to group survival. With regard to ethnicity, Devalle (1992) states, "The cultural 'language' in which a particular ethnic identity is lived and expressed has codes and meanings that are significant only to those who create and share them...[in context of] dominance-subordination, [it is] in preservation of coded spaces that can become zones of resistance" (p. 235). However, Devalle continues, 'reality' is more subtle. A strict dichotomy of dominance-resistance obtains in the mind of social scientist for academic convenience. In reality, there is a dialectical tension between oppression and resistance, perhaps similar to Tannen's (1993) similarity/difference continuum, resulting in potential consensus and coercion. Further, Devalle says, "For those involved...class...is not translated in abstract discourses. Class is lived as a process and handled in cultural terms in many different ways. Ethnicity can be partly seen as one of these ways, particularly, in systems of inequality" (p. 238).

As White females, we can never truly understand the psychocultural underpinnings of Ellington boys' specialized attitudes toward gendered literacy. But, we must accept the assumption that its origin has something to do with group survival for it to be so pervasive. Given this assumption and this study's findings, I offer the following explanation: Ellington boys' heightened sensitivity to gendered literacy probably contributes to their creating a sense of contrastive status which serves to enhance their particular social identity as African American males (DeVos, 1992), thereby garnering strength. Upon consideration of both, historical precedence in which it has been primarily the role of the male to defend their community against outside onslaughts, and, the grim statistics regarding the life-span of young African American men, I propose that the above stated explanation regarding gendered literacy inform our prioritizing of equity issues. Assuming the importance of survival to be preeminent, then, issues of ethnicity should take precedence over issues of gender equity where the education of low-income, African American children is the concern.

How, then, can a teacher of economically disadvantaged students of color best handle issues of equity. Two ways suggest themselves; the first is based on my four years of observation at Ellington, the other is addressed by Delpit (1986, 1988, 1995). The first is very simple: respect the contrastive gender status boys have constructed even though you may not understand it or like it. Tannen (1990, 1993) has suggested in much of her work, that gender differences be viewed more as cultural differences. Most people find 'differences' easier to accept when framed in cultural terms. Accepting ethnic based gender differences may help

minimize conflict that serves no practical or constructive end, at least not where students' welfare is concerned.

Second, there is a need to be sensitive to writing assignments which may evoke resistance in boys and may only serve to harden their reserve against writing in general. Such a problem perhaps could be circumvented by allowing students to choose from among a list of content material, or if the task is one focusing primarily on the process of writing, allow open student choice. Attempting to make the process and content as gender neutral (and perhaps, impersonal) as possible may be helpful; in this way, providing a strong contrast between academics and gendered writing may help assuage any dissonance boys may otherwise experience. However, I am not so naive as to believe that even the greatest sensitivity will be enough to encourage a boy on to a higher level of conventional writing ability. These suggestions only recognize the need to minimize the conflict a boy may feel when engaged in a domain thought to be dominated by female expertise. But when it comes to really understanding what it may take to help him acquire the mastery of conventional writing, as well as how best a teacher can deal with 'machismo' behavior, we need to learn how to rely on those with greater knowledge. It is at this juncture that serious attending to observations shared by Delpit (1986, 1995) is appropriate.

Delpit (1995) relates, "Teachers are in an ideal position...to get all of the issues on the table in order to initiate true dialogue. This can only be done, however, by seeking out those whose perspectives may differ most, by learning to give their words complete attention..." (p. 47). Please recall from the narrative,

the account of taking lunch in the faculty lounge at Ellington. Recall, that usually there were no African American staff or faculty present. I regret now that I never thought to ask Mrs. Harris where she ate lunch; I suspect it was where she felt more comfortable. The nature of conversations I witnessed while in the faculty lounge certainly would have precluded any possibility of White teachers engaging in constructive dialogue with their African American colleagues. It may be that the faculty lounge situation is constitutive of a more pervasive interpersonal climate among staff and faculty. I hate to think of all that must have prefaced the conditions found in the lounge to have provoked such an evident professional chasm. It may be that the absence of African American teachers in the lounge represents their retreat in order to preserve some rational calm for themselves. Delpit relates such defensive measures shared with her by various African American teachers and graduate students: "You can try to talk to them [Whites] and give them examples, but they're so headstrong, they think they know what's best for <u>everybody</u>...They just don't listen well. No, they listen, but they don't <u>hear</u>...So I just try to shut them out so I can hold my temper" (p. 21; emphasis original). Sadly, conditions in Ellington's faculty lounge precludes any opportunity White teachers could have of learning better how to reach and teach Ellington students through the seasoned counsel of their African American colleagues.

What must take place in order for White teachers to recognize the wealth of information held by their African American co-workers? Delpit (1995) offers the following suggestions: "...both sides do need to be able to listen, and I contend

that it is those with the most power...who must take the greater responsibility for initiating the process" (p. 46). Following Delpit's lead, then, it is incumbent of Ellington's White teachers to suggest informal occasions, such as lunch time, as times of dialogue. Though times in the lounge may serve to "let off steam," growing frustration may be better defused in the long run by talking out problems about which their African American partners may have constructive advice. A necessary precursor to this, Delpit relates, is to recognize that people are experts on their own lives, "...they can be the only authentic chroniclers of their own experience" (p. 47). But the necessary preparation for constructive dialogue, Delpit admits, is difficult: "To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment--and that is not easy" (p. 46). It involves the cultivation of a special kind of listening, listening which requires, she relates, both hearts and minds, and "...being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze" (p. 46-47). With regard to the above advice from Delpit, a question surfaces in my mind: are we able to care more for the children at Ellington than we care about our own notions concerning solutions and maintaining our own status?

The discussion above seems to imply that teachers bear the weight of responsibility for children's learning. I would argue that though they indeed bear the burden, they do not bear the responsibility of the ultimate educational outcomes of their students. To use an analogy: teaching a class of 25, middle-class students who are relatively academically successful is similar to nursing on a self-care unit in a hospital; both are relatively undemanding. But the same ratio of

nurse-to-patient would not be seen in an intensive care unit in a fine suburban hospital; to do so, would invite litigation, partly because the health care recipients in this case have the means to address wrongs. But assigning a single teacher to a classroom of 25 economically disadvantaged students is analogous to staffing an intensive care unit with the same nurse-to-patient ratio as a self-care unit. Little wonder then, that after a few years of practice one can find teachers disparaging their low-income students and their families, and emotionally and intellectually distancing colleagues with greater investment in seeing these children succeed.

To address conditions which ultimately effect a learning environment of a school, requires professional involvement at the state and federal levels. But administrators in upper levels of decision-making appear to have evolved methods, perhaps even at a level below conscious intent, of deploying resources in a manner which assures that administration appears innocent of culpability when a program designed for disadvantaged children fails. Ellington is an example. Its designation as a Chapter One school is suppose to aid the garnering of extra funds. In my opinion, students would be better served if funds were used to hire more teachers. The case of Stephen (see p. 47) is just one example. Ogbu (1991) states that minority students exhibit oppositional identity in their response to a school environment because they don't perceive education as a means of status mobility. While this attitude of opposition towards education may be characteristic of older adolescents, it does not yet characterize attitudes observed with Ellington's sixth grade students. The obvious educational implication concerning this, is that the

elementary years may provide the only window of opportunity to invest intense educational attention in these students.

No amount of acquired high-tech equipment and new furniture can substitute the value of teachers. But teachers must be hired in numbers that will really effect change, and this was not the case with Ellington's Chapter One designation. Some extra teachers were hired for "pull out" classes, but any observer in this school could report that this was not nearly enough. The Chapter One program is probably doomed to fail because of a lack of commitment, not necessarily on the part of teachers at the classroom level, but rather by those at state and federal levels of decision making where most monetary resources are acquired and distributed. When the program fails, a summary document will probably report the failure as due to ineptness of teachers and dysfunctional home environments. Worst of all, another failure will only confirm in the minds of many the general ineducable status of these students, making it even more difficult to argue for the value of allocating funds.

Meeting the educational needs of economically disadvantaged children such as those at Ellington, requires sustained, long term economic commitment. Without sustained commitment, the Chapter One designation simply becomes another form of segregation; a way of warehousing perceived undesirables until such a time the judicial system can take over. Archeologists who specialize in studying past and present garbage say our trash reflects a society based on consumerism--the production, use, and subsequent disposal of items thought

expendable. The title of this document, Treasure from Our Trash, may seem distasteful to some. It was chosen, in part, because it reflects how I really spent some of my time at Ellington: collecting trash. But it is also a metaphor framed as a paradox, created to illustrate an apparent societal attitude towards a segment of our population. And in this case, it is the children--as well as their genre of literate texts which gives voice to concerns nearest their hearts--who are apparently expendable. As distasteful, then, as the imagery of the title may seem, it attempts to relate the value, but threatened loss, of the inherent talent and intelligence of these children.

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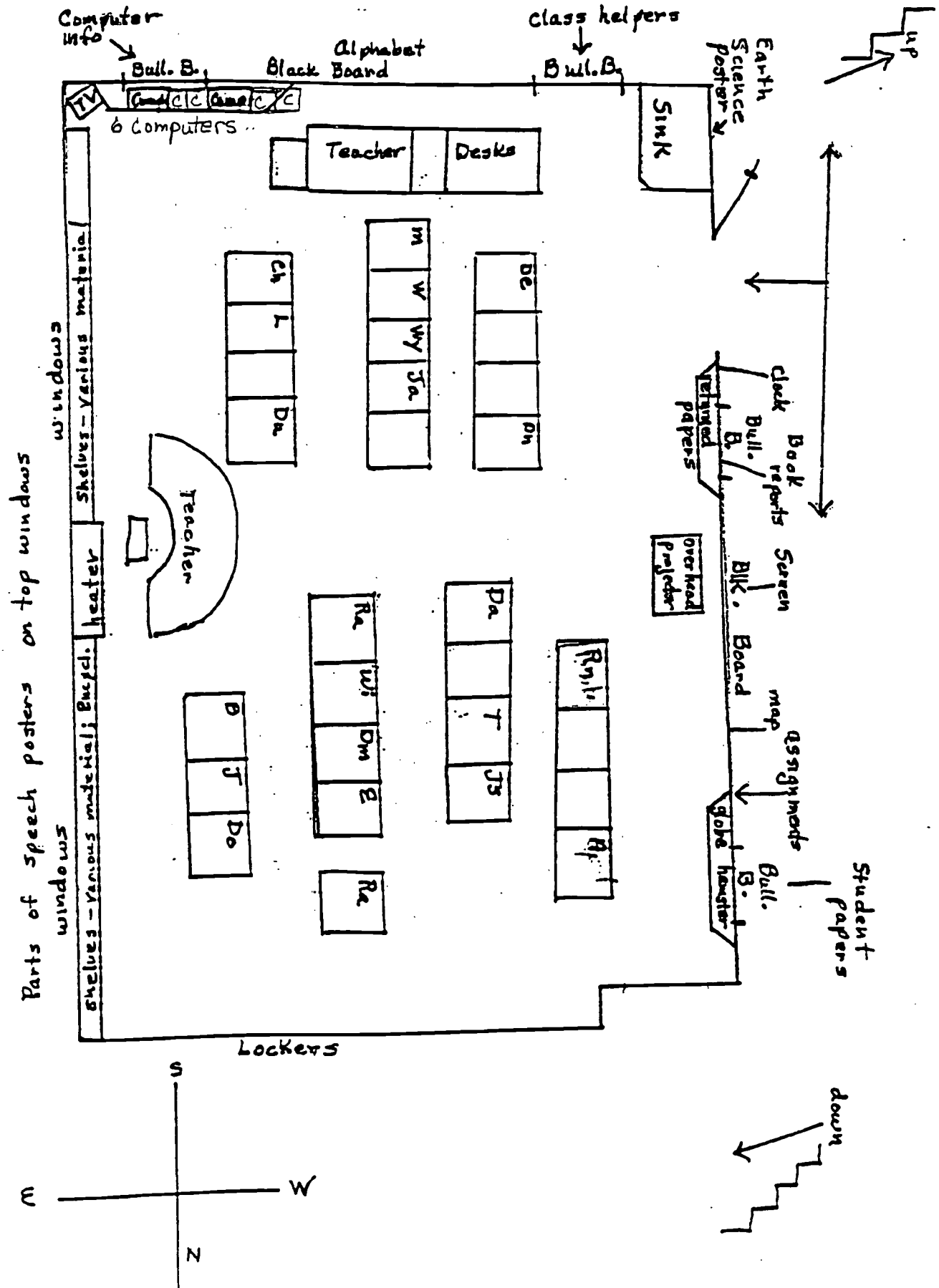
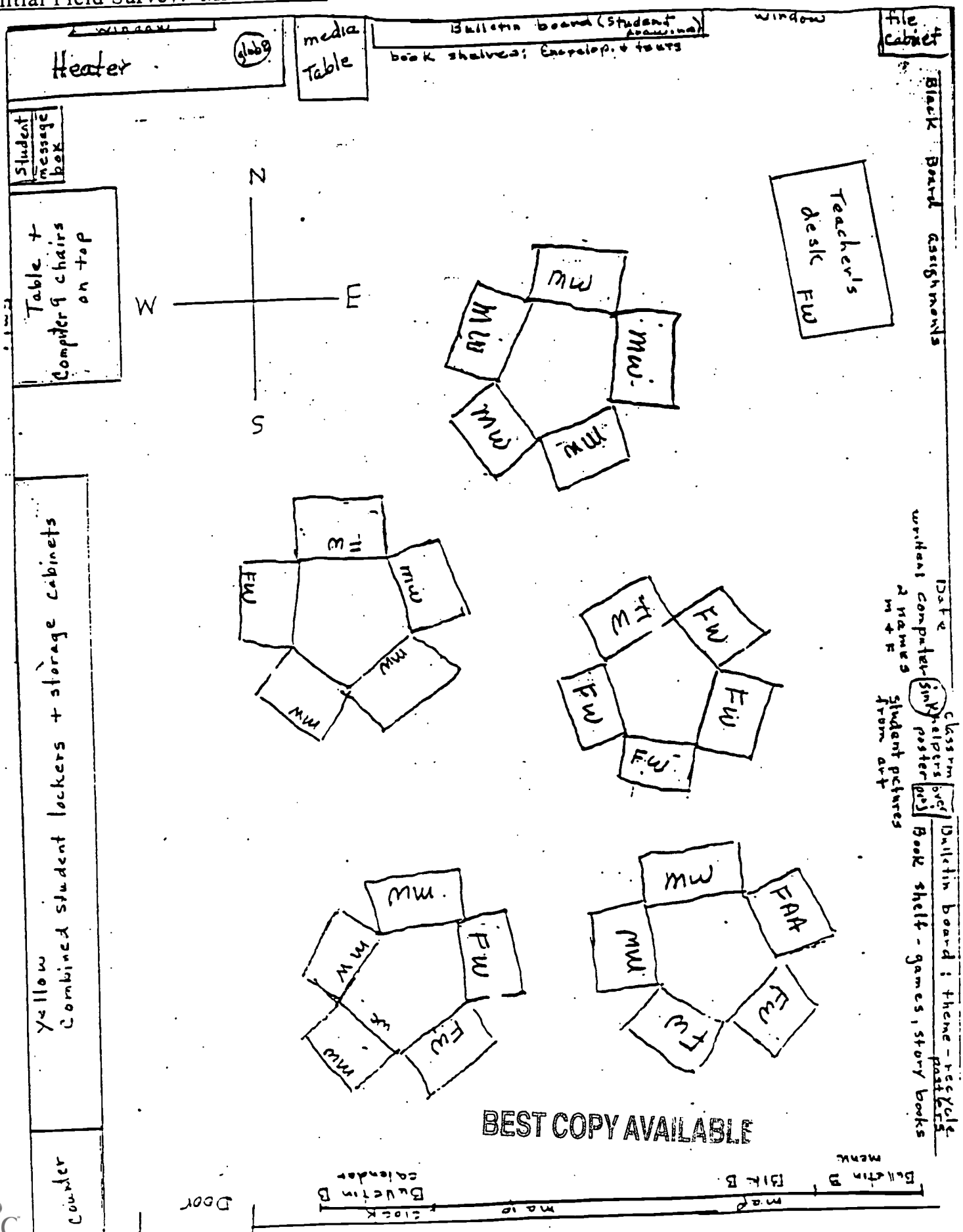
Appendix A

Initial Field Survey: Ellington



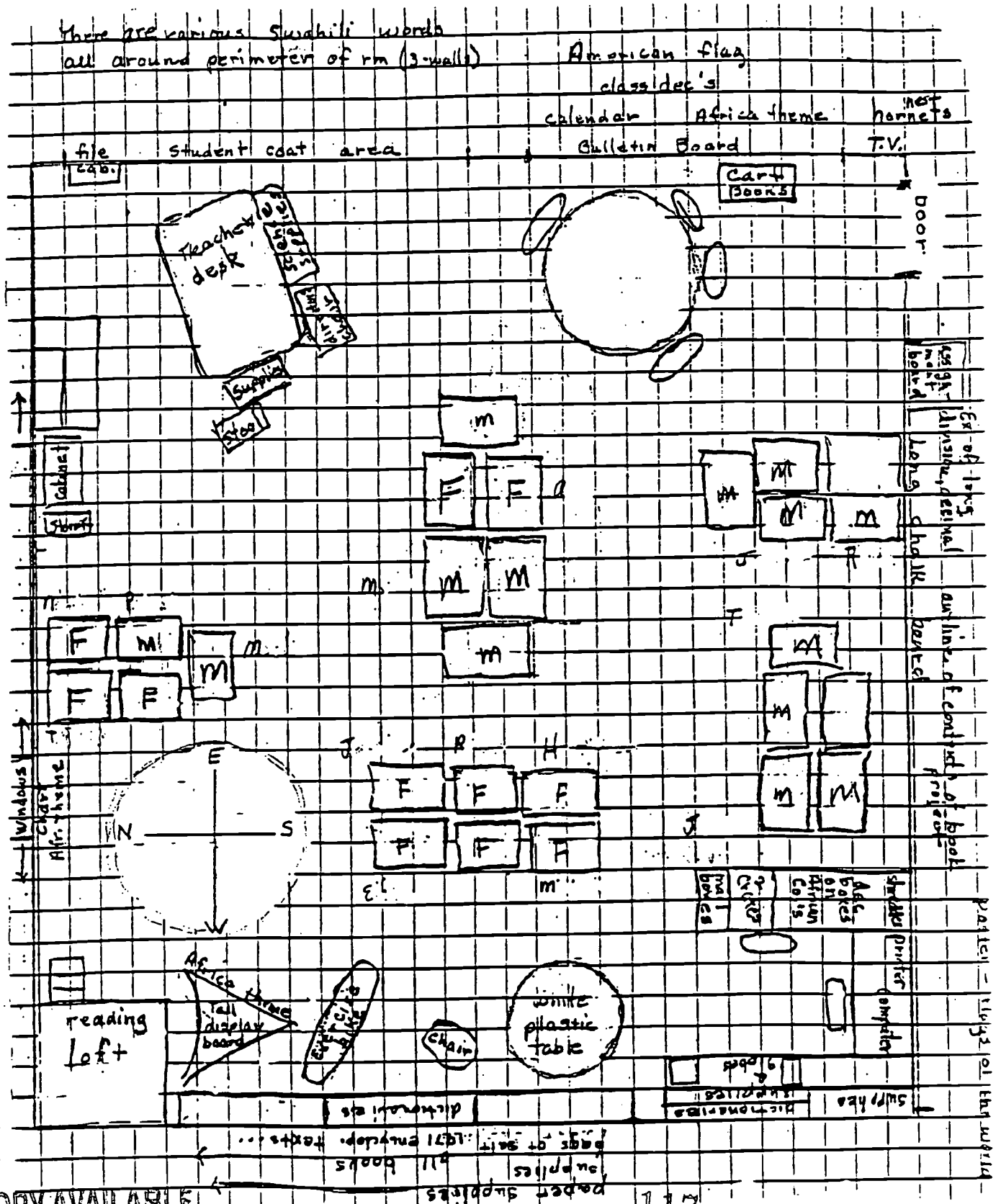
Appendix A

Initial Field Survey: Middle-class



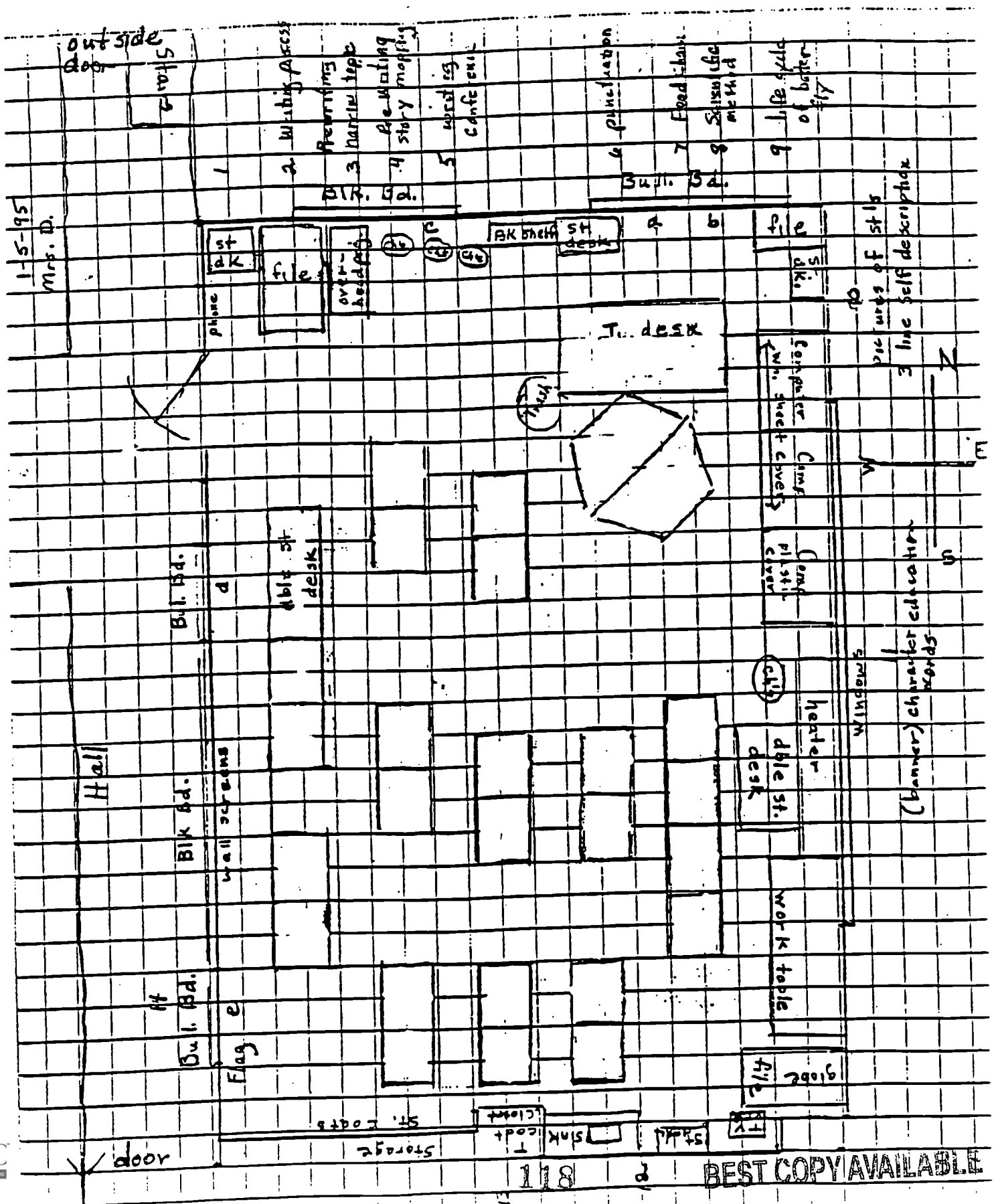
Appendix A

Initial Field Survey: Rural



Appendix A

Initial Field Survey: Urban-Two



Appendix B

Field Note Summary

Data Summary on Urban-One (Ellington), from Spring of Academic Year 1992-93

Total pages of fieldnotes: 45
Total hours in school: 38
Total students observed: 25; female 8 (32%); male 17 (68%); race, African-American 72% and 28% white.

Principal category, Nonacademic Literacy Events (LE), is the number of *direct* observations of nonacademic literacy *events* (frequency/number reflects 'events,' not number of students involved): 20. Total *indirect* evidence of LE (production of an artifact or event unobserved by researcher, but activity is claimed by particular student/s or reported by teacher, and is recorded in fieldnotes): 5. Artifacts found not accounted for in the above: 14. Grand total of LE: 39. Rate of occurrence: 0.97.

Index of Literacy Events Observed

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
01*	4	1-22-93	8:06, CAT practice	M	AA	drawing	share, b to b
				M	AA	with script	among 5 boys
				M	AA		
02	5	1-22	8:15, math assign't teacher intercepts	M	AA	reading	deck of cards teacher intercepts
03	5	1-22	8:20, class chg.(trans)	M	AA	reading	cards again
04	7	1-22	math instruction	M	AA	reading	shows another boy something in Jr. Scholastic
05	8	1-22	11:30 (transitional)	M	AA	unknown	independent, draws or writes then wads up
06	8	1-22	11:35, during instr.	M	AA	drawing	independent
07	8	1-22	11:35, during instr.	M	W	drawing	independent
08	9	1-22	12:30, during instr.	M	AA	drawing	independent
09	9	1-22	12:45, during instr	"		"	
10	9	1-22	12:50, during assign't	"		"	
11	9	1-22	1:45, transitional	M	AA	draws on Eng. paper	independent
12	10	1-29-93	early a.m., transitional	M	AA	unknown	share
				M	AA		boy to boy
13	10	1-29	early a.m., transitional	M	AA	drawing	gives away draw-
				F	AA	(receiver)	ing done day before
14	14	2-5-93	10:30, during conflict management lesson (instr)	M	AA	draw	independent
15	14	2-5	" "	M	W	draw	on desk, indep.
16*	15	2-5	during assignment	M	AA	draw	independent, plus brief interview: he keeps notebook; offers me a drawing
In February, I observe in Ms H.'s class							
17*	28	3-1-93	8:45, math instruction	M	W	2 notes	(indep) reads one and possesses...

Appendix B

3-1-93: Brief, spontaneous survey of class on who writes lyrics at home (7 out of 16, all AA)

Ms Mann's class...

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
18	30	3-1-93	taking math quiz (assign't)	F unknown	AA girls	script	share answers to quiz
19	35	3-5-93	transitional	F	AA	note	"running note" share
20*	43	3-5	English assignment	F (1) M (2) M (3) M	AA AA AA W	script/photo	out of sale catalog (1)passes thru (3) to potential rdr (2) is confiscated by teacher

...another in his pocket, plus brief interview about exchange

Indirect Evidence of Literacy Events

Event	Page	Date	Sex	Race	Type	Context
01	4	1-22-93	M	AA	drawing/script	original creator (at home)
			M	AA		second collaborator
02	5	1-22	F	AA	script "other"?	owner of deck of cards
03*	34	3-5-93	F	W	note(folded)	share; confiscated by teacher
			F	AA	receiver	
04*	34	3-5	F	AA	gives me a typed page of lyrics-one song plus one hand writtin in pink ink	
05*	34	3-5	Teacher relates that students also use computers (2) on their own			

* Indicates there is a corresponding artifact

Data Summary on Middle-class School(4), from Spring of academic year 1993-1994

Total pages of fieldnotes: 44
Total hours in school: 29
Total students observed: 24; female, 12 or 50%; male, 12 or 50%; race, one African American or 4%, and 23 white or 96%.

Principle category--Literacy Events (LE). Total number of *direct* observations of literacy *events* (frequency/number reflects 'events,' not number of students involved): 28
Total *indirect* evidence of LE (artifact viewed or an activity in which a student *voluntarily* states s/he is involved and which is recorded in fieldnotes; creation of artifact or event unobserved by researcher, but activity is claimed by particular student/s or is reported by teacher, and is recorded in fieldnotes): 6. Artifacts not accounted for in the above: 10. Grand total LE: 44. LE rate: 0.66 (per hour).

Appendix B

Index of Literacy Events Observed

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
01	3	5-6-94	early a.m.	M	W	draw + interview	Independent
02	3	"	"	M	W	comic bk+interview	"
03	3	"	"	M	W	read/lyric	indpendent
04	4	"	"	M	W	write/list videos,	"
05	4	"	"	M	W	read/note	3 share, causes teasing from peers
06	4	"	"	F	W	write/list	independent
07	4	"	"	M	W	draw/boat & interview	independent
08	7	"	after am rest-room break	M	W	draw/the end	"
09	14	5-12	early a.m. after buzzer, but while T was helping a student with math	M	W	comic bk + interview	independent
	24-25	"	informal interview				
10	30	"	after lunch & recess while T reads to class he reads from diff. bk	M	W	read	independent
11	30	"	after lunch, T read to	M	W	draw in notebk	independent
12	30	"	class	F	W	note-	2 share
				F	W	exchange	"
13	30	"	" "	F	W	draw	indep
14	30	"	" "	F	W	draw	indep
15	30	"	" "	F	W	write	indep
16*	30	"	" "	F	W	draw (she gives me one)	indep
17*	30	5-12	" "	M	W	write(note) fancy-folded; plus, brief interview	indep later,with Nash's urging, he lets me see it; it's to a girl

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
18	31	5-12	1:10 during paired class reading with Steven	M	W	doodles on desk	indep
"	32	"	1:21; same boy everyone appears focused on story, "Interstellar Pig" but this boy	M	W	doodles on desk	independent
19	37	5-20	early a.m. before class	F	AA	unknown	3 share/group she hid it from me; group laughed
20*	37	"	9:50;after soc. st. lesson T instructs to visit quietly while she grades a test	F & F	W W	game "hand-puzzle" game	2 share
"	39-40	"	"			plus, interview with both	
Survey 5-20-94							
21*	38	"	10:45:during	M	W	coded writing	independent

Appendix B

21...	... spelling test, between ...words, on his paper	...see pg 41 for ex. ...plus, interview

Survey 5-25-94

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
22	48	5-26	early, 8:05	M	W	draw/scene	indep
23	49	"	8:10,before class starts	F	W	draw/face	indep
Survey 5-26-94							
24	51	"	1p.m.,while T reads to class "while they work on something of their choosing"	M	W	draw/car	indep
25	51	"	" but he also listens	M	W	draw/scene	indep
26	51	"	1pm, while T reads to class...	M	W	draw	indep
27	51	"	"	M	W	draw (freq draws boats)	indep
28	51	"	"	F	AA	write(a note, based on folding method)	indep

INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF LITERACY EVENTS

Event	pg	Date	Sex	Race	Context
01*	9	5-6	F & M Plus. brief interview	AA W	She gives me permission to take 4 sheets from her writing folder;made-up Morse code: "not from book," says she and Nash did it
02*	6-7	5-6	M plus. interview	W	he gives sample of drawing, he plans to make it a part of his "writing folder"
03*	10	5-6	M	W	he shows me comic bk: on 12 pgs of stapled coarse, white paper
04	41	5-20	F plus. brief interview	AA	mentions Morse code again while I was talking with Victor about his code
05	39	5-26	M	W	comic bk in school notebk
06	49	5-26	F	AA	shows me a picture of sports figure she's drawn on a notebook cover

* indicates there is a corresponding artifact

Appendix B

Data Summary on Urban-Two, Appal (2), from Spring of academic year 1994-1995

Total pages of fieldnotes: 47
Total hours in school: 36
Total students observed: 29; female 15; male, 14; White, 66%; African American, 34%. Two boys spent all day in separate LD class (not included in classroom observation, but took survey). Three boys were mainstreamed LD

Principle category: Literacy Events (LE). Total number of *direct* observations of literacy *events* (frequency/number reflects 'events,' not number of students involved): 16
Total *indirect* evidence of LE (artifact viewed/found or an activity in which a student *voluntarily* states s/he is involved and is recorded in fieldnotes; creation of artifact or event unobserved by researcher, but activity is claimed by particular student/s or reported by teacher, and is recorded in fieldnotes): 10. Artifacts found that are not accounted for in the above: 9. Grand total: 35. Rate of LE occurrence: 1.02.

Index of Literacy Events Observed

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
01	5	4-3-95	9:20am, spell'g assign't	M	W	comicbk	independent
02	5	4-3-95	9:20am, spell'g assign't	M	W	comicbk	independent
03	6	4-3-95	9:30am, reading	M	AA	drawing	indep.
04	7	4-3-95	9:47am, transition	F	W	note	2 share/initiator
"				M	W	note	share/receiver
05	7	4-3-95	" rdg assign't	F	W	note	share, to boy
06	7-8	4-3-95	9:50am, reading instr.	F	AA	note	indep/writer
	11	4-3-95	10:25, chg class, to hall	"	"	"	receiver unknown takes out into hall
07	11	4-3-95	10:41, rdg assignment rest of class-silent rdg	M	W	unknown	writing event, but form unknown; ...independent
08	12	4-3-95	10:45, reading instr	M	W	draw	independent, Teacher tells him to stop
09	13	4-3-95	11:00, reading instr	F	?	script	focusing on stick-ers,is also writ-ing (unknown)
10	14	4-3-95	11:20, ready for lunch	F	W	script	unknown: on teacher's desk teacher intercepts
11	15	4-3-95	12:10pm, restroom brk	M	W	game	2 share
"		"	"	M	W	tic-tac-to	boy to boy
12	18	4-3-95	about 1pm, writ'g lesson	F	W	script	indep, unknown
13	18-19	"	"	F	W	note	indep, to male
14	22	4-11-95	9am. transitional	M	W	draw	independent
15	22	4-11-95	"	M	W	draw	independent

Appendix B

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
16	23-24	"	9:25am, rdg assign't	F	W	script year bk	indep, teacher intercepts, an alteration follows

4-24-95 *Survey Part I*
4-25-95 *Survey Part II*
5-1-95 *Survey Part III*

Indirect Evidence of Literacy Events

Event	Page	Date	Sex	Race	Context
01	27	4-11-95	M	W	drawing on notebk cover
02	27	4-11-95	M	W	drawing on notebk cover, with label "Thor"
03	28	"	M	W	S. grabs a picture of A.'s and says I wouldn't want to see; is a devil figure on a cross. S. says as A. takes back: "He's really into Satan."
04*	29	"	M	W	during bathrm brk, gives me a picture
05*	29	"	F	AA	gives me 2 notes during same bathrm brk
06*	"	"	"	"	" "
07*	29	"	F	AA	gives me a note during same bathrm brk
08*	36	5-1	F	AA	she lets me keep 2 poems long enough to copy plus interview (another interview later, see her survey)
09*	41	5-16	M	W	gives me 3 drawings and asks for 3 copies
10	41	5-16	M	W	gives me one drawing for me to copy, but wants original back

* Indicates there is a corresponding artifact.

Data Summary on Rural (3), from Spring of Academic Year 1994-95

Total pages of fieldnotes: 59
Total hours in school: 34
Total students observed: 27; female 11 (41%); male 16 (59%); race, 100% white. Was a self contained classroom where regular teacher shared teaching with special education teacher; there were four LD boys.

Principle category, Nonacademic Literacy Events (LE), is the number of *direct* observations of nonacademic literacy *events* (frequency/number reflects 'events,' not number of students involved): 10. Total *indirect* evidence of LE (production of an artifact or event unobserved by researcher, but activity is claimed by particular student/s or reported by teacher and is recorded in fieldnotes): 3. Artifacts found not accounted for in the above: 14. Grand total of LE: 27. Rate of occurrence: 1.26.

Appendix B

Index of Literacy Events Observed

Event	Pg	Date	Time Context	Sex	Race	Type	Social Context
01*	24	2-21-95	1:00, math instr	F	W	other?	to boy, independent (possess)
02*	25	2-21-95	1:45, rdg instr Teacher intercepts	M	W	note	receiver, independent Teacher intercepts
				& F unknown 'ghost writer?'	(9) female	note	'author', but teacher says is A.'s (F) writing
				F	W	note	prob the passer
03*	26	2-21	2:10 end of day, listening to recording	F	W	note	receiver, teacher intercepts
			teacher intercepts	& M	W	note	author,
04	29	3-1-95	8:10, before math (3)	M	W	read collection	boy to boy, teacher confiscates
05	40	4-4-95	7:40, before school	M	W	note	author or receiver is unknown, Indep.
06	40	4-4	7:54, during Ed. TV	2-M	W	read	read, pass magazine
		4-4-95	*Survey Parts I and II*				Slam
07	46	4-7-95	early, before school	F's	W	read	read magazine, but esp.at photo of man
08	46	4-7	early, before school	M's	W	read	sports cards
09	46	4-7	early, before school	F	W	note	receiver/reader,ind.
		4-7-95	*Survey Part III*				
10	51	5-15-95	during reading assign't	M	W	draw	independent (has special permission to draw)

Indirect Evidence of Literacy Events

Event	Page	Date	Sex	Race	Context
01	38	3-1-95	unknown	W	another sixth grade teacher relates she intercepted note in hass, but let student keep was a "good" note--a note to one in hosp.
01*	49	4-7-95	M	W	submitted poem to folder
02*	50	4-7	F	W	submitted a drawing to folder

* indicates there is a corresponding artifact

Appendix C

Literacy Survey:

School: _____

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Name: _____

Age: _____

Address, especially zip code:

_____

About how long have you lived at this address? _____

Relatives (or guardian) living with you at this address; ***circle*** answer/s: mother, father, foster parent/s, step-mother, step-father, brother/s, sister/s, aunt, uncle, cousin/s, grandmother, grandfather, other _____

About how many relatives live within about a 15 minute drive from you _____

Do you now have, or ever had, a nickname? (circle) no or yes. If you can remember, what was or is your nickname: _____

Who all calls you by this nickname? (or, if you can remember, who used to call you by this nickname?)

_____

If you can remember, who first gave you this nickname? _____

_____

Appendix C

Please mark the item/s that best answers the question:

A. Do you remember seeing your parent/s or guardian reading at home?
   (1) no
   (2) yes (if you can remember, what do they read? _____

B. Do you remember someone reading to you when you were younger?
   (1) no
   (2) yes (if you can remember, who? _____

C. Do you know anyone in your family or in your neighborhood who is a storyteller; that is, someone who doesn't usually ***read*** a story, but tells it?
   (1) no
   (2) yes

D. Do you like to read?
   (1) no
   (2) sometimes (if this is your answer, tell me *"when"* _____
   _____
   (3) yes

E. Have you ever read to someone in your family, such as sisters and brothers, or cousins, an adult?
   (1) no
   (2) sometimes (who? _____
   (3) yes (who? _____

F. Have you ever read to someone in your neighborhood?
   Circle one answer: No or Yes

G. Have you ever gone, or do you now presently go to a public library?
   (1) no
   (2) yes (with whom? [parents? friends? alone?] _____

H. Do you read anything at home that is ***not*** homework related?
   (1) no
   (2) sometimes/***not*** everyday (tell me what you read: _____
   _____
   (3) yes, almost everyday (what? _____

Appendix C

I. What kind of reading do you enjoy the most? You may mark as many needed to answer the question:

(1) adventure stories

(2) fantasy/fairy tales

(3) mysteries

(4) sports

(5) romances

(6) news articles

(7) religious literature _____

_____

(8) cook books/recipes

(9) comic books

(10) science

(11) science-fiction

(12) horror stories

(13) true stories

(14) magazines _____

_____

(15) song lyrics on tape or CD container

(16) "How-to" books

(17) other _____

(18) poetry

3

Appendix C

J. Please mark the kind/s of "writing" you do at home or AWAY from school (*or*, it could be something that you might do at school, but only on your own time, and/or is something you don't want the teacher to see)
Please read through entire list before marking your answer/s:

(1a) I write musical lyrics: No or Yes. *If "yes,"* what kind? _____

(1b) *If* you answered "yes" above, please answer the following: Do you save most of them? No or Yes.

(1c) Do you ever share them with someone? No or Yes. *If* yes, with whom? friends? family? other?

(2a) I keep some type of "record keeping notebook" (ex: about baseball, love-life, or videos?) No or Yes

(2b) *If "yes,"* what is usually the topic 1)_____ 2)_____

(2c) Do you give the notebook a name? No or Yes. *If yes*, what is the name? _____

(2d) Do you *prefer* working on your "record notebook" (circle only one) 1) Alone (is private) or 2) With someone else or 3) No preference, *or*, 4) perhaps you keep different kinds of notebooks, one that is private and one which is shared.

(3a) I make up games/codes, sometimes on single pieces of paper, sometimes in a notebook? No or Yes

(3b) *If 'yes'* do you give it a name? No or Yes. *If* "yes," what is it? _____

(3c) What is it about? (please tell me what it is about or you may illustrate on back of page) _____

- (4) I like to write stories at home or away from school. *If* yes, do you save them? No or Yes.
- (5) I like to write poetry. *If* yes, do you save them? No or Yes.
- (6) I keep a diary, or I used to keep a diary
- (7) I have a pen pal, or I used to have a pen pal
- (8) I write letters to relatives
- (9) I send stamped letters to a boyfriend or girlfriend (romantic interest)
- (10) I send stamped letters to a friend (any 'friend' whether same sex or opposite)
- (11) I leave notes to people at home
- (12) I write (or have written) to a manufacturer for information or for a product
- (13) I make lists, like: "things to do today" or, "shopping list"

(14) other _____

(15) I don't remember writing anything at home

K. Do you write "notes"? No or Yes

Appendix C

L. Is there a computer in your home? No or Yes

M. *If* there is a computer in your home (you answered yes to question above), do you use it?
No or Yes *If* you answered "no" to questions "L" and "M," please answer question "N."

N. If you do not have a computer at home, or if you're not allowed to use the computer in your home, do you ever go somewhere mainly to use the computer that is there? No or Yes *If* you answered "yes," *where* do you usually go to use a computer? (example: friend's house, library...?) _____

O. If you use a computer (at home or somewhere else) what do you do on the computer most of the time? (example: the word processor to write, educational programs, or games...?)_____

_____

P. If you play computer games, do you ever have trouble reading the directions or making sense of the game? (circle one) No or Yes or I never use a computer.

Q. Do you pick out the T-shirts or sweatshirts you wear? No or Yes

R. Do you have a favorite 'theme' or slogan or personality you like to wear on your shirts? No or Yes If yes, what is it?_____

S. Do you enjoy gym?
(1) no
(2) yes

T. Do you participate-in or play sports?
(1) no
(2) yes (if so, which ones? _____)

Appendix C

The following questions concern "art" or "drawing" you do on your own; that is, art or drawing *that is not assigned by the school or an adult.* Though these questions concern art or drawing that has not been assigned, it includes drawing you do *both* in-school and drawing done away from school.

U. Do you draw?
- (1) no **(If your answer is this then you're done. Turn survey over please.)**
- (2) seldom=about once a month (If your answer is this then *you're done. Turn survey over please.*)
- (3) yes (If you answer "yes," thoughtfully continue the remaining questions)

V. *Where* do you draw? Mark as many items needed. Read all possible answers before marking.
- (1) at home, where no one can see or watch me
- (2) at home, I don't care who watches
- (3) at school (where and when? _____ _____)
- (4) on the bus
- (5) at a friend's house
- (6) at a relative's house
- (7) other _____

W. Where do you do your *most* drawing or art? (choose only **one** answer)
- (1) at home
- (2) at school
- (3) other _____

X. Circle only **one** answer: Do you *prefer* to draw 1) alone or 2) with someone else **or**: it 3) depends on the project whether I draw alone or with someone? Or: 4) it doesn't matter.

Y. What do you do with your drawings? Mark ***only one answer***:
- (1) I throw *most* of them away
- (2) I give *most* of them away
- (3) I save *most* of them. If so, **how**? in a box or folder or notebook?_____

_____

Where? at home? just any place? or routine place, like drawer, under bed, or closet?___

_____

Z. Do you like to "share" or "show" your art or drawings?
- (1) no (why not? _____)
- (2) yes (if yes, mark any the next items that apply to you)
  - a) I share with anyone who asks to see it
  - b) I share with my family
  - c) I share with close friends/buddies
  - d) I share my drawings with my "girlfriend" or "boyfriend" (you know, someone you're "romantically" interested in)
  - e) other _____

Appendix C

AA. If you share your art, *where* do you most frequently exchange pieces or give away or show your work to someone? Mark any of the items that apply to you:

(1) I don't show my art or very seldom do (once every two months or so, or less)

(2) I show or share my art at school

(3) I show or share my art at home

(4) I show or share my art at someone else's home (whose? _____)

(5) other place _____

BB. Do you like to "give away" your art or drawings?

(1) no (why not? _____)

(2) yes (if yes, to whom do you give it *most* of the time? *mark no more than <u>two</u> items* that apply to you)

a) I give my art away to anyone who says they want it
b) I give my art to family/relatives
c) I give my art to close friends/buddies
d) I give my art away to my "girlfriend" or "boyfriend"
e) other _____

CC. What are your favorite "things" to draw?

(1) Most favorite: _____
(you can draw a typical example of favorite subject on back if you want)

(2) _____, (3) _____

DD. Do your drawings tell a kind of story (even though you may not write any words)?
circle answer: <u>No</u> or <u>Yes</u> or <u>Sometimes</u> *If* you answered "yes," or "sometimes" please answer the next question:

EE. Do you **ever** *write* some kind of story (can be short), or write a "caption" or label on your drawing?

(1) no; I know that my drawing is telling a story, but I don't usually write words on it
(2) for about every 10 to 15 drawings I might write something on one (don't write much)
(3) yes = I write at least a little ***<u>most</u>*** of the time. ***<u>About</u>*** <u>how much do you write with your drawings</u>?
a) I provide some kind of "caption" or labeling on most art pieces
b) I might write a story/explanation for every 5 out of 10 drawings
c) writing a story is an important part of the activity; I write a story for most
(**example**, answer "c" includes drawing/writing activity that looks like a comic strip)

Appendix C

NAME: _____

Just a few more questions...

1) What is/are your parent/guardians' occupation or job?_____

2) About how many times a month do you go to church or some place of worship? Example: if you seldom ever go, or go only for special occasions, answer would be "0 to 1." If you go only Sunday A.M., but you go regularly, answer probably would be "3 to 4 times." But if you go Wednesdays, and Sunday morning or/and evening services, answer could be "6 or more" times. ***Circle*** the range of times that you think is true for you:

0 to 1 times a month 3 to 4 times a month 6 or more times a month

3) Do boys write notes? NO or YES

4) Do boys fold their notes in a special way? NO or YES

EX: after folding, notes look like a triangle: 

5) If a boy "writes notes," does this mean something particular about this boy? NO or YES

(IF YES, what does it mean? _____)

6) Have you ever used a computer to write a "note" to a friend (mainly to pass at school)?

7) You were one of the students who said they knew someone in their family or community who was a story teller. If you can, could you give me some information about them?

Name of story teller: _____
or circle: "I don't remember their name"

Do they live around here? (circle **one**) No or Yes or I don't know

Thank You!!

Appendix D

Example of Field Notes:

pizza. After a while, I sit in a chair between them and decide to listen quietly to their conversation. I wish I could have recorded it. The boys take turns, without being interrupted by the other, telling about one illegal activity after another, or some fight they've been in. Sometimes the story is about one of their relatives, but the activity is the same. The stories [and my impression is that they are true] are told in macho manner. At one point the media center director overhears their conversation and comes over to add some adult perspective, that is, she asks them questions (why...what if...) that demands some self reflection. They respond in what I would think is a positive manner: they don't talk in an angry manner, but they seem to listen to her. J says he doesn't hang around with those cousins any more cause they get into bad trouble (it was one of his cousins that was the main killer during the holiday killing spree). DO responds in a similar way, he says he doesn't do what he used to do when he lived in the housing project across town. When the media center director leaves I begin to talk with them a little. J reveals that he's got a beeper in his coat pocket. I remind him

Appendix E

Survey Results, by Percents:

"Yes" Responses to Survey Questions by School, Sex and Race:

Abreviations: 1= School Total Students in subgroupings: (percents are "yes" responses within particular sub-group) 2= M/AA: male, African American 3= F/AA: female, African American 4= M/Wh: male, White 5= F/Wh: female, White	Schools: student sex/race: total (99) student response	Ellington 1. school total, n=24 2. M/AA n=11 3. F/AA n=8-9 4. M/Wh n=1 5. F/Wh n=3	Urban-Two 1. school total n=27 2. M/AA n=1 3. F/AA n=8 4. M/Wh n=12 5. F/Wh n=6	Rural 1. school total, n=27 2. 3. 4. M/Wh n=16 5. F/Wh n=11	Middleclass 1. school total, n=19-21 2. 3. F/AA n=1 4. M/Wh n=10 5. F/Wh n=8-10
Questions: Section Ia		Percent:	Percent:	Percent:	Percent:
1. remember seeing your parents reading?	94%				
2. remember someone reading to you when you were younger?	85%	1. 83% 2. 82 3. 78 4. 100 5. 100	1. 78% 2. 100 3. 100 4. 58 5. 83	1. 93% 2. 3. 4. 100 5. 82	----
3. Do you like to read?	84%				
4. ever read to someone in your family?	80%	1. 96% 2. 100 3. 100 4. 100 5. 67	1. 78% 2. 100 3. 88 4. 58 5. 100	1. 67% 2. 3. 4. 63 5. 73	----
5. ever read to someone in your neighborhood?	27%				
6. read anything at home not homework related?	91%				
READING MOST ENJOYED: Section Ib					
7. adventure stories	65%	1. 63% 2. 64 3. 67 4. 0 5. 67	1. 59% 2. 100 3. 38 4. 67 5. 67	1. 74% 2. 3. 4. 63 5. 91	1. 63% 2. 3. 0 4. 60 5. 75

Appendix E

1= School Total
2= M/AA=male, Afr-American
3= F/AA=female, Afr-American
4= M/Wh=male, White
5= F/Wh=female, White

	Total	Ellington:	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
8. fantasy/fairy tales	47%	1. 54%	1. 44%	1. 52%	1. 37%
		2. 45	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 78	3. 50	3.	3. 100
		4. 0	4. 33	4. 38	4. 40
		5. 33	5. 50	5. 73	5. 38
9. mysteries	59%	1. 50%	1. 70%	1. 52%	1. 63%
		2. 36	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 56	3. 88	3.	3. 0
		4. 100	4. 67	4. 38	4. 60
		5. 67	5. 67	5. 73	5. 75
10. sports	49%	1. 63%	1. 52%	1. 48%	1. 26%
		2. 91	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 33	3. 38	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 67	4. 75	4. 30
		5. 67	5. 33	5. 9	5. 25
11. romances	26%	1. 13%	1. 26%	1. 26%	1. 42%
		2. 9	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 22	3. 50	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 8	4. 0	4. 20
		5. 0	5. 33	5. 64	5. 75
12. news articles	20%				
13. religious literature	12%	1. 4%	1. 22%	1. 7%	1. 16%
		2. 0	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 11	3. 0	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 33	4. 6	4. 20
		5. 0	5. 17	5. 9	5. 13
14. cook books/recipes	15%				
15. comic books	54%	1. 54%	1. 70%	1. 37%	
		2. 64	2. 100	2.	
		3. 44	3. 63	3.	-----
		4. 100	4. 83	4. 44	
		5. 33	5. 50	5. 27	

Appendix E

Questions...	Total	Ellington:	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
16. science-fiction	31%	1. 25%	1. 30%	1. 33%	1. 37%
		2. 27	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 22	3. 25	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 50	4. 44	4. 60
		5. 33	5. 0	5. 18	5. 13
17. horror stories	67%	1. 63%	1. 74%	1. 59%	1. 74%
		2. 64	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 67	3. 63	3.	3. 0
		4. 100	4. 83	4. 44	4. 80
		5. 33	5. 83	5. 82	5. 75
18. true stories	46%	1. 50%	1. 48%	1. 48%	1. 37%
		2. 27	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 78	3. 75	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 25	4. 19	4. 30
		5. 67	5. 67	5. 91	5. 50
19. magazines	55%	1. 58%	1. 59%	1. 41%	1. 63%
		2. 55	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 56	3. 63	3.	3. 100
		4. 100	4. 75	4. 38	4. 90
		5. 67	5. 33	5. 45	5. 25
20. song lyrics on tape or CD	54%	1. 58%	1. 67%	1. 37%	
containers		2. 36	2. 100	2.	
		3. 67	3. 75	3.	-----
		4. 100	4. 75	4. 25	
		5. 100	5. 33	5. 55	
21. "how-to books"	17%				
22. poetry	47%	1. 46%	1. 56%	1. 37%	1. 5%
		2. 18	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 78	3. 100	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 33	4. 31	4. 10
		5. 67	5. 33	5. 45	5. 0
TYPES OF WRITING: Section II					
23. I write musical lyrics	33%	1. 50%	1. 19%	1. 44%	1. 16%
		2. 55	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 56	3. 38	3.	3. 0

Appendix E

Questions...	Student Total:	Ellington	Urban-2	Rural	Middleclass
23...		4. 100	4. 17	4. 38	4. 20
		5. 0	5. 0	5. 55	5. 13
24. keep some type of record keeping notebook	54%	1. 71%	1. 78%	1. 41%	1. 19%
		2. 55	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 89	3. 100	3.	3. 100
		4. 100	4. 75	4. 38	4. 30
		5. 67	5. 50	5. 45	5. 0
25. I make up games or codes...	53%	1. 54%	1. 78%	1. 22%	1. 57%
		2. 36	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 78	3. 100	3.	3. 100
		4. 0	4. 58	4. 13	4. 50
		5. 67	5. 83	5. 36	5. 60
26. I like to write stories...away from school...	34%	1. 67%	1. 30%	1. 19%	1. 26%
		2. 55	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 89	3. 50	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 17	4. 19	4. 30
		5. 67	5. 33	5. 18	5. 25
27. I like to write poetry.	30%	1. 29%	1. 41%	1. 30%	1. 16%
		2. 18	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 56	3. 63	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 33	4. 13	4. 10
		5. 0	5. 33	5. 55	5. 25
28. I keep a diary or used to...	43%	1. 58%	1. 56%	1. 37%	1. 16%
		2. 9	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 100	3. 88	3.	3. 100
		4. 100	4. 25	4. 6	4. 0
		5. 100	5. 83	5. 82	5. 25
29. I have a pen pal or used to...	46%	1. 71%	1. 37%	1. 44%	1. 32%
		2. 73	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 67	3. 38	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 42	4. 25	4. 40
		5. 100	5. 17	5. 73	5. 25
30. I write letters to relatives	51%	1. 63%	1. 70%	1. 33%	1. 33%
		2. 45	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 78	3. 75	3.	3. 100

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...30		4. 0	4. 67	4. 25	4. 20
		5. 100	5. 67	5. 45	5. 40
Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
31. send stamped letters to girl or boyfriend (romantic interest)	28%	1. 33%	1. 19%	1. 11%	1. 57%
		2. 45	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 33	3. 13	3.	3. 100
		4. 0	4. 25	4 13	4. 70
		5. 0	5. 0	5. 9	5. 40
32. send stamped letter to a friend...	47%	1. 38%	1. 48%	1. 26%	1. 81%
		2. 18	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 56	3. 50	3.	3. 100
		4. 0	4. 50	4. 25	4. 70
		5. 67	5. 33	5. 27	5. 90
33. I leave notes for people at home.	55%	1. 75%	1. 63%	1. 33%	1. 48%
		2. 64	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 89	3. 67	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 58	4. 13	4. 50
		5. 100	5. 50	5. 64	5. 50
34. write to a manufacturer for info...	19%	1. 29%	1. 19%	1. 11%	1. 19%
		2. 18	2. 0	2.	2.
		3. 44	3. 0	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 25	4. 13	4. 20
		5. 33	5. 33	5. 9	5. 20
35. make lists. like: things to do...	38%	1. 63%	1. 41%	1. 11%	1. 43%
		2. 55	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 100	3. 63	3.	3. 0
		4. 0	4. 25	4. 0	4. 10
		5. 0	5. 33	5. 27	5. 80
36. I don't remember writing anything at home	3%				
37. Do you write notes (to pass...)?	81%	1. 96%	1. 78%	1. 70%	
		2. 91	2. 100	2.	
		3. 100	3. 88	3.	----
		4. 100	4. 58	4. 56	
		5. 100	5. 100	5. 91	
38. Is there a computer in your home?	39%	1. 33%	1. 37%	1. 44%	1. 43%
		2. 36	2. 0	2.	2.

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...38		3. 44 4. 0 5. 0	3. 50 4. 33 5. 33	3. 4. 56 5. 27	3. 0 4. 60 5. 30
Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
39. if so, do you use it?	80%	1. 75% 2. 75 3. 75 4.---- 5.----	1. 90% 2. ---- 3. 75 4. 100 5. 100	1. 85% 2. 3. 4. 80 5. 100	1. 67% 2. 3. ---- 4. 83 5. 33
40. if not, do you go somewhere mainly to use computer there?	49%	1. 54% 2. 55 3. 44 4. 0 5. 100	1. 48% 2. 100 3. 38 4. 50 5. 50	1. 41% 2. 3. 4. 31 5. 55	1. 52% 2. 3. 100 4. 30 5. 70
Section III					
41.(following not a part of survey: students observed drawing a lot)	18%	1. 22% 2. 50 3. 0 4. 0 5. 0	1. 20% 2. 0 3. 0 4. 50 5. 0	1. 11% 2. 3. 4. 13 5. 9	1. 19% 2. 3. 0 4. 40 5. 0
42. (survey question) Do you draw a lot?	72%	1. 58% 2. 73 3. 67 4. 0 5. 0	1. 59% 2. 100 3. 50 4. 75 5. 33	1. 89% 2. 3. 4. 94 5. 82	1. 81% 2. 3. 100 4. 90 5. 70
43. drawings tell a story, even though may not write words? ("sometimes" plus "yes")	(29% of all) 62% of those who draw:	1. 64% 2. 63 3. 67 4.---- 5.----	1. 81% 2. 0 3. 75 4. 100 5. 50	1. 42% 2. 3. 4. 40 5. 44	1. 71% 2. 3. 100 4. 67 5. 71
44. Do boys write notes?	88%	yes: 1. 70% 2. 45 3. 88 4. 100 5. 100	yes: 1. 81% 2. 0 3. 100 4. 75 5. 83	yes: 1. 100% 2. 3. 4. 100 5. 100	yes: 1. 100% 2. 3. 100 4. 100 5. 100

Appendix E

Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
44...		sometimes:	sometimes		
		2. 18	2. 100		
		no:			
		2. 36			
		3. 13			
45. Do boys ever write notes to other boys?	56%	yes:	yes:	yes:	
		1. 22%	1. 48%	1. 56%	
		2. 9	2. 100	2.	
		3. 38	3. 63	3.	
		4. 0	4. 42	4. 50	
		5. 33	5. 50	5. 64	
		sometimes:	sometimes	sometime	
		2. 27	2. 0	4. 13	
		3. ----	3. ----	5. 9	----
		4. 0	4. 8	no:	
		5. 67	5. 17	4. 38	
		no:	no:	5. 0	
		2. 64	2. 100	unknown:	
		3. 63	3. 38	5. 27	
		4. 100	4. 50		
		5. 0	5. 17		
46. ever used a computer to write a note?	24%				
47. know how to play "Mash?"	64%	1. 91%	1. 81%	1. 74%	1. 0
		2. 91	2. 100	2.	2.
		3. 88	3. 88	3.	3. 0
		4. 100	4. 67	4. 75	4. 0
		5. 100	5. 100	5. 73	5. 0
48. mostly girls or boys play Mash?	87%	1. 86%	1. 91%	1. 85%	
		2. 90	2. 0	2.	
		3. 71	3. 100	3.	----
		4. 100	4. 88	4. 75	
		5. 100	5. 100	5. 100	
49. know how to do "Slambook?"	22%	1. 39%	1. 48%	1. 4%	1. 0
		2. 27	2. 100	2.	2.

Appendix E

Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
...49		3. 50 4. 100 5. 33	3. 63 4. 25 5. 67	3. 4. 0 5. 9	3. 0 4. 0 5. 0
50. mostly girls or boys do Slambook?	70% (girls)				
51. know how to play "True Love?"	32%	1. 26% 2. 27 3. 25 4. 100 5. 0	1. 48% 2. 0 3. 75 4. 17 5. 83	1. 44% 2. 3. 4. 19 5. 82	1. 0 2. 3. 0 4. 0 5. 0
52. mostly girls or boys (or unknown) play True Love?	48%(girls) 29% (unknwn)	girls: 1. 63% 2. 50 3. 67 4. 100 5. ---- both: 2. 50 3. 33	girls: 1. 69% 2. ---- 3. 50 4. 100 5. 80 both: 2. ---- 3. 50	girls: 1. 10% 2. 3. 4. ---- 5. 13	----
53. know how to play "Popsicle" game?	20%	1. 26% 2. 27 3. 25 4. 100 5. 0	1. 33% 2. 100 3. 50 4. 8 5. 50	1. 0 2. 3. 4. 0 5. 0	----

Appendix E

Survey Results, by Frequencies:

"Yes" Responses to Survey Questions by School, Sex, and Race:

Abreviations:
1= School Total
2= M/AA: male, Afr-American
3= F/AA: female, Afr-American
4= M/Wh: male, White
5= F/Wh: female, White

Schools:	Ellington	Urban-Two	Rural	Middleclass
	1. school total, n=24	1. school total, n=27	1. school total, n=27	1. school total, n=19-21
student sex/race:	2. M/AA n=11 3. F/AA n=8-9 4. M/Wh n=1 5. F/Wh n=3	2. M/AA n=1 3. F/AA n=8 4. M/Wh n=12 5. F/Wh n=6	2. 3. 4. M/Wh n=16 5. F/Wh n=11	2. 3. F/AA n=1 4. M/Wh n=10 5. F/Wh n=8-10

Questions: Section Ia	total (99) student response	frequency:	frequency:	frequency	frequency:
1. remember seeing your parents reading?	94%				
2. remember someone reading to you when you were younger?	85%	1.20/24 2.9/11 3.7/9 4.1/1 5.3/3	1.21/27 2.1/1 3.8/8 4.7/12 5.5/6	1.25/27 2. 3. 4.16/16 5.9/11	----
3. Do you like to read?	84%				
4. ever read to someone in your family?	80%	1.23/24 2.11/11 3.9/9 4.1/1 5.2/3	1.21/27 2.1/1 3.7/8 4.7/12 5.6/6	1.18/27 2. 3. 4.10/16 5.8/11	----
5. ever read to someone in your neighborhood?	27%				
6. read anything at home not homework related?	91%				
READING MOST ENJOYED: Section Ib					
7. adventure stories	65%	1.15/24 2.7/11 3.6/9 4.0/1 5.2/3	1.16/27 2.1/1 3.3/8 4.8/12 5.4/6	1.20/27 2. 3. 4.10/16 5.10/11	1.12/19 2. 3.0/1 4.6/10 5.6/8

Appendix E

1= School Total
2= M/AA=male, Afr-American
3= F/AA=female, Afr-American
4= M/Wh=male, White
5= F/Wh=female, White

	Total	Ellington	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
8. fantasy/fairy tales	47%	1.13/24	1.12/27	1.14/27	1.7/19
		2.5/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.7/9	3.4/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.4/12	4.6/16	4.4/10
		5.1/3	5.3/6	5.8/11	5.3/8
9. mysteries	59%	1.12/24	1.19/27	1.14/27	1.12/19
		2.4/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.5/9	3.7/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.1/1	4.8/12	4.6/16	4.6/10
		5.2/3	5.4/6	5.8/11	5.6/8
10. sports	49%	1.15/24	1.14/27	1.13/27	1.5/19
		2.10/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.3/9	3.3/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.8/12	4.12/16	4.3/10
		5.2/3	5.2/6	5.1/11	5.2/8
11. romances	26%	1.3/24	1.7/27	1.7/27	1.8/19
		2.1/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.2/9	3.4/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.1/12	4.0/16	4.2/10
		5.0/3	5.2/6	5.7/11	5.6/8
12. news articles	20%				
13. religious literature	12%	1.1/24	1.6/27	1.2/27	1.3/19
		2.0/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.1/9	3.0/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.4/12	4.1/16	4.2/10
		5.0/3	5.1/6	5.1/11	5.1/8
14. cook books/recipes	15%				
15. comic books	54%	1.13/24	1.19/27	1.10/27	
		2.7/11	2.1/1	2.	
		3.4/9	3.5/8	3.	-----
		4.1/1	4.10/12	4.7/16	
		5.1/3	5.3/6	5.3/11	

Appendix E

Questions...	Total	Ellington	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
16. science-fiction	31%	1.6/24	1.8/27	1.9/27	1.7/19
		2.3/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.2/9	3.2/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.6/12	4.7/16	4.6/10
		5.1/3	5.0/6	5.2/11	5.1/8
17. horror stories	67%	1.15/24	1.20/27	1.16/27	1.14/19
		2.7/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.6/9	3.5/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.1/1	4.10/12	4.7/16	4.8/10
		5.1/3	5.5/6	5.9/11	5.6/8
18. true stories	46%	1.12/24	1.13/27	1.13/27	1.7/19
		2.3/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.7/9	3.6/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.3/12	4.3/16	4.3/10
		5.2/3	5.4/6	5.10/11	5.4/8
19. magazines	55%	1.14/24	1.16/27	1.11/27	1.12/19
		2.6/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.5/9	3.5/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.1/1	4.9/12	4.6/16	4.9/10
		5.2/3	5.2/6	5.5/11	5.2/8
20. song lyrics on tape or CD	54%	1.14/24	1.18/27	1.10/27	
containers		2.4/11	2.1/1	2.	
		3.6/9	3.6/8	3.	-----
		4.1/1	4.9/12	4.4/16	
		5.3/3	5.2/6	5.6/11	
21. "how-to books"	17%				
22. poetry	47%	1.11/24	1.15/27	1.10/27	1.1/19
		2.2/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.7/9	3.8/8	3.	3.
		4.0/1	4.4/12	4.5/16	4.1/10
		5.2/3	5.2/6	5.5/11	5.
TYPES OF WRITING: Section II					
	33%	1.12/24	1.5/27	1.12/27	1.3/19
23. I write musical lyrics		2.6/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.5/9	3.3/8	3.	3.0/1

Appendix E

Questions...	Student Total:	Ellington	Urban-2	Rural	Middleclass
23...		4.1/1	4.2/12	4.6/16	4.2/10
		5.0/3	5.0/6	5.6/11	5.1/8
24. keep some type of record keeping notebook	54%	1.17/24	1.21/27	1.11/27	1.4/21
		2.6/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.8/9	3.8/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.1/1	4.9/12	4.6/16	4.3/10
		5.2/3	5.3/6	5.5/11	5.0/10
25. I make up games or codes...	53%	1.13/24	1.21/27	1.6/27	1.12/21
		2.4/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.7/9	3.8/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.0/1	4.7/12	4.2/16	4.5/10
		5.2/3	5.5/6	5.4/11	5.6/10
26. I like to write stories...away from school...	34%	1.16/24	1.8/27	1.5/27	1.5/19
		2.6/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.8/9	3.4/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.2/12	4.3/16	4.3/10
		5.2/3	5.2/6	5.2/11	5.2/8
27. I like to write poetry.	30%	1.7/24	1.11/27	1.8/27	1.3/19
		2.2/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.5/9	3.5/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.4/12	4.2/16	4.1/10
		5.0/3	5.2/6	5.6/11	5.2/8
28. I keep a diary or used to...	43%	1.14/24	1.15/27	1.10/27	1.3/19
		2.1/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.9/9	3.7/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.1/1	4.3/12	4.1/16	4.0/10
		5.3/3	5.5/6	5.9/11	5.2/8
29. I have a pen pal or used to...	46%	1.17/24	1.10/27	1.12/27	1.6/19
		2.8/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.6/9	3.3/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.5/12	4.4/16	4.4/10
		5.3/3	5.1/6	5.8/11	5.2/8
30. I write letters to relatives	51%	1.15/24	1.19/27	1.9/27	1.7/21
		2.5/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.7/9	3.6/8	3.	3.1/1

Appendix E

30...		4.0/1	4.8/12	4.4/16	4.2/10
		5.3/3	5.4/6	5.5/11	5.4/10
Questions...	Total:	Ellington	Urban II	Rural	Middleclass
31. send stamped letters to girl or	28%	1.8/24	1.5/27	1.3/27	1.12/21
boyfriend (romantic interest)		2.5/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.3/9	3.1/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.0/1	4.3/12	4 2/16	4.7/10
		5.0/3	5.0/6	5.1/11	5.4/10
32. send stamped letter to a	47%	1.9/24	1.13/27	1.7/27	1.17/21
friend...		2.2/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.5/9	3.4/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.0/1	4.6/12	4.4/16	4.7/10
		5.2/3	5.2/6	5.3/11	5.9/10
33. I leave notes for people at	55%	1.18/24	1.17/27	1.9/27	1.10/21
home.		2.7/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.8/9	3.6/9	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.7/12	4.2/16	4.5/10
		5.3/3	5.3/6	5.7/11	5.5/10
34. write to a manufacturer for	19%	1.7/24	1.5/27	1.3/27	1.4/21
info...		2.2/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.4/9	3.0/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.3/12	4.2/16	4.2/10
		5.1/3	5.2/6	5.1/11	5.2/10
35. make lists. like: things to	38%	1.15/24	1.11/27	1.3/27	1.9/21
do...		2.6/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.9/9	3.5/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.3/12	4.0/16	4.1/10
		5.0/3	5.2/6	5.3/11	5.8/10
36. I don't remember writing anything at home	3%				
		1.23/24	1.21/27	1.19/27	
37. Do you write notes (to pass...)?	81%	2.10/11	2.1/1	2.	
		3.9/9	3.7/8	3.	----
		4.1/1	4.7/12	4.9/16	
		5.3/3	5.6/6	5.10/11	
38. Is there a computer in your	39%	1.8/24	1.10/27	1.12/27	1.9/21
home?		2.4/11	2.0/1	2.	2.

Appendix E

38...		3.4/9	3.4/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.4/12	4.9/16	4.6/10
		5.0/3	5.2/6	5.3/11	5.3/10
Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
39. <u>if so</u>, do you use it?	80%	1.6/8	1.9/10	1.11/13	1.6/9
		2.3/4	2. ----	2.	2.
		3.3/4	3.3/4	3.	3. ----
		4.----	4.4/4	4.8/10	4.5/6
		5.----	5.2/2	5.3/3	5.1/3
40. <u>if not</u>, do you go somewhere mainly to use computer there?	49%	1.13/24	1.13/27	1.11/27	1.11/21
		2.6/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.4/9	3.3/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.0/1	4.6/12	4.5/16	4.3/10
		5.3/3	5.3/6	5.6/11	5.7/10
Section III					
41.(following not a part of survey: students observed drawing a lot)	18%	1.5/23	1.5/25	1.3/27	1.4/21
		2.5/10	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.0/9	3.0/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.0/1	4.5/10	4.2/16	4.4/10
		5.0/3	5.0/6	5.1/11	5.0/10
42. (survey question) Do you draw a lot?	72%	1.14/24	1.16/27	1.24/27	1.17/21
		2.8/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.6/9	3.4/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.0/1	4.9/12	4.15/16	4.9/10
		5.0/3	5.2/6	5.9/11	5.7/10
43. drawings tell a story, even though may not write words?	(29% of all) 62% of those who draw:	1.9/14	1.13/16	1.10/24	1.12/17
		2.5/8	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.4/6	3.3/4	3.	3.1/1
("sometimes" plus "yes")		4.----	4.9/9	4.6/15	4.6/9
		5.----	5.1/2	5.4/9	5.5/7
44. Do boys write notes?	88%	<u>yes</u>:	<u>yes</u>:	<u>yes</u>:	<u>yes:</u>
		1.16/23	1.22/27	1.27/27	1. 21/21
		2.5/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.7/8	3.8/8	3.	3.1/1
		4.1/1	4.9/12	4.16/16	4.10/10
		5.3/3	5.5/6	5.11/11	5.10/10

Appendix E

Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
44...		**sometimes:**	**sometimes**		
		2.2/11	2.1/1		
		no:			
		2.4/11			
		3.1/8			
45. Do boys ever write notes to other boys?	56%	**yes:**	**yes:**	**yes:**	
		1.5/23	1.13/27	1.15/27	
		2.1/11	2.1/1	2.	
		3.3/8	3.5/8	3.	
		4.0/1	4.5/12	4.8/16	
		5.1/3	5.3/6	5.7/11	
		sometimes:	**sometimes**	**sometime**	
		2.3/11	2.0/1	4.2/16	
		3. ----	3. ----	5.1/11	----
		4.0/1	4.1/12	**no:**	
		5.2/3	5.1/6	4.6/16	
		no:	**no:**	5.0/11	
		2.7/11	2.1/1	**unknown:**	
		3.5/8	3.3/8	5.3/11	
		4.1/1	4.6/12		
		5.0/3	5.1/6		
46. ever used a computer to write a note?	24%				
47. know how to play "Mash?"	64%	1.21/23	1.22/27	1.20/27	1.0/21
		2.10/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.7/8	3.7/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.1/1	4.8/12	4.12/16	4.0/10
		5.3/3	5.6/6	5.8/11	5.0/10
48. mostly girls or boys play Mash?	87%	1.18/21	1.20/22	1.17/20	
		2.9/10	2.0/1	2.	
		3.5/7	3.7/7	3.	----
		4.1/1	4.7/8	4.9/12	
		5.3/3	5.6/6	5.8/8	
49. know how to do "Slambook?"	22%	1.9/23	1.13/27	1.1/27	1.0/21
		2.3/11	2.1/1	2.	2.
		3.4/8	3.5/8	3.	3.0/1

Appendix E

49...		4.1/1	4.3/12	4.0/16	4.0/10
		5.1/3	5.4/6	5.1/11	5.0/8
Questions...	Total:	Ellington:	Urban II:	Rural:	Middleclass
50. mostly girls or boys do Slambook?	70% (girls)				
51. know how to play "True Love?"	32%	1.6/23	1.13/27	1.12/27	1.0/21
		2.3/11	2.0/1	2.	2.
		3.2/8	3.6/8	3.	3.0/1
		4.1/1	4.2/12	4.3/16	4.0/10
		5.0/3	5.5/6	5.9/11	5.0/8
52. mostly girls or boys (or unknown) play True Love?	48%(girls)	**girls**:	**girls**:	1.1/10	
	29% (unknwn)	1.5/8	1.9/13	2.	
		2.2/4	2. ----	3.	
		3.2/3	3.3/6	4. ----	
		4.1/1	4.2/2	5.1/8	----
		5. ----	5.4/5		
		both:	**both**:		
		2.2/4	2. ----		
		3.1/3	3.3/6		
53. know how to play "Popsicle" game?	20%	1.6/23	1.9/27	1.0/27	
		2.3/11	2.1/1	2.	
		3.2/8	3.4/8	3.	----
		4.1/1	4.1/12	4.0/16	
		5.0/3	5.3/6	5.0/11	

Appendix F

First Boy Literacy Event:

Appendix G

Example of Letter-note:

4-3-95

Dear Richard

What Up?

Do you really like me now no I think you do very much and I hope you feel the same about me like a real man why use if I don't Answer you when you ask me something that mean I am scared Do you playing on me if you going to tell me now. I really like you so what up now. Remember when I said if you live next door what will you do I no what. I will come over your house and get to no you when I will start kissing I was going to kiss you yesterday but my mom came I can not wait to Friday to see you You are my man 4-2 95, and 96.

Love Woman
Latrisha

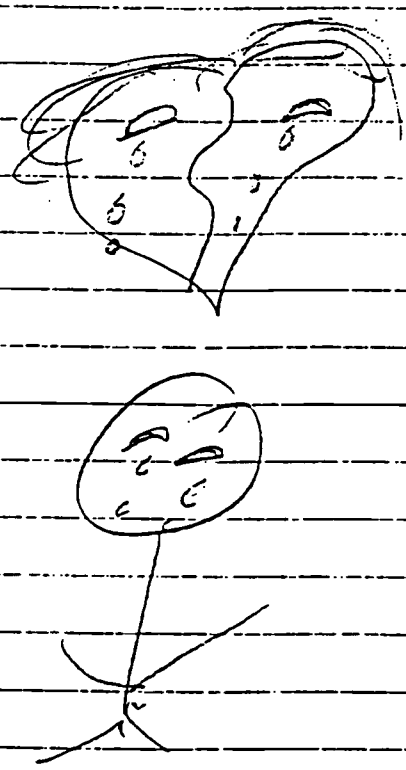
(please give back)

Appendix H

Note to Adult:

Donna I'm sorry to hear about the death of your mom and I know you are going through a lot of trouble now but god loves and loves yo just take your time and think about things and get it togethe I will always love you

love
Dacita



Appendix I

Running-note Parodying Dialect:

Sarah

Do you still want to be friends
I am your friend Who all
is coming to your party who
did you invite. W/B/S

Your friends
together
forever

→ Well all the
Hillfillus" Say
"I, um um, I Sa
think I am or can or Oh whatever!" (Ha/Ha)

WHO ALL Did you invite
to your Birthday Party
And who is coming.
I will try. I am W/B/S

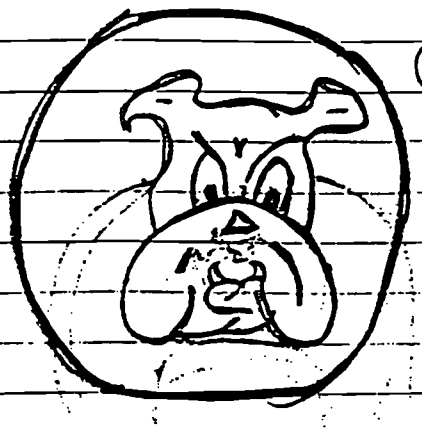
Y'A'll Come BACK YA HERE (Ha/Ha)
I invited, Shaya
Tyrone Leticia Janine
Africa Connie Joe
Corey Deanne Cidra

Appendix J

Second Boy Literacy Artifact:

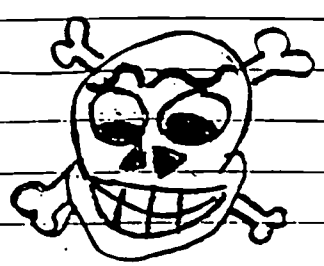
(name of city)

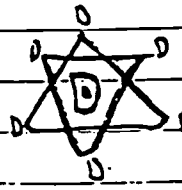
BAD BOY'S

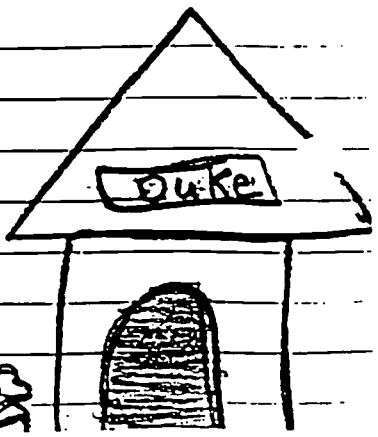


THE BIG DOG'S CLUB

1. Bryan 6. 11.
2. Garon 7. 12.
3. ~~Honah~~ 8. 13.
4. Brandon 9. 14.
5. antwon 10. 15.



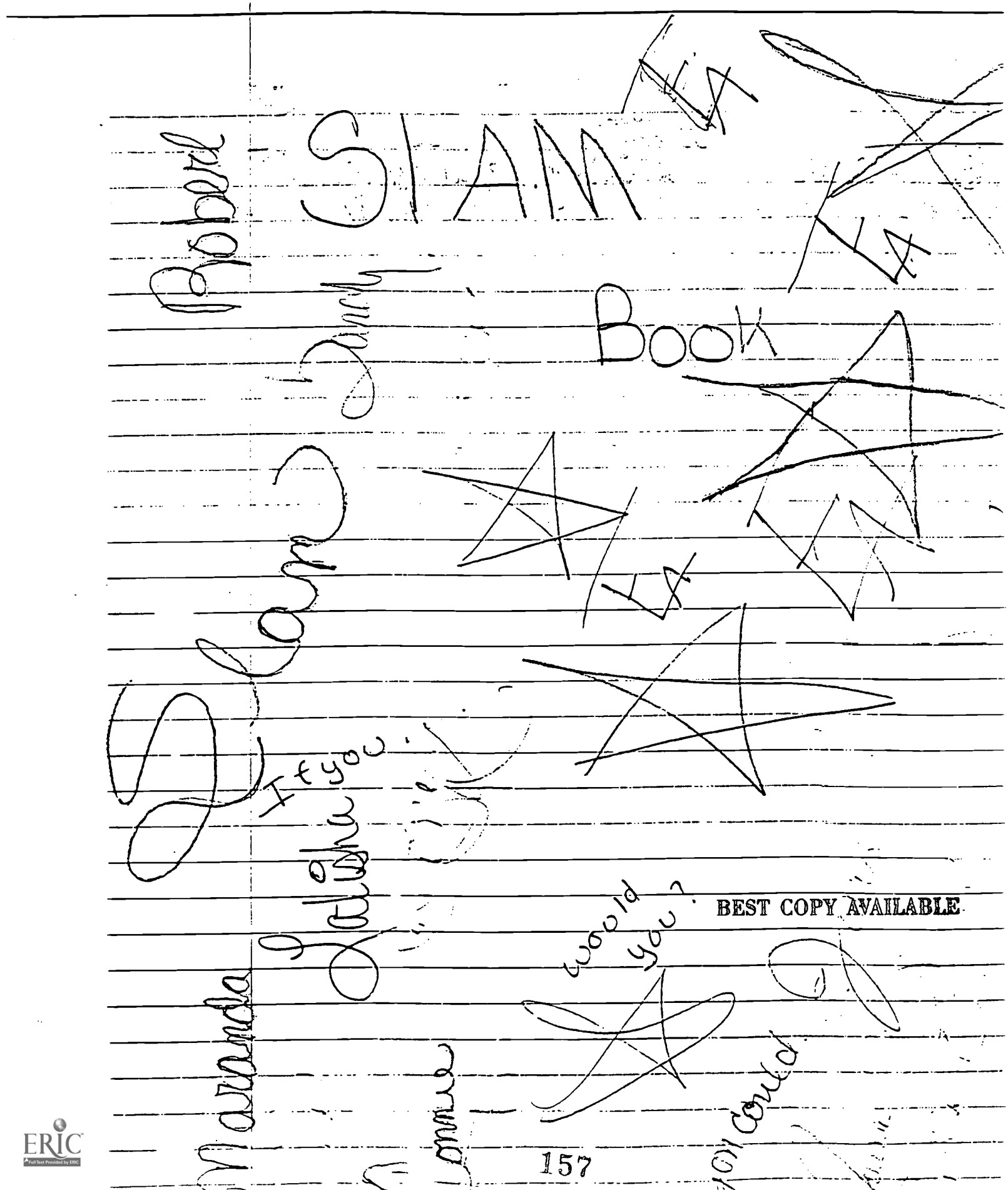




Ellington '95

Appendix K

Example of Slam Book (Title Page):



Appendix K

Slam Book (Sample of Questions):

"whats your favorite candy."
Butterscotch
Peppermint
Gummy Bears
please Skip

Girlfriend

Whats your boyfriends name+age
Joey allen ..... 14 years old I love him
Chris Sears
Jerome ..... 13 years old I love him
Please Skip

whats your favorite color
Pink + Purple
White & black
White
Please Skip

I lowest rate these boys
(5 highest

Joey	Levi	James	Chris	Richard
1000	1	4	3	2
	1	1	1	0
	0	0	0	0

Appendix L

Example of True Love:

May 22 [Fri] 1992

9:00 9am announcements over, silent reading. They have their anti-drug walk-a-thon this afternoon.

9:45 rdg. assign 9:45 doing a rdg. assignment & some are being retested over material not previously passed.

10 a.m. R.F. showed me a game they play (on paper) they make it up (though another student said they used the name of another game + then developed their own rules) I'll see if I can reproduce it: Ex

count t's, etc... in names

T - 5	R.... F... Girl's name: (someone she likes)	L 1
r - 4	Boy's name:	o 2
u - 2	C... D...	V o
e - 5		e 5
	29 16 %	
	+ − +	
R 4		L 1
e 5		o 2
a 4		V o
L 1		e 5

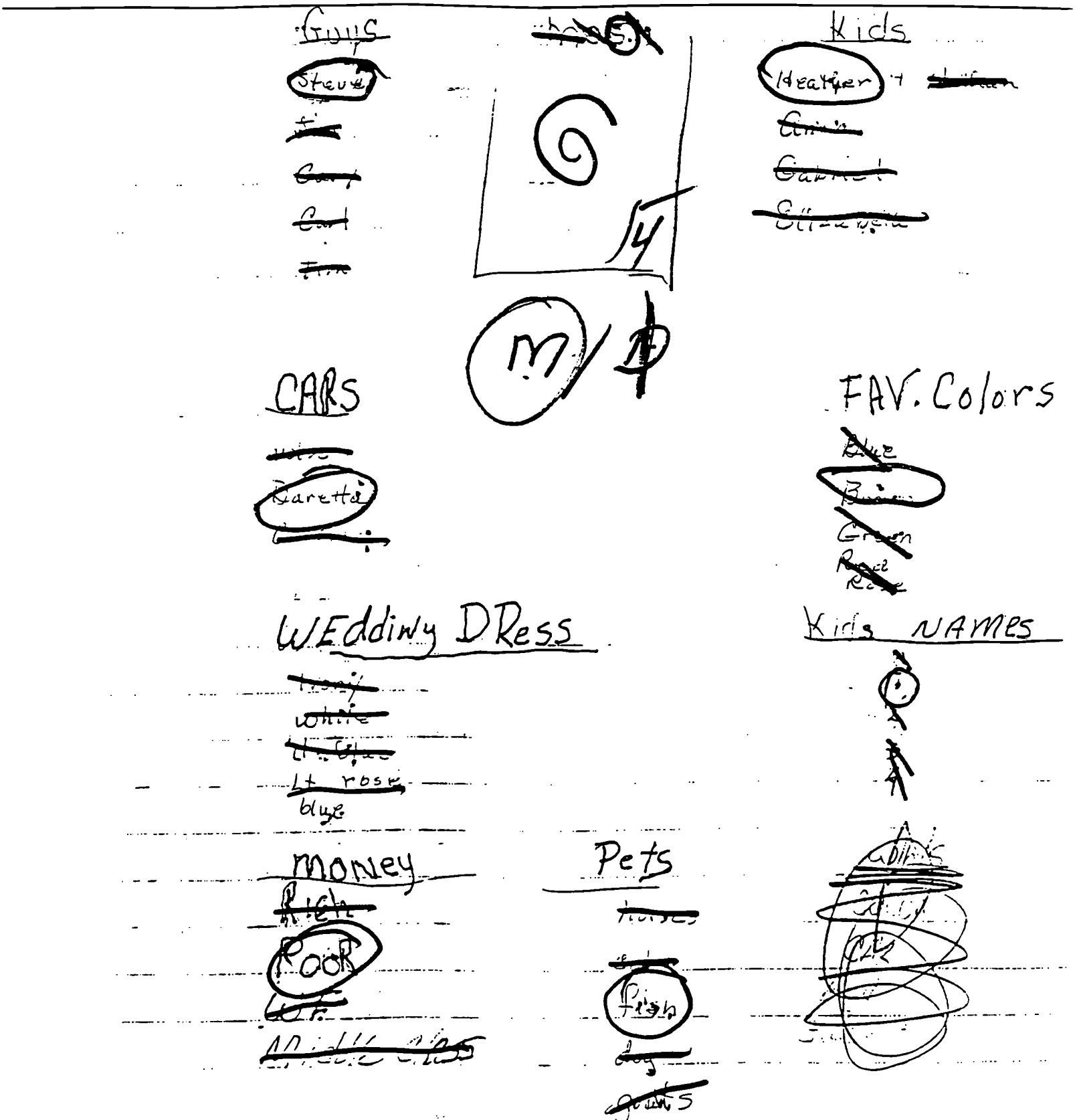
They made up scale, she points out.

Perfect Couple Scale (She used this word)

Perfect Couple	130% +	- 250 % ↑	
Beautiful	"	100 % - 129 %	
Cool	"	99 % - 75	Best Couples
great	"	74 % - 66	
Good	"	65 - 50	
Fair	"	49 - 45	
Ugly	"	44 - 37	
Bad idea	"	36 - 14	
never meet	"	13% - 0%	

Appendix M

Example of MASH:



May 22, 1992

Appendix N

Example of Love Test:

Love Test

1. Write your full name
2. Do you like boys (or girls)
3. Do you like animals
4. Name a person you like
5. Do you like music
6. Write a number between 10-60
7. Do you like T.V
8. Name a diffrent person you like
9. write the word nothing
10. Do you like sports
11. write a number between 90-150
12. write the word twins or triplets or quadruplets
13. write a best freinds name
14. write my turn next

ask someone these (they answer on another sheet)

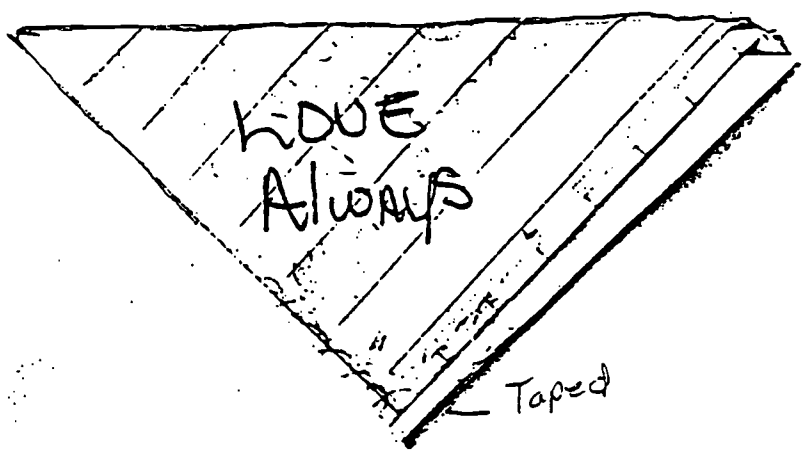
1. whats your name
2. are you telling the truth
3. are you in love
4. with who
5. have you kissed him / her
6. how many times
7. are you still in love
8. with who
9. what were you wearing

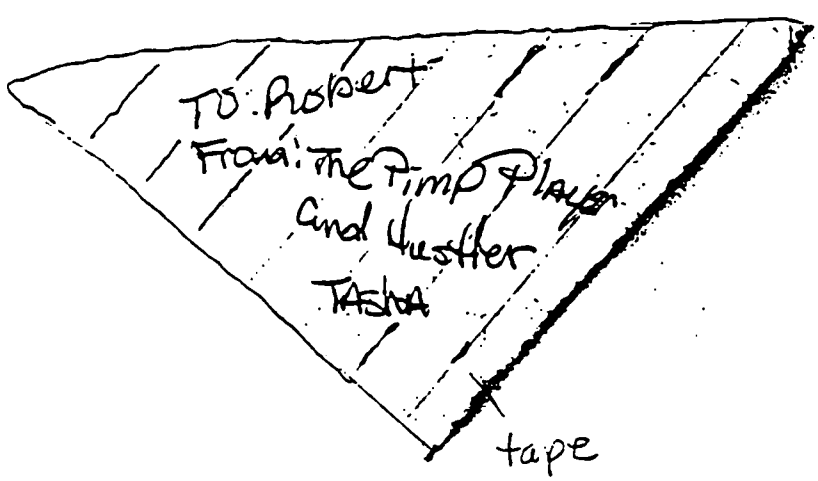
afterwards have answers filled up with these

Ellington '95

Appendix O

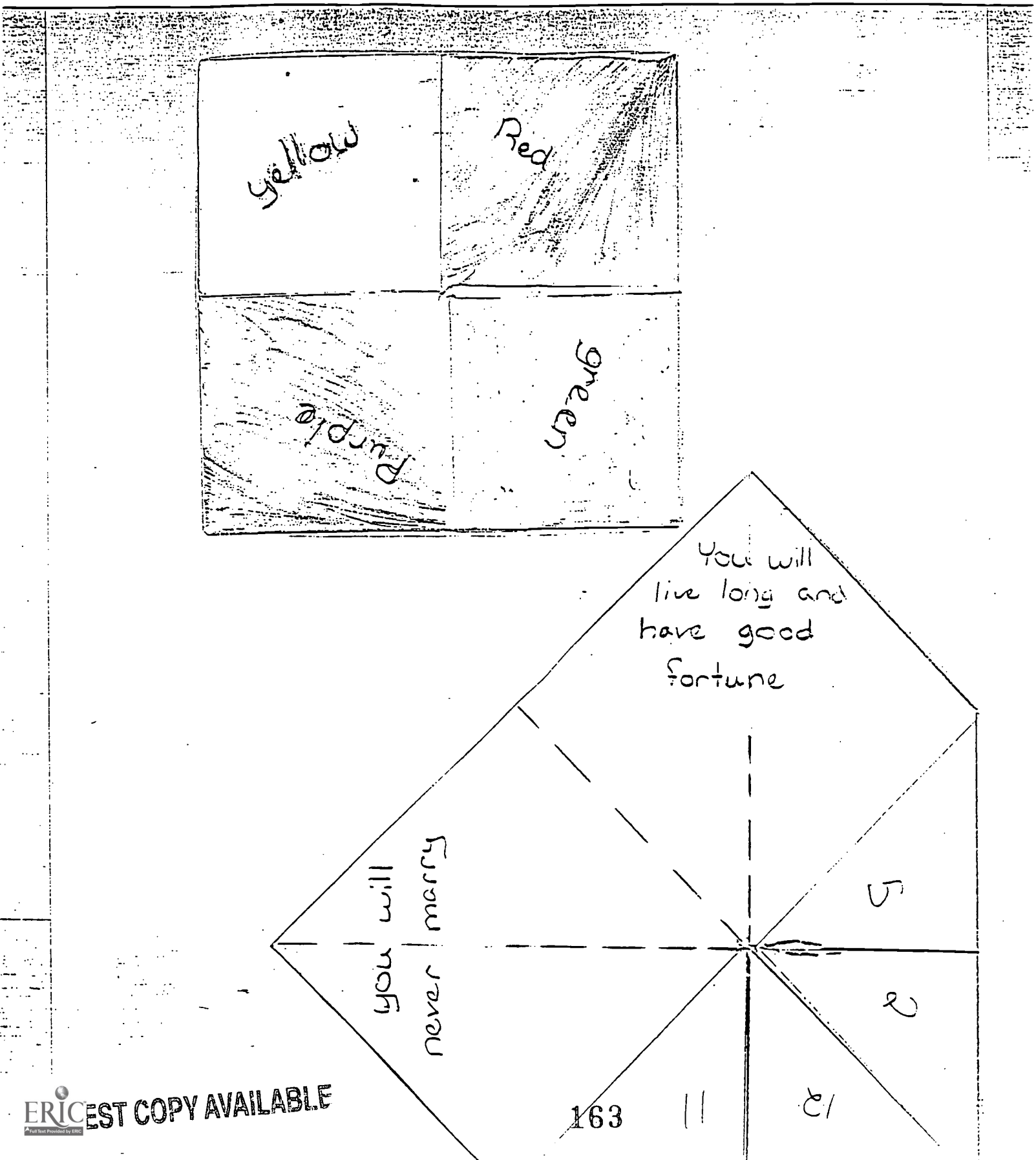
Note Folding Technique:





Appendix P

Hand Puzzle Game:



Appendix Q

Student Lyrics (Girls):

ALL I DO IS THINK OF YOU

VERSE 1:I CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO SCHOOL EACH DAY AND WAIT FOR YOU TO PASS MY WAY AND BELLS START TO RING AN ANGEL STARTS TO SING HEY THAT THE GIRL FOR YOU SO WHAT ARE GOINA DO HEY LITTLE GIRL I LOVE YOU

CHORUS:ALL I DO IS THINK OF YOU DAY AND NIGHT . I CANT GET YOU OFF MY MIND THINK ABOUT ALL THE TIME.

VERSE 2: I BEGIN TO TAE THE LONG WAY JUST SO CAN BE ALONE TO THINK OF HOW TO SAY MY HEART IS HERE TO STAY HEY I"""M IN LOVE WITH YOU I THINK THE WORLD OF YOU SO WONT YOU PLEASE BE MINE.

CHORUS:

Ellington

Appendix Q

The very first time that I
saw your brown eyes your
lips said hello and I say hi
~~he~~. I knew right then you
were the one but I caught up
in physical attraction but ~~it~~ my satisfaction
baby you were more than just a friend
And if I ever ever fall in love so true
I will be sure that the fellas is a friend
And if I ever ever fall in love so true
I will be sure that the fellas just like
you Yeah baby yeah my my my my my my
I swear the next time he'll be my
friend Yeah If I say that I will be
your one and only promise promise promise
that you'll never leave me lonely
I just want to be the one you'll
need hoe baby I just want
to be the En to serve you
Somtimes I fill I dont deserve
you I cherish every ~~moment~~ moment
that we share and if I ever
ever fall in love So true

Ellington

Appendix R

Tamika's Poem:

The Day we met

The day we met
I gave my heart to you
Made a promise
I'd never part from you...

Years may come and
Years may go
But there is something
I want you to know

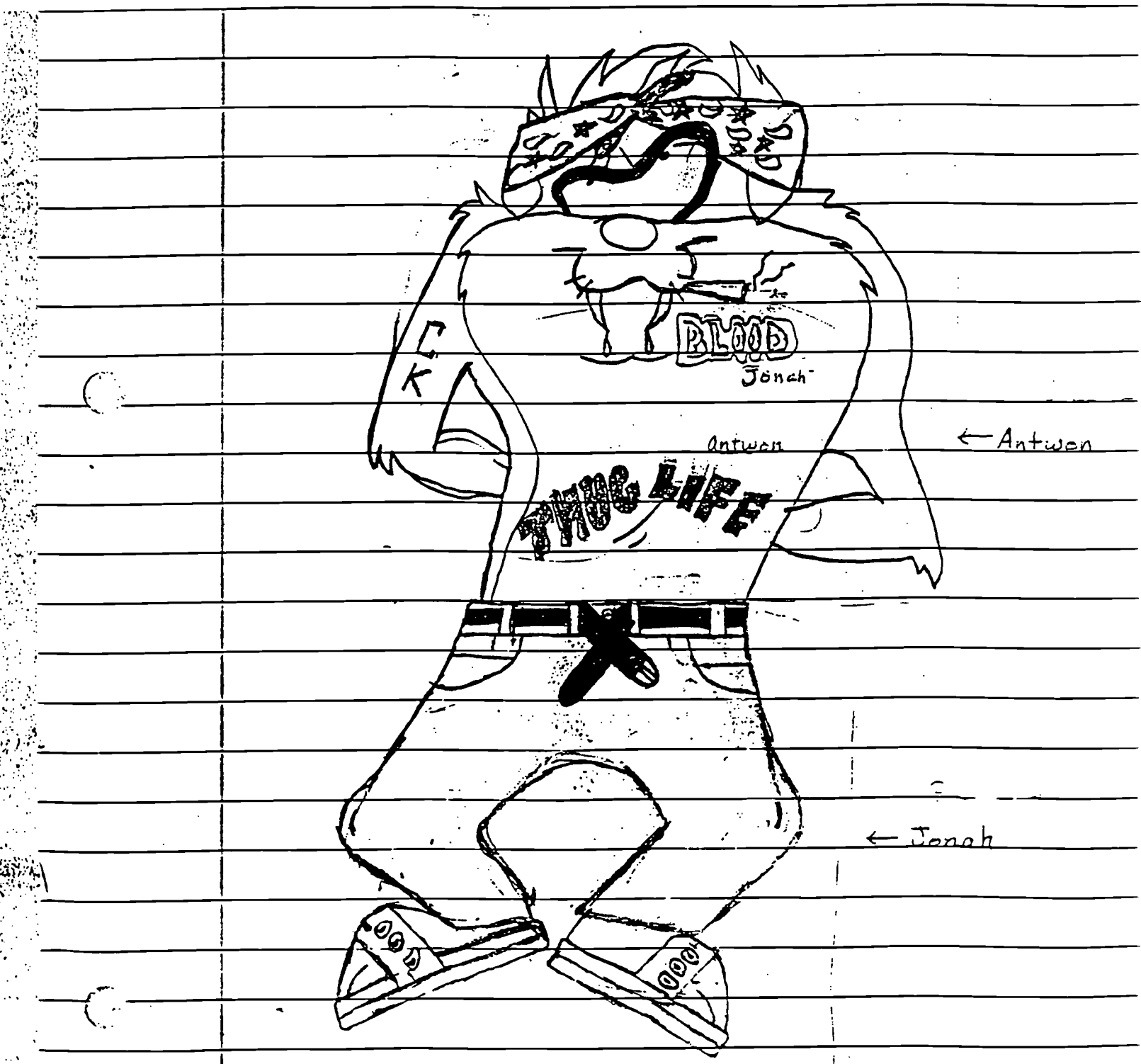
My love 4 you will grow each day
My love will grow
In many ways

And when I close
My eyes in death
I'll call your name
With my Last Breath

(has been "fancy" folded) Urban-Tw
4-24-95

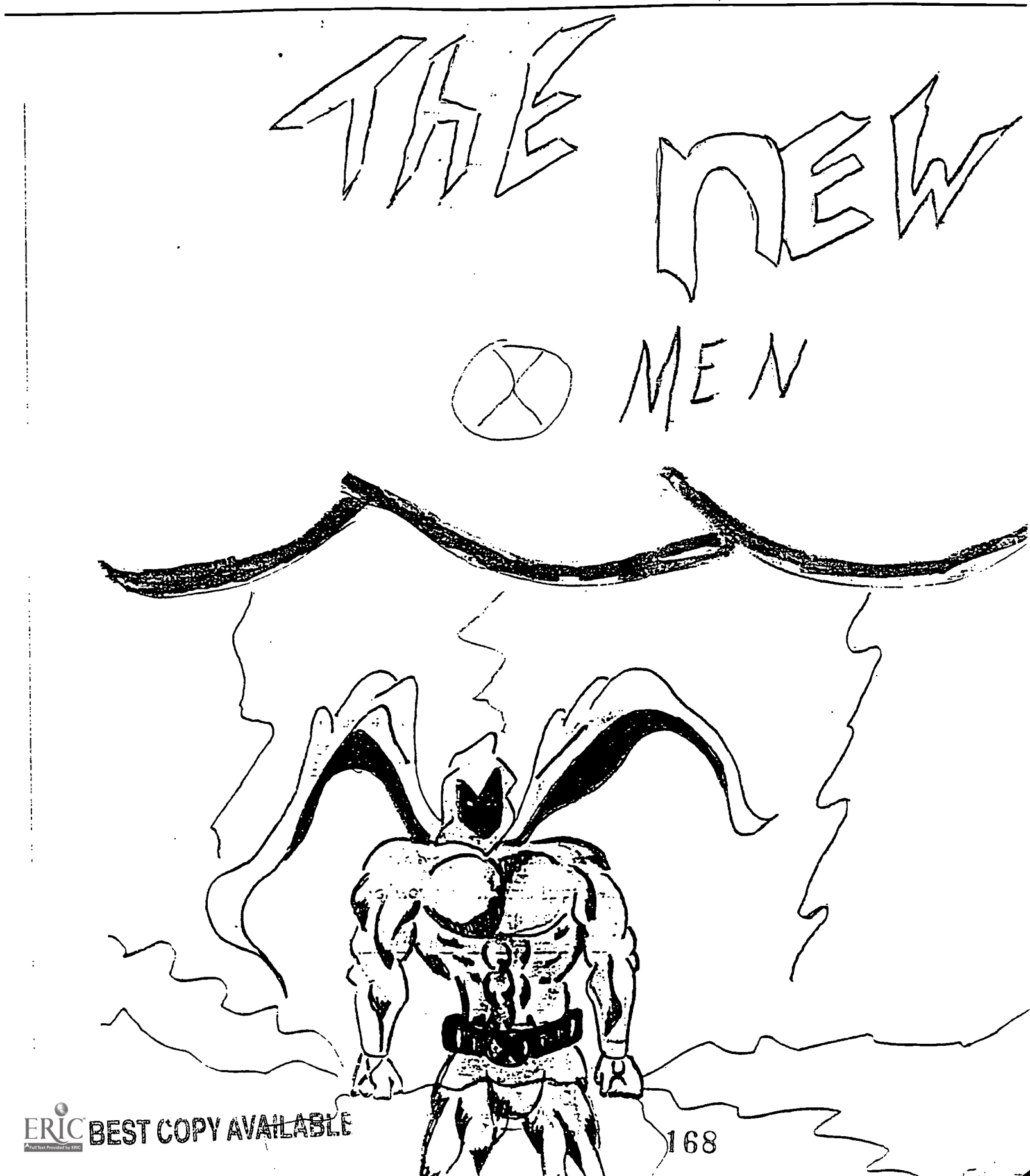
Appendix S

Boys' Collaborative Picture:



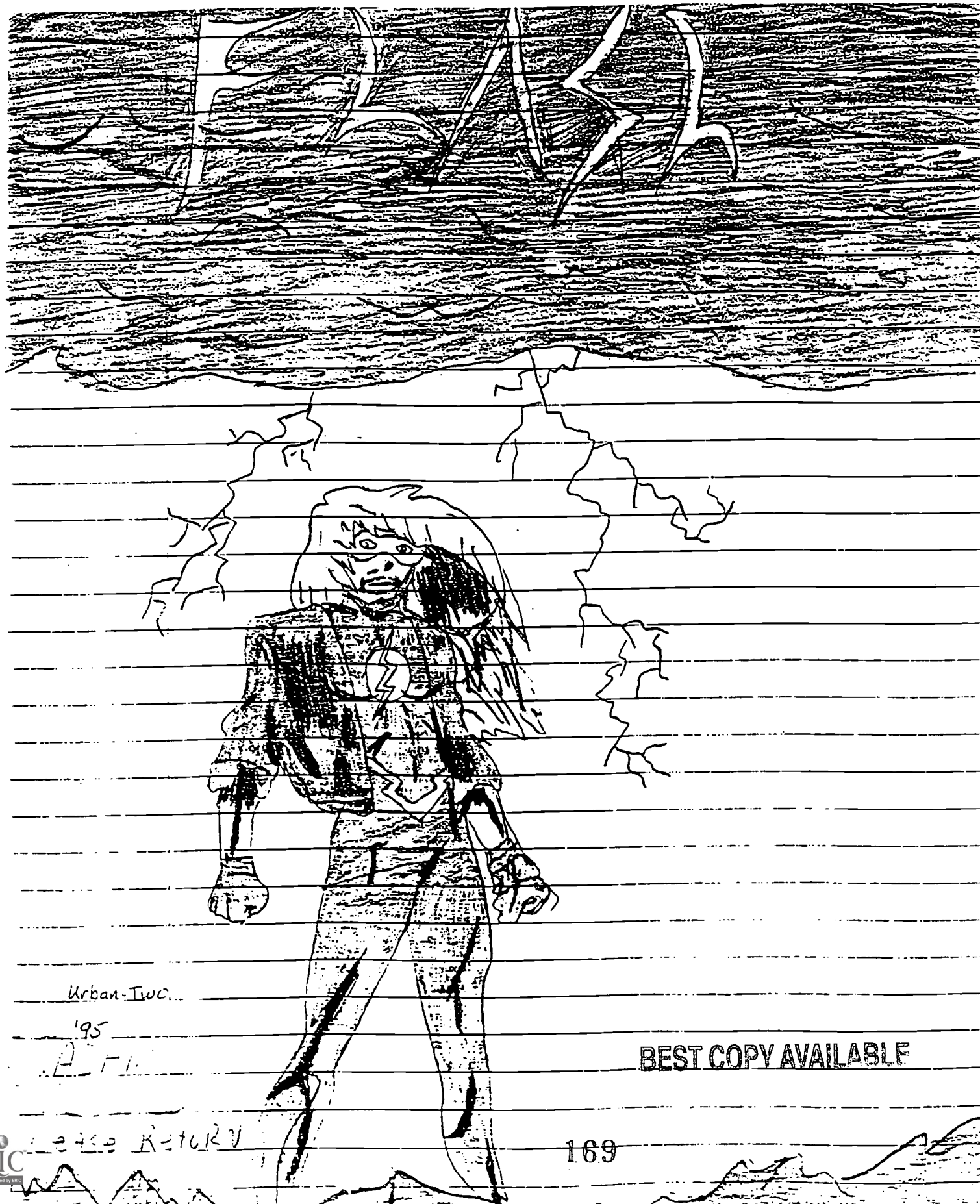
Appendix T

Boys' Drawings from Four Schools (Ellington):



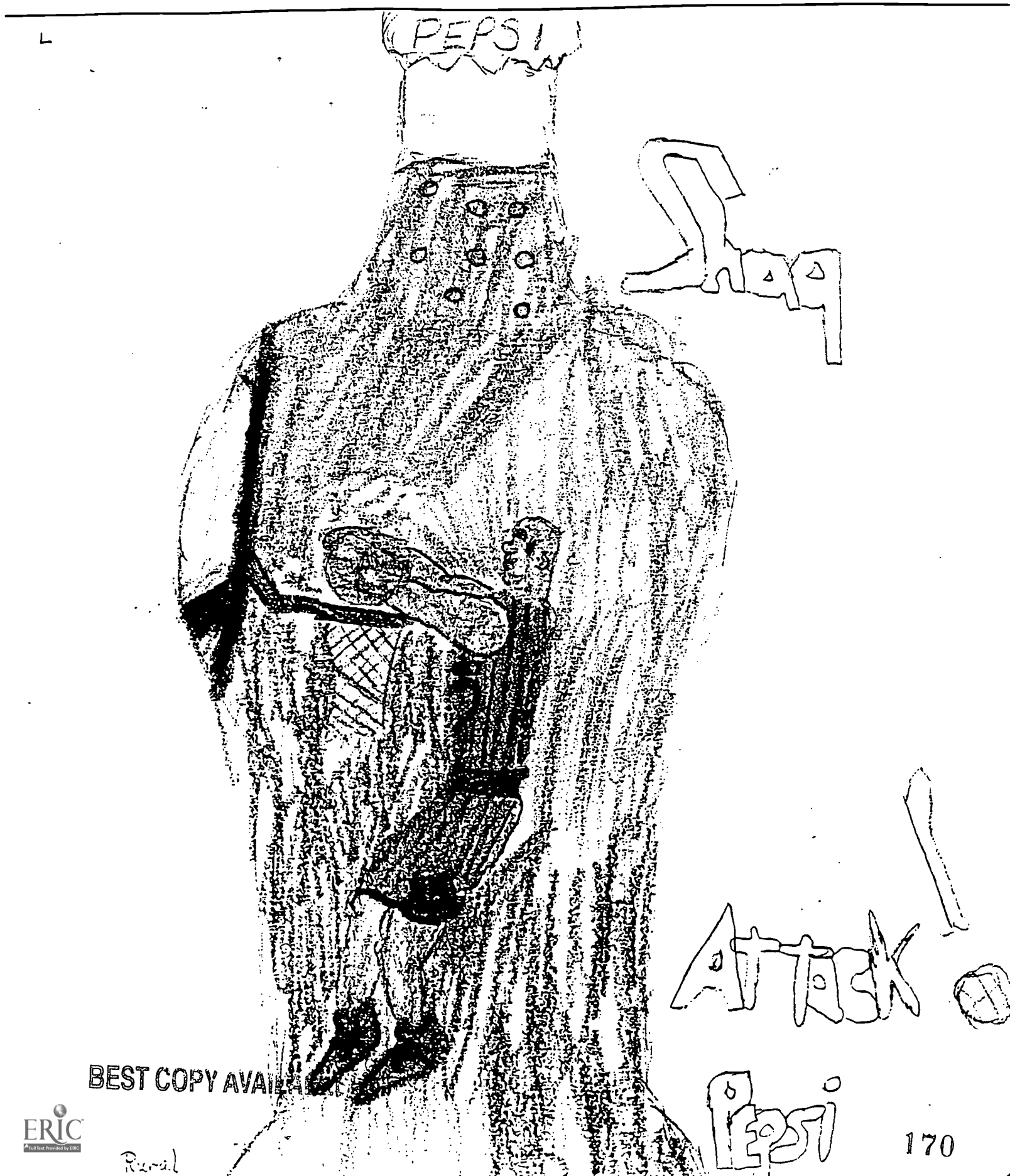
Appendix T

Urban-Two:



Appendix T

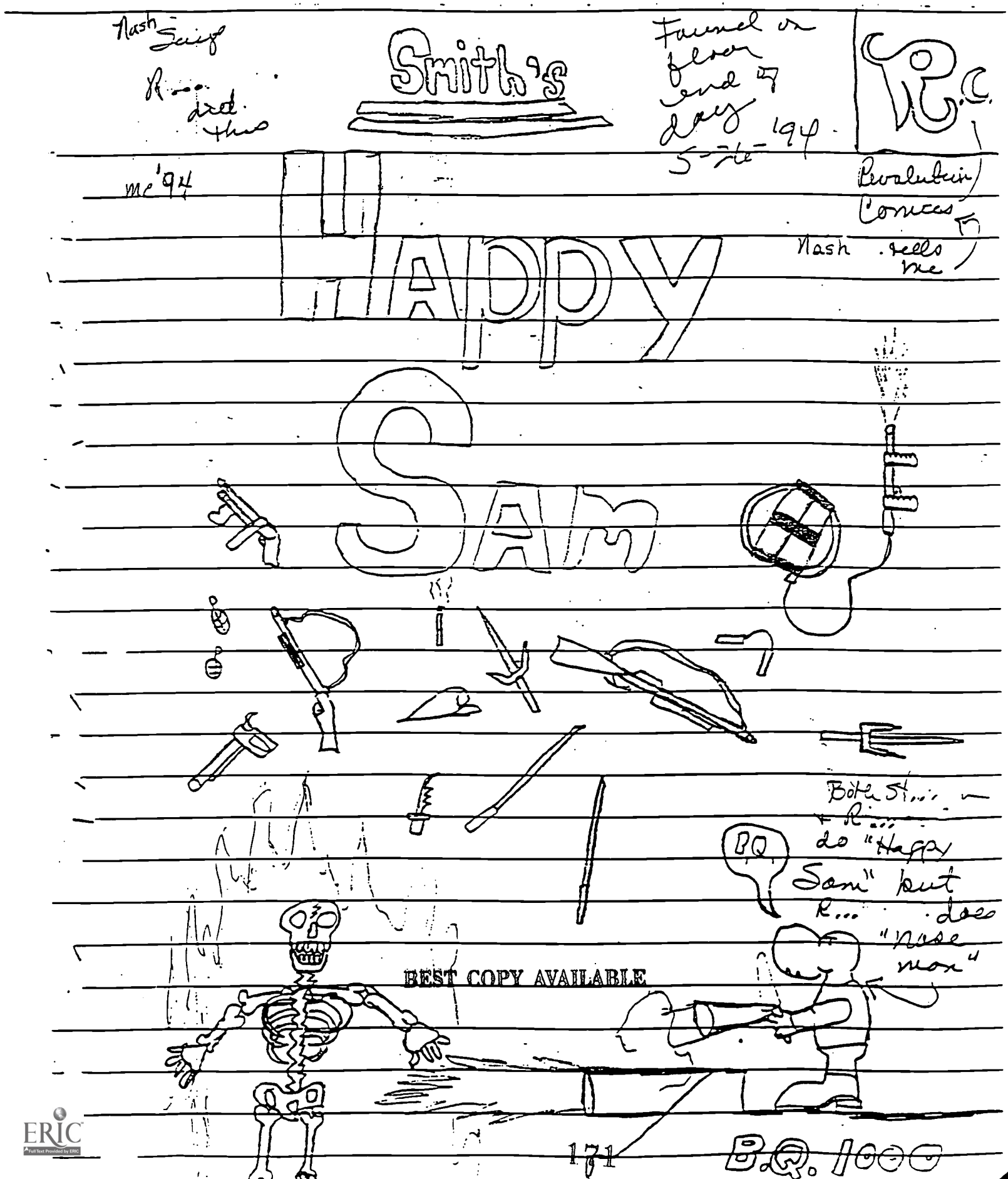
Rural:



Rural

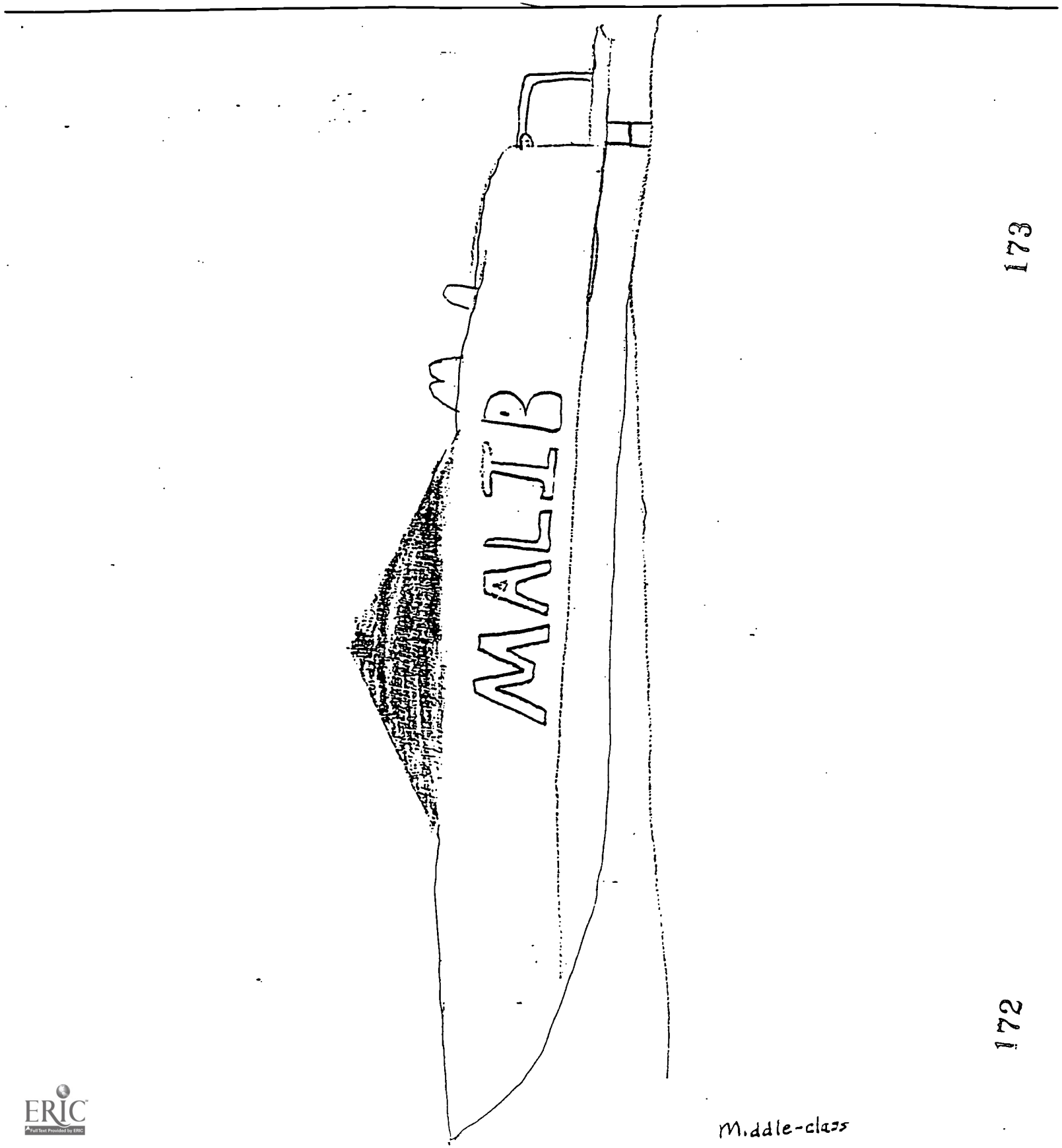
Appendix T

Middle-class:



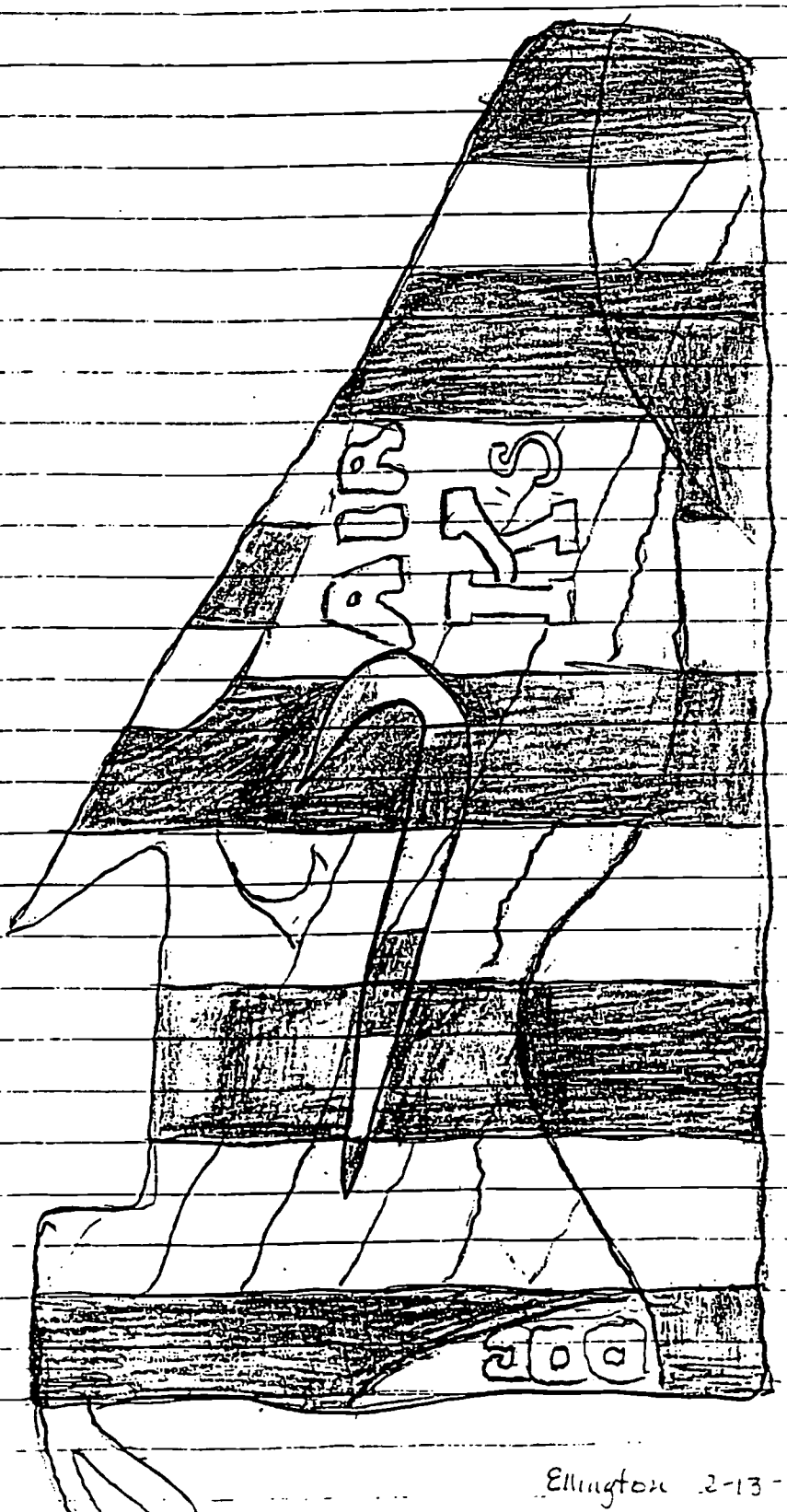
Appendix U

Middle-class Materialistic Drawings:



Appendix V

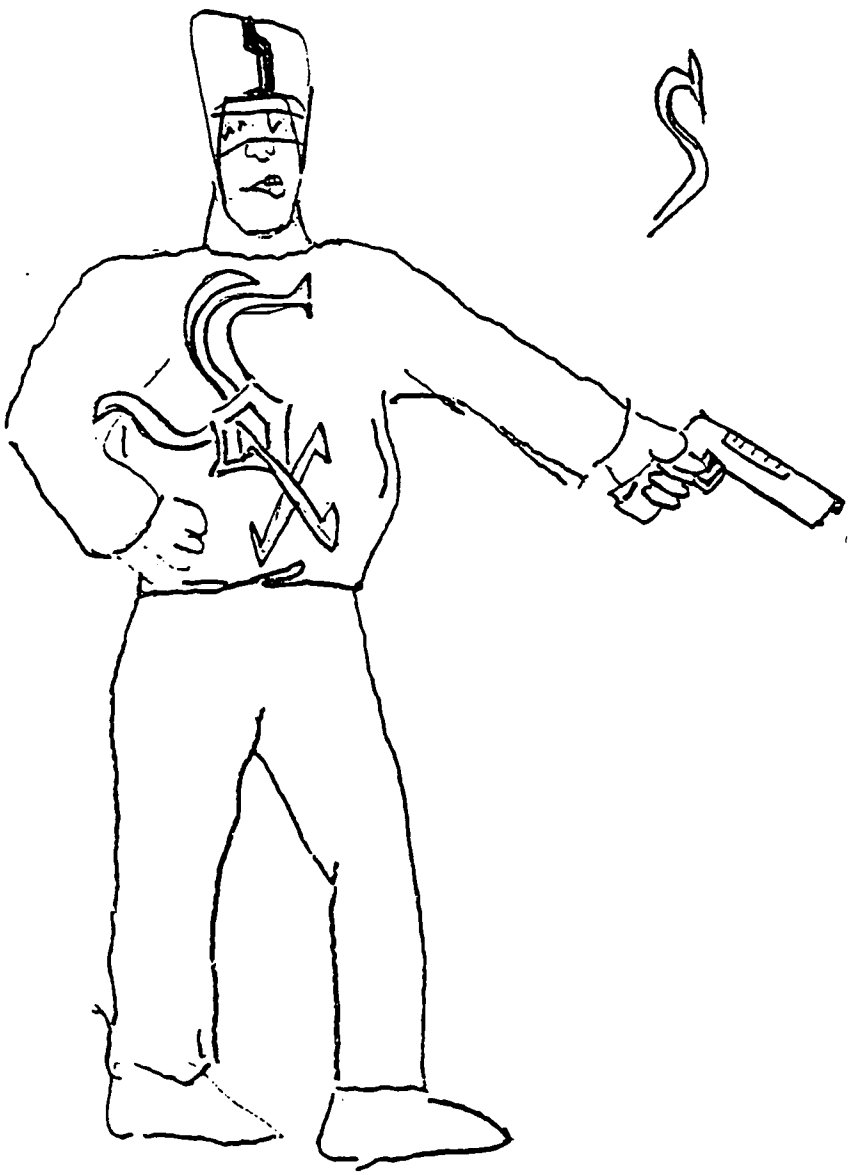
Ellington Boys' Materialistic Drawings:



Ellington 2-13-95

Appendix W

Boys' 'Presenting':



Ellington

* my AERA paper was a small part of this larger document. CS215519 my committee suggested that I submit entire document.

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