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"Keep Funding or Else... It's Mustaches": Building a Community of Literacy at Owl Creek

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Building a Community of Literacy at Owl Creek

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by

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Abstract

The following research report on literacy practices presents an analysis of the data collected over the course of four months at Owl Creek middle school in Northwest Arkansas. Following a qualitative research protocol, I interacted with middle school students who participated in the Razorback Writers after-school literacy outreach program sponsored by the University of Arkansas. This report details the two major literacy practices encouraged in this after school program – the collective read-aloud sessions focusing on the graphic novel *I Kill Giants,* and the students' creation of their own graphic novels, which were developed in group workshops. In the following pages, I examine the events and relationships that emerged during the group reading sessions and creative workshops, and I try to identify the implicit and explicit assumptions about literacy that became apparent in these sessions. Moreover, I explore the ways in which these practices express several theories of literacy, specifically 1) language socialization, 2) the New London Group's theory of Design and multiliteracies pedagogy, and 3) university-sponsored literacy outreach. Thus, this study also provides a report of how these theories function – together and separately – in the Razorback Writers classroom.

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I. Background and Theoretical Framework

A. Language Socialization

For the first section of my study, I draw on the subject of language socialization, an idea well elucidated by Bambi Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs. When speaking to children, argue Schieffelin and Ochs, caretakers – parents teachers, and family members - are both socializing children *"through the use of language"* and *"to use language"* (163). That is, in acts of speech, adults teach young learners socially acceptable behavior *and* socially appropriate language use. Schieffelin and Ochs note several aspects of the language socialization process which are relevant to the study at hand. First of all, they maintain, language socialization is an "interactive process." Students are not "passive recipient[s] of sociocultural knowledge but rather [active contributors] to the meaning and outcome of interactions with other members of a social group" (165). In other words, children are not only shaped *by*, but also themselves shape, the process of language socialization. Secondly, there are no "socialization-free" zones in language use; as Schieffelin and Ochs remind readers, "Every interaction is potentially a socializing experience in that members of a social group are socializing each other into their particular world views as they negotiate situated meaning" (165). As such, any activity in which children interact and communicate with those older than they is a site of language socialization, and is thus open to analysis. Finally, Schieffelin and Ochs extend their scholarship to literacy socialization, specifically through the use of story. "Storyreading," they claim, "is an interactive negotiation during which time certain sequences of interaction are acquired […] through the adults who display to children ways of taking information and giving it back" (181).

Deborah Poole provides readers with a concrete example of language and literacy socialization in the classroom. Much research has been conducted regarding a variety of reading

groups, from elementary school read-aloud sessions to adult book clubs featuring informal discussion of literary texts. In her analysis of fifth-grade reading groups centered on non-fictional science textbooks, Poole explores both the contextualized and decontextualized language that arises within reading group discussion. In reading together about dinosaurs, notes Poole, these students and their teacher engage in the sort of "de-contextualized" language encouraged by essayist literacy: language that is not "linked through linguistic or gestural means to its immediate context or to its author, audience [or] context of production" (379). The essayist literacy style of speech or writing mirrors the conventions of the academy, which values the depersonalized transmission of facts and analysis which ostensibly reflect rational and objective thought. However, Poole also found that, particularly in situations where the text featured illustrations, students used highly *contexualized* language, which makes reference to the situation at hand and is "characterized by more affective marking, more personal language, and more student initiation turns" (386).   Rather than suggesting that using these differing language styles disrupts the students' acquisition of essayist literacy competence, Poole in fact suggests that these competing discursive practices enhance students' ability to discuss the reading. The heightened sense of student involvement and authority in contextualized discussions gives those students the opportunity to interact with one another and the teacher, which allows them to "comprehend, reframe, paraphrase and question" the text at hand, abilities and practices linked to essayist literacy (398).

In analyzing this reading group's activities as a form of language socialization, Poole broadens our understanding of "socialization *through* language." According to Poole, students – or "novices" – are exposed to "broader cultural orientations" and "ideologies or beliefs" regarding language use through "recurrent interactions and activities," such as participating in

classroom reading groups. In Schieffelin and Ochs's model, socialization occurs when "expected ways of thinking, believing, and acting" about language are displayed by an "expert," such as a teacher, within such "routine literacy events." A significant effect of this sort of socialization is that novices do not unvaryingly adapt to the values of essayist literacy, and thus language socialization becomes a "bidirectional process in which both novices and experts have influence" (Poole 381). So, even as students are exposed to the interactional, communicative norms of the academy – or of the home, or of the supermarket – they are also, to one degree or another, shaping those same norms.

B. Multiliteracies and Design

Secondly, I also ground much of my analysis in the New London Group's call for multiliteracies pedagogy in the classroom. In response to the growing prevalence of new technologies, as well as to increasing cultural diversity, the New London Group, a team of scholars from several English-speaking countries, developed a "programmatic manifesto" outlining the need for a multiliteracies curriculum (64, 73). In this manifesto, the team argues that a language-centered curriculum focused on "mere literacy" cannot sufficiently respond to the changing, decentralized atmosphere of the modern workplace, public space, and personal life. Rather, they argue, instructors ought to engage in a "pedagogy of multiliteracies," which "focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone" (64). These modes include visual, audio, gestural, and spatial design. In using these multiple kinds of texts and text production, students engage in a three-part, recursive process of "Design". Students draw upon Available Design, the conventions and tools of a particular mode of discourse (like film, drama, or fiction) in the act of Designing a new text, called the Redesigned. While Designing requires an awareness of Available Design, the Redesigned is not "simply a repetition" of previously

existing texts, nor is it an entirely original creation. Instead, "The Redesigned is founded on historically and culturally received patterns of meaning," *and* "at the same time it is the unique product of human agency: a transformed meaning" (76). In consuming or producing a text, written or otherwise, students must pair prior knowledge of a particular genre or mode of discourse with their own creative abilities in order to form something new.

The New London Group outlines four main elements of a strong multiliteracies pedagogy: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice. Through Situated Practice, students experience "immersion in meaningful practices within a community of learners." Students help craft knowledge, rather than passively absorbing discrete units of information (85). In Situated Practice, argue the New London Group, students should be encouraged to draw on their "previous and current experiences, as well as their extra-school communities and discourses," in order to foster a more authentic learning environment (85).Teachers may need to offer Overt Instruction from time to time, but not through "direct transmission" of facts. Rather, in a "collaborative effort" with students, teachers might offer guidance to students by providing the general "scaffold" of activities, by pointing out the "important features" of the activity at hand, and by offering "explicit information" when it will help the students in their own work (86). Teachers must also provide Critical Framing for the students' projects and their own Overt Instruction, placing them in the context of the "historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice" (86). Finally, suggest the New London Group, students must be able to take these elements and return to a Transformed Practice, in which they can take their knowledge of a creative form or concept and apply it to "their own goals and values" (87).

In the wake of the New London Group's research, many authors and educators have continued to see the usefulness in multiliteracies education. Some, like Carolyn Piazza, have tapped into multiliteracies' potential for using creative and artistic media alongside traditional linguistic modes of expression. In her guide on the subject for teachers, Piazza defines "multiple literacies" as "the complex amalgam of communicative channels, symbols, forms, and meanings inherent in oral and written language (verbal and nonverbal) as well as the arts – visual arts, music, dance, theater, and film (including television, video, and technology)" (2). Piazza goes on to recommend that teachers allow students to produce texts in all of these different modes in order to better help them understand what they're being taught, and to provide them with a wide variety of artistic and educational experiences.

If the New London Group's manifesto is lacking (albeit intentionally) in specific examples of what multiliteracies education might look like in the classroom, Kathleen Gallagher and Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou provide readers with a very particular glimpse of one Toronto drama course, studied through the lens of multiple literacies (323). In this course, students were encouraged, collaboratively and individually, to write about themselves, to watch and write about plays, to write and perform monologues, and to write and perform plays (324), thus approaching the subject of drama through "different modes of meaning making and communication" (323).

Through observing this classroom, Gallagher and Ntelioglou describe the shape of many of the New London Group's fundamental concepts as they appear in a real-world situation. First of all, they saw the use of multiple modes of communication, and these various modes seemed beneficial to the classroom. Gallagher and Ntelioglou argue that "using multimodal sources to inspire students' writing is effective." By asking students to engage with plays, physical objects,

and each other, teachers are able to foster in students a deeper interest in the subject matter of their coursework (329).Secondly, students in this classroom experienced the sort of situated practice which the New London Group argues is essential for a strong multiliteracies pedagogy. In particular, these students were asked to draw on their own personal experiences (New London Group 85). Not only were these students expected to craft their plays and monologues according to the conventions of such forms, they were also expected to "focus on" their own "prior knowledge, their culture, community, language, and identity for literacy learning and deep understanding" (Gallagher and Ntelioglou 326). Through these and other principles of multiliteracies education, students become "active designers of meaning" in the classroom (327), which allowed them to "significantly shape their sense of mastery of language and communication" (322).

C. University Outreach

Lastly, I also couch my analysis of the Razorback Writers program at Owl Creek in the context of recent calls for community outreach from universities. Many scholars have written on the subject of university-sponsored outreach programs, and a fair number have focused their work on the subject of literacy outreach. For example, University of Florida librarians Iona R. Malanchuk and Marilyn N. Ochoa note the "continuing need" to develop literacy programs for children which will "lead to an increase in reading and reading comprehension skills" for those students (23). While they recognize that many school and public libraries have crafted successful after-school programs for young students, Malanchuk and Ochoa argue that university libraries and librarians must also develop programs to improve the "well being and education of children within their local communities" (25). Malanchuk and Ochoa draw their rationale for such action from the Kellogg Commission report, which calls not only university libraries, but entire

universities, to become "'engaged institutions'" that would "redesign [their] teaching, research, extension and service functions to become increasingly involved in their local communities" (25).

Ellen Cushman seconds this call to community action. In particular, she urges teachers of rhetoric and composition to move outside the boundaries of the university, "isolated socially and sometimes physically as well" from "the communities in which they're located," into the lives of those in the surrounding area (8). Using examples of her own literacy work in her surrounding community, such as providing a young mother with the resources necessary to complete a college application and later writing a letter of recommendation so that same mother could obtain housing (13-14), Cushman asks composition scholars to "facilitate people's oral and literate language use as well as lend [their] status for [those people's] achievement" in order to empower them (15). Cushman relies on the language of empowerment, which she defines as composition scholars and instructors using their knowledge and resources to help members of the community achieve their literacy goals (14). Despite this emphasis on empowerment, Cushman also warns her readers that they should avoid putting members of the community in a position where they feel they somehow owe the university something for its outreach. Rather, scholars ought to work *with* members of the community to provide service, "bridging the university and community" with "give-and-take relationships that must be openly and carefully navigated" (17).

Linda Flower and Shirley Bryce Heath also suggest that members of the university collaborate with members of the surrounding community in order to solve problems, rather than trying to solve the problem *for* the community. They propose "[transforming] service into a collaboration with communities" based on "mutual inquiry and literate action" (43). Flower and Heath quote Justin Johnson, a judge and trustee in their surrounding community, who noted that

the question is no longer "whether the university is going to teach young people about being good citizens, but to what degree will the university be a good citizen" (47). Flower and Heath argue that scholars and universities move away from the philanthropic practice of coming in, solving problems and conducting research, and then leaving, instead working closely with the community to improve its well-being and that of its citizens.

Community-based literacy outreach has also found expression here in Northwest Arkansas. According to the University of Arkansas's David Jolliffe, the University's Brown Chair in English Literacy has collaborated with the city of Augusta, Arkansas, to create the Augusta Community Literacy Advocacy Project (271). The driving mission behind this initiative is to improve education – particularly literacy – among the constitiuents of Augusta as one component of a multi-faceted approach to turning the tide of its economic decline. This project includes multiple elements, such as a community-wide kickoff event (270), community participation in the Brown Chair's Arkansas Delta Oral History Project (275), and literacy assistance for young parents (277). In this way, the Project is a holistic literacy education program – seeking to improve the literacy practices, not just of students in the schools, but of the entire community. The Project is an example of the sort of university-community collaboration which Cushman and Flower and Heath so strongly support. According to Jolliffe, the Project is "a collaborative effort of the White River Rural Health Center" and the Brown Chair (271). The Augusta Recovery Initiative sponsored and led many of the events, while scholars from the University, including Jolliffe, provided the additional guidance, opportunities, and resources necessary to ensure the program's success.

These seemingly disparate theoretical threads – 1) language socialization, 2) multiliteracies pedagogy, and 3) literacy outreach – come together in practice, creating a unique, creative

pedagogical environment. These philosophies function as natural allies at Owl Creek. I started my study at Owl Creek because the Razorback Writers group there constitutes a remarkable mix of my various research interests, as university outreach, multiliteracies pedagogy, and nontraditional classroom dynamics weave together in one location. Such a study is warranted because, while much has been written regarding the *theoretical* parameters of these theories, little has been written about their practical *application*. My intent, then, is to describe Owl Creek as a place where these theories are given flesh, blood, and expression. As may be gathered from my above discussion of the literature, Razorback Writers functions as a convergence of two of my primary research interests – literacy outreach and multiple literacies. By virtue of its emphasis on multimodal literacy, Razorback Writers also offers a glimpse at non-traditional language socialization, in which students and instructors share an equitable, collaborative relationship, rather than the traditional authoritarian classroom model. More specifically, the *I Kill Giants* reading groups at Owl Creek feature elements of all these theoretical concerns, and thus I place them at the center of my study.

II. Methodology

The data I present were culled from observations I conducted with Razorback Writers in the spring of 2012 at Owl Creek School. Owl Creek is a Northwest Arkansas public elementary school of 618 students and 51 teachers. Half of the school's students are male. While a little over half (roughly 53%) of the school's students are white, the rest are African American, Latino, Indian, Asian, or Pacific Islander. During the course of my research, I took field notes describing each of the 16 sessions I attended. There were five (5) male students – Michael, Alan, Robert, Sawyer, and Bradley – and six (6) female students –Amber, Jenny, Ella, Wendy, Tara, and Violet. The students were of Caucasian, African-American, Latin-American, and Middle-Eastern descent, contributing to a culturally diverse classroom. There were also four (4) male mentors – Finn, Bryan, Sam, and Steven – and three (3) female mentors – Elise, Breanne, and Jaime – all of which were Caucasian. Jeff and Patricia were the site's coordinators.

My work at Owl Creek Middle School is a study of another instance of university-sponsored literacy outreach in Northwest Arkansas. Owl Creek is one of the four main sites where Razorback Writers operates. As an after-school, extra-curricular writing program, also sponsored by the University of Arkansas's Brown Chair, Razorback Writers is a prime example of a university's commitment to literacy development within the larger community. The program itself is sponsored (and funded) by the University. At each of the four middle schools where Razorback Writers operates, an English graduate student functions as site coordinator, both planning out learning units and overseeing groups of tutors as they develop themed composing activities. The tutors themselves are undergraduates enrolled in the University's pre-Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, who receive service-credit hours for their Curriculum and Instruction (CIED) course.

In this way, the activities in Razorback Writers are firmly linked to the activities at the University of Arkansas: the site coordinators receive graduate funding which they might otherwise receive from teaching assistantships, and in return they work in classrooms outside of the academy. The tutors work at the tutoring sites in order to receive the necessary hours for their CIED course, thus furthering their education and moving them toward graduation. In return, of course, those in charge of the program aim to provide the middle-school and junior-high participants with meaningful literacy education and activities. Razorback Writers' program coordinators are conscious of this dual aim. In a presentation at the Conference on Applied Learning in Higher Education, Nikki Holland and Iris Shepard, two site coordinators, explained that the program "holds as its mission to both provide a meaningful teaching opportunity for pre-service teachers as well as to deliver a program to local middle and junior high students that will help these students to improve their literacy skills and develop a love of reading and writing." The activities at Razorback Writers also reflect the concern that university-sponsored outreach be a collaborative effort. According to Holland and Shepard, they designed the program based on a "constructivist approach to teaching" which "creates a structure that forces students to participate actively in the learning process rather than to passively receive information," an approach which they've implemented through "arts integration."

Holland and Shepard describe arts integration education as "an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate an understanding of material through an art form." They've adopted arts integration as a primary focus for Razorback Writers because it "naturally draws on multiple modalities, allowing children to learn visually, aurally, and kinesthetically" (Holland and Shepard). As such, the students produce a wide variety of artistic texts and participate in many activities; during my preliminary observations at the Owl Creek chapter of

Razorback Writers in the fall of 2011, for example, I saw the children write stories and plays, perform those plays, draw flipbooks, make silent films, and even play outdoor games based on children's books. Through these various methods of arts integration, Razorback Writers allows its students to participate in the production of multi-modal texts and asks children to engage in multiliteracies.

This study lends itself perfectly to qualitative research methods, so I will use data collection strategies common to ethnography and other naturalistic methodologies.[1] The most basic goal of ethnography of communication is to "study, explore, and describe a group's culture" *in context* (Heath 155). Undergirding ethnographies of literacy is the conviction that, as John Szwed argues, "definitions of reading and writing […] must include *social context* and *function* (use) as well as the reader and the text of what is being read and written" (423). In other words, one cannot fully understand language use – including reading and writing practices – without understanding where, when, how, and why it is used. Running through my study are such nebulous, theoretical concepts as multiple literacies pedagogy and language socialization, about which much has been written, but which have not often been studied in practice. It would certainly be beneficial, then, to spend time in a community which offers us concrete examples of important pedagogical theories; after all, should not the ultimate goal of composition scholarship be to see classroom practices improved and impacted? Spending time in a community like Razorback Writers gives me the opportunity to see multiple literacies pedagogy and language socialization occur *in situ*, rather than as a controlled experiment or as a "programmatic manifesto." Quantitative studies and theoretical frameworks are certainly good and valid arenas

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[1] It has been pointed out to me that such a short study as mine – lasting only one semester – cannot be considered a *true* ethnography. Regardless, I do root many of my methods of data collection, and my understanding of effective literacy studies, in the practices and values held by most ethnographers. As such, I refer to my study as ethnographic in nature.

of composition research. However, qualitative research such as mine can fill in some of the gaps left by other forms of inquiry: specifically, qualitative study offers a glimpse of pedagogical theories in practice, and of the context of behaviors studied in controlled, laboratory research.

The primary methodological principle of ethnographic research is that of *triangulation*. Most simply, triangulation requires "combining multiple sources of data" (Lauer and Asher 42). Through triangulation, ethnographers gain "multiple perspectives by mapping the setting, selecting observers and developing a relationship with them, and establishing a long period of investigation" (40). Underpinning this methodological principle is a "conception of knowledge as a social construction, a collaborative search, interpretation, and reinterpretation of complex acts in context" (40). In contrast with laboratory-based quantitative studies, which tend to be focused on one variable to be explored, ethnographers attend to as many sources of information about a community as possible, including the words its members speak, the documents they craft, and the spaces they inhabit. In this way, qualitative researchers work to paint a holistic picture of the community, with the understanding that a truly complete study of a given group is always elusive. Regardless, triangulation offers researchers the ability to bring together a variety of sources of information – from field notes, to interviews, to recorded footage of community events – in order to study that group's behaviors in context. In the current study, I draw on multiple sources of data, including my own field notes and the observations of my interviewees, in order to give my descriptions of Owl Creek greater depth and authenticity.

Another element of ethnographic work is the role of the researcher. In most qualitative studies, the researcher assumes the role of a participant observer. As such, he or she must navigate between two different levels of standing within a community. On the one hand, an ethnographer's primary objective in researching a community is to gain a greater understanding

of that community, its rituals, and its culture. As such, the researcher must attend to various sources of data, and content himself to some extent with merely watching the community's activities. On the other hand, the researcher also desires to gain an insider's, or *emic,* perspective of the community's goings-on, as such a viewpoint is central to an ethnographic epistemology, wherein knowledge is understood to be socially constructed; therefore, one may only gain a meaningful understanding of a community or culture from *within* that community or culture. Thus, "in order to represent authentically the perspectives and experiences of those being studied," a researcher must to some extent engage in the activities of the community (Lauer and Asher 73).

At Owl Creek, it became clear from the beginning that I would be recognized as a member of the Razorback Writers community, albeit one with different reasons for being there. The first day I walked into the library classroom, the students greeted me with cries of "Look! It's Justin Bieber!" referring to my blonde hair swept to the side. Perhaps because of this initial interaction, the students treated me much as they would the other mentors in the program. I encouraged this as best I could, attending mentor meetings and participating in the program's reading groups and comic-book workshops. In so doing, I worked to become a genuine participant in Razorback Writers' daily work. However, I also worked to distance myself from the program in order to better research the community. This distance in some cases arose naturally. For example, my tape recorder conspicuously designated me as somehow distinct from the rest of the Owl Creek community. Similarly, I spent much of my time in the classroom scribbling field notes in a Moleskine notebook, an act which necessarily separated me from the immediate physical reality of the program's activities. Moreover, my field notes are also metaphorically representative of my *mental* separation from the rest of the group. Even as I sat

with a reading group or a table in workshop, I was already taking notes, building a bridge between the actual classroom and what would eventually become my "writing" of it – in other words, this thesis. As such, I did my best to find a moderate point between participant and observer, hoping that a happy medium would provide an academic yet empathic portrait of Razorback Writers.

The Razorback Writers at Owl Creek did not simply present me with a convenient confluence of pedagogical theories in practice or an environment in which to experiment with qualitative research methods, however. Rather, I am equally interested in simply telling a broader story of the program than what theoretical underpinnings or state test scores can tell. While the program and site coordinators have already diligently noted a variety of theoretical and pedagogical justifications for the Razorback Writers program, and while standardized testing in literacy may indicate to those coordinators whether or not the students who go through the program might improve their performance in objective measures, neither of these can provide a detailed picture or analysis of day-to-day life with the Razorback Writers. Assessment may provide objective standards which school programs and curricula might aim to attain, but assessment cannot tell us everything. Assessment cannot offer a sense of a classroom's intellectual or emotional tenor, of student-teacher relationships, or of the students' genuine enjoyment of their time in the classroom. On-the-ground study and observation, using qualitative ethnographic methods, might provide the program with in-depth understanding of its individual sites that goes beyond objective assessment or theoretical framing.

For immediacy's sake, I wrote down my notes during those sessions at Owl Creek rather than afterward, then transcribed them using Microsoft Office Word after each session. I wrote down the names and number of participants for a given day or activity; detailed the group's activities,

including homework tutoring, creative workshops, board-game breaks, and reading groups; and I also remarked upon statements or occurrences which I found particularly interesting. Beyond keeping written notes, I recorded those same program activities on five hour-long cassette tapes, transcribing my recordings into 83 pages of written material. Using my tape recorder, I also interviewed four mentors and six students, one time each for roughly 30 minutes, regarding their reactions to Razorback Writers, specific events within the program, and other information which they found important for discussion; in addition, I asked the mentors about their own philosophies of education and how they saw those philosophies functioning within the Razorback Writers classroom. Naturally, I also transcribed my recordings of these interview sessions.

Here, I draw on transcripts of tape recordings and of field notes from six group readings of *I Kill Giants*, collected between February 16th and March 13th, as well as the transcripts from my tape-recorded interviews with students and mentors. While many of the students are present in most or all of these reading sessions, the groups are quite protean, with students moving between groups from week to week, particularly when a few new students joined the program several weeks in. Likewise, mentors did not read with the same group of students each session. Of course, these reading groups are only one facet of Razorback Writers. As such, in my analysis I interweave transcripts and interviews from the program's various other activities and practices in order to better understand the reading groups, and the groups' impacts on the rest of the Razorback Writers experience. Although the reading groups were variable, the population of the classroom remained the same throughout the semester.

Specifically, I more closely examined the *I Kill Giants* reading group sessions because the students themselves define their reading of the graphic novel as an important, and perhaps the

most enjoyable, element of Razorback Writers. Students expressed their love for the book and asked to read it daily. They expressed disappointment when reading sessions ended, and attempted to barter with the mentors (to no avail) to let them take a copy home and read it there. One student even absconded with a copy on more than one occasion, to read and reread the book at his leisure. Perhaps more importantly, these students exhibited a deep *connection* with the text; more than one of them declared their respect for the main character and expressed the desire to cultivate her level of conviction.

As such, these reading sessions, which are arguably the center of this semester's Razorback Writers program, also served as the center of my study. First, I examine the Razorback Writers reading groups' interactions in terms of language socialization, in order to better understand their academic practices, as well the egalitarian student-tutor relationships that appear on site. Secondly, I evaluate the groups in terms of the New London Group's concept of Design, in order to better understand how the students in these groups assimilate their readings of *I Kill Giants* into their notions of literature and literacy, as well as their own creative endeavors. Finally, I also explore the ways in which the reading groups manifest the four components of multiliteracies pedagogy – 1) Situated Practice, 2) Overt Instruction, 3) Critical Framing, and 4) Transformed Practice – also expounded by the New London Group.

III. Findings and Discussion

A. Language Socialization

Someone walking into the Owl Creek library might be shocked to find groups of middle schoolers quietly and intently focused on a graphic novel while one or two of their peers alternate reading aloud the parts of different characters in the text. Someone might be even more surprised if they were familiar with the usual cacophony of voices and laughter which generally accompany activity in Razorback Writers. Yet this is exactly what did happen once or more every week as the students and mentors read together from *I Kill Giants,* a graphic novel about Barbara, a young outcast who believes that there are giants who threaten her mother's life and that it is her duty to slay those giants. Reading inside at a table or outside in the courtyard, students and mentors would break up into two groups of roughly equal size to read the text together. As mentioned earlier, the groups were not clearly defined from session to session – students and tutors migrated from one group to another depending on which chapters they had missed. By the end of each reading session, the students had all settled down to silently and intently focus on the narrative, and their peers' reading of it. Of course, the students were not always quiet in reading, and the noise surrounding each session was more telling than the silence. What is interesting about the chatter interrupting, and the students' reading of, the text is that, as Deborah Poole suggests, there is a genuine sense in which the mentors and students worked together to define what practices were important within the reading group; through the interactions and evaluations – sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly – which occurred in these groups, performance, cooperation, and to a lesser extent analysis became the skills which mentors most frequently modeled for the students, and which the students accepted and attempted to master. In the following analysis, I will examine the tripartite relationship between

novices, experts, and text as they appear in the Razorback Writers' *I Kill Giants* read-aloud sessions, and in doing so seek to understand what manner of language socialization the mentors and students engaged; namely, I will examine the ways in which the practices displayed at Owl Creek differ from and mirror those of essayist literacy, explore the values which underlie these practices, and reflect on how these practices and values are shaped cooperatively by the mentors and the students involved.

Sawyer, one of the Owl Creek students, is a young boy who likes both the *Harry Potter* series and the grunge band Nirvana, and talks about both with equal enthusiasm. In the course of his semester with Razorback Writers, he is also, as the mentors will tell you, the student who most frequently threw himself completely into the program's activities: Sawyer finished his homework quickly and with little help from the tutors; he had crafted several pages of his own comic book by the end of the semester, informed by *I Kill Giants* and his own prior knowledge of film and comic books; and he emerged as one of the primary readers and moderators in the read-aloud reading groups. In fact, Sawyer's participation in the reading groups serves as a prime example of the program's emphasis on performance in reading. By performance, I simply mean a dramatic, emotionally-inflected reading of the text. In performing *I Kill Giants*, students and mentors take on the roles of characters within the graphic novel, and the text becomes something more like a play to be acted out than information to be conveyed; as such, through performance, the students and mentors engage in more direct participation in the text, merging their own voices with those of the characters.

It may be useful to illustrate the students' performance of the text by exploring a couple of the elements of reading aloud which signal that performance. One of those elements, demonstrated most frequently and exaggeratedly by Sawyer, is following textual cues. In *I Kill*

Giants, as in most comics and graphic novels, many words are bolded, printed in all caps, or italicized for emphasis. When Sawyer read aloud, he made certain to verbally indicate this emphasis by pausing before, then using increased volume in, reading those words and phrases. For example, in one of the later sessions, he read the following line: "Stop it, Taylor. Stop it now or I'm going to **kill** you. I'm gonna kill you if you don't leave **now**." The words "kill" and "now" were printed in bold on the page, and Sawyer translated this in his reading of the text by saying those words louder than the rest of the words in the sentence. Moreover, he might further emphasize those words in the text with the use of pauses, as in the following passage: "With this [warhammer], I can stop – **any** – giant, - **kill** – any giant. If I'm strong enough, if I stay focused and – **I'm – worthy** –, I can…" Each time Sawyer came to one of the bolded words, he would provide a brief pause both before and after reading them, which, in tandem with his increase in volume, further signified the emphasis placed on those words. The use of gestures and non-verbal additions to the text functions as another area in which the student's readings become performative, as they move from verbal recitation into full-body, kinesthetic participation in the text's action. This occurred in tandem with reading aloud, as when Sawyer would shake his fist and move his hands to accompany his verbal emphasis on bolded words. However, students and tutors would also provide non-verbal, kinesthetic performances *in response* to the text. For example, as Sawyer finished reading a passage from the novel, Violet noted that the character was spitting. Upon hearing this, another student, Tara, made a spitting sound and acted as though she were spitting on the table, representing through nonverbal sound and motion the book's events.

The mentors encouraged the students' performance in reading *I Kill Giants* both implicitly, by modeling performance themselves, and explicitly, by praising students when they

engaged in performance. Much like Tara with her spitting pantomime, several mentors provided kinesthetic interpretations of moments from *I Kill Giants.* When one group had stopped to discuss the artist's intent in providing a close-up of Barbara's eye, Josh, one of the mentors, imitated the illustration by opening one eye very widely and glaring at the students in turn, a move which Violet praised and pointed out to the rest of the group. The mentors also modeled verbal performance of the text. Throughout the story, Barbara's sister often calls her name angrily, in a loud voice. Whenever this occurred in the text, Finn – another tutor – would yell "BAAARBARAAAAAAAA!!!" at the top of his lungs, and eventually the students came to expect him to take on this role. The mentors also expressed appreciation for performative reading consistently throughout the semester. In fact, at the end of the very first reading session, in which Sawyer was the only student to read aloud from the text, Marty expressed his appreciation for Sawyer's ability to "be a good narrator." Sawyer was aware of his penchant for strong performative reading, saying "You know, I've always been told that." In subsequent reading sessions, mentors and students offered direct affirmation for strong performative reading.

The clearest moment in which both performance and appreciation for performance were present occurred during one of the last reading sessions of the semester. In a rare moment, Tara had elected to read the part of the main character, Barbara. She came to the line "**YOU TRIED TO KILL ME!"** a line in all capital, bolded letters. Tara read the line softly and quietly, after which the mentors Finn and Sam exhorted her to read the line again, this time more loudly and with emotion. Tara elected not to, so Sawyer took up the mantle, reading the line at the top of his lungs and with obvious enthusiasm. When Sawyer finished the line, the entire group provided positive evaluation of his reading: the other students smiled and laughed, Sam yelled "There we go," and Sawyer and I shared a high-five, all of which indicate Sawyer's success in providing a

performative reading of the text. It is important to note here that this scene does indeed suggest that the students and tutors recognized that this performative reading was in fact a skill, a strategy which may be practiced either well or poorly, and which is worthy of commendation when it is done well. Not only did the contextual clues of the reading group sessions suggest that performative reading was commendable, the tutors explicitly stated in interviews that they found such a skill praiseworthy. For example, in an interview with Jeff, I asked which moment in Razorback Writers stood out to him the most. He responded, "Sawyer is one of the most excellent narrators at this age level that I've ever heard." As such, all of these elements – performative strategies, mentor modeling, and group affirmation of solid performative reading – suggest that this practice was indeed a central element of the *I Kill Giants* reading groups.

The group affirmation of successful reading performances brings us to the other major practice within these groups, that of cooperative reading. In reading *I Kill Giants* together, the students collaborated in order to determine who would be reading which roles and to navigate the text. While perhaps unintentional, it was the students themselves who prompted the practice of cooperative reading. While Sawyer read aloud without interruption during the first group reading, in the second session some of the other students had begun to grow restless. While he was reading, another student started reading the same passage a few seconds behind Sawyer. In order to curtail this disruption, Finn suggested that the students choose which roles they wanted to read. After that, cooperative reading became common practice in each session.

At its most successful, cooperative reading gave the students an opportunity to work together to determine who would play which roles, and to remind each other when to read. Consider the following scene, which took place in one of the semester's final reading groups:

Sawyer: No, I'll make all the noises.

Sam: Who wants to be Sophia? [Finn begins reading the part of Sophia. There is a pause, as there is some confusion about who should be reading next; one of the students begins reading, but is stopped by Tara.]

Tara: No, that's me! [Tara laughs, then resumes reading as Barbara. There is another pause.]

Sawyer: Sophia? Sophia! [Pause.]

Finn: Sound effects? Who's sound effects?

Tara: Where are we?

Finn: ::in a low voice:: "Barbaraaa…."

Tara: Who was the person who – yeah, you or him ::indicating Finn:: who did a good sound?

Finn: ::yelling:: "Barbaraaa!"

In this exchange, the students good-naturedly determined who would read which part, as when Sawyer claimed the role of reading sound effects. While he did phrase this as a demand, the tone of his voice was light, and he was also willing to pass off his normal duty of reading Barbara's lines so that someone else (Tara) might have the opportunity. The students and tutors also helped each other find their places in the reading, as there was often confusion about whose turn it was to read. While there were myriad interruptions in the reading, as students lost their place or read the wrong part, student and mentor attempted to get back on track are cordial: students laughed about reading out of turn, asked each other who was reading which role, and suggested that those who were successful performative readers read the more emphatic passages from the text. While the mentors participated in this collaboration, their contributions were not qualitatively different from those of the students. They too asked questions and made suggestions to propel the reading

forward, but these strategies were essentially the same in tone and in content as those used by the students.

However, cooperation between the students occasionally gave way to conflict, particularly when determining reading roles. For example, in the session when Finn first suggested that the students read the parts of different characters, Tara and Mark's negotiation of roles quickly turned to dispute:

Tara: Who's the boss bully? I'm gonna – I'm gonna be the fat girl.

Finn: That's the boss bully.

Tara: I'm gonna be the fat girl.

Mark: No, I wanna be the boss bully.

Tara: No, I'm gonna be the fat girl.

Mark: Nuh-uh.

Tara: Yes, I am.

Tara and Mark continued arguing until Finn stepped in and suggested that they take turns playing this role; when they continued to argue, he took on a more directive tone and said, "Bullies, read." Tara and Mark expressed confusion, so Violet assisted Finn and told them that one of them needed to read. Just as the groups recognized that it is possible to conduct performative reading well or poorly, they also acknowledged that their personal engagement could lead to conflict, which may be detrimental to cooperation. When cooperation broke down and turned to conflict, though, the mentors moved from their usual method of working *with* the students to provide more explicit direction and reprimand.

What does it matter, one may wonder, that these practices of cooperation and performance arise in the Razorback Writers' reading groups? What do they tell us about the kind

of language socialization going on at Owl Creek? What these practices expose, primarily, is a more egalitarian relationship between educators and students. As noted earlier, Poole maintains that any language socialization situation is "bidirectional," and that experts and novices contribute in some measure to determine what practices will be emphasized. However, in most educational contexts one might expect the teacher – the expert – to have much more authority than his or her students in setting the boundaries for, and practices within, socialization. In Razorback Writers, though, evidence suggests that the students do indeed have a significant amount of influence in negotiating which practices will be stressed. While mentors implicitly and explicitly affirmed performative reading from the beginning of the semester, this affirmation arose in response to what students were already doing; as such, the groups' "experts" were calling attention to a practice that was already in place. Similarly, while groups began reading cooperatively due to student disruption and restlessness, it was the mentors who recommended the students take turns and read the text collaboratively. Such give and take suggests that the students and mentors truly did work together to define the practices of these reading groups. Of course, I would be naïve, and perhaps even disingenuous, were I to claim that the students and mentors experienced a fully egalitarian relationship. At the end of the day, mentors do have the power to moderate student behavior, as when they adopted a more directive tone to curtail student conflicts. Nevertheless, those same mentors gave the students significant freedom within these groups, and generally only chose to intervene when they felt that students were forestalling the groups' activities for an inordinate amount of time.

One might ask what sort of relationship these practices have to the values of essayist literacy. I would be overreaching if I suggested that the Razorback Writers' reading groups totally support or wholly reject those values. There are certainly ways in which the groups'

practices correspond with values of the academy. In performative reading, for example, students are evaluated by their peers and mentors for their individual contributions to the reading, which one might see as analogous to the essayist emphasis on individual acts of knowledge making and analysis. However, the absence of overt analysis of the *I Kill Giants* text within these groups indicates some departure from academic practices. Students in many educational contexts are expected to recall information from and provide direct response to the texts they read, and because of this the absence of such discussion within the Razorback Writers' groups is noticeable. In place of factual recall about the events of the book or overt interpretations thereof, students instead engage in more direct participation with the text. In other words, whereas these students might otherwise have been expected to talk about the book and its meaning, reading the words on the page instead becomes the focus of their activities and their collaborative efforts.

The absence of overt analysis within these reading groups, however, does not mean that students abandoned analysis altogether. In fact, when I asked several students in interviews what they enjoyed most about *I Kill Giants*, their responses betrayed a keen, thought-out understanding of the book that might certainly be termed "theoretical." Tara, for instance, noted that she really respected the character Barbara, because she stood by her convictions even when no one else agreed with her. Similarly, Michael (another student), found Barbara appealing because of her willingness to go against the grain at great personal cost. Such a reading of *I Kill Giants* must necessarily go beyond surface interaction with the individual images and lines from the text, and requires some ability to synthesize the various scenes in the graphic novel in order to arrive at a developed interpretation of Barbara's character. While not strong analysis, this suggests a budding ability to theorize, and to take the concrete details of a text and make generalizations about them – a skill crucial to literary analysis. That the students demonstrate

such reading is worth noting for two reasons. First of all, the students themselves appear to have developed their own understandings of the text. As noted before, overt analysis does not actually arise within read-aloud sessions. Moreover, to my knowledge, the students and tutors did not spend significant time discussing the book's themes or characters, beyond simply to state that the students liked them; this literary analysis is not expressly supported by the activity of the reading group. As such, students were able to conduct some sort of analysis without the tutors' help. Secondly, the students' readings of *I Kill Giants* were highly affective: analytical understanding of the text was accompanied by expressions of enjoyment of the novel, admiration for the main character, and a desire to emulate Barbara's commitment and conviction. Statements such as these hint at strong emotional investment in the text; however, such investment does not replace, but rather accompanies, understanding of the text. On the other hand, this cursory analysis is neither sustained by the students, nor is it expressly encouraged or supported by the group; as such, it would be reaching to suggest that students learned literary analysis in any meaningful sense during their participation in these reading groups.

With the bidirectional nature of language socialization in mind, let us return now to some of the other overarching theoretical concerns addressed throughout this project. Having more closely identified some of the elements of language socialization within the *I Kill Giants* reading groups, one may see how Razorback Writers' egalitarian classroom dynamic functions as a site where the main pedagogical connection between Poole's work, the New London Group, and literacy outreach research arises. Specifically, Poole and the New London Group both offer principles which would support a collaborative teacher-student dynamic in the classroom. Schieffelin and Ochs and Poole describe the bidirectional process of language socialization, which is, of course, descriptive rather than prescriptive. However, knowing that students will

inevitably contribute to shaping social-academic situations ought to call the traditional authoritarian classroom into question, as such a dynamic suppresses students' capacities to fully participate within the classroom. As such, while Poole may not call for an egalitarian classroom environment outright, her elucidation of the bidirectional nature of the student-teacher relationship offers some justification for such an environment.

Moreover, the questions raised by language socialization studies jibe with the New London Group's definition of pedagogy, "a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation" (60). Like Poole, the New London Group do not overtly call for a more collaborative student-teacher dynamic; however, readers may infer from the New London Group's agenda that such a relationship is preferable to the traditional classroom hierarchy. For one thing, the New London Group proposes as their pedagogical goal that students become "active designers – makers – of social futures" (64). If teachers desire that students take an active role in shaping their futures, it would certainly behoove them to allow students more freedom within the classroom. Secondly, the New London Group argues that "meaning-making is an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rules" (74). Such a philosophy allows a great deal of room for students to use the classroom as a space for discovering and creating meaning, and we might expect teachers to divest themselves of some of their classroom control in order to allow for the sometimes messy, frequently rewarding possibility of students discovering knowledge for themselves, with the teacher as a guide and collaborator, rather than keeper and dispenser of knowledge. Finally, the New London Group maintains that, in order to be relevant, "learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities students bring to learning" (72). How can teachers possibly "recruit" students' differences in

experience, background, and belief without relinquishing some of their own classroom control and allowing the students greater agency in shaping their own learning and learning environment?

So, there are strong connections between the ideals of multiliteracies education and of a collaborative classroom; one might also argue that a more collaborative classroom is particularly desirable for university-sponsored literacy programs. As Ellen Cushman suggests, scholars ought to work *with* members of the community to provide service, emphasizing "give-and-take relationships" between members of the academy and the surrounding area (17). Similarly, Linda Flower and Shirley Bryce Heath argue in favor of turning university-based community service into "a collaboration with communities" based on "mutual inquiry and literate action" (43). Granted, Cushman and Flower and Heath write about university outreach in terms of serving adult members of the community, but surely a program such as Razorback Writers is no less an example of the university serving its community. As such, even though Razorback Writers mentors are working with children, we may expect – if not necessarily demand – that they bring this same spirit of collaboration into the classroom. After all, we may hope that this classroom might prepare those same students to pursue a give-and-take relationship with the university as adults. Thus, a more egalitarian student-instructor dynamic is a fitting one for a university-sponsored literacy outreach program. In sum, our knowledge of the language socialization process, the pedagogical goals of the New London Group, and the social goals of university-sponsored outreach all point to the same implication: A collaborative classroom in which students and teachers work together in order to discover and create meaning and knowledge. As Finn maintained in his interview, "In a traditional classroom, it's strictly: the teacher's in the front, the kids are in the back, and they're being taught at. With this [dynamic at Razorback

Writers] we can kind of show them something they might want to know without feeling like they're being taught." The Razorback Writers at Owl Creek create such a classroom space, and, while the space they create certainly has its shortcomings and pedagogical limitations (as I will discuss further in the conclusion to this work), it also provides a place for students to flex their academic muscles, working in tandem with the program's mentors to determine the practices within their reading groups.

B. Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and the Process of Design

Now that I have explored in some detail the mentor-student relationship in the Razorback Writers reading groups at Owl Creek, I would like to take a closer look at the focus of those groups: *I Kill Giants*. While Patricia could have chosen any book for these students to read, she chose a graphic novel, a particular kind of fiction marked by comic-book style frames containing illustrations and dialogue. She also chose to make graphic novels the theme of the entire Razorback Writers curriculum for the semester, asking students to craft their own graphic novels in the course of their time together. While this may seem like an innocuous, inconsequential decision – one of many options available to someone crafting an arts-integration curriculum – the choice of graphic novel reveals the program's commitment to multiliteracies pedagogy; more specifically, the students' experience with *I Kill Giants* – and with their own writing – illuminates the New London Group's concept of Design, as the students drew from Available Design (i.e. *I Kill Giants* and other graphic novels/comic books) in order to create their own graphic novels, transforming Available Design into the Redesigned.

In "Marveling at *The Man Called Nova*: *Comics as Sponsors of Multimodal Literacy*," Dale Jacobs argues that comic books (we may also include graphic novels here) comprise a "major site of literate practice," not unlike "normal" forms of print literacy, namely books.

However, Jacobs notes that comic books are not only a place where children and adults practice "print literacy but also […] multimodal literacy – the ability to create meaning with and from texts that operate in print form and in some combination of visual, audio, and spatial forms as well" (181). Comic books are in fact sites of multiple forms of literacy, containing within their pages image and text weaving together to form narrative. Rather than viewing comic books as "debased written texts," Jacobs urges readers to acknowledge that "as we function in the world our literacies operate not only in the print realm but in the visual, audio, and spatial realms as well" (183). As such, readers may accept comic books as a legitimate form of "multimodal literacy or as multiliteracy" (182). Such an approach might encourage teachers to take comic books and other multimodal texts seriously in the classroom. Moreover, argues Jacobs, "[Comic books] can shed light […] on the literate practices that surround all multimodal texts and the ways in which engagement with such texts can and should affect our pedagogies" (183).

Jacobs pays special attention to the New London Group's concept of Design. He reminds readers that, in the process of Designing – whether creating or simply consuming a text – individuals draw on their awareness of the Available Design provided by various modes of meaning-making, such as visual, gestural, or linguistic meaning, in order to recreate the text (184). Jacobs is here describing the process of *reading* comic books, and thus illuminates the ways in which texts are transformed as they pass through the filter of our personal experience and knowledge. However, one might just as easily apply Jacobs' understanding of Design to the creation of comic books, and that is exactly what I have in mind here. I would like now to examine the *I Kill Giants* reading groups as prime examples of the process of Design, as the students drew on their knowledge of graphic novels in order to understand the text, as well as to create their own graphic novels. Emerging from my data is a narrative of progression, wherein,

early in the semester, students were prompted by the mentors' questions and explanations to think about Available Design in their current reading and writing of comic books in the after-school program. Later in the semester, however, we find more and more examples of the students drawing, without being prompted, from their own well of Available Design, which they brought to bear on their own creative endeavors[2].

While I will later show some scenes from Razorback Writers in which the Owl Creek students draw on their own store of Available Design options, I would like first to explore the ways that mentors exhibited Available Design for the students. In a very real sense, the mentors supplied these students with questions to aid in critical thinking about Available Design, as well as explicit instances in which they modeled such critical thinking for the students. One of the main strategies mentors used early in the semester was to pose questions to the students during the *I Kill Giants* readings, asking them to consider why the author/artist of the text chose to use certain images and dialogue to help elaborate on the narrative of the text. Consider, for example, the following transcript from the very first *I Kill Giants* reading group of the semester. Patricia pointed to a frame in the graphic novel that features some of the popular girls at Barbara's school, sitting on the bus and talking about such pop-cultural issues as the Academy Awards and Britney Spears. Barbara, meanwhile, is reading the Dungeons and Dragons *Dungeonmaster's Handbook*. Patricia asked the group the following question:

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[2] I should note here that I am *not* saying that this narrative of progression should indicate that the Owl Creek students somehow miraculously acquired a full store of Available Design techniques and conventions only after a semester with Razorback Writers. Rather, I explore this narrative in order to emphasize the link between the students' reading of *I Kill Giants* and their own comic book projects, as the mentors' practices from the reading groups find new expression in the students' writing. Jeff, one of Razorback Writers' site coordinators at Owl Creek, explains that the students are "making their own characters based on the novel that we're reading [*I Kill Giants*]," emphasizing that the students' comic-book creation is *rooted* in their reading of *I Kill Giants*.

Patricia: Why do they show these characters [the popular girls]?

Sawyer: Umm… they're the bullies? They're probably popular?

Patricia: Yeah, they're probably the popular ones, and may be bothering Barbara. [The students agree, noting Barbara's growling and smoke coming out of her ears as a sign that she's annoyed.]

Patricia: …In this context, we know she's not like these girls. Like, she's not interested in this stuff, like the Oscars…

Jeff: She's reading the Dungeonmaster's guidebook. You know, Dungeons and Dragons, and that's just totally not what they're talking about at all.

A few minutes later, Patricia asked the students about a frame which features a close-up of an eye:

Patricia: Why is the close-up shot on her eye? What does that mean?

Sawyer: Like, they were looking at something really hard…

Patricia: […]Moves closer and closer to her eyes. Why are her eyes black?

Sawyer: Maybe it's… She's trying to hide, she looks scared.

In these mentor-driven conversations, Patricia asked the students to offer possible reasons why the author chose a certain visual or textual design, or what that design might signify for readers of the novel's narrative. As such, she prompted the students to draw upon their own past experiences with visual and textual representations of a story's meaning – in other words, their store of Available Design – in order to better understand the narrative meaning in *I Kill Giants*.

In the first conversation, Patricia asked the students to consider the authors' possible purpose for portraying this scene on the bus. The students all correctly identified these as the popular girls, and Patricia affirmed this interpretation, adding that "Barbara's not like these girls." Jeff further emphasized the juxtaposition between the popular girls and Barbara, indicating that the Dungeonmaster's guidebook she is reading marks her as having a different set of interests. By pointing to clues within the graphic novel's dialogue and other textual cues, Patricia and Jeff worked to deepen the students' understanding of this scene by discussing some of the visual and verbal tools which the authors use to contrast Barbara's geekiness with the other girls' cultural savvy. This is a prime example of Available Design because the tutors pointed to both the girls' discussion of movie awards and to the Dungeonmaster's Handbook, both of which are cultural indicators of pop cultural awareness and geekiness, respectively. Without having "stored" knowledge of these different forms of cultural capital, a reader could not fully appreciate the dichotomy being created in this scene. As such, this prior knowledge (part of one's store of Available Design) helps readers as they construct meaning within the text.

In the prior example, it was the tutors who pointed out to the students the conventional cues which might aid in interpreting this scene; however, a few moments later, the students displayed their own awareness of Visual and Linguistic Design conventions, as they pointed out evidence from *I Kill Giants* which suggests that the popular girls "may be bothering Barbara." The students noted that Barbara seems to be grumbling – shown through the use of ellipses – and also has smoke rising from her head, two Design choices which lend credence to the students' reading of this passage. It seems improbable that the students were interpreting these cues without any prior knowledge – more likely, they were drawing on their past experience with

other drawn/animated texts (such as other graphic novels, TV cartoons, animated films, and the like) in which smoke above the head is frequently used as an indication of frustration.

Similarly, in asking the students why the illustrator of *I Kill Giants* chose to draw a close-up of Barbara's eye, and then to draw her with black eyes, Patricia again invited them to interpret a Design decision. Sawyer suggested Barbara might simply be "looking at something really hard," but that she also "looks scared." To come to this conclusion, Sawyer might simply look to the image's context – that Barbara has just come home to find herself alone, and so we might reasonably expect her to exhibit some apprehension. However, it is also more than likely that Sawyer was also drawing on an awareness of Visual Design decisions in showing fear and trepidation, that many comic book illustrators draw larger pupils to indicate fear or surprise. In any event, Patricia used these two conversations as an opportunity for students to think critically about Design choices in *I Kill Giants*. Interestingly enough, this not only invites students to draw on their own well of Available Design; such a move *supplements* their knowledge as well. In so doing, Patricia prepared the students to be aware of Design choices available to them in their own creative projects.

Outside the pages of *I Kill Giants,* the tutors also encouraged students to draw on Available Design as they created their own comic books. During a special Razorback Writers workshop in which Will, a graphic artist, taught the students shading and drawing techniques. Huck and Mark both asked students questions about their characters that framed their decisions in terms of Available Design and convention. Finn asked one of the students, "When you say she [your character] flies, does she fly like Superman, or like in a plane? … So she flies, does she have a cape? [Student is uncertain, so Finn explains what a cape is, gesturing with his arms] So when you go like this, it looks like a bat?" Almost simultaneously, Will discussed with another

student her need for a nemesis. "But you always need to have a bad guy. You know, there's like Batman and the Joker…" In these two very brief statements, both Finn and Will call up cultural icons and visual design conventions. As the Owl Creek students were creating comic books, most of them created superheroes as their protagonists. Because of this, in helping students decide how to portray their characters or structure their stories, these mentors reminded them of specific comic book heroes and villains, such as Superman and Batman, to help them more clearly visualize the design options in front of them – for example, whether or not their character would fly like Superman or in a plane. The same was true of Finn's description of the cape, which is an icon of superheroes in general, but more specifically of those who fly.

In a similar discussion, Elise also referred to Batman while working with another student, who was explaining to Elise that her character is a vampire cat who kills people:

> **Elise:** She kills people? Who's gonna stop her?
>
> **Student**: Nobody, she kills the bad […] that try to kill people.
>
> **Elise**: Oh, so she kinda helps out by killing the bad guys?
>
> **Student**: Yeah.
>
> **Elise**: That's kinda like Batman. He's a vigilante. He goes around killing bad guys […] That's really interesting!

While the student in this conversation designed her character before Elise suggested that character's similarity to Batman, Elise nevertheless couched the student's decision in the broader arena of comic book narrative and character conventions, thus providing the student with a greater web of Available Design with which to frame her own character.

The previous examples are incredibly helpful in understanding the ways in which mentors model the use of Available Design for the students at Owl Creek. The question naturally arises, however: Are these students taking such subtle lessons to heart? Do we know that they are thinking more critically about their own creative decisions as being filtered through the conventions and images offered by Available Design? I would argue that indeed they are, and it is Sawyer's comic book draft that most clearly demonstrates an awareness of Available Design. I spoke with Sawyer about his comic book several times throughout the semester, asking him questions about his characters' development, his plans for the narrative, and his design decisions for the comic book itself. The day I asked Sawyer to discuss his draft with me, he insisted we step outside of the classroom into the main library area, where he felt it would be easier to talk. In our quieter surroundings, Sawyer led me frame-by-frame through the first page of his draft, indicating the narrative significance of each individual image. His story, *The Adventures of Jonh* [sic] *and Eye-Man*, recounts the crime-solving exploits of the highly agile, well-dressed secret agent John, and his sidekick, who is indeed a giant human eye. Throughout his draft, Sawyer exhibited a keen awareness of the Visual and Linguistic Design elements at his disposal.

First of all, Sawyer clearly drew on some very traditional Design elements within the comic book/graphic novel genre, and demonstrated a surprising mastery of these elements' potential for enhancing his own narrative. Consider, for example, his use of frames. As one might expect, Sawyer crafted his comic book as a series of frames – individual images meant to propel the narrative forward, separated into boxes and arranged on each page of a graphic novel or comic. One might also expect that Sawyer, by no means a professional or experienced comic-book illustrator, would arrange his frames in a fairly simplistic fashion, in predictable rows with little to no variation in their size or arrangement. However, Sawyer's use of frames was anything

but simplistic. He divided each page vertically into thirds using two horizontal lines, and within these three segments Sawyer used the space to draw a variety of frame sizes and combinations. Some segments consist only of one large image, giving a sense of space or of a climactic narrative tenor – as on page four, wherein the top frame shows the fight between John and the Port-to-Port Killer. He divided some of these segments in half with a vertical line, and these frames might be used for parallel, to shift from one perspective to another, or simply to indicate narrative progression. Finally, Sawyer divided some of his segments into three frames, often two on one side of the page separated by a horizontal line, with a larger image on the other half of the page, separated from the first two by a vertical line. These images frequently indicate a rapid progression of narrative action, as, for example, the middle segment of the first page moves from John's sighting the dead body, to his grabbing Eye-Man's optic nerve, to Eye-Man looking down the alley at the victim.

Such marvelous use of a variety of frames certainly speaks to Sawyer's own high level of creativity; it also displays a strong ability to draw on Visual Design conventions used in other comic books and graphic novels. In *I Kill Giants*, for example, almost no two pages' frames are exactly alike, and the different organizational strategies used by the illustrator often enhance the narrative: full-page frames suggest scope and space, whereas unusually small frames frequently hint at intensity of emotion. Even if Sawyer had never read another comic book or graphic novel – not likely – we can certainly assume that the framing techniques used in *I Kill Giants* had an impact on his own creative decisions. In other words, Sawyer drew from a well of Available Design elements in order to format his graphic novel. I would not argue that Sawyer was always fully conscious of his frames' impact on the narrative; however, I would suggest that he has at

least been made aware of the possibilities of creative use of framing, and he experiments with such possibilities here.

Sawyer also draws on his awareness of Visual Design conventions in order to decide what images to include within the frames of his graphic novel. As in *I Kill Giants* – and any number of other graphic novels and comic books – Sawyer's draft features images from a variety of perspectives, from images of whole characters, to close-ups on eyes and hands, to overhead images which cover a wide swath of space. One need look no farther than the first page of Sawyer's draft (see Appendix III) to see the wide variety of images he uses; it is also immediately clear that Sawyer understands the narrative potential inherent in the use of multiple perspectives. In the first frame, we see John and Eye-Man in full, and by Eye-Man's posture we may assume that they are in motion. The next frame immediately cuts to a close-up of John's eye, followed by John's arm taking hold of Eye-Man's optic nerve. Comic-book readers and movie viewers, drawing on their own store of Available Design, will immediately recognize Sawyer's close-up of John's eye as a signal that the character has spotted something. These two frames combine to create a sense of suspense, leading into the next frame, which pans out to an over-the-shoulder view of an alleyway, where Eye-Man is looking at a body surrounded by blood. The reader/viewer is then moved from this bird's-eye view to John, head and torso, presumably surveying the scene in the alleyway. Sawyer masterfully leads his audience through this first page, waiting until the page's final frame to reveal what it is that John sees. Sawyer again shows us the corpse, this time up close, where we find that *someone* has written "Hi John!" in the pool of blood.

Consider the sheer awareness of Visual Design conventions Sawyer would have to possess in order to draft such an effective series of frames. First of all, he would have to know

that comic books and graphic novels are indeed sequential art – that is, a series of separate images, usually comprising a narrative. Secondly, he would have to know that comic book illustrators frequently make use of multiple angles from frame to frame. Beyond these two basic facts, however, Sawyer also seemed to understand how illustrators use different frame sizes and multiple perspectives in order to influence the tone and meaning of a narrative. Sawyer, then, drew on Available Design in a deeply meaningful way. Not only did he draft his story using multiple frames and images because that's what one is "supposed" to do when creating a graphic novel; rather, he drew on these Design conventions in order to create a more meaningful, suspenseful narrative.

Sawyer suggested in an interview that he was aware of his own use of Design conventions, although he would likely not call it that.

> **Ian:** […] Tell me why you made some of the decisions that you did. So why did you draw, like, that picture of just the eye.

> **Sawyer:** Well, a lot of the movies, you like see them running, and then you see like their eyes, but, and then they stop all of a sudden.

So Sawyer understood that his ideas came from *somewhere*; in this instance, he maintained that his decision to depict a close-up was cinematic in nature, a camera move he had seen used in film. Moreover, I mentioned to Sawyer after our interview that I recalled seeing a similar close-up in *I Kill Giants*. Almost guiltily, he allowed that yes, the close-up on Barbara's eye had indeed been an inspiration for his own work. We might therefore draw a line straight from the students' first day of reading *I Kill Giants,* the session during which Patricia asked the students to think critically about the meaning of the close-up on Barbara's eye, all the way to this moment

several weeks later, as Sawyer described for me the significance of each frame of his graphic novel. Sawyer clearly drew upon a fairly immediate source of Visual-Design inspiration, finding use for a frame very similar to one (or more) that he had seen in the graphic novel he had been reading all semester. However, Sawyer also attributed his inspiration to his experience with film, so it would be unfair to suggest that Sawyer *only* drew on *I Kill Giants* to design his graphic novel. Rather, I would argue that *I Kill Giants* became, for him, yet another source among many books, comic books and films, from which he might draw inspiration for Visual and Linguistic Design.

Having explored the ways in which students at Owl Creek engage in Design, let us consider how their engagement with this process relates to this study's other overarching theoretical concerns – namely, language socialization and university sponsorship. In a very real sense, Available Design is language socialization, only extended to include elements of design beyond language. If language socialization consists of introducing and modeling "expected ways of thinking, believing, and acting" about language to and for students, then Available Design means learning to draw on a wider variety of conventional elements – visual, aural, gestural, *and* linguistic. In the Owl Creek classroom, students certainly were introduced to a community of language users, but more importantly they were brought into a community of meaning makers. Language became just one tool in their arsenal of Design. Such a classroom, where students are encouraged to explore a broad, supportive web of literate meaning, should certainly be seen as a space in which university-sponsored outreach is right at home. One of university outreach's great goals is empowering members of the surrounding community to more confidently and effectively engage with and participate in literate practice. If this is the case, then the process of Design – and the classroom in which it is modeled – is truly empowering, teaching students to think

critically about, and boldly use, a wide variety of meaning-making tools, including words and images.

C. The Cycle of Multiliteracies Pedagogy

If the New London Group's theory of Design constitutes the "What" of multiliteracies (as the group would maintain that it does), its theory of pedagogy, consisting of Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice, forms the "How" of multiliteracy education (73, 82). These four practices provide the scholastic structure within which students can work through the process of Design – alone, together, and with the aid of teachers. Arguably, the most important element of the New London Group's pedagogical theory is Situated Practice, wherein students are immersed "in a community of learners engaged in authentic […] practice" (84). The New London Group emphasizes that Situated Practice is rooted in the notion that knowledge requires context. As they argue, "Knowledge is inextricably tied to the ability to recognize and act on patterns of data and experience, a process that is acquired only through experience" (84). In other words, students are more likely to learn concepts and skills when they are participating in a meaningful educational community, if for no other reason than that knowledge itself is meaningful when discovered and constructed within a genuine community. Naturally, then, engaging students in Situated Practice is of paramount importance to a multiliteracies classroom.

I have explored some of the ways in which Sawyer and other Razorback Writers students participated in the process of Design – particularly by consciously and unconsciously making use of Available Design elements – both in reading *I Kill Giants* and in crafting their own graphic novels. In effect, I have shown Razorback Writers students practicing the "what" of

multiliteracies pedagogy. Having done so, I will next analyze the Razorback Writers classroom in terms of Situated Practice and the rest, in order to better understand the framework within which students practice Design. Such a discussion is worthwhile on two fronts: first of all, as has been mentioned, illuminating the "how" of multiliteracies education *in situ* among the Razorback Writers of Owl Creek helps make sense of the space in which these students Design texts; secondly, understanding the mulilteracies cycle of pedagogy allows us to come back full circle to our discussion of language socialization and the egalitarian student-teacher dynamic. The four components of multiliteracies pedagogy provide language and concepts which prove helpful in understanding how and why a collaborative classroom could and, in the case of Razorback Writers, generally *does* work.

If Situated Practice – students working within an authentic learning community – is in fact the foundational element of multiliteracies education, then we ought first to examine the ways in which the Razorback Writers at Owl Creek engage in Situated Practice. There are two criteria which a classroom must fulfill in order to succeed as an authentic learning community. First of all, members of the group must agree about the values and practices of the classroom, both about what is important and about what is actually done within the time and space allotted to the group. Secondly, the members of the classroom must see themselves *as* a community, rather than a loose affiliation of students who happen to have been placed in the same classroom.

One of the first indications we find that the members of Razorback Writers see themselves as members of a community is the commitment of the mentors to creating a collaborative classroom, wherein they work *with* the students to complete projects and to participate in the program's activities. Such an attitude on the part of the program's tutors jibes well with the more egalitarian relationship between teachers and students set forth by the New London Group. In

order for students to experience meaningful Situated Practice, the Group maintains, "The community must include experts, people who have mastered certain practices. Minimally, it must include expert novices, people who are experts at learning new domains in some depth" (85). That is, rather than taking an authoritarian position at the front of the classroom and dictating knowledge *to* the students, the tutors view themselves as co-partners in the classroom's activities. According to the New London Group, instructors ought to enlist their own knowledge and learning experiences in order to assist students as they engage in meaningful practice, rather than simply teaching authoritatively as the primary means of transmitting information.

All the Owl Creek mentors I interviewed emphasized the cooperative relationship they intentionally cultivated with the students. One of the key ways in which mentors fostered such a relationship was by working alongside the students, creating their own characters, writing their own graphic novels, and participating in the *I Kill Giants* reading groups. Jeff, one of the site's coordinators, confided that, when tutors engaged in the same work as the students, it got "the students [saying] 'Hey, this is something that older students are doing, like our mentors are doing this, so we can do it too.'" In other words, Jeff's hope was to create an environment where the students could feel as though the work they are doing is somehow meaningful; after all, even the teachers were doing it. Some of the semester's CIED student tutors echoed Jeff's sentiments. Both Elise and Breanne explained to me that their task was to provide a positive, encouraging environment for the students to learn and to try new things. Says Elise, the mentors were "just kinda helping them along" and offered the students "positive encouragement." Breanne agreed with her, describing herself as a "motivator, encourager, pretty specifically." This philosophy of encouragement and equal participation is not simply a nebulous, feel-good concept for the tutors. Rather, as Elise maintained, the students and tutors each truly brought something to the table in

this instructor-learner dynamic. She described each group's contributions to the program's work in creating graphic novels. "I think they're bringing these huge imaginations," Elise told me, "and then we're bringing in more, like 'structure' help, and how to mold [their stories…] They're bringing youth and funny faces and then we're like structure – in a fun way!" As such, to the Razorback Writers mentors, their own contributions to the classroom did not take precedence over the students' experiences and ideas.

Finn, another tutor, spoke with the authority of experience on the mentors' collaborative relationship with their students at Owl Creek. A mentor who had the unique opportunity of working with the Owl Creek Razorback Writers two semesters in a row, Finn compared the sometimes frustrating, often authorative tone of the Fall 2011 semester to the Spring 2012 semester, the focus of this current study. Finn celebrated the egalitarian learning space which Razorback Writers provides for its students, a space built through the messy process of experience and adjustment. While last semester, he explained, the mentors "had to be authority a lot of the time," he emphasized that this semester, the mentors were more interested in "walking next to [the students], walking with them." Because of this more egalitarian atmosphere, Finn maintained, the students viewed their mentors "as people, instead of teachers […I]t's not quite peer relations, but almost. So they can learn from us without having to be taught." The great hope for Finn and the other mentors was to create a learning space in which the students would not feel cowed by their instructors into thinking, behaving, or creating in a specific way; rather, their ideal community is one in which the line between mentor and student is blurry, with learners and instructors working together to create a productive learning environment.

The mentors affirmed their desire for a strong sense of community with and among their students. More importantly, however, they time and again expressed the belief that this

community was in fact being developed. While he did describe the Spring 2012 Razorback Writers program much more favorably than he did that from the previous fall, Finn was quick to note that the Spring 2012 students are not "better or worse [than the others], but they're more one group, they're one cohesive group." From Finn's point of view, as from the other mentors', a strong sense of community *among the students* was a significant marker of the program's success. Finn was not the only mentor to note this increasing sense of community among the Razorback Writers students. In her interview, Breanne described a period in the semester when the group nearly doubled in size, as students from other after-school programs were swapped into Razorback Writers. She explained that, while the new group of students had some difficulty integrating with the semester's original participants, the two groups quickly blended together to create a cohesive learning community.

In particular, Breanne recalled an afternoon session in which some of the new and original female students bonded with one another and with her. Said Breanne,

> [The girls and I] just walked outside, and we were like, "Let's sit on this bench." And then all of a sudden they're telling me about everything. It was really nice. They were like, "Here's this letter my ex-boyfriend wrote me," and it was the most hysterical one I've ever read, too. Umm… and, "Here's what my mom thinks about my ex-boyfriend," and "Oh, you like my sunglasses? I got them here. My brother gave them to me. I like my brother." Yeah, it was great!

In this brief narrative, Breanne provided just one example of the community being built at Owl Creek, both among the students and between the students and mentors. As Breanne suggested, the female students in her anecdote clearly felt rather comfortable with one another, each offering up personal stories and opinions within the context of a group conversation. Not only were they comfortable sharing this information with one another, however. They were also willing to include Breanne in such discussions. As such, we see how these members of

Razorback Writers, even members of different ages or peer groups, came together as a broader community.

If the mentors saw disparate groups blending together as a larger, meaningful community, they also found evidence of outlying members being brought into the fold. Consider, for example, Jenny, one of the more rebellious members of Razorback Writers. At the beginning of the semester, Jenny showed little interest in the program, constantly made fun of the other students, and frequently talked back to mentors. As Breanne explained in her interview, "It's hard to get [Jenny] to want to talk to you. I mean, it's not hard to get her to talk to you, but for her to actually want to be there is a struggle." Similarly, Stu noted that "it used to be that [Jenny] wouldn't even participate or talk or do much of anything with the […] group." However, both mentors describe the ways in which Jenny became a more integrated member of the Razorback Writers' community over the course of the semester. According to Breanne, Jenny was one of the female students who bonded with her and with the other girls. Jenny responded very positively to Breanne's encouragement and compliments. Stu described these same changes, and noted Jenny's greater sense of involvement in the program's projects. "She's actually become a lot nicer to everyone […] she seems to have gotten a lot more appreciative of everybody that is working on this stuff." Moreover, "she's even started doing a lot of her own drawing, working on the comic book [which has] really helped with her being able to at least express, you know, how she's feeling." Stu argued that much of Jenny's improved participation and attitude stemmed from "the fact that she's getting this positive… positive reinforcement that, you know, like, that she wants to, you know, giving her an outlet as far as drawing or showing her that that's okay to do that, that's an okay way to express your feelings, how everything's going, you know." A pattern of integration emerges here, wherein greater positive feedback encouraged Jenny to

participate in the creative work at Owl Creek, which in turn gave her an outlet for frustration and strong feelings, which led to more encouragement from her mentors, and so on. Jenny, then, is an excellent example of how even students apparently "left out" of the learning community may be encouraged to join in and participate in its goals and work.

It is all well and good that the mentors viewed Razorback Writers as a cohesive community. However, if we are interested in an egalitarian learning environment, then we must also look to the students. How did they see the Razorback Writers group? Did they view the program as a meaningful community engaged in meaningful work? And, in fact, the students make very clear that they did. On a very basic level, the students agreed that theirs was a community of shared activities. Whenever I asked the question "What happens at Razorback Writers?" students listed one, several, or all of the following activities: reading *I Kill Giants*, writing their own comic books, seeking homework help, playing games, and playing outside. While individual students certainly preferred some activities more than others – for example, Michael felt that "we don't play enough kickball" during the program – what is important is that they all agreed that *these* are the activities that constitute Razorback Writers. Granted, while such a notion may not be surprising, and tells us very little about any sort of deeper group dynamic among students, understanding that these students saw themselves as engaging in the same work provides us with a basic framework for exploring the deeper significance of the Owl Creek learning community.

Not only did the students agree on what kind of work occurred at Razorback Writers, they also agreed that they were engaged in *meaningful* work. This was especially true of the *I Kill Giants* reading groups and of the comic-book workshops. I earlier described in detail the classroom practices surrounding the students' reading groups, and included a brief survey of the

students' own analyses of the text. Recall, for example, that Tara explained "how Barbara was just different from everybody else, and she doesn't care what other people say, and she fights back for herself and stands up for her friends." Similarly, Michael noted that the main character, Barbara, was "different from all the other kids, that she believes in giants, which turns out to be true, but nobody believes in it until it happens," a conviction which he compared to a student refusing to stop believing in Santa Claus even when the entire class is against him. Earlier, I explored how these statements make clear the students' ability to engage in close analysis of a text. Now, however, I would also like to note that Tara's and Michael's musings were equally indicative of the text's meaning and relevance to them. Rather than simply claim that they enjoyed the action, or the story, or the pictures in *I Kill Giants*, Tara and Michael both found strong messages of free thought and loyalty with (ostensible) relevance to their own lives. As such, beyond simply reading the graphic novel as a fun story with lots of pictures, the students again *participated* in the text, drawing meaning from their reading that goes beyond surface concerns of style and structure.

Similarly, the students found significant value in crafting their own graphic novels, as these novels become a site for exercising their own creativity. Of course, one might pose the objection that these children were drawing, coloring, and, for all intents and purposes, making storybooks. Obviously they were having fun. However, as the student themselves explain, this work was important beyond after-school recreation. Michael, again, described this importance rather eloquently: "I like […] working on the story. It's like a step up, and at the end you get to bind it, and you feel like you're accomplished." Pressed to explain what he meant by "step up," Michael replied "Like, most kids don't write books. But when you like, whenever you get a book and you pick it up off the shelf, it isn't written by kids, it's written by an older person." What

Michael was implying, of course, is that Razorback Writers provided young students with a space to actually write a book, an activity typically barred from them in any serious sense. Yet at Razorback Writers these students were given the opportunity to join "older" authors on the bookshelf, as genuine writers and artists. For Michael to express kinship with "real" authors points to just how meaningful his work at Owl Creek was. Far from absent-minded doodlers, he and the other students took on the role of storytellers and practitioners of the writing craft.

Though such feelings of meaningful work and community are telling, the significance of Razorback Writers for Sawyer, Michael, and the rest goes even beyond the opportunity to produce a serious work of art. In the end, Razorback Writers was a liberating experience for the students at Owl Creek, providing a striking contrast to their lives at home and at school. Whereas at school and at home, the students maintained, there are limits on what they can say or think, Razorback Writers offered an opportunity to say what was really on their minds, and they had the freedom to act the way they wanted to act. Students were free to be imaginative in crafting their graphic novels, but this liberation went beyond the work of the classroom. Even the classroom space offered a sense of freedom, as Sawyer noted when he explained to me that he was allowed to move about the classroom, rather than being forced to remain in his seat. Students were free to speak to one another, to move between tables and work spaces, to banter with tutors, and to spend time inside or outside as they liked. For Sawyer, this freedom even manifested itself in seemingly trivial classroom decorum: "I don't even have to ask to go to the bathroom."Of the program, Tara said simply, "It's freedom."   What is interesting is that, while students certainly did have a great deal of agency in Razorback Writers, there were of course limits placed on their behavior. During my observations at Owl Creek, I regularly witnessed students being reprimanded for cussing, treating another student unkindly, placing themselves in

potentially dangerous situations, and using the library computers recreationally during the program's time slot. And yet, despite these boundaries, the Owl Creek students felt *free* during Razorback Writers.

While members of the New London Group describe Situated Practice at length, they also emphasize that Situated Practice is insufficient as the sole means of pedagogy. For example, they argue that "Situated Practice does not necessarily lead to conscious control and awareness of what one knows and does, which is a core goal of much school-based learning," and that "such Situated Practice does not necessarily create learners or communities who can critique what they are learning in terms or historical, cultural, political, ideological, or value-centered relations" (84). In other words, while Situated Practice is certainly a key element of multiliteracies, and other "progressive," pedagogies (84), it does not enable students to "know what they know."It is because of this deficiency that the New London Group includes three other elements of a successful multiliteracies pedagogy, one of which is Overt Instruction. Overt Instruction constitutes "all those active interventions on the part of the teacher and other experts that scaffold learning activities," and which make explicit the implicit skills and knowledge learned in the Situated Practice of a learning community (86). Practicing Overt Instruction gives mentors and instructors an opportunity to guide and focus the learning process, to present uniform information which will inform the inescapably unique learning experiences of students in an authentic community. As such, Overt Instruction becomes a necessary element of instruction, and contributes to a truly *collaborative* classroom; if Situated Practice centers on student-directed learning, then Overt Instruction provides a teacher-driven counterpoint, in which instructors might guide classroom learning and respond to student concerns. In the Razorback Writers classroom, mentors and coordinators practice Overt Instruction in three specific ways:

they provide teacher-centered lessons, paper handouts, and tutoring assistance and intervention during workshops and reading groups.

At several different points in the semester, Patricia and a series of outside "experts" provided students with teacher-driven lessons and activities to more clearly scaffold the creation of their comic books. These lessons focused on different elements of drafting, including drawing, storyboarding and character development. During one of the first sessions of the semester, in fact, Rebecca – one of the program directors – led Razorback Writers in a series of character and story development activities to prepare students to design their own comic books. For the activity, Rebecca asked the students to work in pairs to develop characters based on commonplace objects (a cork, a baby shoe, a cheap necklace), and then to give those characters motives and a place to meet. The following is a brief sample of her lesson:

> **Rebecca**: Okay everybody, so once you guys have your characters, and once you guys know where they're gonna meet. Then, once you figure out… Have you told each other what your character wants? So, tell them what your character wants, and then figure out – how are you guys gonna be in this place together and how are each of you gonna get what you want, or how are you at least gonna work at trying?

After the activity, she gathered the class back into one group. She then asked several students to describe their characters and the settings for their meetings, and offered positive feedback for their design decisions. For example, when Sawyer portrayed his character – a baby's shoe – as "hard on the outside and buff" yet "soft on the inside," as well as "kind of jumpy," Rebecca praised Sawyer for taking characteristics from the shoe. Rebecca also asked students design questions, such as "Can you tell us why… what made you decide things about the character?" In guiding this session, Rebecca provided a structure in which the students might develop their creative abilities. By asking leading questions during and after the activity, as well as offering

design-centered feedback, she guided the students to specific outcomes – the creation of their own characters and scenes, an awareness of their own design decisions – instead of leaving them to draw their own conclusions about the purpose of the activity. While this may seem an intrusion upon the unfettered self-direction of the Situated Learning classroom, it is in fact an example of the kind of explicit guidance which teachers can give to students, offering their own (relative) expertise as a supplement for students in their own creative endeavors. And, because teachers have an obligation to ensure that students learn certain essential skills and facts in the classroom, Overt Instruction allows teachers to draw an entire class's attention to such relevant information.

The tutors at Owl Creek also provided Overt Instruction to their students by offering them a variety of printed handouts and worksheets in order to further structure their comic book drafting workshops. While these printed materials did not serve as the basis of a lecture, the mentors still encouraged students to incorporate them into their own creative processes. One such handout was the opening chapter to a comic-drawing guidebook, itself illustrated like a comic book. The chapter, titled "Writing with Pictures: Clarity, Persuasion and Intensity," leads readers through several important concepts involved in creating comic books, including choice of moment, frame, image, word, and flow. In conjunction with this excerpt, Patricia supplied the students with a short drawing exercise. The students were provided with strips of paper including three consecutive (blank) frames and a described action or series of actions. For example, one strip read, "The queen died, and the king died of grief after her," and another, "Girl kicks soccer ball. Window breaks." Students illustrated the described action within those three frames, thus having to consider what images, words, and gestures were necessary to convey that action in a

limited space. As such, this exercise offered students the chance to practice the skills outlined in the accompanying guidebook excerpt.

Patricia also passed out two worksheets designed to help students develop their own characters and narratives more thoroughly. The first, titled "MyPage," was a single-paged worksheet designed to resemble the profile page of a social media website (see Appendix). The sheet had a place for students to draw their characters' profile picture; a sidebar where students could list their characters' interests, relationship status, birthday, place of birth, etc.; and several other questions about their character's mindset – "My Summer Vacation," "Looking Forward to This Year," and "Favorite Memory from Last Year." By providing a familiar context – social media – this worksheet offered students the opportunity to consider the important details of their characters' lives as if those students were facebook friends with them. In other words, the "MyPage" Worksheet functioned as a more meaningful milieu in which students might construct their characters. Similarly, mentors invited students to fill out the "Writing Your Character's Story" worksheet (see Appendix). As the sheet informed students, "The following questions will give you the space to write your character's story. Then, you can decide which parts of the story need to be told through illustration and which parts need to be told through words." Students were then asked to return to the questions asked in Rebecca's character development workshop at the beginning of the semester: What are their characters like? What are their characters' motivations? What conflict prevents the characters from achieving their goals? How does their character overcome obstacles? As a form of Overt Instruction, this sheet again helped students to refocus their creative work, considering the broad strokes of their narratives, allowing them to return to their graphic novels with a renewed sense of overall purpose.

Finally, mentors provided pinpoints of Overt Instruction to students throughout the semester by responding to student questions and creative problems with information that the students could not have learned during the course of their everyday practice. These were the instances that "allow [learners] to gain explicit information at times when it can most usefully organize and guide practice" (New London Group 86), the innumerable interactions wherein students required explicit direction, particularly in the *I Kill Giants* reading groups. In the *I Kill Giants* reading groups, mentors offered cultural information. For example, in order to help the students understand Barbara's unpopularity, Jeff pointed out that she is frequently shown reading the "Dungeonmaster's guidebook. You know, Dungeons and Dragons, and that's just totally not what [the popular kids are] talking about at all." The mentors also aided students in pronunciation and vocabulary, as when Sawyer struggled to pronounce the words "incontinent" and "homicidal":

> **Patricia**: "Incontinent," it means you can't stop from peeing, you just pee all over.
>
> **Sawyer**: [reading] "Incontinent, and…"
>
> **Patricia**: "Homicidal."
>
> **Sawyer**: "And homicidal."
>
> **Zaria**: What's "homicidal"?
>
> **Patricia**: You kill people.

Thirdly, mentors offered students insight into the narrative techniques employed in *I Kill Giants*. During one read-aloud session, Tara had difficulty interpreting off-screen dialogue. In order to help her understand the designer's intentions, Sam explained, "It's still your character. They're talking off of – they're not in the scene. So like, it's like Sophia's going through her room,

through Barbara's room, and she's hearing all these voices in the background. So it's her sister talking still." While none of these classroom interventions came in the form of a traditional lesson, the mentors nevertheless provided important information which enabled students to better understand the Design decisions made use of by the creators of *I Kill Giants*. In so doing, the mentors allowed these students to more fully appreciate the text, and these day-to-day interventions constituted yet another fundamental, instructor-based structure which benefited the authentic practice of the Razorback Writers community.

While the Razorback Writers classroom was replete with examples of Situated Practice and Overt Instruction, instances of Critical Framing and Transformed Practice were harder to come by. This may be due in part to the fact that the latter two elements of multiliteracies education are more nebulous, and thus perhaps more difficult to identify *in situ*; however, I also found during my observations that the mentors and coordinators simply did not spend much classroom time focusing on these aspects of multiliteracies pedagogy. Nevertheless, there are examples of each worth noting. While it is not clear that students were encouraged to "frame their growing mastery" of graphic novels "in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice" (New London Group 86), there is still some evidence that the Razorback Writers engaged in Critical Framing of their learning activities. Principally, by offering the students help with their homework, the mentors implicitly taught the students to "creatively extend and apply" the lessons learned in creating and reading graphic novels, enabling them to "eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and new ones" (87). During our interview, Sam described this cross-pollination between new and old learning communities at length.

Formerly a graduate student pursuing a doctoral degree in molecular biology, Sam understandably found himself most comfortable tutoring students working on science homework. He explained that working one-on-one with students allowed him to "[give] them a little bit more application than what normally I think they would see in just a regular classroom. Which, I don't know if that was one of the original purposes of Razorback Writers, but I think has really been helpful." Using this after-school time as a space where homework coexists with comic books, Sam felt that he was able to show students that "'Yeah, you're still gonna be using literacy [outside of school]; you're still gonna be reading and writing […] or anything like that.'" And, indeed, during his time as a mentor, Sam noted improvement in the students' literacy-based skills. He described "significant improvement in the quality" of Michael's writing-based science homework, wherein he was expected to read a short essay on some scientific subject, and then give short answers regarding his comprehension of the material. Sam also maintained that the students vastly improved their "out-loud" reading skills. We might note here that, although the mentors did not explicitly link the students' work with graphic novels to their activities during the rest of their school day, Razorback Writers nevertheless provided a space in which homework and after-school literacy enrichment coexisted, and thus there was an implicit connection between the two spheres of activity. And, as Sam suggested, there was at some level a transfer of "basic literacy skills" (reading and writing) passing between those two spheres. Such a transfer is at the root of Critical Framing, as students are enabled to think of their work in a specific area as one "discipline" among many, with skills that might be transmitted laterally to other kinds of work.

In Critical Framing, students begin to view their learning as situated and discipline-specific; in approaching Transformed Practice, students take this knowledge and apply it to their

own practices. According to the New London Group, it is through a Transformed Practice that

"students can demonstrate how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new

practices embedded in their own goals and values" (87). Having experienced the full cycle of

multiliteracies pedagogy, a student should be able to take the knowledge he or she has acquired

through authentic practice and instructor-based intervention and adapt that knowledge to his or

her own needs. One prominent example of this in the Razorback Writers classroom was

Michael's decision to depart from the graphic novel format and instead write a more traditional

storybook. In our interview, I asked Michael, "Your plan is to kind of move away from the

comic book and do more of a regular book?" He replied, "Yes. The comic book isn't working

out." Michael found the process of telling a story through a series of visual frames, and so opted

to create a written narrative with several illustrations. While one might argue that Michael was

just being a difficult student and should be required to do the same work as the rest of the class, I

would maintain that he was simply taking the lessons he learned in Razorback Writers thus far

and adapting them for his own ends. Consider, for example, the portion of his text which he read

to me:

> He's the Dog Archer. He […] The hat that he wears holds the power of a great
> god. He is a pit-bull dog, a brown one. He loves doing archer practice, and his
> little home in the forest is made of wood. His destiny is to get a special magic
> potion to bring his beloved owner back to life. He always wanted to show Robin
> [his owner] that he could speak. The one and only thing that stands in his way is
> the powerful traitor. He is two times the size of […] Archer doesn't know how to
> defeat him, but he meets an old angel that tells him how.

Notice how well Michael has internalized the lessons about character and story featured in

Rebecca's character-creation session and in the "Writing Your Character's Story" worksheet. He

described his character, the character's primary desire, the major conflict, and the promise of

eventual resolution. Hardly the work of a student trying to avoid participating in an activity that

he disdains, Michael's storybook – or at least his opening section – suggests the same care and enjoyment evident in Sawyer's "Adventures of John and Eye-Man" comic book.

These examples, however, are only the slightest rumblings of Critical Framing and Transformed Practice within the Razorback Writers classroom. These two aspects of multiliteracies education were otherwise not emphasized, and this represents one of the great future opportunities for Razorback Writers. As a collaborative, arts-integration program, we would expect Razorback Writers to feature Situated Practice and Overt Instruction as part of the mentors' teaching philosophy. And, indeed, this seems to be the case. These elements of multiliteracies pedagogy form the bedrock of the Owl Creek classroom, a fact acknowledged by the students and tutors participating in the program. It is also possible for these elements to occur naturally, without necessarily needing to be explicitly mentioned during any particular session. I would argue that Critical Framing and Transformed Practice, on the other hand, require a degree of explication which was predominantly lacking in the Razorback Writers classroom. Setting the program in the school library, as well as including homework help in the program's curriculum, undoubtedly provided an implicit link to the rest of the students' academic lives, and the brief examples provided above certainly suggest outbursts of explicit instruction. Otherwise, however, these latter two elements of multiliteracies pedagogy were notably absent from Owl Creek.

I want to emphasize here that I point out this absence not as a glaring fault in the Razorback Writers program at Owl Creek; rather, I submit that spending more time highlighting Critical Framing and Transformed Practice would simply better enable the mentors and coordinators to better achieve their goal of providing after-school literacy education that would ostensibly aid students in their studies throughout the school day. And, after all, one goal of after-school literacy education presumably should be to provide students with skills transferrable

to the classroom. Critical Framing and Transformed Practice, the designated ends of the New London Group's cycle of pedagogy, are also logical aims for any after-school learning community. By helping students to understand the "situatedness" of their work as discipline- and community-specific, and by teaching them to return to their own work and goals with renewed understanding, after-school programs – and Razorback Writers particularly – may empower students to take skills acquired and knowledge gained back to the classroom, thus improving their academic performance.

Razorback Writers is not only an after-school program, however; as university-sponsored community outreach, the program has a further obligation to help students move from the library to the rest of their lives. Here, the Razorback Writers have an opportunity to engage in one of Ellen Cushman's primary definitions of empowerment: "to facilitate actions […] associated with language and literacy" (14).

IV. Conclusion

The goal of this study has been to provide a detailed portrait of one Razorback Writers semester at Owl Creek, and to explore the ways that various theories of pedagogy and composition emerged, in one degree or another, over the course of a few months. In so doing, I hope that the many potential benefits of such an after-school program have been made clear. This program has the capacity to create in students a strong sense of identity within an authentic learning community, wherein they are free to engage in truly meaningful work, and these elements of the program comprised the bulk of this study.

What, if any, were the program's shortcomings? I should note here that there are two orders of expectations placed on an after-school program: those imposed externally, by the school system's administrative authorities, and those imposed by the program upon itself. Those expectations set from the outside include improved grades, classroom participation, and standardized test scores. In other words, expectations set forth by educational authorities are those which directly relate to students' improved performance within the school system proper. There are, on the other hand, expectations for an after-school program set within the program itself – the expectations set forth by the program's own directors and authorities. Let us look to these goals.

In one sense, this semester at Owl Creek could be said to be a rousing success. As has been shown in this study, students, mentors, and site directors alike found the Razorback Writers classroom to be a place in which an authentic, liberating, collaborative learning community was given room to grow and flourish. In a delicate balance between student-directed learning and overt instruction by various classroom "authorities," students were given the opportunity to both learn *and* be active agents in their own education. While there were certainly moments of

misbehavior that called for authoritative measures on the part of mentors and site directors, overall, students in the program remained engaged in the meaningful, creative work set before them. And for these reasons, because Razorback Writers is a program explicitly founded on the principles of arts integration and multiliteracies pedagogies, we may indeed call this semester at Owl Creek a success.

However, as has been discussed previously, there were also some shortcomings. The program did not encourage the type of deep analysis of the *I Kill Giants* text that one might find in keeping with the values of essayist literacy; nor did the program carry students comprehensively through the full cycle of multiliteracies pedagogy. Moreover, almost <u>none</u> of the students ended the semester with a finished product. One of the goals set forth by the directors and mentors at Owl Creek was for the students to produce a comic book or graphic novel, to be bound and "published" for parents and other students to read. With the exception of Sawyer, though, none of the students produced more than a series of sketches, worksheets, and notes – few of the students even began the process of arranging their drawings into comic-book frames. While students remained faithfully engaged in the creative *process*, they were unable to move through the process to craft a finished *product*. Surely there are myriad reasons why this proved to be the case. Perhaps students needed the mentors to step in and take on a more authoritative role in pushing them to finish their comic books, or maybe they would have benefited from a clearer set of deadlines to propel their projects forward. Another possibility is that a semester was simply too short a time for most students to become familiar with the graphic novel form, then brainstorm, draft, and write their own. Yet again, the students may simply have needed greater incentive to complete their comic books.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that essentially none of the Owl Creek students completed their projects. Not only had the directors set this goal, it had become a goal accepted by all the students in the program. Several students spoke in their interviews of their excitement to have a book, written and published, to put on the shelf. In a sense this goal became the semester's driving force, and the goal was not completed within the Razorback Writers community. Moreover, this likely represents a failure from an administrative point of view, as school authorities are more inclined to look favorably on an after-school program that offers a tangible finished product.

Beyond the program's tangible successes and failures, we would do well to consider the ultimate triumphs and shortcomings in terms of the various theoretical frameworks within which we've been operating. As we have seen, the Razorback Writers classroom functioned as a convergence of various composition and literacy pedagogies; although discrete, each of these theories complements and informs the rest.

How did Razorback Writers succeed and fail in enabling students to participate in the process of Design? As we have seen in the preceding chapters, students were encouraged to develop and draw upon their own well of cultural and literary conventions (Available Design) as they read *I Kill Giants* and wrote their own graphic novels. They were exhorted to do so quite explicitly, as evidenced by the mentors' modeling of such cultural awareness in the Razorback Writers reading groups and workshops. Students were also encouraged to engage in the process of Design, wherein they drew on a wealth of previously existing visual, aural, and gestural elements – as well as linguistic – in producing their own texts. So far, we might reasonably argue that there were many instances of success in exposing these students to the recursive process of Design.

However, we once again come up against the problem of so many unfinished graphic novels. While the mentors modeled drawing on Available Design, and supported the students as they sought to Design their own texts, only one of these students successfully completed his project. In other words, the vast majority of these students were unable to complete the full process of Design – to move from the classroom's "historically and culturally received patterns of meaning" into crafting their own "transformed meaning" (New London Group 76). This is important to note because, as we have seen in Sawyer's masterfully crafted graphic novel, this kind of proficiency is indeed possible for these students. Sawyer navigated through his experience with *I Kill Giants* and other graphic novels, drawing on the Design conventions found therein in incredibly nuanced and perceptive ways, in order to produce his own text. He experienced the full cycle of Design and emerged victorious, which should suggest to us that other students might do so as well.

On the other hand, through their reading of *I Kill Giants*, students were introduced to language socialization – they came to participate in, and shape, the *culture* of language use present in the Razorback Writers classroom. As I noted earlier, language socialization is itself a kind of Design, with its own recursive navigation of roles and transformed meaning. Razorback Writers students drew on the wealth of classroom conventions at their disposal, collaborating with the mentors to define the primary values and practices of the program's reading groups, shaping a transformed space which took on new meaning as the students and mentors became co-creators of their classroom experience. A natural counterpart to language socialization, the cycle of multiliteracies pedagogy, especially Situated Practice and Overt Instruction, provided a natural environment for the students to encounter language socialization and Design; by creating a strong sense of classroom community identity, the mentors allowed students to both learn and

explore existing language and Design conventions, as well as to shape these conventions to their own needs and goals. As such, Razorback Writers offered a space in which students could be taught by teachers *and* where students could direct their own learning.

In the background of all these related theories, we must not forget that Razorback Writers is a university-sponsored literacy program. One of the overarching goals of university sponsorship is empowerment of the community; in the case of Razorback Writers, empowering students to help them craft a broad, supportive web of literate meaning that extends beyond the after-school space into their school and home lives. This commitment to empowerment, then, is the bedrock philosophy underlying the rest of the Razorback Writers pedagogy. Engaging in a multiliteracies pedagogy, wherein students are called to participate in a meaningful learning community and become active and creative makers of texts, and are encouraged to participate in defining and refining literate practice within the classroom, must naturally occur in a space where the goal is student empowerment. A more egalitarian classroom is the logical conclusion of a pedagogy of empowerment.

And yet, how does the program succeed in enacting this pedagogy? On the one hand, as we saw earlier, the program did in fact create a strong culture of empowerment for the students; the mentors and coordinators crafted a classroom in which students were able to define reading practices, walk about freely (although within some limits), joke with one another, and determine the direction and style of their own graphic novel. In this sense, these ambassadors of the academy fulfilled their obligation to "facilitate people's oral and literate language" (Cushman 15), and any amount of time spent speaking with these mentors makes it abundantly clear that they care about the "well being and education of children within their local communities" (Malanchuk and Ochoa 25). The Razorback Writers classroom culture, then, was indeed one of

empowerment. This is not to be glossed over or taken lightly, as this represents a major pedagogical success for the program: those involved crossed the bridge from university to community and created a liberating space in which literacy learning could occur.

But was the community fully empowering? We must once again return to the unfinished final projects. What do these suggest about empowerment? On the one hand, because the classroom itself was a liberating space, students were "empowered" to either finish their graphic novels – or not. And many of them elected not to. They had the liberty to take their time, brainstorm, talk with friends, and, ultimately, leave the semester with an incomplete project. But this does not appear empowering on a broader level. Sure, the mentors enabled these students to experience an egalitarian relationship in this particular setting, but it could well be that students were unable to take this new-found freedom into the rest of their lives. A more lasting kind of empowerment would have been the kind brought about by finishing a serious work of art – the kind that can be bound and put on a shelf, to be revisited time and again. While this might not have a significant impact on the students' experience of empowerment in their daily lives, it could certainly have served as a tangible reminder of their own creative capacities.

It would be reductive to suggest that the narrative of this Razorback Writers semester is primarily one of success or failure. While we may lament the students' lack of a finished product, it is well worth celebrating that they participated as empowered agents in shaping the classroom culture. One may be tempted examine the results of the semester at Owl Creek, and surmise that there must necessarily be tension between process and product, between students' exploratory learning and educators' authority and effectiveness in the classroom. While that is certainly a possibility, one must not be too hasty to draw conclusions about what pedagogical strategies do and do not work in the after-school classroom; rather, we must look at this study as

one piece in a much-needed body of research, with a great deal more to come. For example, there must of course be quantitative research to determine whether there is indeed any indication that participation in the Razorback Writers program has a positive impact on overall academic performance, particularly in reading and writing – in grades and in standardized test scores. Do students perform better on certain measures after their involvement with the program? Such research certainly has relevance to the program's importance within the school system.

Quantitative research alone is not enough, however. Further detailed, qualitative, ethnographic research is also necessary to paint a fuller portrait of the Razorback Writers program and other after-school programs. Researchers might study the Owl Creek classroom in coming semesters in order to better describe how new and different site directors, mentors, students, and curricula contribute to variations in the program's culture, and by extension its success. Furthermore, researchers might broaden their focus to include other Razorback Writers sites with the same questions in mind. Beyond this, researchers might look to other university-sponsored after-school programs, and even to those not sponsored by a university, to explore how different pedagogical styles, student-mentor dynamics, and academic focuses contribute to the culture of the after-school classroom. And, of course, quantitative study of the results of these programs would further supplement our understanding of their efficacy.

In the end, however, whatever research follows, this study is worthwhile on its own merits. It is worthwhile because our students are worthwhile. They are not simply test scores, or progress reports, or even graphic novels. They are children whose stories are worth telling, and I had the privilege of telling them, if only for a semester.

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VI. Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Students

1.   What happens at Razorback Writers?

2.   What do you think is the most important thing about Razorback Writers? What is your favorite thing about it?

3.   Do you see any connections between the things you do in Razorback Writers and the writing you do in school or at home?

4.   What has been your favorite Razorback Writers project so far? What did you like most about it? What did you like least about it?

5.   What has been your least favorite Razorback Writers project so far? Why?

6.   Do you prefer working with other middle schoolers and the tutors, or do you prefer working by yourself, or do you like doing a little of each? Why? What do you like about each thing?

7.   Are there any questions you think I should have asked, but didn't? Anything else you'd like to talk about?

Mentors/Site Coordinators

1.   What happens at Razorback Writers? What role do you play as a tutor?

2.   What do you think is the most important thing about Razorback Writers? What is your favorite thing about it?

3.   Do you see any connections between the things the students do in the program and the writing they do in school or at home?

4.   What sorts of things do the kids bring to the table/what prior knowledge do they have? What sorts of help do they need?

5.   Are they any questions you think I should have asked, but didn't? Anything else

you'd like to talk about?

VII. Appendix 2 - Transcription Key

Symbol	Meaning
[ ]	Bracketed material is the author's explanatory notes regarding the nonverbal/gestural elements of a particular conversation.
[…]	Brackets with ellipses in between represent portions of the recording which were unintelligible.
…	Ellipses without brackets represent a participant's trailing off between or after sentences.
:: ::	Words within these symbols are descriptive of a participant's tone or tenor of voice (e.g. "::whispering::")
-	A measured pause between words.
bold	Represents intentional emphasis on a particular word.
" "	Elements within quotation marks are being read aloud by the participant.
ALL CAPS	Words in all capital letters were spoken at a loud volume.
Additional Vowels	Words with additional vowels (e.g. "Barbaraaaaaa") represent elongated speech.

VIII. Appendix 3 – Classroom Documents

Figure 1: Sawyer's Graphic Novel, "The Adventures of Jonh [sic] and Eye-man"

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Figure 2: "Writing Your Character's Story" Worksheet

Figure 3: "MyPage Worksheet"

IX. Appendix 4 – University IRB Research Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

August 19, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ian Whitlow
                 Patrick Slattery

FROM: Ro Windwalker
                 IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 11-08-039

Protocol Title: *Summer and Semester Programs in Writing Instruction at the*
                 Boys and Girls Club: An Ethnographic Study

Review Type: ☐ EXEMPT   ☑ EXPEDITED   ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 08/19/2011 Expiration Date: 08/18/2012

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 35 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.