The Depth and Dynamics of Context:
Tracing the Sources and Channels of Engagement and Disengagement in Students' Response to Literature

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In this article, we analyze one coauthor's 12th-grade English class, focusing on a small group of students who interpreted the character of Gertrude in Hamlet *through a body biography, a life-sized human outline that students filled with words and images that represented their understanding of the character. We analyze the body biography production as a function of the social context of activity and then analyze the processes of composition involved in their production. Analysis of the data reveals that (a) the students exhibited different degrees of commitment to and involvement in the group task, (b) the degree of equity in productivity and social relations varied within the group in accordance with these different degrees of engagement, and (c) the inequity in social relations and contributions to the group product belied the degree to which the final interpretive product met the teacher's assessment criteria. We conclude with a reconsideration of the notion of engagement that includes attention to both the immediate social relations within the classroom and the histories of engagement that students bring to class.*

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IN OUTLINING THE STRATEGIES that readers potentially use in fruitful transactions with literature, Beach and Marshall (1991) include engagement, which they describe as the process that occurs "whenever [readers] articulate their emotional reaction or level of involvement" with a text (p. 28). In Wilhelm's (1997) view, engagement means "that the reader uses a variety of moves and strategies to enter and involve herself intensely in worlds of meaning. In these 'story worlds,' the reader interprets characters, setting, events, and thematic possibilities through her interaction with and movement through that world" (p. 144). Engaged readers, in these conceptions, make a volitional effort to enter the story worlds of literary characters and live through the characters' thoughts and actions in order to make better sense of their own experiences, a view of literary reading often attributed to Rosenblatt (1978). The process is at once both strategic and emotional, serving to take readers more deeply into the texts and at the same time enabling readers to probe more deeply into themselves.

Research on schooling, however, has suggested that relatively few classrooms are conducted in ways that enable students to connect with subject matter in personally meaningful ways (Applebee, 1993; Barnes, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Cuban, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1992). From these studies, an overall portrait of school emerges in which students are disengaged from their learning. The school culture disengages students in the area of classroom process, which focuses on the teacher's interests and agendas and allows few opportunities for students to interact with one another; and it disengages them in the area of assessment, which focuses on their ability to answer factual questions about the texts they read with little attention to the ways in which this information illuminates their own worlds.

Progressive educators in the tradition of Dewey (1966) have argued that the restructuring of curricula and classrooms will provide environments more likely to engage students in schooling than those provided by traditional teacher- and content-centered instruction (e.g., Applebee, 1993; Hynds, 1993; McWhorter & Hudson-Ross, 1996; McWhorter, Jarrard, Rhoades, & Wiltcher, 1996; Nystrand, 1997; Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Routman, 1996). The notion of progressive pedagogy has no firm definition, instead being based on generally accepted principles that are interpreted in diverse ways. Our own view of progressive education is well described by Bernstein (1975): (a) The control of the teacher over the students is implicit rather than explicit; (b) the teacher arranges the instructional context, which the students are expected to rearrange and explore; (c) within this arranged context, the students have wide powers over what they select, over how they structure their activity, and over the timescale of their activity; (d) the students regulate their own movements and social relationships within this negotiated context; (e) the transmission and acquisition of specific skills is de-emphasized, with students learning by doing what they feel is appropriate to their needs and interests; and (f) the criteria for evaluating learning are multiple and diffuse and are themselves difficult to measure. We see these principles implying that:

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1. For such a pedagogy to provide the arena for engaged learning, students and teachers should share a large degree of goal congruence. By goal congruence, we do not mean that they have in mind a common, specific destination. Rather, what they share is the goal that classroom activities ought to facilitate the construction of meaning, which leads to personal growth, which takes a different direction for each learner.
2. Given that students and teachers share this goal of meaning construction, learners are better served by having their choice of tools for mediating their understanding. Schools tend to superimpose goals, tools for achieving them, and paths to follow to reach them, often neglecting students' own purposes for engaging in literacy activities. The elimination of rigid constraints liberates students from the hegemonic structure of school and empowers them to seek knowledge in their own ways, on their own terms, and to their own ends, thus helping students to realize Barnes's (1990) ideal that "The best teaching has always strengthened the learner's own attempts to understand and participate in life, partly by offering alternative 'tools' for understanding" (p. 85).
3. Given freedom of choice, students will become empowered learners, will set worthy goals, will regulate their own progress toward their own goals, and will share willingly with classmates, who, similarly liberated from adult-imposed school structures, will grow together as a community of learners. Individual difference, whether cultural or neurological in origin, enriches the classroom community given that students see one another as resources, supporters, and confederates in their journey of personal growth.
4. With students no longer subordinated by the agendas of others, schools will no longer dominate students; rather, students will transform schools in order to transform themselves.
5. Through such action, students will develop a "continuing impulse to learn" (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994, p. 142), an ongoing intrinsic motivation to learn fostered by their engagement in the personal construction of meaning.

In this article, we contextualize and then focus on one instructional episode in a classroom in which the teacher, coauthor Cindy O'Donnell-Allen, deliberately structured a progressive learning environment. Her teaching was predicated on the assumption that students would exhibit maturity if granted the freedom to use it wisely, would take responsibility for their own learning if provided the opportunity to make their own decisions, were worthy of respect and would reciprocate if given a role in determining the substance of the class, and would undergo a fundamental change in attitude toward school if they played a fundamental role in constructing their own learning environment. Her notions of the ideal classroom were strongly influenced by her reading of educators (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1991; Graves, 1983) whose accounts of child-centered classrooms stressed the need to liberate students from authoritarian schooling

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(e.g., Atwell's narrative of her journey to get out from behind the "big desk" [p. 4] that separated her from her students' needs and interests and discouraged their development of personal agency).

In addition to her effort to help students meet their personal needs through the literacy events in her class, Cindy's goals included the formation of a democratic classroom community. She devoted considerable time at the beginning of the year to activities designed to help students get to know and appreciate one another. In one activity, for instance, students drew life maps (Kirby & Liner, 1988) that represented their personal life journeys and significant events along the way. They then told their stories to one another as a way of helping to bring together students who, prior to their junior years (their first year in this 2-year high school), had attended different feeder systems throughout the city. Cindy incorporated frequent small-group work in literary analysis and writing instruction, making collaborative assignments integral to her instructional routines: During the first semester, Cindy's students worked in groups for at least a fourth of the period during 22 days observed, without small-group activities on 8 days, and in a writing workshop format on 8 days. Even activities that did not take place in small groups were collaborative in nature. On one occasion, Cindy taught the students the procedure of clustering (i.e., networking ideas prior to writing) by having them generate experiences and images from elementary school. Through this discussion, the students exchanged stories about their childhoods, with Cindy recording them on the chalkboard. From this list, the class composed a group poem called "Remember When," which they wrote on a 10-foot piece of butcher paper, with each student contributing a line. The poem generated by each of her six classes was then displayed in the classroom. Throughout the year, student work comprised the primary wall coverings for the classroom.

She also engaged the students in two whole-class collaborative projects. One was their planning of a visit to their school by a fifth-grade class with whom they had developed pen pal relationships, a task that required them to coordinate a network of activities for a half-day visit that included icebreaking activities, a tour of the school, a writing activity, and a pizza lunch on the school's front lawn. One student videotaped the morning and edited it for broadcast on the school's cable television channel. The second collaborative project was the design of their classroom. For the first 3 months of school, Cindy's classes met in the school library while portions of the school were being renovated. When her classroom – a windowless abandoned room in the business department – was ready for occupation, the students in all of her classes had the opportunity to brainstorm for ways to arrange the room. The students ultimately raised money to buy a rug and couch, and they also contributed a microwave oven, plants, candles, aquarium, and other comforts and accoutrements that Cindy arranged according to negotiations among her students. Her students agreed that they preferred to keep the typing desks left by the business teacher, because they could be

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rearranged as tables for group projects. Cindy's efforts at giving students authority in designing their physical surroundings were intended to make the class a place where students felt comfortable and invested, both in the academic work and in their sense of community with one another. Through these activities, she also taught team-building skills by engaging the students in collaborative, consequential action in which each individual's contributions had implications for the quality of other students' experiences.

In this article, we focus on one event from one of Cindy's classes to analyze the processes that took place when, within this overall progressive approach, students participated in an activity designed to engage them in a collaborative interpretation of literature through an unconventional medium. We analyze the discussion of a small group of students – Rita, Jack, Dirk, James, and Bob – as they interpreted the character of Gertrude in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through their collaborative production of a body biography, a life-sized human outline that the students filled with images and words that depicted their understanding of the character and her relationships. We chose this activity for our analysis because the students responded to literature collaboratively, used the small-group format to enable for tentative and exploratory talk leading to the development of an interpretation, responded to literature within a framework that guided their action yet allowed for great variation in both interpretation and interpretive form, used both linguistic and imagaic media for their response, and learned to use conventional interpretive tools (e.g., character analysis) through engaging activities. A significant aspect of this facet of her instruction was her emphasis that students learn to use the interpretive tool to construct their own meaning for literature, a goal that departed from her colleagues' general tendency to lead students toward a particular, officially sanctioned interpretation (see Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995, for descriptions of these typical patterns of discourse).

In spite of Cindy's efforts to provide an environment of active learning and democratic involvement, some students remained disaffected and disengaged and at times resistant to her emphasis on the developmental potential of reading and responding to literature and the open-ended means through which she encouraged them to achieve it. Our study therefore examines the ways in which a classroom organized according to progressive principles was experienced by a set of students, some of whose goals for schooling were incongruous with those of the teacher and one another.

To do so we use a theoretical framework provided by cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as described by Cole (1996), Leont'ev (1981), Tulviste (1991), Valsiner (1998), Vygotsky (1978, 1987), Wertsch (1981, 1985, 1991), and others. This perspective assumes that human thinking originates in social action and is internalized through the mediation of cultural tools (e.g., speech, computers, drawing) used within social settings. Involvement in different contexts and social practices can thus result in the development of different ways of

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thinking. For instance, within the United States, a number of different cultural groups coexist under a common set of laws. Different subgroups, however, have developed different worldviews and related social practices. Allen (1983), for instance, contrasted non-Christian Native Americans with other American cultural groups on a number of dimensions, including views of space (spherical vs. linear), time (cyclical vs. sequential), and spirituality (belief that all objects have souls vs. belief that only humans have souls). These different belief systems are learned through engagement in cultural practices, the study of which is central to understanding human development from a CHAT perspective. Such study requires attention to settings, with a focus on the physical context of human commerce (Chin, 1994) and the setting's embodiment of cultural history (Salomon, 1993), and the recurring social practices that provide genres that suggest appropriate means of communication (Bazerman, 1998).

In the North American version of genre theory typified by Bazerman's (1994) genre systems theory, genres are "operationalized social action" (Russell, 1997, p. 512) facilitating common understandings in present action through experience with prior social processes. As social action, genres embody values for tool use. For example, talk can have different characteristics, each effective in different settings and for different purposes. Schooling that reflects society's value on knowledge of immutable facts (Dewey, 1960) promotes and rewards what Barnes (1992) called "final draft" talk (p. 108), that which is designed to name or establish fixed knowledge. Dewey's argument against this quest for certainty posits instead a belief that knowledge is tentative, negotiated, and under development, suggesting a need for school talk to be *exploratory.* To use Barnes's metaphor, a teacher's value on final draft talk requires that students "arrive without having traveled" (p. 118), whereas an emphasis on exploratory talk stresses instead the process of thinking through problems toward a solution, thus valuing the journey as well as the destination. An academic speech genre involving exploratory talk, then, suggests an underlying value system, a set of assumptions about knowledge, consequent beliefs about the role of speech in learning, a value on a particular tool and how it serves to enable changes in consciousness, and how that tool use both reflects this set of values and contributes to the structure of the activity system in which it is used.

Cultural-historical activity theory helps to account for human development through its emphasis on the dialectical process through which people create and develop settings which in turn provide the tools through which people internalize ways of thinking. Because people experience a variety of social settings and the ways of thinking they afford, they develop multiple frameworks for thinking. Wertsch (1985) pointed out that every setting has an overriding motive based on the predominant values and social practices of the people who inhabit it; the motive suggests which sorts of purposeful action are appropriate within the setting. Through shared, ritualized practices known as an intercontext (Floriani, 1993), people in a setting negotiate an idioculture:

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> [the] system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and that serve as the basis of further interaction. Members recognize that they share experiences, and these experiences can be referred to with the expectation they will be understood by other members, thus being used to construct a reality for the participants. (Fine as cited in Cole, 1996, p. 302)

Every setting is likely to include subsettings or idiocultures in which local practices are developed that may depart from the practices of the larger culture. Thus, within an overall school setting, there is likely to be an overriding motive developed that embodies the community's values and social practices; and within this whole culture, there might develop idiocultures where this motive can be renegotiated or resisted by subgroups, including peer groups, particular classrooms, small groups within classrooms, or other configurations of people. The motive of any setting or subsetting is always provisional, providing space for resistance and alternative, competing motives. Although settings provide overriding motives and channel human action, they do not determine the ways in which people act. Individuals have heterogeneous ways of thinking (Tulviste, 1991) and thus may construct meanings for the setting that suggest other motives. Settings therefore have predominant motives that may be altered or subverted by the goals of individuals who act within them.

An activity theory framework is illuminating for this research, because it allows us to look at the predominant, sanctioned motives of a progressive classroom and the ways in which individual students performed within it. Data from other case studies from Cindy's class (e.g., O'Donnell-Allen & Smagorinsky, in press; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998, in press) revealed that a number of students were responsive to her efforts to foster a sense of personal responsibility for learning. The group we analyzed in the present study enables us to understand how alternative motives can develop as substreams to predominating motives, and to identify the types of social frameworks that existed to enable students to pursue alternative goals within the progressive setting in Cindy's class.

Our study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What dispositions, experiences, and social practices did these students bring to Cindy's class and this activity in particular?
2. What was the activity framework that constrained and channeled the students' production during small-group work, and what were the intercontext and idioculture that established the parameters for this framework? How were the constraints of this activity framework recognized, negotiated, and reconstituted by students during the process of their collaboration?
3. In what ways did the students' interaction generate the intertextual sources they drew on to inform their graphic and written representations of meaning in the body biography?

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CONTEXT OF THE INVESTIGATION

The School

The research took place in a large (1,662 students) 2-year senior high school in the American Southwest. Most students and faculty were White, with the largest minority groups among the students being Native American and African American. At the time of data collection, the high school was beginning its second year in a block schedule. Students enrolled in eight courses and attended four 84-minute periods per day, with each class meeting every other day. The block schedule fit well with Cindy's progressive emphasis, allowing extended time for discussion and response-centered activities. After the two morning classes, teachers were required to remain in their rooms for an additional 30 minutes called Overtime, where students could receive make-up work and tutoring or spend extra time completing assignments.

Cindy taught a total of six different English classes, three block classes each day with each class meeting every other day. This study focuses on one of these classes, one that met in mid-morning. This class was selected because it met just prior to the Overtime period, thus giving Peter an opportunity to talk with and tape-record Cindy and students immediately following class.

The English Department

Instruction throughout the core academic departments in the school tended to be designed for the college-bound student and reliant on teacher-dominated patterns of discourse. A variety of teachers and students interviewed for this study and other studies (Smagorinsky, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) confirmed that the five-paragraph essay was a staple of English department writing instruction. During a series of department meetings devoted to an articulation of departmental values, the majority of Cindy's colleagues stated that they advocated approaching literature through chronological surveys of canonical works in order to preserve the department's traditional value on cultural literacy, a value that suggested an authoritative role for teachers in both the content and process of discussing literature.

Cindy's Class

Cindy's Background

At the time of the data collection, Cindy was in her ninth year of teaching in pub-

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lic high schools. During that time, she had completed a master's degree in English Education, attended a summer institute of the state's National Writing Project affiliate, been elected to the Writing Project affiliate's board of directors, conducted numerous in-services for schools throughout the state, founded a teacher-research group within the Writing Project affiliate, been elected to the state National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) affiliate executive board, made presentations at national and regional conferences, and initiated the process of applying to a doctoral program at the nearby state university. This level of professional activity distinguished her from many of her colleagues in both the degree of involvement in a broader teaching community and in the pedagogical approaches she adopted through her participation in them.

Cindy was strongly influenced by two factors from her orientation to teaching. First of all, her mother was a kindergarten teacher and her three young children were at the time enrolled in a play-oriented kindergarten. Her exposure to the constructive nature of kindergarten activities of play, projects, and growth-oriented activities informed her approach to teaching high school students. In addition, she was influenced by her first professional assignment as a drama teacher and structured her classes to promote activity, interaction, and performance in responding to literature.

Prior Instruction

As noted, Cindy strove to teach according to progressive principles. Her core progressive stance was modified by her participation in other activity systems that suggested other goals and activities. Her school, for instance, required her to assign grades and generate attendant documents (progress reports for parents and counselors, etc.), a bureaucratic structure that at times conflicted with her progressive aims. In addition, she executed required duties such as administering a hoary reading comprehension test as a means of assessing her students' reading level, a duty she fulfilled with considerable reluctance and skepticism, and whose results she discounted.

Within this structure, she tried to teach so that, while respecting students' individual choices, she also anticipated their future needs. To help students meet them, she provided instruction that prepared them for the conventional literacies expected in higher education and economically rewarding careers. She thus implemented her progressive approach amidst the tensions that take place when multiple frameworks are available within a school setting. Both the school's social history and her own sense of productive adult literacies informed her aims and practices in ways that some might find incongruous with a progressive approach. Yet progressivism has no definitive form and is always practiced within a setting that constrains its implementation. We thus see Cindy's teaching, like any application of a progressive pedagogy, as situated in and affected by the setting in which she practiced.

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Classroom Activities During the Reading of Hamlet

Hamlet was the first unit of study in the second semester of the students' senior year. The first semester had ended late in January, and at that point, many students' schedules were changed, leading them to change English classes. Of the 24 students in the class under study during the first semester, 11 returned for the second semester. Of the new students in the class in the second semester, most had been enrolled in one of Cindy's other senior English classes during the first semester.

Cindy's role during their reading of *Hamlet* in some ways built on her emphases of the first semester, but also departed from them in important ways. In terms of similarities, she regarded the study of *Hamlet* as a thematic unit of study even though the focus was on a single work rather than a series of related works. When appropriate, she included the reading of related literature, such as Langston Hughes's "A Dream Deferred" to help the students think about the delayed gratification experienced by Hamlet. After the class discussed the poem, she asked the students to write in their writer's notebooks in response to the following prompt: "Put yourself in Hamlet's place. Your dad is murdered, he's come back from the dead, your uncle did it, you want to avenge his death. If you don't, his soul is trapped in the nether world. It's 2 months later, and you've deferred the dream." She told them they could write as if they were Hamlet or they could just write about Hamlet. Their writing then served as the basis for a class discussion.

Cindy continually strove to help students see the characters as they might appear in modern times, asking students to think about issues such as revenge, jealousy, and other themes in terms of their own experiences. Yet the challenges of reading such a difficult play caused her to be far more directive in her teaching than she was with less daunting literature. She had deliberately chosen accessible literature during the first semester in order to provide students with materials through which they could understand her emphasis on making personal connections and then apply methods of personal response independently. Shakespeare, however, presented greater challenges simply in terms of decoding the language. Her approach to scaffolding students' knowledge thus shifted from her customary facilitative method to a more explanatory role in assisting them through the difficult parts of the play.

For their reading of *Hamlet,* Cindy drew heavily on her background as a former drama teacher, stressing performance-based activities and teaching strategies to help students interpret the text independently. The room was set up to accommodate a performance-oriented reading of the play. Students' desks were set up in a two-tiered U-shape with a sofa occupying the center of the inner U. This arrangement left a large space in the front and center of the room with a large oriental carpet on the floor. During the reading of the play, students gathered in this open area on the couch, seats, and floor.

To emphasize the performative aspects of their reading, Cindy began the unit by having students participate in a summary choral reading that included

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lines from the play bridged with modern-day language. This activity then served as a reference point for students as they created their own study guides for each act of the play. These study guides required students to create titles for each scene, to write a summary of the act, to list and describe each character's function in the act, and to select and respond to what they saw as the most significant conflict and quotation from the act. Students later referred to these study guides as they completed class projects and studied for the essay test that Cindy developed in response to their request for preparation for university-style exams.

In addition to using performance as a springboard for their reading, students "performed" their reading of the play, with student readers positioning themselves in the open space to give some idea of relationships and action of the play. Cindy alternated such readings with both the Zeffirelli film version of *Hamlet* and an audio performance that she played on a portable record player. Students thus were exposed to different interpretations of the characters as they proceeded through the acts. Periodically, Cindy would conduct an interview with students playing various roles in order to have them explain their characters and their understanding of their relationships. The students also performed *freeze frames* in small groups: They were instructed to choose a scene, decide why it was the most important one that they had read, work out a modern interpretation of it, title it, and then perform it for the class. Other students tried to guess which scene they were performing and then discussed how the scene was pivotal in the progression of the play's action. Through this activity, the students were able to discuss the play in their own language, interpret it through depictions that represented their own worlds, and translate Shakespeare's language so that they could express their own experiences and concerns through Shakespearean themes and characters.

Body Biography Assignment

At the end of the unit, Cindy told students to organize into five small groups. Each group chose a central character in *Hamlet* (Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, Ophelia, or Laertes) whom they would interpret through the construction of a body biography, an activity she had read about in an *English Journal* article (Underwood, 1987). The activity as described by Underwood was an individual project in which the student's own experiences served as the substance of the body biography text. Cindy adapted this assignment so that students worked in groups to interpret a literary character.

Cindy provided a handout (see Appendix A) that described their responsibilities, which in turn provided Cindy with the criteria for assessing their work. To produce a body biography, students were instructed to place a 7-foot long sheet of butcher paper on the floor and have one student lie down on it. Another student then drew an outline of the student's body on the butcher paper. Students filled in this outline with artistic representations of the character's traits,

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relationships, motivations, and experiences, and supplemented their artwork with relevant quotations from the play and their own original written text about the character.

The body biography assignment built on Cindy's prior literature instruction while also departing from it in key ways. Throughout the year, Cindy had emphasized the importance of close readings of literary texts as a key skill in responding to literature (see Beach, 1993, for an account of textual reader response approaches). In their response log assignments, for instance, students were instructed to identify significant passages that they could then respond to in personal ways, though personal response was not required. Cindy had modeled, though not required, personal response to literature in their response logs, providing prompts that they might use to initiate personal connections to literary characters and events.

The body biography assignment also promoted a close reading of *Hamlet,* requiring that students include words and images that represented the key events, traits, and relationships of their focal character. The body biography assignment did not specify personal associations with the character, focusing students' attention instead on interpreting the character based on textual evidence. Cindy's reasons for not promoting a personal response were based on the intense themes of the play: jealousy, incest, revenge, suicide, murder, and other emotionally charged issues. She felt that it would be inappropriate to require students to share experiences and feelings about these topics in a small group and therefore directed their attention to these themes as they appeared in the play.

METHOD

Method of Collaboration

This research represents a collaboration between a classroom teacher and researcher and a university teacher and researcher. It is a teacher-research project in many ways. Cindy designed the curriculum and instruction, although she did so within the constraints provided by Peter's NCTE Research Foundation grant, which provided funding to study multimedia composing. She also collected data through her recording of discussions, her selection and collection of student work for reproduction, her maintenance of regular classroom records and a log of her teaching plans and reflections, and her access to and provision of information about students, the school, and the community. She received each day's field notes on E-mail, providing her with the opportunity to revise them and make additional contributions. In the year following data collection, she taught half days at the high school and began a doctoral program at the university, providing her with a research assistantship that enabled her to become a full participant in the development and application of the coding system and in the discussion and writing of the interpretation.

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The study was also a researcher-teacher study. Peter and a research assistant visited most classes that took place during the school year. As a regular member of the class, Peter developed cordial relationships with many students and within a short time took on some teaching responsibilities. When Cindy was involved with students' questions during small-group activities and writing workshops, he would often assist other students with their questions. He also began teaching the class whenever Cindy was absent, usually to stay home with her sick children. With a substitute teacher, students would treat the class as a strictly social occasion. Peter decided that the students were losing valuable opportunities to engage with the course materials and so taught the class in Cindy's absence. His 14 years of experience as a high school teacher, along with the students' knowledge of him as a teacher and class member, allowed these classes to proceed according to Cindy's plans.

Data Collection

Field notes from the classroom observations totaled over 500 single-spaced pages for the year. Other data sources used for this case study included a log kept by Cindy, her planning book, and interviews with students. In addition, prior research conducted in this school (Smagorinsky, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) and Cindy's experiences in the school provided an overview of instruction across the curriculum and in other English classes.

During the body biography productions, data were collected during two-block period classes. A portable tape recorder was used to record the group's discussion during their production of their body biography. The transcribed tapes were the primary data source for the analysis of the group processes.

Data Analysis

Coding Process

The body biography tapes were transcribed, then checked by a research assistant, then rechecked for final verification of students' identities and accuracy of the transcription by Cindy. Students were not available for member checks, because they had graduated by the time the tapes were transcribed and verified.

We then coded the transcripts of the small-group discussions to identify their description of the social framework within which they produced their body biographies and their negotiation of the sources that they drew on to inform their interpretation of Gertrude. The codes described two levels of process. Level 1 was organized around the triadic semiotic perspective described by Witte (1992; cf. Peirce, 1931–1958) and was designed to identify the ways in which students

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developed social processes to engage with contexts, texts, and intertexts to produce their body biographies. Level 2 was designed to use Barnes's (1992) notion of exploratory or final talk to identify the ways in which the small-group setting enabled students to use discussion as a vehicle for developing new ideas about their topic.

Coding System

The coding system consists of two levels. The next sections describe each level of codes and explain major categories in Level 1. See Appendix B for a full elaboration of the coding system, including definitions of categories and examples of each from the transcripts.

Level 1

Under Level 1, we identified seven general types of statements that contributed to the students' body biography productions, and one type that included off-task talk. These seven general types of statement are reviewed next. In the Results section, we explain how the codes contributed to our understanding of the social context of production and the students' collaborative process of composition.

Social process – productive. These codes describe the types of interaction that contributed to the students' production of their body biography representation. These social processes allowed them to function as a group as they produced their body biographies.

Social process – constructive. These codes occurred when students would make statements to support other group members emotionally through positive remarks toward one another. This category of statements appeared infrequently in the transcript.

Social process – destructive. Statements of this type involved exchanges that were insulting, degrading, or abusive. These social processes contributed to the establishment of a set of social relations that worked against their engaged production of the body biography.

Context. Context codes describe students' attention to aspects of their environment that constrained their efforts to work.

Text. Text codes describe references to *Hamlet* independent of the students' efforts to represent it through the body biography.

Intertext – prior knowledge. These codes refer to statements in which students would incorporate knowledge from prior events into their production of their body biography.

Intertext – graphic representation. These codes describe statements in which students would draw images that represented their understanding of the play.

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Intertext – written representation. These codes describe students' comments referring to the written portion of the body biography.

Level 2

Level 2 codes draw on Barnes's (1992) argument that discussion consists of exploratory and final language. Exploratory speech concerns the way in which meaning is constructed in the translation of inner speech to public speech and describes the way in which the process of speaking or composing serves as a tool for discovering new meaning (cf. Smagorinsky, 1998). Final statements represent what Barnes (1992) called final draft versions of speech, those that have been previously explored and are now offered in final form as a resolution to thought. Each individual category is coded with an either an *E* or an *F* to indicate whether the remark is exploratory or final; that is, whether the remark represents an effort to think toward a solution or is in itself a statement that does not invite further discussion. Through the *E* and *F* codes, we sought to understand the role of the students' discussion in leading toward new ideas.

Other Codes

Two types of codes existed outside the basic coding system, statements marked as off-task and inaudible. Off-task codes describe discussion that was unrelated to the play or their interpretation, such as Rita and Dirk's conversation about the upcoming state basketball tournament.

RESULTS

We next report the processes that led up to and were involved in the production of the group's body biography for the character of Gertrude in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (see Figure 1). Our presentation of data follows the path outlined by our research questions. These questions are concerned with two general areas. The first area concerns the social context of production, including the ways in which the students' activity within the small group was channeled and constrained by (a) the students' experiences and dispositions and the ways in which these influences affected their engagement with schooling and more specifically with one another and the task during their group project, (b) the intercontext of prior classroom practices orchestrated within Cindy's values and routines, and (c) the specific requirements of the task and limitations provided by the task environment. The second area concerns our identification and understanding of the

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FIGURE 1. Group's Body Biography for Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet*

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group's discussion of the processes of composition that were afforded by these social constraints, including the meaning they constructed through both written representation and graphic representation. The next sections present our findings in response to these questions.

Social Context of Production

We consulted the following data sources in attempting to answer the questions concerned with the social context of production:

1. Classroom observations throughout the year that documented students' degrees of participation in classroom activities.
2. Cindy's various experiences with the students, including their routine classroom interaction, her reading of and response to student work, her conferences with students and parents, her access to school records, her interaction with colleagues (counselors, coaches, teachers), her interactions with students during Overtime tutorials, and other types of interaction.
3. Interviews with students and corroborating artifacts such as student work, transcripts of classroom discussions, and an interview with Rita's resource teacher.
4. The coded transcript of the group's discussion during their body biography production and the finished text of their body biography of Gertrude.

From an analysis of these data sources, we were able to characterize:

1. Students' degrees of engagement with school and orientation to the body biography task.
2. The activity framework within which the students worked, including (a) the established channels of social activity emerging from prior classroom practices, (b) the superimposed constraints within which they worked, including the temporal framework that constrained their activity and the teacher-imposed framework that structured their work, and (c) the negotiated constraints that they developed within the group, influenced by the students' task orientation and resulting in the relational framework established by the group members.

Students' Degrees of Engagement

The students in the group analyzed in this article were Rita, Jack, Dirk, James, and Bob (all names in this article, aside from the authors', are pseudonyms). All but Bob had been in the class under study for the first semester; Bob had transferred into this block from another of Cindy's classes at the semester break. We

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next provide profiles of the students that give evidence of their degree of engagement with school.

Rita

Rita had a history of difficulty in school and had moved back and forth between public and Catholic schools. Rita's school performance had improved dramatically during her junior year of high school when she agreed to being tested for learning disabilities and was found to have attention deficit disorder, for which she was prescribed Ritalin. Concurrent with her medication, she began seeing Ms. Jackson, a special education teacher in the school, for personal tutoring in her school assignments and individualized instruction in study skills.

Through Ms. Jackson's tutelage, Rita learned to ask teachers for clarification in areas she misunderstood, an approach she frequently employed in Cindy's class. Cindy's process-oriented classroom was often confusing to Rita, because Cindy, in her efforts to allow students to take individual directions within the classroom framework, did not explicate her expectations to the degree that Rita felt she needed. Rita, as a result, often did not understand Cindy's assessment criteria, a clarification that Ms. Jackson recommended she receive with all assignments. Rita stated a strong preference for more authoritarian teachers who provided a clearer direction and more explicit articulation of expectations. Cindy's approach more resembled that of the middle-class teachers Delpit (1995) described as relying on indirection and suggestion in communicating their expectations to students. Rita, like the students that Delpit described as being unschooled in the codes of academic power, claimed to perform much better when a teacher's expectations were clearly and explicitly explained to her. In spite of her feeling of being at odds with Cindy, Rita received *B*'s both semesters of her senior year.

Jack

Jack was a tall young man who was enrolled in a number of agriculture classes and who held an after-school job with a large-breed veterinarian. Jack was not studious, a conclusion drawn from many sources of evidence, including his own acknowledgement during a conference with Cindy and his parents. He watched a tremendous amount of television, being a virtual walking catalog of television characters whom he mimicked routinely in his conversation. In class, he chose to sit in the back corner, preferably on the couch before it got moved to the center of the room, spending as much time socializing as he could manage.

Jack was enigmatic to Cindy and his parents. He professed a strong Christian faith, often wearing T-shirts with Biblical quotations and other expressions of fellowship. His father had been at one point a Baptist preacher. Jack's declarations of faith often seemed at odds with his behavior in class. During the produc-

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tion of the body biography, he frequently became abusive, especially toward Dirk and Rita. His remarks to Dirk, an African American male, were at times blatantly racist. At one point during their production, for instance, Dirk wanted to use a black marker. The following exchange took place. The SPD:D codes refer to discourtesies directed toward Dirk, with Dirk's SPD:RD statements identifying his resistance to discourtesy (see Appendix B for a full list of codes):

Jack:	What's up, Bucky? [SPD:D/E]
Dirk:	I had black. [C:MF/F]
Jack:	What's so great about black? Black stinks. [SPD:D/F]
Dirk:	You got a point? Huh? I smell good. What're you talking about? [SPD:RD/F]
Jack:	You smell so good – if you took a bath. [SPD:D/F]
Dirk:	I was going to mention that I found some markers in the drawer. [CM:F/F]
Jack:	Hey, what are you doing, son? [SPD:D/F]
Dirk:	Same thing you're doing, son. [SPD:RD/F]
Jack:	Well, now what are you doing? You're just messing everything up. [IGR:A/F]
Dirk:	Come on now. [SPD:RD/E]
Jack:	Just take your black marker and get away from me, man. You hear me, boy? [SPD:D/F]

Jack frequently made such remarks toward other group members, with 28 of his remarks in the transcript coded as *discourteous*. The tape recording revealed that he usually offered them with a chuckle. As the response of Dirk suggests, however, Jack's remarks were often interpreted as insulting.

Of all the students who passed Cindy's class, Jack had the lowest point total, coming very close to failing and not graduating. His shortcoming was that he did not turn in work. Jack barely passed the first semester, getting a *D* on the final exam to raise his grade up to 60% (the lowest passing grade) for the semester. He got a *D* the second semester only after Cindy began requiring him to attend Overtime sessions to work on his senior paper, a research paper required by all 12th-grade teachers. Cindy reported a huge discrepancy between his low grades and his intellectual potential, which he would flash on occasion. He got an *A* on his senior paper, for instance, a multi-genre paper and presentation on John Keats which Cindy felt was one of the best efforts of any of her seniors. Cindy's frustration with Jack's complacency was shared by his parents. During parent-teacher conferences and frequent phone conferences, his parents expressed great dismay and concern over his thorough lack of interest in school and his satisfaction with the lowest possible passing grades.

Dirk

Dirk was a very personable, soft-spoken, and friendly African American male. His hero was basketball star Michael Jordan, who served as the topic for many of

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Dirk's writer's notebook entries. He referred to Jordan's establishment of high goals and hard work in achieving them, qualities that Dirk said he admired and wanted to emulate. His frequent references to high personal goals in his writer's notebook and his earnest references to achievement, however, were belied by his poor school performance.

Dirk passed the first semester with a low *D* and was the only student in all of Cindy's five senior English classes who failed the second semester because of his grades; other students failed because of excessive absences. Because he failed English, Dirk did not graduate with his class. Whenever Dirk's grade dropped below a *C,* Cindy assigned him to Overtime to help him complete his assignments. He still did not turn in enough work to pass the second semester, ending up with an average of 48%. The writing he did turn in was problematic, appearing to Cindy to be disorganized. It resembled the "episodic" writing that Cazden (1988, p. 11) described as common among African Americans and often difficult for White middle-class teachers to follow.

James

James was a very pleasant young man though not academically oriented. He had an after-school custodial job at the town's main hospital which he described in his writer's notebook as a full-time job. He usually wore a weather-beaten hat adorned with a farm machine emblem, and his conversational topics usually turned to trucks and related topics. With no other students in the class sharing these interests, his main conversational partner before and after class was Peter. James had also had a number of operations to repair a cleft palate, resulting in some disfigurement to his face. According to his counselor, these operations had in previous years caused him to miss long periods of school. At 20 years of age, James was the oldest student in the class.

When asked during an interview what his goals were for the class, he said simply and immediately, "To pass!" He did not reach this goal, however, dropping out of school less than a month before graduation. He failed the class both first and second semesters, even declining Cindy's offer of a contract to help him earn a passing grade. When assigned to Overtime to help pull up his grades, he did not attend.

Bob

Bob was, in the words of Cindy, a member of the school's "counter culture," with long blond hair and the casual attire of jeans, sandals, earring, flannel shirts, and other accoutrements of the small neo-Sixties culture within the school. Cindy reported that his demeanor had changed when he switched classes at semester. His first semester class had included a number of kindred spirits, and Bob had

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seemed comfortable and had a sense of social belonging. In his second semester class, however, he found no such friends and mostly kept to himself. During the body biography production, he arrived late one day and missed the second day, thus limiting his contributions to the effort.

Bob got *C*'s both semesters. Cindy felt that this performance did not reflect his ability, a view substantiated by his admission to the state's flagship university the following year.

Summary

In the body biography activity, as in all other collaborative projects, the students chose their own group partners. Rita and Dirk had worked together frequently in group assignments throughout the year, with Jack often joining them during the second semester after his own regular group had dispersed to other classes at the semester break. James had no regular friends in the class and appeared to work with this group because the group was primarily male and formed in the vicinity of his desk. Bob also had no core of friends in the class and appeared to join this group because of its physical, if not philosophical, propinquity.

Of the five students in the group, two were college bound and thus concerned about grades. As will be revealed, Rita initiated virtually all of the discussion about the body biography interpretation, with Bob contributing when present. Rita and Bob were engaged readers, but in Rita's case, her engagement came largely through her effort to understand and complete the assignment in ways specified by the teacher. Jack and James had little investment in the activity and were content to let Rita initiate and carry out the bulk of the work. Dirk complied with Rita's initiatives for the most part. As a whole, the group represented greatly varying degrees of engagement with school in general, with Cindy's class as a whole, and with the body biography productions in particular.

Activity Framework

The activity framework consists of the constraints that channeled the students' production of the body biography. The activity framework included three dimensions, all of which were dynamic and socially constructed. These dimensions were (a) the established channels of social practices developed in prior class meetings, (b) the superimposed constraints established by Cindy to structure the students' activity, and (c) the negotiated constraints established within the group to guide their productivity.

Each section of the following analysis is tied to different areas of the coding system. (See Table 1 for a report on the frequencies of each type of code for each student.) The established channels draw on students' use of exploratory talk (Level 2 codes). The superimposed constraints are determined through context

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TABLE 1. Coding Categories

	Rita/E	*Rita/F*	*Jack/E*	*Jack/F*	*Dirk/E*	*Dirk/F*	*James/E*	*James/F*	*Bob/E*	*Bob/F*	*Cindy/E*	*Cindy/F*	*Total/E*	*Total/F*	*Total/T*
Social Process – Productive															
SPP:R (Role)	8	8	6	13	2	4	4	3	5	2	0	0	25	30	55
SPP:S (Strategy)	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	14	0	14
SPP:O (Order)	0	3	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
SPP:P (Physical)	3	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	8
SPP:RC (Request Clarification)	1	0	7	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	13	1	14
Social Process – Constructive															
SPC:A (Affirmation)	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	9	9
SPC:C (Courtesy)	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
SPC:SA (Self-Assessment)	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	7
Social Process – Destructive															
SPD:D (Discourtesy)	0	0	0	28	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	28	30
SPD:RD (Resistance to Discourtesy)	2	1	0	0	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	13
Context															
C:TIF (Teacher-Imposed Framework)	7	9	3	2	4	6	2	0	1	0	8	1	25	18	43
C:MF (Material Framework)	8	3	8	4	5	3	3	1	4	2	1	1	29	14	43
C:TF (Temporal Framework)	2	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	6	5	11
C:SF (Social Framework)	3	0	7	4	1	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	13	8	21
Text															
T:D (Description)	3	7	1	1	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	11	17
T:I (Interpretation)	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	6
T:E (Evaluation)	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	7

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TABLE 1. Continued

	Rita/E	*Rita/F*	*Jack/E*	*Jack/F*	*Dirk/E*	*Dirk/F*	*James/E*	*James/F*	*Bob/E*	*Bob/F*	*Cindy/E*	*Cindy/F*	*Total/E*	*Total/F*	*Total*
Intertext – Prior Knowledge															
IPK:WK (World Knowledge)	7	1	3	2	1	0	4	0	1	1	1	0	17	4	21
IPK:H (History)	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	2	8	2	10
IPK:T (Transmedia)	3	2	4	3	3	3	1	0	3	1	0	0	14	9	23
Intertext – Graphic Representation															
IGR:A (Appearance)	8	9	28	15	8	9	6	2	7	6	0	0	57	41	98
IGR:SR (Spatial Relationship)	7	1	12	3	3	2	2	0	7	1	0	0	31	7	38
IGR:D (Description)	4	2	3	1	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	14	3	17
IGR:S (Symbol)	22	6	7	4	10	8	2	2	18	0	0	0	59	20	79
IGR:R (Reflection)	4	1	6	3	3	0	4	0	3	1	0	0	20	5	25
Intertext – Written Representation															
IWR:SR (Spatial Relationship)	6	3	3	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	12	5	17
IWR:D (Description)	3	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	9
IWR:S (Symbol)	4	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	2	10
IWR:R (Reflection)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	4
Total – On Task	122	71	129	99	60	60	45	9	61	16	12	6	429	261	690
Total – Off Task[a]	83	0	116	0	68	0	40	0	8	0	6	0	0	0	326

Note. /E = exploratory, /F = final.
[a]Not coded as exploratory or final.

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codes. Negotiated constraints are accounted for by statements coded for all three kinds of social processes and off-task comments.

Established Channels

The small-group activity of the body biography production took place within the intercontext, the established channels of social practices enacted in Cindy's class. The group produced their body biography within a framework of social practices that issued from her vision of democratic, student-centered classrooms. As detailed previously (in the section Context of the Investigation), Cindy had established a communication genre (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994, 1995a, 1995b) within the classroom in which artistic interpretations counted as part of students' grades, thus establishing nonlinguistic expression as a legitimate mode of composition. The frequent use of small groups and generally informal tone of the class also sanctioned exploratory talk during class; that is, tentative talk that resembles thinking aloud and enables people to work toward ideas through conversation rather than expressing ideas in final draft form (Barnes, 1992). During the body biography discussion, students' on-task talk was characterized by a 1.6:1 ratio of exploratory to final talk. Students also had received extensive practice in reading literary texts closely, using a textual medium (including spoken words, written words, and art) to explore and project an evocation (Rosenblatt, 1978) or image of the textual signs, interpreting that evocation, and explaining their personal interpretations through references to evidence from the text.

In addition to these academic values, Cindy emphasized the issue of investment, believing that students' contributions to the class gave them a degree of responsibility for the quality of the class, a degree of ownership that was often absent in school. She also projected for the students a set of expectations predicated on faith in their sense of initiative and ability to carry it out. Toward this end, she often told them that she had high hopes for them as writers, knew that they were capable of going beyond psittaceous repetition and had the intelligence to arrive at legitimate interpretations of literature, wanted them to trust their own ability to read and respond without relying on teachers' authoritative explanations, and assumed that they would want to grow as students through the activities that she had planned for them.

Superimposed Constraints

The group was constrained by several factors that they explicitly identified during their discussion. These factors were superimposed on the group by Cindy and concerned the temporal framework and teacher-imposed framework that they explicitly discussed during their composing of their body biography.

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Temporal framework. The temporal framework describes the students' attention to the deadline they worked under to complete the body biography. On 11 occasions, the group referred to the ways in which their task was circumscribed by time limitations (coded as Context: Temporal Framework or C:TF).

The temporal framework served as an initial concern of the group, but an action by Rita dissolved the temporal framework as a structure and imperative for this group. Cindy had originally allocated one block period (Thursday) for students to work on their body biographies, then decided to provide an additional block period (Monday) when students had trouble completing the work in one session. She also made her classroom available to students during Overtime sessions and encouraged the students to work on the project on their own.

As the group began working, however, they believed that Thursday's class would be the only opportunity they would have to work on the body biography without devoting time to the project outside class. Early in their discussion, the group realized that they would not be able to finish their project during Thursday's class. Rita, who had some kind of meeting scheduled during virtually every Overtime session, eliminated Overtime as an occasion to work further:

Rita:	You guys, we're not coming in for Overtime – I'll do some of this over the weekend. [C:TF/F]
Jack:	Rita's like – sacrifice. We're not coming in. You're right, I ain't coming in. [C:TF/F]
Rita:	She should have given us like two periods to do this in. [C:TF/F]
James:	Shoot, I can't do this, I gotta work. [C:TF/F]

Rita's declaration that she would take the assignment home and work on it by herself came early in the session, on the 3rd page of a 32-page transcript. Most of what preceded this juncture was devoted to tracing Rita's outline on the butcher paper. Her announcement just as they began working that she would take the body biography home over the weekend eliminated much of the urgency the group might have felt to use class time productively and appeared to give the less engaged students in the group license to converse on unrelated matters. As Table 1 shows, 326 out of 1,016 statements in the transcript were coded as Off-Task. Off-task conversations drifted far from the body biography assignment, encompassing such topics as the film *Forrest Gump,* an upcoming car wash sponsored by the cheerleaders (including Rita), the impending state basketball tournament (which included Dirk), the merits of different brands of shoes, their preferences in snack foods, and other topics. The temporal framework of their production, then, once expanded beyond the allocated class time and eliminated as a constraint by Rita, enabled the students to disengage from the work.

Teacher-imposed framework. Statements coded as teacher-imposed framework revealed that their sense of their teacher's expectations constrained their activity to an extent (coded as Context: Teacher-Imposed Framework or C:TIF). Most often, they acknowledged this constraint through their attention to the

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assignment provided by Cindy, as in the following excerpt in which they refer to the list of features specified on the assignment:

Bob:	What else are we going to draw? [SPP:S/E] What else on that list is not up here yet? [C:TIF/E]
Rita:	Your – [inaudible]
Dirk:	"I am" poem. [C:TIF/F]

Yet references to the assignment and its specifications were rare during the transcript. More often, C:TIF codes characterized the ways in which the students asked Cindy about how their work would be graded. In spite of her year-long efforts to persuade students that they should become self-sufficient learners and use their studies for personal exploration and growth, they saw her external constraints as providing the basis on which their work would be judged. In the following excerpt, for instance, Cindy circulated past their group and inquired about their progress on the assignment, posing questions about how far they had gotten. When encouraged to interpret the assignment in ways that would give them control of the project, the students requested instead an explication of her expectations:

Cindy:	You guys need to include more things? – Have you gone down this list of all the stuff? Have you talked about that? [C:TIF/E]
Dirk:	We're doing it. [C:TIF/F] Now on this medallion here, can we just like – what you want us to do with it? Do you want us to put like – [C:TIF/E]
James:	Can we draw a face on there? [C:TIF/E]
Dirk:	A face or can we put a name or what? [C:TIF/E]
Jack:	Let's put a face. [IGR:D/F] I'll draw a face. [SPP:R/F]
Cindy:	It's up to you. You are you artists. You are the bosses. [C:TIF/F]
Dirk:	Yeah, but you're the teacher. [C:TIF/F]
Jack:	Yeah, but you're the grade giver. [C:TIF/F]

This exchange reveals the way in which students took a pragmatic view of teachers and schoolwork. For this group, Cindy's efforts to create a classroom motive in which students were provided with choices within the framework of the assignment did not override their view that meeting her expectations mattered more than generating a meaningful response to and representation of the character. Note that Table 1 reports that eight of Cindy's nine remarks coded C:TIF were exploratory rather than final, suggesting that her explanation of the assignment left much open for interpretation. The exchange reveals well the tension inherent in student-centered classrooms in which teachers are responsible for assigning grades. Prior to Cindy's visit to the group, they had discussed the ideas of including a medallion and putting a face on it, yet when Cindy arrived they began to ask her for permission to add them to their body biography. The transcript reveals how students' conditioning to conventions of schooling makes it difficult for them to see that one facet of performance that teachers can reward is originality. Jack and Dirk believed that Cindy had arrived at a correct

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interpretation of *Hamlet* and wanted to provide it for her in order to get a good grade. Cindy, on the other hand, wanted them to use the assignment to deepen their understanding of the character, with the body biography the interpretive medium for her evaluation of their work. The appearance of that deepened understanding inevitably varied from group to group and student to student, with radically different interpretive products conceivably getting the same high grades. This conception of schooling and grading, even well into the second semester in Cindy's class, did not enter the thinking of these students, at least not as revealed through their interaction with her in the transcript.

Negotiated Constraints

Their activity was also channeled by dispositions and structures that they negotiated within the group. We next describe two factors that influenced their interaction, the individual group members' task orientation and the relational framework that they formed and that affected the degree of cooperation possible within the group.

Individual group members' task orientation. One factor that channeled their activity was the sense of task orientation of different members of the group. Rita provided the impetus for virtually all of the group's attention to working on the body biography. After the outline of her body was finished, Rita said, "OK, I'm going to make my own little outline on what we should do," a statement we coded as SPP:S/F to indicate that she was making a final statement concerning a strategy on how to proceed. After locating a pen, she then began directing the group activity with an effort to find a role for each student (coded as SPP:R):

Rita:	OK, all the way like around the bodies, [IWR:SR/E] I want to do what they did on the chess piece, like write an "I am" poem. [C:TIF/F] I'll do that. [SPP:R/F]
Jack:	OK. [SPP:R/F]
Rita:	Like "I am" – um, I don't know I'll write that, and then I'll go around the body and then – [IWR:SR/E]
Dirk:	Be sure it's long enough and spaced out so we can fit the head at the top. [IWR:SR/E]
Rita:	Can anybody draw a skull? [SPP:R/E]
Jack:	Yeah. [SPP:R/F]
Rita:	Do you know how at the end she dies? [T:D/E] We should draw her head as a skull. [IGR:S/E]
Jack:	Skull and cross-bones? [IGR:S/E]
Rita:	Because she's dead. [IGR:S/F]
James:	I can do that. [SPP:R/F]

Here Rita announced the tasks she expected the group to work on, and they followed her plan. When Bob arrived several minutes later and asked what the group was doing, Jack responded, "I don't know, Rita's running the show." Rita

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continued to direct the group, commandeering others' attention when she thought they were not paying attention, as in an exchange that took place about halfway through Thursday's class:

Rita:	I think we need to put some kind of – [IGR:S/E] Are you listening? [SPP:O/F]
Dirk:	Yeah. [SPP:R/F]
Jack:	Who? [inaudible]
Rita:	I think we need to put something about – [IGR:S/E]
Jack:	Do what? [SPP:RC/E]
Rita:	About how she – either she did know about the king's murder, or she didn't [IGR:S/E] 'cause I didn't know if she did or not. [T:I/E]
Jack:	I didn't either. [T:I/E]
James:	She looks Chinese. [IGR:A/F]
Bob:	Cool. [IGR:A/F]
Rita:	I think that Gertrude is kind of a baby. [T:E/E]
James:	She's what? [SPP:RC/E]
Rita:	She's not being an adult. [T:I/E] She acts like a kid because she, like, follows her new husband around. [T:I/E]
Dirk:	Like a puppy dog. [T:I/E]

This excerpt typifies the way in which Rita directed the group's activity when it concerned their interpretation and representation of Gertrude. Her task orientation directed the group both procedurally and in terms of their attribution of meaning to the character. Few other incidents in the transcript revealed other students taking charge in this manner.

Relational framework. Rita's commanding role in directing the group's academic efforts stood in decided contrast to her role in the relational framework of the group's interactions. Rita's emotional vulnerability and lack of social confidence made her an easy target for Jack's abuse. Rita's self-deprecating remarks (coded SPP:P) about her body were typically met with reinforcement from Jack. After finishing her body outline, for instance, the group discussed how to embellish it. Rita had just finished a bag of flavored corn chips and said:

Rita:	Don't smell my breath whatever you do. [SPP:P/F]
Jack:	You already ate one bag a minute ago. [SPD:D/F] Rita, you're a pig. [SPD:D/F] That's why we had to size down your thighs. [SPD:D/F] We had to do a little constructive surgery. [SPD:D/F]
Rita:	My crotch is not that low. [IGR:A/F]
Jack:	No, that is a pretty low crotch. [IGR:A/E] Do you want me to fix that for you? [SPP:R/E]
Dirk:	Well, what are we supposed to do – draw you buck naked or something? [SPD:D/E]
Jack:	No, Dirk, please. [C:SF/E]
Dirk:	I'm pretty sure – [C:SF/E]
Jack:	Don't go there, man. [C:SF/F]
Dirk:	We'll just draw some lines like she had clothes on and that is why her crotch is so low. [IGR:A/E]

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Jack:	All right, tell me how high, Rita, like up in there? [IGR:A/E]
Rita:	That's good, I don't care what it looks like. [IGR:A/E]
Jack:	It's a good thing. [SPD:D/E]
Dirk:	We'll draw the chi-chi's now. [IGR:A/E]
James:	Man, that is, that is weird. [IGR:A/E]
Rita:	No boobs. [IGR:A/E] (Laughter) I don't have any, and no, you're not going to draw any. [SPP:P/F]
Dirk:	She lookin' – [IGR:A/E]
Jack:	Yeah, she looks – we can reconstruct, but we can't reconstruct that much. [SPD:D/F]

While serving as director of the group's academic work, Rita also served as the subject of various insults, primarily from Jack. Jack's abusive remarks toward Rita (and, as illustrated previously, Dirk) were central to a relational framework that discouraged collaboration. On the fringes of these discussions stood James, whose contributions were minimal and rarely acknowledged by the others, and Bob, who was task-oriented when present but largely absent from the discussion. The relational framework developed by this group did not support Cindy's intention to have the body biography serve as a vehicle for the generation of a cooperative interpretation of the character or a democratic community of learners.

Summary

By structuring the class to provide freedom of response and independence from teacher direction, Cindy hoped to provide liberation from overly scripted responses and provide empowerment for students to grow through discussion and representation. But the data suggest that the liberties taken by students freed them not only from interpretive constraints but also from the need to develop academic goals and engage in respectful collaborative production. Cindy's faith that the students would take the initiative if granted freedom of direction ran aground when her goals had little congruence with those of dominating students such as Jack. The data presented thus far suggest that students who are not engaged with school or school-related tasks can use their freedom in unproductive and at times destructive ways, even in tasks that are designed for the purposes of encouraging them to explore, negotiate, and represent their independent interpretations of challenging literature.

Processes of Composition

The data presented thus far reveal a group whose dynamics made the possibilities for a fruitful collaborative effort highly problematic. Yet, as Figure 1 reveals, they did complete an interpretation of Gertrude that met Cindy's criteria for the assignment, even if Rita did produce a good part of it by herself over the weekend. We next report on the processes they went through during their more

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productive exchanges during the class sessions devoted to the body biography. Codes that describe the students' processes of composition fall in the categories of Text and the three types of Intertext.

The activity framework we have described provided the context for the group's work on their body biography. In Table 1, we report the categories identified for their contributions to their discussion. As noted, they spent much time establishing the parameters for their work and then talking off-task after Rita asserted that she would take the project home to work on. Even with roughly one third of their remarks coded as Off-Task, a relational framework often characterized by Jack's abuse, and a productive initiative provided almost exclusively by Rita, two-thirds of their discussion did center on the play, the significance of Gertrude, and their decisions about how to represent their interpretations through both graphic and written symbols. In the next sections, we review their processes of interaction when interpreting Gertrude through their written representation and graphic representation.

Written Representation

The body biography assignment required the students to include both significant quotes from the play and original writing that interpreted the character. Previously reported discussion excerpts have referred to their decision to include an "I am" poem, a formula poem in which students are provided with a series of starters for each poetic line that they then complete (i.e., "I am _____/ I feel _____/ I touch _____/..."). Their discussion of both of these assigned written representations were limited on the transcript, because Rita produced them over the weekend. The group did, however, discuss an idea to include the word "lust" prominently in their drawing. As was typically the case, Rita initiated the idea:

Rita:	We need to draw a big – lust. [IWR:S/E]
Jack:	A big lust? [SPP:RC/E]
Rita:	Yeah, write the word "lust." [IWR:S/E] You know, Gertrude's about like 45 – [T:D/F]
Bob:	Where? Over here? [IWR:SR/E]
Rita:	Somewhere, yeah. [IWR:SR/E]
Bob:	Lust. [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	Because what she – she was like 45 [T:D/F] and she's in like her sexual peak. [IPK:WK/F] She's just a whore. [T:E/F]
Jack:	What? [SPP:RC/E]
Rita:	Because I mean she is. [T:E/F]
James:	Why don't we put – [inaudible]
Jack:	What do you want to do, stamp it on her forehead? [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	Yeah, she should have it stamped on her forehead. [IWR:S/E]
Jack:	Why do you think that? [SPP:RC/E]
Rita:	I'm sorry, I just think it's really sick that she married her husband's brother. [T:E/F]
Jack:	OK, but that doesn't necessarily make her a whore. [T:E/E]

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Following an effort to find a pen, the discussion continued:

Bob:	*Draw the big word "lust."* [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	Where'd my pen go? Where's my pen? Where's my pen? [C:MF/E]
Dirk:	I mean, that's cool. [inaudible]
Bob:	Lust? [IWR:S/E]
Jack:	*Where, like right here?* [IWR:SR/E]
Bob:	Are you going to write it? [SPP:R/E]
Dirk:	Like, have "lust," going from one leg to the other one – right here. [IWR:SR/E]
Bob:	What else? [SPP:S/E]
James:	*What about a lustful heart? Write "lust" in the heart.* [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	Lust is in the sexual organs. [IWR:S/F]
Dirk:	So are we going to take and draw lust? [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	I am, right now. [SPP:R/F]
Dirk:	Use a pencil first. [C:MF/F]
Bob:	Who's going to draw it? [SPP:R/E]
Rita:	I will. [SPP:R/F]
Dirk:	I'll draw it. [SPP:R/F] I'll make it big. [IGR:SR/E]

This discussion reveals two key processes in the role of the discussion in the development of their interpretation. One is in the way they draw on their knowledge of human experience to inform their interpretation of Gertrude: Rita thought she was a "whore" for her behavior, a point that Jack disagreed with. Rita drew on her knowledge of sexual desire over the life span, as well as her own sense of morality, to justify her judgment. Finally, the group discussed whether lust originates in the heart or the sexual organs. Their symbolic representation of Gertrude, therefore, came through the transaction of their own knowledge of social behavior and their view of the character's behavior in the play.

The second noteworthy aspect of their discussion is the exploratory character of their talk (coded at Level 2 as *E*). As Barnes (1992) and others have argued, classrooms typically discourage the kind of groping, tentative thinking aloud that leads to the development of more fully articulated, final draft ideas. This excerpt reveals the way in which exploratory talk, mediated by exchanges with other students, can lead to a final form of representation that all agree on. In this case, the exploratory talk allowed the students to think out loud about the character's behavior in the play, their evaluations of that behavior, their views of that behavior in light of their knowledge of the world, and their ideas on how to represent their response to the character through written symbols.

Graphic Representation

The group also produced 256 statements coded as Intertext – Graphic Representation. In a manner similar to their discussion about the symbolic importance of the placement of the word "lust," the group discussed a number of ways to represent

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Gertrude's character through images. Their discussion of imagaic representation was nearly six times longer than their discussion of their written representation. As Figure 1 reveals, their use of written representations primarily consisted of writing significant quotes outside the outline of Gertrude, with the word "lust" and an "I am" poem the only interpretive uses of words. Most of their efforts at symbolization (79 statements coded IGR:S), then, came through graphic images.

The group spent a great deal of time discussing what they felt was a central event in the play, the accidental poisoning of Gertrude by Claudius. They drew a goblet falling from her hand to represent this incident on the literal level. This depiction of the scene then led to a more symbolic effort to represent how the poisoning served as a denouement to a series of events, passions, and relationships within the play. As they discussed their depiction of the falling goblet, Rita said, "I think we need to put something about how she really did like Ophelia, but I don't know how." From there, the group decided to consider Gertrude's loyalties in the play, particularly those toward three key characters: Claudius, Hamlet, and Ophelia. They discussed her divided loyalties between Claudius (her second husband and the brother of her first husband, King Hamlet) and Hamlet (her son who disapproved of her second marriage and suspected Claudius of murdering King Hamlet). They represented these loyalties in two ways, both in her heart and in her head. The group decided to draw two hearts, one split between Claudius and Hamlet and one devoted to Ophelia. Dirk explained to Bob what the divided hearts symbolized:

Bob:	Working on her heart? [SPP:R/E]
Dirk:	We're going to show like Claudius and Ophelia, and the broken hearts is going to be where she was disgracing, finding out that Claudius was trying to poison her. [IGR:S/E]
Bob:	So, which one is gonna be her – [IGR:S/E]
Dirk:	That one, yeah. [IGR:S/F]
James:	What about King Hamlet? [IGR:S/E]
Dirk:	[inaudible] Hamlet decided to have [Ophelia] as a [inaudible] and to marry her and then at the end [Gertrude] finds out that Ophelia dies and she is heartbroken about this. [T:D/F] And [Gertrude] is heartbroken about Claudius, trying to find out, she finds out that Claudius was trying to kill her. [T:I/F] That's what we're going to do. [IGR:S/F]

Dirk's account of the play was not entirely accurate in that Claudius intends to poison Hamlet's drink, not Gertrude's. Gertrude is the one, however, who drinks from the poisoned goblet while Claudius watches without intervening in order not to implicate himself in the poisoning. The effect of Claudius killing Gertrude, however, is the same. In their presentation of the body biography to the class the following week, Rita explained that in the divided heart, "One is Hamlet, Claudius, and she is split between them. Then she has a big heart for Ophelia because I really think she liked her."

The discussion of the character's head followed and paralleled that of the

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heart. Early on, Rita had decided to draw the head as a skull. Later they decided to divide it into three sections and devote each to a character central to Gertrude's feelings and, as Rita said during their class presentation, among whom she felt "torn" about:

Bob:	*Do we divide her head in the middle?* [IGR:S/E]
Rita:	Yeah, you know why? [IGR:S/E]
Bob:	Because she loves Claudius, she loves Hamlet Senior. [IGR:S/E]
Rita:	We should crack it. [IGR:S/E] You know like when cartoon characters like are skiing and they like hit something – [IPK:WK/E]
Bob:	Oh yeah, and it like separates. [IPK:WK/E]
Rita:	– and their whole body is like cracked, and they go like – [IPK:WK/E] Because she's got all these different parts, or – [IGR:S/E]

Here they drew on world knowledge (coded as Intertext – Prior Knowledge: World Knowledge) of cartoon programs to inform their representation, if not their interpretation, of the character. They used this fragmented head as the vehicle to depict her divided feelings about these three central characters in her life.

The transcript following this discussion reveals the inequity in the contributions of the students to the interpretation. Rita and Bob continued discussing how to depict the head, while Jack and Dirk got involved in a discussion of a car wash taking place over the weekend, eventually distracting the others away from the group activity:

Bob:	I say we do three. [IGR:S/E] You'll have to take the head apart, though, to do that. [IGR:S/E]
Rita:	Yeah, get that crack out of there. [IGR:S/F]
Jack:	*Dirk, man. They had a little car wash Saturday at [a local Christian school]. I went up there and they about filled the* floor boards with water. [OT]
Dirk:	I heard about that. [OT]
Jack:	Who did you hear about it from? [OT]
Dirk:	It was like, what was it like? [OT]
Rita:	Three pieces? [IGR:S/H]
Bob:	Yeah. [IGR:S/H]
Rita:	Are you going to put it in three pieces? [IGR:S/H]
Dirk:	It was on the west side of Norman. [OT]
Jack:	It's over here. [OT]
Rita:	What are we going to put in each one of the three pieces? [IGR:S/H]
Dirk:	It was on the northwest corner? [OT]
Jack:	No, it was on Robinson and 24th. Across from Buy for Less. At Hardee's or something. [OT]
Dirk:	By that new Buy for Less? [OT]
Jack:	No. At Robinson. [OT]
Bob:	No, I'm gonna take this apart and – [IGR:S/H]
Dirk:	Hardee's. [OT]
Jack:	No, it was on Robinson and 24th. [OT]
Rita:	That's Hardee's. [OT]

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In this excerpt, the less productive aspects of the group's activity framework made collaborative composing difficult. It also shows the limitations of simple frequency counts in the tabulated results and the lack of the coding system's sensitivity to nuances of the discussion. The figures, for instance, reveal that Jack produced a total of 228 on-task remarks and 116 off-task, whereas Rita produced 193 on-task remarks and 83 off-task. Jack's ratio of on-task to off-task remarks was just under 1.9:1, whereas Rita's was 2.33:1, frequencies and ratios that are not substantially different and that suggest similar degrees of engagement in the activity. The codes do not reveal, however, that Jack's on-task remarks tended to consist of going along with other students' ideas rather than initiating ideas or substantively building on contributions of others. The coding of Jack's remarks as final might suggest interpretive authority in composing the body biography, yet his final remarks most frequently confirmed another student's contribution. Jack's contributions came primarily in terms of the body biography's appearance (IGR:A) in contrast to Rita's and Bob's attention to the symbolic meaning of the interpretation (IGR:S). While on-task, Jack did not particularly contribute; while off-task, he did not particularly interfere. We saw him instead as leaning on his intellectual shovel while other crew members worked, contributing little to the construction of meaning yet satisfied to receive credit for the group effort. Rita's on-task remarks, however, led the group both procedurally and substantively. A simple contrast of the numbers, then, is somewhat misleading in measuring their relative contributions to the effort.

A second limitation of the methodology concerns what is and is not captured on tape. In class, the tape recorder failed to record softly spoken discussions taking place beneath the more audible off-task talk of Jack and others. While Jack and Dirk were talking about the car wash, for instance, Rita and Bob could be heard discussing the body biography in the background, though not loudly enough for transcription. The reliance on tape-recorded discussion also did not allow us to capture or analyze the extensive work that Rita completed over the weekend. The transcripts, then, underrepresent the contributions of the various group members in quantifying their statements during their production.

The transcript did, however, provide some information on the thinking behind the additional symbolic representations that Rita produced over the weekend. When they returned to class the next week, she explained to the group the decisions she had made:

Jack:	Where's our little writing that goes around her? [IWR:D/E]
Rita:	I know, I haven't done that yet. [SPP:R/F]
Jack:	Rita, what are you thinking? What did you do, blow it off again? [SPD:D/E]
Rita:	Well, I've got it written down. I just – [IWR:D/E]
Dirk:	I see, you closed in the hip a little bit. [IGR:A/F]
Rita:	Yeah. [IGR:A/F]
Jack:	Oh, the king, the king of hearts. [IGR:A/F]
Rita:	Guys, does it look crappy? – I mean is it OK? [IGR:R/E]
Jack:	The king of hearts. Pretty sweet. I think it looks pretty sweet,

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	Rita. You did well. [SPC:A/F] Did your little sister help you? [SPD:D/E]
Rita:	The reason why I crossed her fingers is because, is because I thought that I was going to explain that. I think she's real, she's crossing her fingers because she's hoping that everything will work out between everybody. [IGR:S/F]
Jack:	Did your little sister help you? [SPD:D/E]
Rita:	No, I did it last night. [SPP:R/F]
Jack:	You done good, Rita. [SPC:A/F]
Rita:	It looks kind of stupid but – [IGR:R/E]
Jack:	You done plum good. [SPC:A/F]
Rita:	I didn't know what to draw down here. I was like – damn, now what do I draw? So, I just – [IGR:SR/E]
Jack:	So, the Queen. [IGR:S/E] Q for queen, right? [IWR:S/E]
Rita:	Yeah – [IWR:S/F]
Jack:	And here she is. [IGR:S/E]
Rita:	I drew some hair because my body kind of looked like it needed it. [IGR:A/F]
Jack:	That's what I thought – I thought she should have hair. [IGR:A/F]
James:	Besides they didn't have chemotherapy back then. [OT]
Dirk:	So she's crying because of Ophelia? [IGR:S/E] Ophelia was killed. [T:D/F]
Rita:	I don't know, she's kind of confused. [IGR:S/E]
Jack:	She's crying because Rita said she was crying. [SPC:A/F]

This excerpt reinforces much of what we have presented and discussed thus far. Rita, as noted, did the bulk of the work. Her insights about the play provided the blueprint for the representations that went into their body biography. Jack, though showing some appreciation and support for the fact that Rita did work for which he would receive credit, balanced his praise with derisive comments. His on-task remarks followed but did not build on Rita's ideas and were coded as final although they did not initiate ideas. James made a single contribution, an attempt at humor that went unacknowledged. Rita, in spite of having drawn an elaborate and accurate reproduction of a Queen playing card, revealed her insecurity about her work appearing to be "crappy" and looking "stupid." And Jack explained the character's tears as an executive decision of Rita's that needed no further explanation.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we sought to understand the backgrounds that the students brought to Cindy's class and the body biography activity, the framework that structured their activity, the students' levels of engagement with schooling and the assignment, the type of talk that they engaged in, and the ways in which they constructed meaning for the play through their body biography production

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within the social framework of their school, classroom, and small group. We do not present this group as representative of all small groups, but rather as representative of the kinds of groups that often form within heterogeneous, regular-track classes in public high schools. From Cindy's class, three groups' discussions were tape-recorded in addition to the one examined here. Of these groups, two functioned cooperatively (see O'Donnell-Allen & Smagorinsky, in press; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998, in press), and one was characterized by the sort of disaffection exhibited in this group. Our purpose in presenting the dynamics within this group is to reveal the ways in which students can negotiate and restructure constraints during collaborative group work in ways that are incongruent with the ways anticipated by the teacher in organizing the class and in planning particular activities.

Through our analysis of the body biography discussion and related data, we found the following:

1. Episodes of collaborative group work take place within a school culture and classroom and small-group idiocultures. Each setting provides an overriding motive for performance that both suggests social and academic goals for the students and is negotiated by subgroups operating within it.
2. During particular episodes within classrooms, students work within activity frameworks that are both imposed and negotiated. The imposed frameworks that we identified in this group's interaction (time, assignments, materials, propriety) were dynamic rather than static; as noted, Cindy revised her original time frame for completing the body biography and tried to convey that the assignment was open to interpretation. These imposed frameworks provide much of the structure for group production. The negotiated frameworks are considerably more fluid and idiosyncratic, depending on the chemistry of the individuals who come together and their construction of both the task and context of production. The relational framework contributes to the degree to which a democratic community develops within a group and the degree of equity that results from the group's sense of community. The group described in this study, we would argue, completed a product that succeeded in meeting the terms of the assignment, yet did so in a way that was neither socially nor academically equitable, and thus not democratic or communitarian. They performed this way within an overall environment that encouraged them to value and collaborate with one another. The disjuncture between the group's degree of equitable social process and the degree to which their product, the body biography, met Cindy's expectations for the activity raises dilemmas for teachers who value collaborative activity yet who pragmatically assess the product and not the process of group work.
3. The vehicle of the body biography enabled the group – four of whom with a history of difficulty in school – to construct a meaningful interpretation of a complex character from a difficult work of literature. By this we mean

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that their on-task discussion of how to represent Gertrude focused on symbolic representation more than literal (by a ratio of 79:17 in their graphic representation and 10:9 in their written representation) and involved both evaluation and interpretation of the characters in the text (coded T:E and T:I). The inequitable relational framework, however, placed more of the interpretive responsibility on some students than on others. Finally, the students drew on different types of prior knowledge to inform their representation of their character.

Our analysis problematizes notions of teaching that emphasize the power of context in changing students' orientations toward school. We present the students in this group as evidence that a consideration of context must go beyond what happens in individual classrooms and take into account the social worlds of the students and their prior experiences within the school culture. To return to our framing theory, the establishment of a predominant motive for a classroom – progressive or otherwise – does not preclude other motives from surfacing or developing. The social framework of a class, although providing a sanctioned set of channels to guide and direct performance, leaves room for negotiating goals and processes among individuals. Within the idioculture of a classroom, then, alternative idiocultures may develop that subvert or complicate the overall dynamics of the interactions. We see the discussion within the group as an illustration of how, even given principled teaching, engaged learning does not necessarily follow. As teachers who believe in the tenets of progressive pedagogy, we have learned from this study that we need to attend to the full range of possible responses that students might have to an open-ended structure, including those that we find counterproductive.

Our study suggests the need to reconceive the notion of engaged reading. Most theorists view engagement as primarily a relationship between readers and texts, with the classroom environment providing a structure that facilitates a meaningful engagement. Through this study, we see engagement in a much more social sense, including readers and texts but extending to relationships beyond them. Lensmire (1994) argued that notions of engagement require "the participation of *all* children in the community's important activities" (p. 147) so that each has a voice, contributes to the classroom, and is heard by others. In this sense, engagement requires each student's engagement with each other, thus establishing an environment of mutual care and concern. Furthermore, the teacher must participate in these caring relationships, both as a leader to ensure that students are mutually respectful and supportive and as a learner who is attentive to students and their contributions. In Lensmire's view, then, notions of engagement that focus primarily on students and texts are insufficient, underplaying the social relationships through which texts are written and read. Rather, engagement can only be understood in terms of the ways in which people in classrooms transact with one another.

We wish to extend Lensmire's (1994) view of engagement further, broadening

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it to take into account students' prior experiences with school and other contexts for literacy development. As this study illustrates, even in a classroom where the teacher negotiated with students an environment to promote engagement with texts and caring relationships with each other, some students did not participate wholeheartedly in activities designed to facilitate their academic and personal growth. Progressive classroom environments cannot be disconnected from students' other experiences with school and literacy and cannot necessarily change the whole climate of student engagement with school. We argue instead for a notion of engagement that takes into account learners' cultural and social histories and views their relationship with texts in terms of this vast web of experiences that they bring to particular classroom episodes. Engagement, like other aspects of activity, is "nested" (Cazden, 1988, p. 198) in multiple social contexts that must be acknowledged and accounted for.

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APPENDIX A
The Body Biography

For your chosen character, your group will be creating a *body biography* – a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the novel.

You have many possibilities for filling up your giant sheet of paper. I have listed several, but please feel free to come up with your own creations. As always, the choices you make should be based on the text, for you will be verbally explaining (and thus, in a sense, defending) them at a "showing" of your work. Above all, your choices should be creative, analytical, and accurate.

After completing this portrait, you will participate in a "showing" in which you will present your "masterpiece" to the class. This "showing" should accomplish these objectives. It should:

- review significant events, choices, and changes involving your character
- communicate to us the full essence of your character by emphasizing the traits that make her/him who s/he is
- promote discussion of your character, (esp., regarding gender issues in the novel)

Body Biography Requirements

Although I expect your biography to contain additional dimensions, your portrait *must* contain:

- a review of significant happenings in the novel using visual symbols
- an original text
- your character's three most important lines from the novel

Body Biography Suggestions

1. *Placement* – Carefully choose the placement of your text and artwork. For example, the area where your character's heart would be might be appropriate for illustrating the important relationships within her life.
2. *Spine* – Actors often discuss a character's "spine." This is her/his objective within the novel. What is the most important goal for your character? What drives her/his thoughts and actions? This is her/his "spine." How can you illustrate it?
3. *Virtues & Vices* – What are your character's most admirable qualities? Her/his worst? How can you make us visualize them?
4. *Color* – Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you most associate with your character? Why? How can you effectively work these colors into your presentation?
5. *Symbols* – What objects can you associate with your character that illustrate her/his essence? Are there objects mentioned within the novel itself that you could use? If not, choose objects that especially seem to correspond with the character.
6. *Formula Poems* – These are fast, but effective, "recipes" for producing a text because they are designed to reveal a lot about a character. (See the additional handouts I gave you for directions and examples.)
7. *Mirror, Mirror,...* – Consider both how your character appears to others on the surface and what you know about the character's inner self. Do these images clash or correspond? What does this tell you about the character?
8. *Changes* – How has your character chanced within the novel? Trace these chances within your text and/or artwork.

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APPENDIX B
Coding System With Examples

Level 1

Social Process – Production

Role (SPP:R) – statement about the student's role within the group's cooperative work.
Dirk: Do you want me to draw just the shoe?
James: Yeah, 'cause –

Strategy (SPP:S) – statement that describes a method for proceeding with the interpretation.
Rita: OK, I'm trying to figure out what we need to do on it.

Order (SPP:O) – statement that directs other students in how to behave.
Rita: If you rip that thing I'm gonna kill you.

Physical (SPP:P) – statement referring to students' physical attributes in relation to producing the representational text.
Rita: Hey, don't make me look real fat. Well, I've got sweats on and stuff.

Request Clarification (SPP:RC) – statement in which a student asks someone to clarify or elaborate on a prior statement.
Jack: Do what?

Social Process – Constructive

Affirmation (SPC:A) – statement that affirms the worth of another group member's contribution.
James: You can be anything you want for the most part.

Courtesy (SPC:C) – statement that conveys considerateness toward another.
Jack: Thank you, Lisa.

Self Assessment (SPC:SA) – statement in which a student refers to his or her own abilities in producing the representational text.
Jack: Me and Dirk are awesome artists, so don't worry about it, Rita.

Social Process – Destructive

Discourtesy (SPD:D) – statement that conveys a lack of consideration for another.
Jack: Rita, you're a pig. That's why we had to size down your thighs. We had to do a little constructive surgery.

Resistance to Discourtesy (SPD:RD) – statement that reveals an affront to discourteous statements by others.
Jack: Dufus. Deer. Is that good for you there D? D. Dork [SPD:D]
Dirk: Dirk. [SPD:RD]
Jack: D for Dork. [SPD:D]
Dirk: Dirk [SPD:RD]
Jack: D for Dork. [SPD:D]
Dirk: Dirk. [SPD:RD]

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Context

Teacher-Imposed Framework (C:TIF) – reference to a structure provided by the teacher to order, direct, and focus students' production.

Cindy: You guys need to include more things? Have you gone down this list of all the stuff? Have you talked about that?
Dirk: We're doing it. Now on this medallion here, can we just like – what you want us to do with it? Do you want us to put like –
James: Can we draw a face on there?
Dirk: A face or can we put a name or what?

Material Framework (C:MF) – reference to a corporeal structure that in some way constrains and enables the students' means and method of production.

Dirk: Whose pen is this, yours or mine?
Rita: Not mine – no, wait, that is mine.

Temporal Framework (C:TF) – reference to the time limitations that bound students' production.

Rita: You guys, we're not coming in for Overtime – I'll do some of this over the weekend.
Jack: Rita's like – sacrifice. We're not coming in. You're right, I ain't coming in.
Rita: She should have given us like two periods to do this in.
James: Shoot, I can't do this, I gotta work.

Social Framework (C:SF) – reference to students' understanding of the rules of propriety that govern social interaction in the classroom.

Jack: Lay down so we can do this, come on. We prefer a girl to do some tracing.
Rita: Lisa, are you going to come and trace me?
Jack: Lisa, come trace her because, you know, we don't want to stir anything up.

Text

Description (T:D) – summary or description of a character or action from the source text with no effort at inference.

Rita: Do you know how at the end she dies?

Interpretation (T:I) – inferential statement about a character or action from the source text.

Rita: She's not being an adult. She acts like a kid because she, like, follows her new husband around.
Dirk: Like a puppy dog.

Evaluation (T:E) – statement that provides an evaluation of the actions of a character in the source text.

Rita: I just think it's really sick that she married her husband's brother.

Intertext – Prior Knowledge

World Knowledge (IPK:WK) – relating the text under consideration to knowledge of the world outside class.

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Bob: No, real pearls don't dissolve.

History (IPK:H) – reference to knowledge of the historical period in which the source text is set.

Rita: What is an Elizabethan?
Cindy: OK, Elizabeth was the Queen when Shakespeare was writing. And so that's what the time period was named after.

Transmedia (IPK:T) – reference to other versions of the same text being studied or interpreted, such as the film version of *Hamlet* viewed in class, with the reference recapitulating, summarizing, or interpreting the text.

Rita: Remember that deal she had around her neck?
Jack: Yeah, a locket?
Rita: Uh huh.
Jack: No, it wasn't really a locket, it was like a medallion.
Rita: A picture.
Bob: It was like a medallion.
Jack: It was like a medallion, dude.

Intertext – Graphic Representation

Appearance (IGR:A) – reference to the images of the representational text (i.e., the body biography) with attention to its appearance (neatness, straightness, messiness, etc.).

Bob: Don't you think it'd be better with the markers?
Jack: Well, we're just fixing it right now.

Spatial Relationship (IGR:SR) – reference to the images of the representational text with attention to the manner in which they fit together in a cohesive whole.

James: How about on the hand?
Rita: How about that, she can be holding it in her hand.

Description (IGR:D) – reference to the images of the representational text (i.e., the body biography) with attention to its capacity to represent the story pictorially; that is, faithfully to the story without figurative embellishment or interpretation.

Jack: We've got to draw wine spilling out –
Dirk: Yeah, that's what I was about to say.

Symbol (IGR:S) – reference to the images of the representational text (i.e., the body biography) with attention to its capacity to represent the story and its characters and action through a medium not literally conveyed by the original text.

Rita: Hey, but don't you think that would be a good idea if we drew the head as a skull because she dies in the end?
Jack: Yes.
Dirk: Yeah.

Reflection (IGR:R) – reference to an effort to step back from the representative text and consider the representative potential of the graphic portion.

Jack: Is that good? I don't know if it is or not because –

Intertext – Written Representation

Spatial Relationship (IWR:SR) – reference to the linguistic portion of the representational text with attention to its capacity to fit together with the graphic images to form a cohesive whole.

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Rita: Like "I Am" – um, I don't know I'll write that, and then I'll go around the body and then –
Dirk: Be sure it's long enough and spaced out so we can fit the head at the top.

Description (IWR:D) – reference to the linguistic portion of the representational text with attention to its capacity to represent the story faithfully without figurative embellishment or interpretation.
Jack: Is that what she wrote down?
Rita: No, I'm going to write down, "Mother, you have my father much offended."

Symbol (IWR:S) – reference to the linguistic portion of the representational text with attention to its capacity to represent the story and its characters and action through analogies not literally conveyed by the original text.
Rita: We need to draw a big – lust.

Reflection (IWR:R) – reference to an individual's effort to step back from the representational text and consider the representative potential of the written portion.
Jack: How's that for your wine and your pearls?
Bob: Good.

Off-Task Talk

Off-Task (OT) – personal talk unrelated to the text under consideration.
James: Where do you work?
Jack: Oh, for a doctor, he has some horses that I take care of.
James: What doctor?
Jack: Dr. Harvey.

In addition to these categories, we labeled statements *inaudible* when we could not figure out their meaning from the available context. Such statements often were uttered to students who were not in the group, but who were passing by on their way to get markers, go to the washroom, or who otherwise momentarily took leave of their own groups.

Level 2

Exploratory (/E) – tentative efforts at interpretation or evaluation. Exploratory talk invites elaboration from others by asking questions and suggesting possibilities. It is marked by a "groping towards a meaning" (Barnes, 1990, p. 28) through thinking aloud and is marked by such terms as *might, could, possibly, maybe, I think,* and other qualifiers that indicate that an idea is under development and being offered for consideration by others.
Jack: Whew, sweet – wait, time out – before we go any further on this side, what do you want to do? Do you want to make her holding the cup?
Rita: Or dropping the cup – I don't mind, I don't care.
Bob: You can just like put the cup like underneath her hand.
Jack: (In a high-pitched voice) "I'm poisoned – oh."

Final (/F) – interpretations or evaluations that express a fully formed idea and do not invite further discussion.
Dirk: We're going to outline the feet now, fellas.

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