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GRADUATE COLLEGE

AN ANALYSIS OF TALK IN FOUR FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COOPERATIVE LEARNING GROUPS

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

JUSTIN EDWARD EVERETT
Norman, Oklahoma
2001

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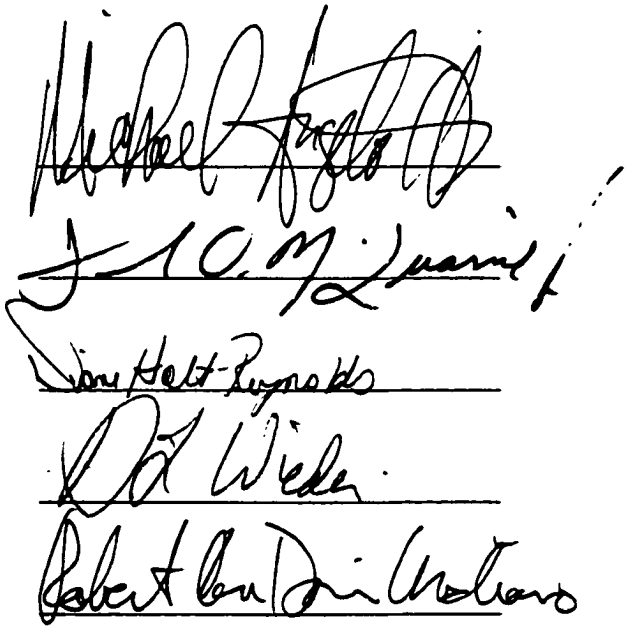
A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

BY



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Chapter 1

Introduction

The last twenty years have seen enormous changes in approaches to teaching composition. Hairston (1982) identified the move away from the current-traditional model and toward viewing writing as a context-sensitive process as a "paradigm shift" (p. 76). Bruffee (1984), in agreement with Hairston (1982) argued that the emergence of the study of writing as a discipline distinct from its application in literature classes was due, at least in part, to open enrollment policies begun in American colleges in the early 1970s, while Nystrand, Greene, and Wiemelt (1993), in a review of the Composition field, argued that the dethronement of formalism (which is text-centered) in favor of "constructivism," which views texts as social objects, contributed to the shift along with numerous other factors. According to Kuhn (1970), a "paradigm shift" occurs when the existing stream of thought among a group of thinkers (to Kuhn, scientists) proves inadequate for dealing with a new phenomenon. For example, the Ptolemaic universe was replaced by the Copernican model, and classical physics has given way to quantum mechanics. As with most changes in the intellectual status quo, this move toward social constructionism may have been more gradual than recent research seems to imply. Still, the "top down" approach to teaching has lost ground (or perhaps the acceptance of alternative teaching methods has been accelerated) due to the change in the demographic makeup of the post-60s college classroom. The appearance of Peter Elbow's books (1973, 1981) and Postman and Weingartner's Teaching as a Subversive Activity (1969) are indicative of the growing popularity of student-focused approaches to teaching at that time.

The early attempts to define a new approach to the teaching of college writing

went primarily in two directions: cognitive process and the social contexts of writing. The process approach, popularized by Flower and Hayes (1981), among others, soon fell under the scrutiny of the social constructionists. The difficulty with the process approach, according to Berlin (1980) is that it places emphasis only on mental processes while ignoring the social aspects of writing, and especially reality as it is perceived by the writer. The 80s, Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt (1993) noted, "quickly became dominated by social interpretations of language use" (p. 285). One of these schools of thought became known as social constructionism or social-epistemic rhetoric. This school of thought has been influential enough to force even a die-hard realist like John R. Searle (1995), famous not only for his speech-act theory but also for his arguments with Derrida, to admit that "there are portions of the real world . . . that are only facts by human agreement. In a sense there are things that exist only because we believe them to exist" (p. 1). This position was certainly not new, having been long ago suggested by Edward Sapir (1921) and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (Crystal, 1987; cf. Pinker, 1994). According to Ward (1994):

> Rather than viewing knowledge as something discovered "out there" in the "real" world through empirical methods, social constructionists argue [that] the facts, the self, "reality," and even knowledge itself are constructed through a dialectical interaction among language, culture, people, and the material world. (p. 50)

This approach assumes that knowledge is the result of social interaction between individuals, and not merely absorbed "as it is" through the senses. One of the defining features of this view is the inseparability of language and knowledge. Social

constructionists are particularly interested in the role that language plays in shaping our concepts of reality. As Bazerman (1994) argued,

> The general intellectual movement known as social constructivism provides an entryway to considering how special languages have been developed as part of social activities, how the use of these languages reproduce and maintain social activities and relations, how the languages are sustained by social institutions, and how language enters into the continuing process of social negotiation that produces novel arrangements for our social future. (p. 114)

The social activity of speech (as one of the dominant means of social semiotic interaction) makes it possible to share knowledge among members of a group. Members of a definable social group, regardless of size, must use language to create a common ground that will allow them to work effectively toward a common goal.

Research Problem

As a primary means of semiotic interaction within a group structure, talk contributes to the ability of groups to achieve individual writing goals. In the post-secondary writing classroom, peer response groups, as Bruffee (1993) proposed, can play an important role in responding to or creating student-authored texts. Talk that occurs within those groups certainly affects the rewriting efforts of individual students. A number of researchers, among them Gere (1987), Gere & Stevens (1985), Gere & Abbott (1985), Nystrand (1986), Freedman (1992) and Sperling (1995), investigated the effect that talk has on student writing (and rewriting) efforts. These studies focused on the function of particular utterances rather than the ways that talk contributes to forming the

social structure of cooperative learning (CL) groups in the college composition classroom. The research to date has been largely impressionistic, and has done less to understand the structural dynamics of such talk than to make inferences about the function of particular utterances. Researchers have yet to investigate how something as common as conversation can play such a crucial role in establishing the common ground that allows students to provide each other with revision advice to begin with. If these areas are explored, then it should eventually become possible to better understand how the social makeup of a given cultural group might contribute to the group's overall effectiveness. While I by no means propose to have accomplished this lofty goal, it remains my hope that the exploratory study into the role that talk plays in creating and maintaining the social cohesion of a group presented in this dissertation had laid some of the groundwork that might make such an understanding possible and pave the way for future studies. Through a close examination of talk within a few representative revision groups, I believe I have gained some insight into the role that language plays in forming the social world within the group. Social construction, with its emphasis on the role that language plays in constructing reality, provided the ideal theoretical basis for this investigation.

What this study has attempted, in an initial exploratory fashion, is a close observation of the talk that takes place within a limited number of cooperative learning groups as they interact together for the first time. As DiPardo and Freedman (1987, 1988) have pointed out, research is still needed to understand "actual patterns of students' communicative interactions during group sessions" ([1988] p. 143). What I shall attempt to track, though a careful analysis of their talk, is the process through which students form a sub world within four college composition revision groups. I shall attempt to

describe what might be thought of as the social dynamic of these revision groups.

Given what I have outlined above, the central question of this study remains, "what appears to be the social dynamic of revision groups in a college composition class?" Related questions may be broken down as follows:

1. What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences and expectations that participants bring with them?

2. In what ways are such contexts not "solid," but mutable entities that may change literally from moment to moment as the conversation goes on?

    2a. What roles do members of revision groups in college composition classes appear to play as they attempt to proceed with their common goals?

    2b. When group members do not agree, what sorts of conflicts arise within the groups?

3. These changing concepts are built out of sign/interpretant complexes. Social interpretants are formed as participants struggle to form a common context that will allow them to move closer to achieving that goal. In what ways do individual goals appear to differ from group goals, and how do those differences manifest themselves?

The Social Constructionist View

In the last ten years social constructionism has seen a variety of incarnations, including Berlin's (1980) notion of personal reality, Cooper's (1989) ecological model, LeFevre's (1987) work in the social nature of invention, Gere's (1987) focus on collaborative learning (though strikingly acultural), and Bruffee's (1993) emphasis on a dialogic approach to collaborative learning. Early on, Berlin was a strong force in laying the groundwork for what would become social constructionism. In a series of critiques of the current-traditional model, Berlin (1980, 1982, 1987), criticized its assumption that

reality is the same for everyone: that data only need be filtered through the senses in order to be seen as it is.

Berlin was not the first to theorize that social concepts of reality affect the way individuals interpret their world. The Chicago school of sociology, dating back to the 1920s and 30s, developed some of the founding methods of what has become known as qualitative research by "emphasizing the social and interactional nature of reality" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 12). Some thirty years later Goffman (1959) studied how people try to manipulate how others see them, and how this posturing affects perceptions of reality. A few years later Berger & Luckmann (1966) argued that individual concepts of reality result from the institutions to which we belong. Berlin brings a similar perspective to the study of rhetoric and composition.

According to Berlin, reality is a matter of perspective. The composing process cannot be "universally defined" (1982, p. 765), but should be dependent on the interaction among writer, audience, reality and language. In the "new rhetoric," he proposed, the writer is engaged as an active shaper of reality rather than being shaped by it. "The subject," Berlin (1988) said, "is itself a social construct that emerges through the linguisitically-circumscribed interaction of the individual, the community, and the material world" (p. 489). In other words, individuals, gathered together in groups (communities) use language to define the parameters of reality as suggested by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Following an independent line of thought, Bruffee applied similar ideas to collaborative learning. Like Berlin, he was interested in how underlying preconceptions shape contexts for learning about writing. Early on Bruffee (1981, 1982, 1985) called for seeing learning in terms of what Fish (1980) terms interpretive communities. As one of

the strongest advocates of collaborative learning as it applies to the college composition classroom, Bruffee (1983) argued that writing must be viewed as an interactive rather than solitary process. According to Bruffee, if writing is a form of socialized speech, then:

> This necessity to talk-through the task of writing means that collaborative learning, which is the institutionalized counterpart of the social or collaborative nature of knowledge and thought, is not merely a helpful pedagogical technique incidental to writing. It is essential to writing. (p. 165)

In other words, the idea that writing can be a solitary activity is an illusion. By definition writing is an attempt at communication, and as such must necessarily involve interaction between the writer and one or more potential readers. It is through such interaction that shared notions of reality are created.

According to the social constructionist view, through the use of language, along with other forms of sign-making, the members of a given community construct reality. If members of a community share common experiences and discourse conventions then the dialogue that takes place within a CL group, as in other task-defined settings, constitutes a kind of shared (social) knowledge. This collective knowledge exists in the individual consciousnesses, realities, of various group members. Through semiotic interaction individuals both contribute to, and draw from, the entire network of individual minds that make up the reality of a particular social group. So in order to understand group knowledge, it becomes necessary to understand how the individuals both contribute to and appropriate knowledge from the group as a whole.

For the most part social groups do not live in isolation from one another, but

interact with vast spectra of other groups in (to invoke a metaphor) a complex pattern of interolocking rings. As one of the places where people from different cultural backgrounds meet, a school must provide a common agenda so people from significantly different backgrounds can sucessfully interact. As individuals enter the institutions they encounter in their lives (college is but one), they become aware of the coda of social rules associated with the institution as they struggle to fit in or otherwise find their place in the setting at hand. They may do this by finding a social group (one of the interlocking rings) that resembles their home reality (perhaps a fraternity/sorority) or a group identified by a common interest (the engineering club).

Yet when students enroll in a first-year composition course and enter a CL group (say, 3 to 5 students) where the instructor expects them to evaluate one another's often highly personal writing with straighforward frankness, the students face a new problem. They must construct a foundation, a new reality, that will bind the group together for the duration of the semester. If members of such a group can successfully negotiate a common ground, then they can begin the process of creating a social bond that will cause them to trust and value each other's comments about their work. When such a bond exists, the group communicates using verbal language as the primary means of semiotic interaction more effectively because they share certain values, assumptions, or beliefs.

Semiotic Implications

An understanding of how this process operates can be found in Saussure's Course in General Linguistics (1986). Though Saussure rejected the study of individual speech acts as "an impossible object for systematic study" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 16), an examination of the relationship between langue and parole might offer a perspective concerning how group realities both construct and are constructed by language.

According to Saussure, language has two aspects, social and individual:

> The study of language thus comprises two parts. The essential part takes for its object the language itself, which is social in its essence and independent of the individual . [. . .] The subsidiary part takes as its object the study of the individual part of language, which means speech, including phonation. (1986, p. 19)

The important distinction here is between language (langue) as a system and speech (parole) as utterance. Essentially, Saussure saw language as a system of arbitrary signs that construct meanings by an agreement among the members of the linguistic community as a whole. The collected speech acts (parole) of a given community provide the raw utterances, the individual sign relations, that construct langue. At the same time, langue, which exists as a system of signs by virtue of communal agreement, supplies the signs individual speakers must draw upon in order to form their individual acts of parole. Speech acts thus both compose and are composed by the parent language.

A brief example illustrates how this might function in the writing classroom. In my writing classes groups sometimes work on classification by defining kitsch (German for ugly), a kind of object collected for its tastelessness. Each group went to garage sales or flea markets to bring in a number of objects that they think are kitsch. While the groups within themselves generally come to an agreement about what makes something kitsch, between groups there is often disagreement. The reason, I think, is twofold. First, the students, from their own cultural backgrounds, possess a sense of what they think bad taste is. Within the groups they negotiate through language to form a group consensus regarding what the group qualifies as kitsch. The concept they come into the class with

becomes negotiated into a group aesthetic through verbal interaction. I provide the initial concept to them via my own brief definition (my parole becomes source material, langue), but the group quickly takes that word up and transforms its meaning. Thus, langue makes parole possible, yet parole shapes langue.

This concept relates to base world and sub world as defined by Berger and Luckmann in The Social Construction of Reality (1966). From initial caregivers, and later from teachers, clerics, and other significant people in their lives, individuals achieve a concept of value-based reality which the authors term base world. This reality, which solidifies at a very young age, becomes the defining influence on them for the rest of their lives. As they move out into the world and encounter other institutions such as schools, religious institutions, government institutions, special-interest groups and workplaces, they develop sub worlds defined by those places. The sub world becomes acceptable to them as long as it does not significantly conflict with their base world. Where conflict exists, a crisis results.

Student membership in the college on one level, the composition class on another, and the CL group on still another, formulate various levels of a sub world. If a student arrives at college and finds the values presented there conflict with his or her base world, then some form of culture shock will likely result. If significant conflict fails to arise, then the student gradually becomes a member of these communities. Language solidifies this relationship. Through exchanges of parole the individual comes to understand the langue characteristic of a particular sub world. As the student engages in discourse at the dorm, in a whole-class discussion, or in a CL group, he or she both distributes and appropriates knowledge. It is through this exchange that the student discovers whether she suits, or even desires, membership in a particular sub world.

When students of different backgrounds come to a CL group with differing cultural assumptions, they may experience difficulty in working out a common goal or working out other details of a CL activity. For example, males and females may differ on what constitutes "date rape." Rather than spending time helping the writer develop an idea or revise a paper on this topic, a CL group may need to spend valuable time working out a mutual definition that will allow the conversation to proceed. Likewise, students from vastly different base worlds might not accept the values or assumptions behind another student's project.

From the point-of-view of semiotics, the base world may be thought of as constituted by langue, or the meaningful systems that individuals have at their disposal. While each person's experiences differ slightly even within similar base world constructions, they share certain similarities that allow the members of a cultural group, formed of a web of family, religious affiliation, and other institutions that contribute to a person's primary self-image, to form a common identity. Each person remains an individual whose sign-reading and sign-making activities, or acts of parole, have gone a long way toward creating an identity that differs, however slightly, from other members of the institutional group. While members of a given cultural group may share langue, what composes langue may differ not only from community to community, but also from indivudual to individual, though in many cases those individual differences might not be immediately apparent. This distinction becomes more noticable as the person enters new institutions and appropriates sub worlds that set them apart from the base world that helped create their self-image. The result is that this identity, this concept of reality, is not a fixed object, but fluctuates as the individual engages in new acts of parole. This situation becomes further complicated as the person interacts with new people whom he

or she has never before seen, and with whom the student may have nothing in common except that they are enrolled in the same first-year composition class. When the students react together in a cooperative learning group for the first time, they engage in acts of parole to establish, at least in part, a common ground, a sub world of sorts, that will allow them to work together toward the common goal of responding to each other's writing. How these differences might function semiotically can be explained through Charles Sanders Peirce's concepts of sign, object, and interpretant.

Peircian Semiotics

Charles Sanders Peirce's (1932) semiotic triad may provide a means of understanding how this process might take place. His work is valuable, as Witte (1990) has argued, for understanding the dynamics of intertext and context as it relates to writing. Peirce's triadic model, Witte proposes, provides a means for understanding how texts (or utterances) exist in relation to one another, and how those texts form multiple interpretants.

Peirce's (1932) sign consists of three elements: the sign mediates between object and interpretant. Peirce defined the sign like this:

> A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person and equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. (p. 228)

This is perhaps Peirce's most compact definition. Elsewhere in the Collected Papers he further specified the relationship between the sign and its object. The "Sign . . . must

'represent,' as we say, something else, called its Object . . ." (Vol. 2, p. 135). The difficulty for Peirce lies in the interpretant which is the individual comprehension or understanding of the representamen, the relation of the sign to its object. That comprehension (interpretant) leads to the creation of a new sign, which must necessarily have its own interpretant:

> If a Sign is other than its Object, there must exist, either in thought or in expression, some explanation or argument or other context, showing how--upon what system or for what reason the Sign represents the Object or set of Objects that it does. Now the Sign and the Explanation together make up another Sign, and since the explanation will be a sign, it will probably require an additional explanation, which taken together with the already enlarged Sign will make up a still larger Sign . . . [and] each such part [of the whole series of significations] has some other part as its Object. (Vol. 2, p. 136-37)

Or put more directly, "Anything which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on ad infinitum" (Vol. 2, p. 169). This triadic process, in which the attempt to relate a sign to its object results in an "understanding" of the "meaning" of that representamen, the interpretant, which itself becomes a sign of a new signification, cannot by dyadic in nature in the sense of the Saussurian sign. A sign cannot simply relate to its object without creating an interpretant:

> A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a

> Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is genuine, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations. (Vol. 2, p. 156)

By logical necessity, according to Peirce, the interpretant, an internal, mental (and thus subjective) function, results when an interpreter connects sign and object, which are external to the individual perceiving the sign. That interpretant, once it is thought about, becomes an object of mental inquiry, which causes it to become a sign, and so the infinite series of continuing significations goes on. As an individual apprehends signs and checks them against his or her consciousness, the understanding of what the sign means grows, develops, and changes. Peirce makes the mental nature of the interpretant clear when he argues that

> A sign is in a conjoint relation to the thing denoted and to the mind. If this triple relation is not of a degenerate species, the sign is related to its object only in consequence of a mental association, and depends upon a habit. Such signs are always abstract and general, because habits are general rules to which the organism has become subjected. They are, for the most part, conventional and arbitrary. They include all general words, the main body of speech, and any mode of conveying a judgement. (Vol. 3, p. 210)

This points to at least three important issues: (1) the sign, external to the person who perceives it, is related to the object, which also is external and ultimately unknowable to the perceiver, through the interpretant, which is a mental association of the sign to the

object. However, through the process of continuing semiosis, since the interpretant becomes a sign which generates its own interpretant, the interpretant is subject to change as semiosis continues. (2) Different individuals perceive differently. Given the same stimulus (sign) various individuals will produce various interpretants, and the interpretants of two individuals can never be identical. (3) Through semiotic interaction, through exchanges of individual acts of parole, individuals within a particular social context may create interpretants that move toward one another but are never identical. While people can agree enough on meaning to be said to share the concept, their interpretants will always differ to some degree.

An explanation of how this process might work has been offered by Deacon (1997). He argued that Chomsky (1957), and more recently, Pinker (1994) were incorrect in their assumption that languages are essentially hard wired into the human brain, and claims that language evolves primarily in culture. Using the metaphor of a virus, Deacon claimed that language passes genetically through culture, spreading from individual to individual, effectively evolving at every step along the way. Language spreads, he said, "as a complete system, not just a collection of words" (p. 113). The "complete system" might be thought of as langue, while the "collection of words" could be considered the individual acts of parole that make up the system. Further, he contended that as this "self-sustaining core" (p. 113) "is passed from generation to generation, the vocabulary and syntactic rules tend to get modified by transmission errors, by the creativity of its users, and by influences from other languages" (p. 114). This "self-sustaining core," I would like to suggest, is at least in part responsible for Berger and Luckman's (1966) base world as well as Saussure's langue. I do not mean to suggest that the base world is a linguistic system, but it certainly is a collection of signs (interpretants) woven in with the

greater body of langue. Indeed, it composes and as a result is composed by langue and could not exist without it. In essence, I would like to suggest that the base world might be thought of essentially as content, as a collection of semiotic relations that make up an individual's concept(s) of reality and identity while langue refers to the system that makes such institutionalization possible.

If semiosis is an ongoing process as Peirce suggested, then this "self-sustaining core" must be undergoing constant revision. I believe Berger and Luckman were correct in their belief that the base world consists of a person's primary beliefs, and as such are not easily changed, though it may be revising itself in infinitesimal ways as new interpretants are formed. However, I prefer to think of the sub worlds as connected to the base world core, but radiating out from it like the spokes of a wheel. Such sub world experiences are not as deeply rooted in their primary beliefs and as such are more subject to revision and change. When a student interacts in a CL group, each individual contributes a storehouse of interpretants that make up this base/sub world complex. Upon interacting with, and becoming a member of the group (understanding and accepting the rules of engagement), the individual develops a sub world of specially categorized interpretants for interacting in that particular social sphere. The degree to which a student succeeds within a group structure is highly dependent upon the extent to which that sub world has been developed, and its compatibility with the sub worlds of other participants. The student must be literate in the sub world, including "a mutual agreement on the meaning of signs, but [also] on the ways in which tools are used to produce them" (Smagorinsky 1995). Group members must understand the group rules of conduct as well as be competent in the langue of the group. The success of a student group will thus be proportional to the competence of its members.

When students are placed in cooperative learning groups for the purpose of giving each other revision advice, they must attempt to create what might be thought of as a sub world within a sub world within a sub world. The first level might be the university, the second the writing class, and the third the cooperative learning group. While these students may or may not have much in common, they must attempt to find common ground between them which will allow them to effectively work together toward the improvement of each others' writing.

Social Dynamic

This is an elusive term, and bears some describing. In this chapter I have described, primarily in semiotic terms, some of the elements that are involved in the verbal interactions that take place within revision groups. The first element of the social dynamic may be thought of the social context in which the students find themselves. It may consist of a combination of a common purpose (the reason that the group has been formed) and a diversity of individual backgrounds which must be somehow intermeshed in order to make the group function as a viable unit. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concepts of the base world and sub world are effective ways of describing the process of creating contexts in which individuals interact together in order to accomplish a shared task. In terms of revision groups, what the students are likely to have in common is the requirement to share their writing with one another, and make constructive comments about what the other members of the group have written. The students may or may not have much in common outside of the context of the classroom. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, their base worlds may be nearly identical, or they may be very different. The participants may have a ready made context that is very familiar to all involved, or they may need to virtually create one from scratch.

The second element of the social dynamic is drawn from Saussure's notions of langue and parole. It is my proposition that group contexts are formed out of shared concepts represented by semiotic vehicles, or signs. But social contexts are not solid, unchanging entities such as a physical object, like a table, which remains more or less the same from moment to moment. As each participants contributes speech acts a group discussion with a common purpose in mind, each utterance helps "build" and (at least slightly) changes the shape of the conceptual entity. Thus the "dynamic" comes into play, because the context of the discussion changes as talk proceeds. As speech acts (parole) are added to the discussion, the complex of rules (langue) which makes the discussion possible may be changed in some way. I am not using langue here exactly as Saussure does, to refer to a language system, thought that is certainly part of what I am suggesting. I am also using it to the social rules (spoken or implied), the shared understandings, that govern how a group discussion will proceed.

Two areas especially affected by this idea are role and conflict. "Role," as I use the term throughout this study, refers to the social function that a participant plays in a group. The role may be self-assigned (such as a person who attempts to become a leader of a group), or the role may be group-assigned (as in someone who is elected to record answers to revision sheet questions). It is possible that participants may play multiple roles, or may switch or share roles within a group. Conflict may also result within a group conversation, and may affect the rule structure of a group. Two different students may vie for leadership positions, or a participant may disagree over the procedures that are to be followed. At such moments, the parole of individual participants may be intended to represent an idea they wish to relate to the other group members, and one or more of the others may disagree over the meaning of a particular sign. Such conflict

might occur when group members disagree over the use of a particular word or phrase, for example.

Such disagreements can arise because of the third element of the social dynamic, the Peircinan concept of the interpretant. The inevitable result of Peirce's semiotic model is that social interactions of any kind must invevitably involve some degree of conflict. If not two interpretants of an individual sign are the same (Peirce would have us believe that they change within the individual from moment to moment) then some degree of semiotic negotiation is necessary in order to establish a social context that will allow participants to work together toward a common goal. Each individual brings with them a mental model of the issues they will discuss. Each of these models might be thought of as an interwoven tapestry of Peircian interpretants. Speakers may then react to utterances in one of three ways. They may accept the value of what another person has said, and weave it into their own model; they may reject what a speaker has proposed, and not work it into their model at all; or they may discuss the issue until it is acceptable to all parties involved. This is the process of creating a social interpretant, of fine-tuning individual semiotic mental models until they are roughly in line with one another (since they will never be identical). This ever-chaging social interpretant is the core of the social dynamic of the CL group.

Conclusion

The model I have proposed, I hope, has made it possible to take a very close look at the dynamics of conversation within a group structure, as the following chapters will illustrate. By examining individual student utterances as signs, and all the while understanding that private interpretants are associated with them, I will describe in the coming chapters conversational structures--literally ways of talking--that tend to elicit

student interaction with their texts as well as those that do not. This, in conjunction with an analysis of what students believe the rules of a particular group setting to be--the sub world conditions–have made it possible to categorize student discussion strategies and make some generalizations about the role that language plays in helping students learn. This picture, literally constructed of many diverse parts, has helped me gain an understanding of the social dynamic that was in play within the groups investigated in this study. In the long term it might be possible to compare the conversational strategies of groups assigned different tasks (whether group-authored or response) as well as the strategies of different group sizes (from a dyad to five or six students) that contribute variously to the quality and effectiveness of the group learning experience, especially as it applies to the long-term goal of the improvement of student writing.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In the last twenty-five years, a great deal has been written about the success that collaborative groups have in helping students learn to write. Most of it--especially the early work–has suggested ways to implement cooperative groups, emphasized the value of peer feedback, and encouraged placing more authority in the students and less in the teacher (Beaven, 1977; Bruffee, 1973, 1984, 1985; Elbow, 1973; Freedman, 1987; Hawkins, 1976; Macrorie, 1970; Moffett, 1968; Moffett & Wagner, 1983; Murray, 1985; Tinto, 1994). Until recently, however, much of the research on collaborative learning groups focused on the effectiveness of particular methods and models (DeVries & Slavin, 1978; Slavin, 1978; Aronson, 1978; Sharan & Sharan, 1976) or on the generally positive outcomes that have resulted from such groups (Cohen, 1984; Fox, 1980; Gere & Abbott, 1985; Johnson, 1981; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1977, 1980). Even though Newkirk (1984, 1995) takes a more cautionary approach, the attitude toward cooperative learning remains overwhelmingly optimistic. In very recent years, cooperative learning has even moved from a theoretical to a more practical focus, as the many classroom applications to cooperative learning that are now so prevalent have attested (Bromley & Modlo, 1997; Marr, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). In spite of generally positive feelings that writing teachers have for cooperative learning, students often resist working in revision groups (Lazar, 1995; Stay, 1994). Some teachers are also expressing doubts about the effectiveness of such groups (Brumberger, 1999). In the face of this controversy, then, it is curious that so few attempts have been made to understand the internal dynamics of cooperative learning groups, though research into the social dynamics of cooperative learning groups has begun to appear. Naturally, since talk is the medium by which such

groups primarily operate, several of these studies tend to focus on the role that conversation plays in group dynamics.

Organization

The following review of studies will show: (1) while a number of researchers attempt to describe the function of language of cooperative learning (CL) groups, few have sought to understand the structure of such group talk or draw generalizations about how such patterns of talk relate to student rewriting efforts (Recent research that has focused on the role that talk plays in cooperative learning groups has included Smagorinsky and Fly, 1993, 1994 and Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen, 1998); (2) the importance of understanding the social contexts for such talk; and (3) the potential that conversation analysis demonstrates for evaluating the conversational structures only hinted at in the current body of research. Further, I believe this research reveals the need to understand the social dynamics of CL group talk if for no other reason than to comprehend how such talk serves to help students negotiate a common ground that will allow them to proceed with their learning tasks. This body of research suggests that when left on their own, students will avoid conflict and criticism for the purpose of maintaining group coherence. This tendency, illustrated by some of the studies to follow, provides some indication of the overall structure of talk in CL groups that focus on writing. This especially deserves consideration as an indicator of the general patterns of group talk.

Function versus form

Studies that take a serious look at the role that talk plays in small group learning began to emerge in the 1980s. A number of these studies demonstrate a tendency to focus on the function of CL group language while paying little attention to its form. In one such study Gere and Stevens (1985) sought to investigate " . . . what actually occurs

in writing group meetings . . . [especially] how writing groups affect the writing process, particularly the revising" (pp. 86). The authors studied cooperative learning groups consisting of four to six students in grades 5, 8, and 10 to 12. Students wrote expository essays and followed a procedure based upon Elbow's (1973) "teacherless writing group," though the authors admit that these procedures were not always observed by the students. The researchers coded talk for "idea units" (Chafe, 1980) marked by pitch changes, pauses, and syntax. The majority of student comments to writers were informative--they attempted to relay information to the author about the author's writing. The greatest number of comments of this type were evaluative, and most of these uncritically praising the author's writing. Collaborative comments were a somewhat less frequent type of informing language in which group members worked together to help one group member develop an approach to a particular question or problem. The students in this study on occasion engaged in constructive negative feedback in spite of the instructions forbidding this type of response. According to Gere and Stevens (1985),

> We feel that the spontaneous appearance of such language, despite instructions to the contrary, offers evidence of the power of this kind of response. We saw nothing to indicate that the students who "disobeyed" the teacher were challenging her authority; rather the force the response itself seemed to take over, whether or not they intended it to. (pp. 98)

This type of response, which the authors deem valuable in an impressionistic way for its presumed power to influence student revision efforts has a negative side. Younger students, Gere and Stevens observed, were inclined to slip into verbal abuse.

Student comments within the group structure, the authors conclude, serve as much

an evaluative function as an informative one. Through collaborative talk the group tries to realize the potential meaning of the text by informing the writer of such meaning for each listener. Teacher comments on the other hand, which frequently included directives for rewriting, indicated that the teacher tried to push students toward and idealized text while the students worked toward the production of an actual text. This fundamental difference between the student's concept of a text and the teacher's concept is also touched on by Newkirk (1995), who discussed writing conferences in which both student and teacher must play various roles and negotiate an understanding of the student's text. In my view, since both the student and teacher must collaborate on such things as the meaning and purpose of the writing, both parties have entered an authoring mode and have begun to shape the text. This, to some extent, may be what happens in CL groups as individual texts are revised according to the outside influences of teacher and peer.

In keeping with several of the studies that follow, Gere and Stevens' (1985) study focused on the function of talk within the group without attending to the form that such talk takes. However, the authors do make a form-related observation that other studies reviewed here also make: That constructive negative feedback may have a direct positive influence on the rewriting efforts of individual CL group members. But the researchers observe that students are not inclined to make such comments. Gere and Stevens note a preference for positive statements about student writing. To a certain degree this study doesn't provide a good example of this tendency, since one of the teachers involved forbade students from making negative evaluations. Of interest here is that students went ahead and made constructive negative comments in spite of their teacher's directions. This would seem to indicate that under certain conditions students will make constructive negative comments about other students' writing, but exactly what those conditions are,

for this study, remain uncertain. The exact conditions under which students willingly engage in such talk, as opposed to polite positive statements that provide little of value for the writer ("It's good, I liked it") needs to be made clear. A structural analysis of CL group talk might offer insight into the structural tendencies of revision group conversation and suggest what conditions tend to elicit constructive negative feedback, and what conditions do not appear to favor such responses.

Gere and Stevens' (1985) investigation, in a pattern typical of the studies reviewed here, does not draw distinctions about the cultural and personal similarities and differences between the students involved. Instead, it seems to assume that the students are culturally similar, and thus could be expected to react to one another in similar ways. I would expect students in a strongly homogeneous setting (a military academy or a "traditionally Black" college might be good examples) to react in similar ways, but I would not expect this in a more diverse population. It simply makes sense that students who have less in common will have to work harder to establish a common ground. Any study that proposes to understand verbal interaction cannot afford to assume that talk occurs in an acultural vacuum.

In another study that appears to use at least some of the same data, Gere and Abbott (1985) evaluated data obtained in CL groups within fifth grade, eighth grade, and high school level classes for the purpose of comparing group talk across three grade levels, to determine the function of such talk, and infer the relationship of such talk to writing. Again students wrote expository essays, and were instructed to follow Elbow's (1973) writing group instructions. The researchers collected copies of student essays and meeting notes as well as any paper revisions that they made. They recorded group sessions and identified idea units, coding each for its linguistic function (inform, direct,

elicit) following the system outlined by Sinclair and Coulthard (1978). According to Gere and Abbot, Elicitation requests a verbal response or other non-verbal signifying action (a reply), directive asks for a non-linguistic response (or requests an action, such as to stop talking), while inform conveys ideas. Gere and Abbot also coded for general area of attention (to writing, procedures, off-topic talk).

They found that older students (high school age) wrote longer texts and produced more idea units than younger ones, and that topics of discussion differed with grade level and mode of discourse. Students informed about the content of writing most often, followed by directives about writing processes. Older students made fewer comments about content than older students, who made more comments about context and form than the younger ones. Overall, the researchers found that (1) writing groups focus on writing, rather than off-topic talk (at least when recording equipment is present), and (2) students made little use of directive functions (in sharp contrast with teachers) and (3) students gradually develop a discourse for talking about writing, as indicated by the greater frequency of directive statements in older students.

This study, like the previous one, does an adequate job of identifying the function of certain utterances without specific attention to the structure or form used to produce them. These researchers did not emphasize the structure of the conversational utterances (in fact, they paid almost no attention to it), preferring instead to concentrate on the "idea units" (Chafe, 1980), or focuses of consciousness, intuited from the recorded talk. The terms elicitation, directive, and inform borrowed from Sinclair and Coulthard do not tell us anything about the structure of the conversation itself, but about the function or task that the speech act is supposed to accomplish. Similarly--and in a much more obvious way--the researchers have added three codes for focus of attention that monitor not the

structure of the talk, but rather attend to its subject matter. A structural analysis of the sort I am proposing would benefit from a system of conversational analysis which focuses upon the form of talk at least as much as its function or content.

This study also observed that competence in the activities that CL groups which focus on writing engage in increases with grade level. The more a student practices CL activities, the better they become at engaging each other's texts and giving advice. This observation points toward another important issue: the ability of students to form a classroom community in which they become "literate" in the rules of classroom conduct in general, and the procedures of writing group conduct in particular. Gere and her collaborators have drawn broad generalizations about small group processes without considering the influence that the social context of the group environment must neccessarily have on the individuals who make up those groups.

Social contexts in cooperative learning groups

A number of researchers have attempted to account for the social forces that help shape students' revision experiences. Nystrand (1986) demonstrates the important role that social contexts, and especially negotiation, play in creating positive learning experiences for group members. His investigation focuses on how talk functions in intensive peer review (IPR) situations. IPR, according to Nystrand, encompasses an alternative teaching method in which groups of students meet several times a week, keep journals, and prepare writings for in-class presentations. The researcher studied 250 average freshmen in thirteen classes over a period of three years and evaluated the essays they produced using Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rosen's (1975) transactional-informative (T-A) scale, based on the idea that expository writing, as an interpretive act, increases in quality while the writer learns to render experience into prose. The lower

levels consist of reporting, followed by generalizing and finally theorizing. This view remains a common one to this day, if the large number of college composition textbooks that use some form of this model are to be considered a representative sample. By the end of each term, the researcher found that studio students (those involved in IPR groups) were substantially ahead of nonstudio students (those in more traditional classes). Studio students on average advanced further down the T-A scale than nonstudio students. Whereas nonstudio students saw revision primarily as editing, those involved in IPR groups demonstrated a greater tendency to value reconceptualizing their writing as well.

When peer review is a part of classroom context, Nystrand argued, it teaches students to reconceptualize because they deal with authentic (not teacher-directed) purposes and contexts. Further, Nystrand continued, groups that work discuss substantial issues that inform their writing, though the researcher observes that groups that proceed by listening to writers read their texts (as opposed to reading the drafts themselves) rarely proceed beyond sentence-level concerns. This advice contrasts sharply with Elbow's (1973) writing group instructions which place the emphasis on oral readings. Nystrand's finding is an important one to remember especially since Elbow's instructions have been used frequently by Gere, Freedman, and others in their own research experiments.

Talk, Nystrand argued, encourages negotiation by balancing the needs for expression against the need to appeal to the expectations of a real audience (presumably other IPR group members). Each revision, when presented to the group, becomes a "text hypothesis" (p. 204) presented to the group to be tested by the group-as-audience. Elaborations made by writers solve some problems (that is, address complaints made by the group about a previous draft) but invariably create new trouble-spots that in turn must be addressed. After the group rejects one potential text, a new one later replaces it with

the hope that the audience will receive it better. Through this process groups engage in rhetorical problem solving that extends from simple conversational repair to more complex issues involved in joint revision.

What Nystrand described here touches upon the very nature of conversation and how it functions to create contexts that make revision possible. In terms of Berger and Luckmann's The Social Construction of Reality (1966) what Nystrand observed was the formation of a strong sub-world on the part of the members of the IPR groups. Unlike traditional university students, who meet in the classroom two to three times a week for perhaps a total of two and one-half hours (and almost certainly very little of that in an interactive mode), the students Nystrand observed spent much more time together. If it is through semiotic interaction that our realities are primarily constructed, and if we admit that one means by which semiotic interaction occurs is through speech, then it is logical that groups of people who spend more time together in pursuit of a common purpose will develop a stronger sense of identity--of group belongingness--than those who spend less time together. Naturally, certain people simply cannot work effectively together for whatever reason. In such a case, the group will probably become more disfunctional as dislike and resentment builds. However, when a common bond is formed, the group identity will solidify with time. Simply put, the IPR students had more opportunity to get to know each other and create a concept as a social unit that identifies itself with a common purpose. They have had time to form a sub world in terms of the Berger/Luckmann model. In essence, they share a set of common assumptions, a coda of rules, and in all likelihood, a structure of participant roles.

Even with these social structures in place, it remains possible that a CL group simply will not "work." Some students, regardless of the social setting, will not be able

to form a productive cooperative relationship simply because of personality differences or other social factors. The studies under discussion here do not appear to have considered this possibility, or otherwise consider it a peripheral issue (or it was simply not observed). I believe the key to such differences lies in the complex interrelationships between base and sub worlds, and that the content of those base/sub world packages gets transmitted through speech. This is similar to what Tannen (1986) characterized as miscommunication caused "by differences in conversational style" (p. 19). Tannen (1990) argued that men and women, people of different cultures (1986), and even close friends (1984) miscoomunicate because they use various styles of conversation based on the cultural assumptions that the speakers make about themselves and one another. When conversants do communicate on the same "wavelength" (so to speak), Tannen argued, they share a "metamessage" between them. This is akin to what I would call a Social Interpretant, or a meaning shared between two speakers who have established a rapport. In other words, they have established a sub world that allows their individual Interpretants (here capitalized following Peirce's lead) to converge to a certain degree. While individual minds can never hold exactly the same Interpretant, through social discourse members of a community can modify their individual Interpretants enough that they may be said to hold an idea in common. Their individual ideas will never be identical, but they can be similar enough to allow the members of a particular interpretive community to move forward on some issue where the individual members hold a common interest. The process Tannen described in such loving detail in her famous (and ongoing) series of books is the business of the struggle to form a sub world where the members can share certain ideas and assumptions in common. Tannen's focus is on intersexual communication, which goes beyond the focus of the present study.

As I discussed in Chapter I, what we call reality, according to Berger and Luckmann, consists of the interaction between a base world and multiple sub worlds. The base world, composed of those values and beliefs that we appropriate at a very young age, forms the core of what we might think of as personality. Institutions such as family, religion, and school invest in us a collection of ideas that we accept as true. As we grow older we encounter other institutions. As long as the sub worlds and base world do not conflict, everything is fine. People from similar base worlds can interact in a particular sub world with very little significant conflict resulting (Example: two military recruits from conservative "military" families, or two children from the same predominantly poor inner city neighborhood). On the other hand, when a base world and sub world conflict, a crisis results which must be resolved either by the rejection of the sub world or a shift in the value system that composes the base world that will allow a conflicting sub world to coexist with it (Example: A young Southern Baptist discovers he is Gay. Since he cannot reconcile his base world religious faith with his new sub world identity, he leaves the church).

Now problems are likely to result if people from vastly different backgrounds enter into groups like those described by Nystrand. Though Nystrand did not provide a demographic breakdown of the participants in his study--he identifies them only as "average college freshmen" (p. 181)--it seems highly likely that the groups were strongly homogeneous, given the white collar setting and the prestige of the college at which the study was conducted. It is my best guess, then, that Nystrand's subjects were predominantly white and from middle to upper class families. Given this, a minimum of base world conflict would be expected. In reality, various learning environments could be expected to tend toward different degrees of potential conflict based on the similarities

or differences between the base worlds that the students bring with them. I suspect that even within so-called homogeneous environments conflicts result, or are purposely avoided in order to preserve group coherence. It may simply be that many of the studies citing average student populations are simply noticing a cultural tendency to prefer dishonest cohesion over honest conflict.

Others have observed the negotiation of a common ground in more culturally mixed environments. Slavin (1980) cited a number of studies demonstrating a general pattern of improvement in race relations within heterogeneous CL groups. This indicates that students from different backgrounds, when united with a common agenda, can overcome certain base world conflicts toward the formation of a strong, task-oriented sub world, provided the motivation to cooperate is strong enough. Individuals may in part construct that sub world, as Goffman (1959) suggested, by taking on particular roles, or patterns of behavior, that will make it easier for them to interact with others. In a study of roles taken on by teachers and students in writing conferences, Newkirk (1995) observed that "As long as there are no major discrepancies between student and teacher readings, this pattern [of putting on fronts and playing roles] can lead to a gratifying meeting of minds with the teacher acknowledging and extending the insights of the student" (p. 196). Newkirk's study helps confirm what Goffman (1959) has long argued: that when people come together for some collaborative purpose, they use language to help establish their role(s) in the encounter and form a common agenda for accomplishing the task at hand. When individuals work together, whether in teacher-student or student-student groups, they must negotiate an understanding of the social context that will allow them to work toward common goals. This may consist of the roles they play, and the rules of behavior that make up those roles.

The presence of a common agenda, or more specifically the construction of a sub world that allows students from diverse backgrounds to focus upon a task they have in common, implies the existence of a corpus of rules through which they can work toward their common goal. This rule system probably does not originate in any one place, but gets assembled patchwork fashion as the individual weaves in and out of various institutions throughout his or her lifetime. Family, school, occupation, religion, politics, and forms of recreation may all contribute to the process. Individuals certainly accumulate these rules gradually. For example, we understand how to conduct ourselves in school through our years of experience with school as an institution. Yet each time we enter a new level, each time we enter a new classroom we attain new rules and add them to the corpus. Our understanding of those often implied and unsaid rules help establish our roles and level of authority in a particular encounter. This understanding is one way to think of context.

The structure of talk in relation to context

Several studies tried to understand how talk functioned within the contexts of specific learning environments. The following studies, when thought of in terms of Berger/Luckmann model, demonstrated a need for a better understanding of how participants in CL situations negotiated the rules of conduct implied by the situations in which they found themselves. Walker (1992), in a study of talk in the student-teacher writing conference, found--contrary to the researcher's expectations--that whether or not the teacher dominated the conference didn't affect whether the student rated the conference high or low. But the study supports Walker's second hypothesis, that students would most value talk that focused on their writing, suggesting that subject matter, not who controlled the conversation, mattered most to students. Students rated conferences

highly where their agenda was addressed.

The idea of "agenda" is an important one. In this context, it signifies the common ground that two speakers must establish in order for discussion on a shared problem to continue. Two individuals must establish (or accept preexisting) rules of conduct for the task at hand. When they begin to cooperate in working on a collective task, they have entered a temporary contract that constitutes some variant of a sub world.

In a case study of two young girls involved in problem-solving tasks, Forman and McPhail (1993) found that in order for the girls to work successfully on a common task, they had to negotiate, or otherwise define a common goal. Once the goal was defined, collaboration could go forward. Similarly, Freedman and Sperling (1985) had eight years earlier, in an analysis of writing conference talk, found that both parties had to negotiate an agreed-upon level of interaction. The researchers divided writing conference conversation into two groups: intellectual (attention paid to subject matter) and affective (attention paid to feelings). Whereas teachers initiated most topics (of either sort) students made occasional spontaneous affective statements without teacher prompts. Yet when both parties failed to share an agenda (that is, an agreed-upon topic of conversation), the responding party would try to redirect the conversation by bring up the desired topic over and over. This is a cross topic problem. The conversation breaks down because the two parties involved fail to share a common agenda. They fail to agree upon the purpose, upon the rules of conduct in a particular collaborative context.

In the case of the two little girls, they had to begin the process of creating a sub world before they could go forward and attempt to complete their task. In the second writing conference example, the teacher and student could go forward as long as they shared an agenda, a set of rules or procedures. Some portion of those rules were

undoubtedly understood. In the Walker study cited above, students did not object to teacher dominance as long as that talk focused upon the agenda. Both parties understood, without necessarily having to discuss all details of that matter, what some of the specifics of the roles of "student" and "teacher" entailed. With this in mind, they formed the beginning of a sub world.

Yet, as Freedman and Sperling (1985) discovered, the sub world, as a set of negotiated rules, procedures, and roles (what might otherwise be called context), can break down at times. At such times communication ends as each party attempts to reestablish the rules. In the case of the Freedman and Sperling study, that breakdown occurred over what subject matter was to be next in the discussion. In a more recent study, Sperling (1995) looked deeper into the social relationship between the writer and reader, finding that students and teachers alike play multiple, and often conflicting roles in their efforts to move text production forward. Basing her report on data collected in a whole-class discussion on a single day, the researcher coded utterances for the type of talk while taking into account the roles students played in making their statements. Finally student writings, produced in response to a whole-class discussion about the Rodney King verdict, were coded both for subject matter and the roles that students took in producing the writing. Generally student utterances served to maintain the topic of discussion with the exception of one student, who worked to redirect the topic. Sperling argues that while teachers and students maintained their traditional teacher/student roles in the discussion, teachers also acted in friendship/relationship roles by offering encouragement to a number of student speakers. While other students remained for the most part within their traditional roles, one student acted as a "performer" with his frequent contributions and (seeming) desire for recognition and attention. Various

students also filled the roles of observer (reporting what they had seen), historian (offering up facts they knew), prognosticator (by predicting future outcomes), critic (by offering opinions) and philosopher (by discussing the greater implications of the events).

This study illustrated very plainly the incredible complexity with which a relatively limited number of people enter into a conversation. They reinforce one another's statements by maintaining the subject of conversation, thus reinforcing the roles that they play in the discussion. In this case, an inner-city classroom composed almost entirely of Blacks and Hispanics, given the limited amount of information available here, appear to have for the most part formed a fairly unified community of students operating under similar base world conditions and with a common agenda. The discussion can move forward because of the common experiences (base world) which they have in common.

Other studies noted the value of conflict and negotiation. Daiute and Dalton (1988) argued in Vygotskian fashion that children's cognitive development should be described in terms of the difference between actual and potential performance, as revealed through a child's interaction with a more capable peer. The researchers noted that CL achieves generally positive results because each individual brings an approach to problem solving to each group. In an attempt to guage the relationship between collaboration and individual writing development, they seek to understand whether collaboration involves cognitive conflict, and whether such conflict leads to specific planning and analysis activities. Daiute and Dalton studied dyads and coded each turn at talk but developed no codes in advance in order to avoid making assumptions regarding intent on the part of the speakers. Most of the talk consisted of activities identified as composing, evaluating/explaining, conversational directives (confirming/disconfirming).

In dyads in which the writing improved, speakers suggested alternatives, monitored, clarified, evaluated, explained, and negated more than those who did not improve. Those who did not improve, or improved less, were involved in more off-topic talk. As a general pattern the more successful dyads engaged in more verbal (thus cognitive) conflict. Successful groups frequently fell short of full agreement, emphasizing the importance of negotiation and conflict over passive agreement in CL activities.

Galda and Pellegrini (1988) came to similar conclusions in their study of children's use of narrative discourse. In a study that examined the ways that children use narrative language in peer group situations, the researchers investigated the extent to which narrative language composes children's play. Operating from the assumption that children use narrative forms that they obtain from and apply to their own oral cultures, Galda and Pellegrini asked children to tell stories about functionally ambiguous (blocks) and functionally explicit (doctor kits) toys and play with them with a peer. Results suggested that when children encounter ambiguity (a problem to be solved) they resort to narrative language. This point certainly is not new. Vygotsky (1986) argued in Thought and Language that children, when they encounter difficulty in resolving a problem, will resort to "egocentric speech" (p. 86) as they verbally think their way toward a solution. Galda and Pellegrini found that when narrative play themes were sustained, it was due to a common "behavioral script" that developed between the participants. Children also used discourse strategies in an attempt to sustain the discourse. This finding would appear to confirm Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" in that children reinforce each other's narratives in an attempt to extend the play and keep the story going. In terms of the Berger/Luckmann model, we might say that the children understood a corpus of rules of play which composed their base worlds. As long as the children share and

understand the rules, the narrative is maintained. Each child depends on the other to fill in the gaps when one's narrative falters. Together they can sustain a narrative that neither would be able to manage alone. The researchers went on to observe that the children studied introduced narrative most often immediately following a conflict. While narrative also occurred as first utterances, in situations where there was no previously sustained discourse, it happened most often following a conflict. Response strategies on the part of second speakers included expansion of information, failure to uptake the narrative, disagreement, agreement, a repetition, though the dominant response resulted in expansion of the narrative by the second child.

The significance of both of these studies lies in their recognition of the role that conflict plays in the talk that occurs in CL groups. It is not necessary, or even desirable, that groups should fall into total agreement. Beyond the more immediate Vygotskian implications, the verbal construction of a common sub world, negotiated between two speakers, seems strongly suggested by both studies, yet is more vivid in Galda and Pellegrini's experiment. As the children agree, disagree, and create a common narrative they actively negotiate a common text between them in a fashion similar to that suggested by Nystrand (1986). That text--an example of what Wertsch (1990) calls multivoicedness--the narrative the children create, becomes a microcosmic reality which the children share for the duration of their play. Of special importance is that the children negotiate their reality. The children often corrected each other, disagreed, or tried to change the theme or direction of the narrative, though their was a preference to continue the play.

This brings us back to a previous concern. The structure or form a conversation takes hinges upon how much group members invest in their sub world, how difficult it is

to maintain, and whether or not it is in the best interest of the group members to maintain such continuity. Where the motivation to maintain group cohesion remains high--such as in a classroom, where a grade may depend on it--some of the studies reviewed here would seem to suggest that group members will support conversational preference structures that will support group cohesion, even if group members have to compromise overall group performance. Pomerantz (1984) and Atkinson and Heritage (1984) argued that conversations consist, in part, of preference structures. Certain conversational structures prefer certain response types. This is not to say that the speaker actually prefers a particular response, but that the social context of the adjacency pair calls for a certain response. For example, a speaker might offer an invitation that he or she would rather have the recipient of the invitation decline, but the social context calls for the invitation on the basis of the implied rules of polite conversation as both conversants understand them. All culturally literate speakers know what sort of response is appropriate and what sort of response is not. Thus a request ("Would you like to go to the movies?") more often invites a positive reply (acceptance) than a negative one (refusal). Even if the request is the sort that would often generate a negative response ("Would you like to go to the slaughterhouse?"), the general structure of a request or invitation implies the desire for a positive response. The second example indicates that the sender of the utterance wants to go to the slaughterhouse, and wants the company of the receiver. This puts the receiver in the position of knowing what response is preferred in advance. So the structure of request-acceptance/refusal prefers a positive reply. The exception might come in the case of an ironic request ("Would you please shoot yourself?") in which case both conversants understand that the request was not a serious one. While the rules that govern conversation may be more culturally bound than Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson

(1978) seem to have believed, it might still be reasonable to infer that in some CL group conversational structures prefer certain kinds of replies. Some of the studies reviewed here would at least seem to suggest that in some CL group situations (cf. Gere & Abbott, 1985), students prefer to agree with one another to avoid conflicting with other group members (an act that would necessitate negotiation, and thus semiotic interaction), something that also implied by a noted reluctance of students to use directive language with other group members (Walker, 1992; Forman & McPhail, 1993; Freedman & Sperling, 1985; and Sperling. 1995). While the structure of preference in CL groups certainly deserves further research, inference suggests that group members consider group cohesion, not assigned task, to be the number one priority.

As Gere and Abbott (1985) discovered in their study of the junior high and high school grades, CL group members preferred to agree with one another, to avoid conflict, in order to avoid (presumably) creating an uncomfortable social situation. Though such a finding would probably depend on the group being studied, a preference against negative comments in CL learning groups seems apparent in Freedman's (1992) study of response groups in two ninth grade classes. The researcher sought to investigate what role response groups play in the overall writing class, and more specifically, what kind of talk occurs in those groups. Two ninth grade college preparatory classes, selected because the teachers used group work extensively, the students appeared active and the teachers used groups differently. However, similar amounts of response occurred in both classes. The primary data consisted of tape recorded sessions of CL group work, while secondary data came from field notes, tapes of whole class discussions, teacher hand outs, samples of student writing, interviews, and a philosophy of teaching statement provided by each teacher. Overall, Freedman found that groups produced procedural talk, focused on

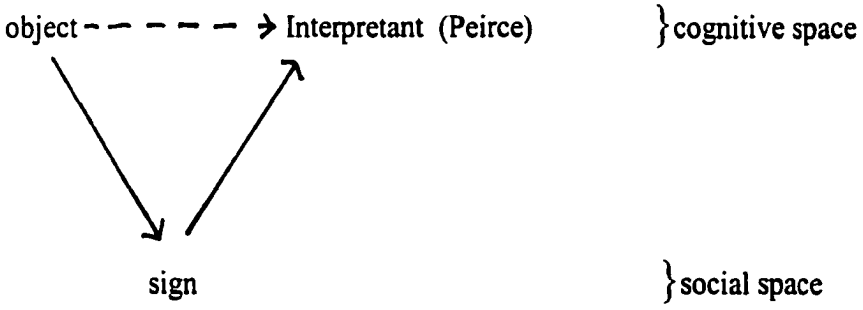
format and mechanics, brief remarks on content, longer discussion of content, and self-evaluation while reading aloud. Results indicated that students tend to overapply rules (resulting in concentration on procedural talk, discussion of mechanics and format) while they resisted response sheet instructions (40%) more than they complied (20%). In both classes, students avoided negative evaluation of others, even when instructed to do so. Also, procedural talk, which consisted of attempts to complete revision sheets in ways that would please the teacher while preserving group coherence, seemed directed more at avoiding group tension than completing the assignment as instructed.

Though she did not use the language of Conversation Analysis (which I employed), Freedman noted a marked preference against making negative comments in CL group sessions. The reason for this is that students attempted to preserve group coherence. They avoided saying anything negative because they sought to avoid conflict, the very thing, if Daiute & Dalton (1988) and Galda & Pellegrini (1988) are correct, that makes such groups beneficial to the students. As teachers, we use CL groups because we want students to discuss, interact, and learn. Part of that learning comes from conflict, from weighing opposing viewpoints and coming up with a solution to a problem.

The evidence presented here suggests that students will, as far as it is possible, avoid one of the very things that would benefit them. Why? Because the social composition of the group favors cohesion instead of conflict. Simply put, agreement unifies, disagreement divides. The students, when they avoid the kinds of tasks that Freedman observes, act on what I hope to show is a preference for agreement which serves to preserve the delicate structure of the sub world that they constructed out of the vastly different fibers of their base worlds.

If it is possible to accept the assumption that students with different concepts of

reality must come together and use language as the primary means to construct a common ground, then it might be possible to argue that such negotiation takes place simultaneously in cognitive and social space. Such negotiation is cognitive in the sense that each individual approaches the group with a set of social concepts, a base/sub world complex, which makes up a sense of identity and reality. In order to interact with others and form a common agenda, the learner must communicate through signs (language) and negotiate an understanding that will allow the work to proceed. Once this has been accomplished, a Social Interpretant has been formed. Consider the following illustration:



According to Peirce (1932), the purpose of the sign is to relate some content, the object, to a listener. Since the object is necessarily external to both speaker and listener, it is only possible to relate an impression of that object through the medium of a sign that (for the speaker) approximates the content of the object. The listener generates an independent impression, an Interpretant that hopefully approaches the speaker's understanding of the sign. Each individual develops their own, slightly different Interpretant (cognitive understanding) of a sign, and each sign leads to an Interpretant which becomes a new sign, so semiosis continues on forever--as we encounter new semiotic events, our understandings and ideas associated with given signs grow and

change. But while individuals may share social space, they can never share cognitive space. This was essentially Rorty's (1979) point: That an objective understanding of the external world is impossible. He argued that ". . . we should try to free ourselves from the notion that philosophy must center around the discovery of a permanent framework for inquiry" (p. 380). People can never escape from the prison of their own senses. The result is that within social space, though identical or highly similar signs are being shared, their cognitive counterparts, their Interpretants, must necessarily diverge. As Witte (1992) noted:

> Peirce seems to recognize that "meaning" is altogether contingent on individual experience, which is itself mediated through signs such that a given sign can "mean" in accordance with, to quote Vygotsky again, the "sum of all psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word" [. . .] And because much of the experience that is necessary for semiosis cannot be shared, there is also the possibility that individually constructed meanings will remain distinct from social ones. (p. 281)

I would argue that social meanings are collections if individual Interpretants that have been carefully negotiated to a point of agreement by the members of a social group. The important point to remember is that individual Interpretants are likely to be closer together among members of a context where the individuals in question have similar backgrounds and experiences. While the backgrounds of siblings might share a number of social experiences, and as a result have almost identical base worlds, people whose social experiences and overall sense of reality diverge to some degree will have less in common. It would be logical to assume that people whose base worlds are similar would

to some degree understand each other better, while individuals from more divergent backgrounds might have to work harder at establishing common ground. In any context, the Interpretants, and thus the base/sub world packages carried by each student will never be identical. Some level of negotiation and discussion in order to form a sub world out of the cooperative learning group is required. This cognitive space consists of the individual Interpretants that make up a learner's base/sub world package, and what I have termed social space consists of the actual verbal negotiations that go into bringing those individual Interpretants in line with one another. The Social Interpretant is thus not an Interpretant at all, but a collection of signs that represent the formation of a sub world between learners.

Conclusion

In this review I attempted to identify areas in the research that focuses on talk in CL writing groups that deserve further investigation and could benefit from a semiotic analysis of group talk. The first group of studies showed that, while some research investigated the function of writing group talk, an analysis of the overall structure of writing group talk had not been done. Such an analysis revealed overall patterns in different strategies within revision group discussions. The second group of studies demonstrated the role that language plays in negotiating a common agenda, while the final group revealed a pattern of preference in favor of agreement in group discourse of this type. My method was twofold: (1) I evaluated the structure of the conversations that took place in a select number of cooperative learning groups that occurred in a single revision session, and (2) attempted to understand how those conversational structures contributed to the roles played by the participants and allowed them to form a common ground that allowed productive discussions to proceed. Together, these offered a picture

of the social dynamic formed by the group.

Chapter 3

Methods of Data Collection

The research project outlined in this dissertation proposed to investigate what role talk in cooperative learning groups played in individual rewriting efforts. And since this study focused on the social construction of the group, and how such social organization made mutually-beneficial discourse possible, it made sense to collect data that provided a description of the social components of such a group. Three important theoretical elements were introduced in Chapter 1: (1) Saussure's distinctions of langue and parole; (2) Berger and Luckmann's concepts of base and sub worlds; and (3) Peirce's semiotic model. To summarize briefly, 100 years ago Saussure (1974) introduced the notions of langue and parole. The two parts are interdependent: While langue ("language," a system of rules and structures) makes parole (individual semiotic acts) possible, it is parole that builds and revises langue over time. Within a given interpretive community, individual speech acts, when they are accepted, adapted, and modified by other members of such a community, become the raw building blocks of a semiotic system. The interrelationship between those parts established the structure of the system through mutual agreement. As a result, langue and parole composed a recursive system that constantly adjusted and reinvented itself through the speech acts of the members of the community in question.

This system shared points of similarity with Peirce's (1932) semiotic model. According to Peirce, the sign was composed of three parts: sign, object, and Interpretant Again, I follow Peirce in capitalizing this word). The sign consisted of a signifying mark (such as a printed letter, a sound, or to use his own example, a weathercock) which was paired with an idea (an interpretant) in an effort to represent an external, objective reality (the object). To make a brief example, a person might point across a hill (making a sign)

in order to relate to his friend the presence of a town on the other side (the object). Each person has in his or her mind an Interpretant, or an idea regarding what the sign means. The difficulty comes in matching similar (though probably never identical) Interpretants between members of a particular interpretive community. Since each signification is unique, and depends on the prior experience of the person making or apprehending the sign, the meanings (interpretants) of signs are likely to vary from individual to individual, and certainly from community to community. Indeed, it is not at all outlandish to say that interpretants vary even within the individual as the individual aquires new experiences through ongoing semiosis.

It is my belief that Peirce's sign explained much of the relationship between langue and parole. Individual semiotic acts contribute to the individual's own internalization of langue, and through an interchange of semiotic acts within a community–as small as a conversational dyad or as large as all the users of a particular semiotic system–people negotiate collective meanings that will allow them to work together on common tasks. This is where I believe that Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work comes into play, along with much of the body of cooperative learning theory. The base world, I contend, was constructed of the entire complex of an individual's semiotic experiences, including his or her primary belief systems and experience recorded as semiotic associations. These primary beliefs were very deep-seated, as Berger and Luckmann argued, and very difficult to change. The sub worlds, however, may be thought of as semiotic subclasses of the base world, and though they also were a constituent of a person's self-concept, they may have been changed more easily since they were not usually rooted in the primary identity/belief complex.

When students enter a classroom, they are entering a sub world–most likely one of

many they will interact with at the university–just as anyone else interacts with multiple subworlds as they move between the social institutions that make up the webwork of their lives. In fact, the subworld may be thought of as a subset of the subworld encompassed by the greater educational institution. In the traditional lecture-based classroom it is a sub-sub world that requires little commitment, since very little semiotic interaction (at least of the two-way sort) takes place there. A student can easily go through a semester without even knowing the names of the people sitting to the right or the left of them, and certainly the professor is not expected to know their names. However, in an interactive classroom, and specifically, in an interactive writing classroom that employs cooperative learning is much different. When a student becomes part of a cooperative learning group they must enter a new social sphere (a sub-sub-sub world, two levels down from the institution) where they must form successful social interpretants–common understandings and rules of conduct–if the group is to become a cohesive social unit. (Throughout this dissertation I have implied that a productive and successful CL group is one that cooperates well and works toward mutually beneficial goals. I find this to be the often unsaid assumption driving many studies in CL theory). To understand how cooperative learning–and more specifically, revision groups–help create social identities that allow them to work together on common tasks requires gaining an understanding of (1) who the individuals are that enter such groups, (2) what kinds of discourse they engage in once in such groups, and (3) how they respond to such interaction. The data was collected for this study in order to gain insight into these social processes.

The Conversation Analysis Method

In this study, I faced the task of devising a means of semiotically tracing how speech acts might influence individual writing efforts. What I attempted, then, was a

study that focuses on exchanges of talk. Garfinkel (1967) suggested that valuable information is to be gained by studying everyday social interactions, such as ordinary exchanges of talk. Unlike Geertz (1973), who was interested in almost every aspect of the lives of the people he studied, Garfinkel (1967) and the conversation analysts who were influenced by his model (cf. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1978) were more interested in the intensive analysis of small, isolated, and carefully-selected examples of social phenomena. Conversation analysts have built their careers on the intensive analysis of small bits of conversation. By using the "conversation analysis" (CA) method of discourse analysis as described by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1978), I utilized this method to identify the structural features of revision group talk as a first step toward a semiotic analysis of revision group conversation.

The CA method grew out of the subspecialization within the discipline of sociology commonly referred to as ethnomethodology. Unlike ethnography, which often attempts to describe the lives of the members of a community in a holistic way, ethnomethodology focused on almost microscopic examples of social phenomena, and attempted to analyze those phenomena in as much depth as possible. Ethnomethodology has its roots in the beginnings of the qualitative research movement within the discipline of sociology. In the 1920s and 30s, sociologists at the University of Chicago developed an inductive approach to studying culture involving personally collecting data, the use of case studies, and an emphasis on urban living, all of which contributed to an understanding of "the social and interactional nature of reality" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 12). Out of this method grew symbolic interactionism, a perspective that emphasized the role that interpretation played in mediating human activity (Blumer, 1969). In a similar way, adherents to the phenomenological approach emphasized the role that

perspective played in the interpretation of culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). From this viewpoint came ethnomethodology (not ethnography, which developed from the discipline of Anthropology) in the 1950s and 60s, with its emphasis on studying the daily lives of ordinary people with the purpose of understanding how they perceived the "reality" of those lives, especially as they differed from the perspectives of others.

Ethnomethodology, then, made an effective platform for collecting data in accordance with the principles outlined in Chapter I. In agreement with Berger and Luckman (1966), ethnomethodology may be thought of as ". . . an organizational study of a member's own knowledge of his ordinary affairs, of his own organized enterprises" (Garfinkel, 1974, p. 18). Ethnomethodology, in short, assumed that participants ("actors") conduct themselves on a basis of tacitly understanding a coda of rules of behavior, and count on others for conducting themselves according to a similar set of rules. According to Taylor and Cameron (1987):

> . . . the ethnomethodologist takes actors to design their behavior with an awareness of its 'accountability'. That is to say, aware of the rule relevant to the situation in which they find themselves, they choose to follow (or not to follow) the rule in the light of what they expect the interactional consequences of that choice to be. For they assume that their co-interactants also know the rule and will be judging their behavior accountable for its conformity or non-conformity to the relevant rule. (P. 102)

In other words, "actors follow interactional rules (such as 'return a greeting') because they are aware of the interactional consequences of not doing so: in particular, they know

that however they act will be held reflexively accountable by their co-interactants" (p. 105). Ethnomethodology thus supplies the "reflexive accountability" (p. 106) that provided the foundation for the CA method.

As an ethnomethodological means of collecting verbal data, the CA method relies upon identifying, transcribing, and carefully evaluating brief occurences of text. That is, instead of transcribing and coding entire discussions for broad features (as discussed in Chapter 2), the CA method tends to identify types of conversational structures. Structures studied are as varied as conversation itself. Hopper (1989) evaluated the openings of telephone conversations; Jacobs and Jackson (1981) examined the structure of verbal fights; Beach and Dunning (1982) looked at initial negotiations ("pres" or "presequences" in CA parlance); and Goodwin (1984) investigated the structure of verbal story-telling. To date, this method has yet to be used to study talk within Freshman Composition revision groups, though it has been used to describe other types of classroom talk.

Relevant Studies

While the essential theoretical elements of CA have already been discussed (turn-taking, adjacency pair construction, and preference structures), and the analytical elements of it will be treated in the following chapter, it is important to consider the ways in which prior studies of cooperative learning contexts have collected conversational data. One study stands out for reaching its conclusions on a relatively small amount of data. Sperling (1995), investigating the roles students take in group discussions, based her conclusions on a combination of field notes and essays collected in a single class on a single day. Though she did collect and evaluate student writings made in class that day, she based the inferences she made about the roles students played in the whole-class

discussion she observed on a combination of site notes and in-class writings rather than an actual recording of the session. While Sperling intended for this study to be only exploratory in nature, others, in more extensive investigations, relied primarily upon recordings of student discourse.

A number of studies focused exclusively on talk without recourse to other forms of data. Freedman and Sperling (1985) taped and evaluated the talk that took place in student-teacher writing conferences, as did Walker (1992). Galda and Pellegrini (1988) recorded and evaluated the talk children engage in while composing a common narrative while playing. Similarly Forman and McPhail (1993) taped the talk that took place between two young girls engaged in problem-solving tasks. These investigations range from small case studies that generated a fairly small amount of data to larger projects (Gere & Abbott, 1985) involving hundreds of hours of tape. Yet all of them collected data on a single, focused event: the talk that students engaged in while working on a problem-solving task. Since these studies all collected only one type of data, they can described the talk that took place in the taped sessions, but had difficulty in making inferences about how such discussions affected student writing efforts (or other projects).

Most of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 utilized more data than just recordings of CL group talk. Most collected revisions of essays discussed during CL sessions as well as site notes. Gere and Abbott (1985), in addition to taping thirty-seven group meetings over a six-month period, collected copies of essays, along with any revisions, copies of any notes made by students during theses sessions, and notes made by the researchers. The emphasis, though, remained on the talk: "The analysis discussed here focuses on the students' oral comments during the writing group meetings" (p. 366). Similarly Gere and Stevens (1985) placed their emphasis primarily upon group talk,

though they also collected student papers and compared teacher's written responses on those papers to the verbal responses of the students. Nystrand (1986) also compared group talk to the changes made on student papers, as did Diaute and Dalton (1988).

These studies all intelligently sought to compare group talk to the papers produced as a result of that talk with the general intention of drawing some inferences about how talk influences learning. All of them coded talk for its function in an attempt to determine how those utterances related to student writing. While all of these studies gained some insight into how group talk contributes to rewriting efforts, none executed an intensive analysis of the structures that might arise naturally during the course of student discussions.

Steps in Data Collection

In order to gain an impression of the sub world of an individual cooperative learning group, data other than the conversation itself must be collected. It is necessary to gain an understanding of the "reflexive accountability" (Taylor & Cameron, 1987, p. 106) of the group(s) in question. The way to do this is to gain an understanding of the participants' self-concepts and attitude toward the revision session in question. For this reason, interviews (discussed in depth below) were conducted before the revision sessions being studied. Follow-up interviews were conducted to discover how students responded to the social setting of the revision group. These interviews served to discover what changes, if any, the students believed they had made as a result of the revision conversation. And since one of the goals of this study is to determine what changes to student writings the group conversation may have facilitated, rough drafts (those actually discussed during revision) and final drafts were collected. Additionally, verbal and written teacher-provided instructions relevant to the revision session were colleted in the

form of videotape, observation notes, and photocopies.

Participants. Students in two separate classes ("sections") of first-year composition, "Composition II: Composition and Literature" at the University of Central Oklahoma volunteered for this study. The classes were held in the Spring semester, 1998 at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma. Edmond is a northern suburb of a large metropolitan center, Oklahoma City, and thus serves primarily suburban and rural populations. That semester, the university enrolled 13,128 students, 10,656 of which were undergraduates averaging 27 years in age. 43% of the undergraduate students were male, while 57% were female. Though the vast majority of students (both undergraduate and graduate) were Caucasian (75%), 10% were international students, and the remaining 15% was composed of other cultural groups consisting primarily of people of African-American, Asian-American, Native American, and Hispanic origin. The fact that the student body tends to be slightly older on average than universities serving primarily resident student populations reflects U.C.O.'s reputation as a commuter's college. In general, the students at this university tend to either live at home with their parents (for the younger students) or have families of their own and work full-time (for the older students).

Both classes were taught by the same teacher, a graduate teaching assistant with three semesters of prior college teaching experience. Both classes met on the same days (a biweekly Tuesday/Thursday schedule) for an hour and fifteen minutes each. The classes were both midday classes that were taught an hour and a half apart. The curricula were identical in the two classes, and the overall student population of the two courses was described by the teacher as "average, middle-class, white bread college students." Out of an initial pool of 37 students who volunteered for the study, 18 successfully

participated in all phases of the study. Out of the final group, 9 were female and 9 male. All described themselves as middle-class Caucasians except for one female Hispanic, one African-American, and one Caucasian male who described himself as upper-class. Though students were not paid for their participation in the study, they were offered extra credit of an unspecified value, and they were told by the teacher that they would only be given that credit if they participated in all phases of the study.

Timing. In order to observe the dynamics of cooperative learning groups as their sub-worlds were formed, it was decided that it would be most productive to observe the groups as early as possible in the semester, before students had a chance to interact together and group identities had already formed. For this reason, this study was carried out in the third and fourth weeks of the Spring, 1998 semester. The teacher's class was observed, and the data collected, during its first cooperative learning/revision activity. With the exception of a brief (5 minute) cooperative learning exercise that was conducted on the class date immediately prior to the revision session being studied, the revision session that provides the focus of this dissertation was the first time the students participating in this study had ever worked together. For the most part, the groups that composed the revision groups were not made up of the same students who participated in the 5-minute practice session.

The data collection proceeded according to the following schedule:

(1). Two weeks prior to the revision session, the class was surveyed for willing participants. Participants were signed up for pre-revision interviews.

(2). One week to one day prior to revision session, pre-revision interviews were conducted.

(3). Two class sessions (one week) prior to the revision session, the classes were

observed and videotaped as students were introduced to the concept of cooperative learning and a five-minute "mini-session" was conducted. Tape recorders and a video camera were introduced during this session to acclimatize students to the presence of recording equipment.

(4). On revision day, as soon as Greg assigned students to their revision groups, the groups were spread across several rooms to make recording easier, and tape recorders were placed in the midst of each group. After the recordings were made, the teacher collected the students' revision guides and rough drafts. Students were instructed to pick them up later that day in Greg's office. They were copied and returned to Greg within the hour. Participating students were signed up for their post-revision interviews.

(5). During the days following the revision session, post-revision interviews were held. While every attempt was made to hold these interviews as soon as possible following the revision session, two-thirds had to be conducted the following week. This was because the revision sessions were held on a Thursday, and those students who did not sign up to be interviewed on that or the following day had to be interviewed after the intervening weekend. Since U.C.O. is primarily a commuter's college, no students were available for weekend interviews.

(6). One week after the revision sessions, final papers were turned in to the teacher. They were copied, and returned to the teacher before they were graded by the instructor.

(7). Tapes were transcribed in preparation for the analysis stage of this study.

Teacher interview. An extensive interview was conducted with the teacher on the day before the first classroom observations were to take place. While this was not

considered part of the core data set for this study, it was conducted in order to gain a sense of what prior instruction that the teacher had given the students regarding cooperative learning, and to gage to what extent that cooperative learning had been previously employed in the classroom. It was also conducted in order to confirm what instructions the students would be given regarding their cooperative learning experience.

Classroom observations. Both participating classes were observed during the week prior to the focal revision session. The purpose of this observation was to gain a familiarity with the overall atmosphere of the class and to obtain insight into, and a written record of, any instructions that the students received regarding their conduct and responsibilities during the upcoming revision session. Greg indicated that the students had not received instructions of any kind prior to these observations regarding the revision session in question, or even regarding cooperative learning in a more general way. Extensive notes were taken, including a written record of any instructions that were given to the students. Naturally, the class was observed on the day that the revision groups actually met and conducted their conversations.

Prerevision interviews. Interviews, as a method of qualitative data collection, have been long used to obtain stories--whether focused accounts of particular events or life-histories--from study participants. Essentially, an interview may be thought of as "a purposeful conversation, usually between two people . . . that is directed by one in order to get information from the other" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96). For the purposes of this study, interviews were conducted both before the primary conversational data was collected and after the revision session. Since the data in this study examined the more limited event of single conversations rather than a broader social context, it seemed that a focused interview of the "active" type (Holstein, 1995) would be most appropriate. A

focused interview concentrates on a particular event of interest rather than on broader influences on the interviewee's life. This conforms to not only the platform of ethnomethodology described earlier, but also adheres to the purposes of conversation analysis generally. Though 'pure' CA relies exclusively on the conversational extract for its data, this study follows the "insistence on the use of materials collected from naturally occurring occasions of everyday interaction" (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984, p. 2). Of particular interest in this interview was how the student conceived of the social environment of the classroom, and the various roles different individuals played, as well as their understanding of the writing assignment at hand. The active interview concerns the style of the interview rather than its scope. It calls for the interviewee, along with the interviewer, to determine the direction and focus of the interview. Both strategies can help uncover the student's perspective on the singular event of a particular small group revision experience.

Instead of collecting broader information of the type obtained in a life history interview, the first interview focused upon (1) the student's prior experience with cooperative learning as well as his/her attitude toward the upcoming revision session; (2) the student's perceived role in the classroom generally and in the group specifically; (3) the student's perception of the roles played by other students; and (4) the student's expectations regarding the upcoming revision experience. The questions were not written as definite questions intended to be quoted exactly in a rigid sequence, but were intended to provide guidelines for the conversation that took place between the researcher and interviewees. Whenever another question arose out of the conversation, the talk was allowed to proceed in that direction as long as it stayed on the research topic. Participants were encouraged to 'tell their own stories' for the purpose of obtaining a greater picture

of their perceived role in the revision session.

The purpose of this interview, as already stated, was to obtain a sense of the students' self-concepts and expectations regarding the cooperative learning experience. Hopefully this revealed what the base world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) of each student was and to what degree a common ground or sub world had been negotiated within the group. Essentially, the first interview served to discover how the students identified themselves socially--what they considered their status to be, what institutions they identified with, and so on. The first interview also served to sketch out what their overall expectations were for the CL experience. The reason for using the active interview as described by Holstein (1995) was to allow the participant to direct much of the course of the interview, to allow each participant to tell their own story. It must be emphasized that the purpose of this interview was not to discover the objective reality of the social environment of the group(s) in question, but to get a sense of the perspectives of the particular participants, and how they indicate that they believe the social conditions of the classroom will affect the paper they will write.

Post-revision interview. The post-writing interview would be more controlled, focusing on the students' reactions to the cooperative learning experience. This interview was also conducted in an active fashion and was less structured than the pre-revision interviews. Students were encouraged to report what had happened during their revision session, and what changes they had made (or planned to make) to their papers and why. The purpose of doing this was not to determine how the groups affected their revision efforts as much as it was to assess their overall reaction to their group experience. Follow-up interviews were grouped together by revision group (inasmuch as that was possible), and students were prompted at times by statements they had made in the first

interview, or by references that other group members had made to events that occurred during their revision sessions. This interview was designed to determine (1) the student's version of what took place during the revision session; (2) the student's perception of the roles played by various group members; (3) and discover whether or not they felt comfortable giving advice to (or receiving advice from) their peers. This post-revision interview served to help explain how their attitudes toward their CL groups had changed (if at all) as a result of their revision experiences.

. Rough Drafts. After the first interviews were completed, participating students were required (on the day the revision group discussions were to take place) to turn in the actual rough drafts that they brought to the revision session. Students who failed to bring a rough draft to the session were eliminated from the study. Greg (the teacher of both participating classes) collected the papers after the revision discussions were completed. The revision guides (typewritten instructions from the teacher describing the procedures the students were to follow) distributed to each student were also collected. Both the papers and revision sheets were collected at the end of class so that comments written by students on the documents could be observed. The documents were copied and returned to Greg that day, who made arrangements for the students to come by and pick them up from his office later. The purpose of collecting the revision guides was to gather any information that might contribute to or help direct the conversations that took place. Any comments they wrote on the guides could be later triangulated with the transcripts of the tapes resulting from the revision conversations. Likewise, the rough drafts were collected in order to gain insight into the issues (an specific instances of text) discussed by the groups. Comparing the "before" and "after" texts also provides further indication of the influence that the conversation may have had on student rewriting decisions.

The analysis of these papers is a part of the peripheral data collected in this study, and is discussed in Appendix 1. The purpose of this study was to examine the social dynamic of the cooperative learning groups, and not to determine in any large sense what specific events may or may not have triggered student revision efforts. The very broad scope of this study would prohibit such an analysis, as well as the many other influences that may have triggered revision decisions. One of the most significant of these is the fact that many of the students in this study participated in revision conferences with their teachers. Some of these appear to have occurred before the revision discussions took place, while others may have occurred later.

Recording the Revision Session. In this study I employed CA in a way that it had not, to my knowledge, been applied before. Namely, I created, through the additional use of interviews and student texts, an informed context that hopefully facilitated a better understanding of the conversations that were recorded and transcribed. Though CA analysts prefer to work with 'pure' naturally-occurring conversations and avoid research treatments they view as contrived, they attempt to "focus on uncovering the socially organized features of talk in context" (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984, p. 5). In their essay that set the cornerstone of the CA method, Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1978) argued that the method should "have the important twin features of being context-free and also capable of extraordinary context sensitivity" (p. 9). However, while I employed interviews, those interviews were not, as Heritage and Atkinson (1984) complained, "treated as acceptable surrogates for the observation of actual behavior" (p. 2). Also, I avoided positing a hypothesis in this study and intend to describe the structural features of a particular type of talk in a specific social context. Though it may be argued that revision conversations are not naturally occurring conversations, but forced talk generated

for artificial reasons, I would propose that revision group conversation is as natural as any conversation occurring where previously unassociated people gather to talk for a common purpose (when applying for a loan, for example).

I did, however, bend one principle of CA adhered to by the purist analysts, who insisted that "tapes of conversations are usually not collected for specific purposes, and consequently, transcripts are typically not produced with a specific problem in mind" (Zimmerman, 1988, p. 413). However, in the same volume Weider (1988) said that

> the largest number of them [conversation analysts] begin with a piece of conversation that the analyst selects because it displays an organization or event that is especially worthy of analysis. The analyst then provides an exegesis of the conversational fragment or some part of it to show us, the readers, that the participant were involved in a specific form of conversational activity. (p. 451)

This quote, and particularly the wording "especially worthy of analysis" would seem to imply that interesting structures tend to occur in particular types of conversations. While much of the work in CA has concentrated on general conversational structures rather than focusing on particular contexts, a number of analysts have done work in specific settings. Atkinson (1981) examined the persuasive devices used in political and legal settings, Dunstan (1980) studied courtroom questions, Frankel (1980), Heath (1981), and Ragan (1990) looked at doctor-patient interactions, McHoul (1978) and Sweigart (1991) considered the structure of formal talk in classrooms, while Hopper (1989) studied telephone conversations. These are but a few of many examples too numerous to mention. My study evaluated a particular type of classroom conversation, and differs from those that have gone before it primarily in that it focused on a particular event (a

single revision session) across two parallel composition classes, and drew upon multiple sources for its data set.

It is the goal of CA to render explicit the "backstage"–visible but often ignored–rules of social organization. Such rules, CA analysts argued, are so ordinary and ingrained into our everyday verbal interaction that we scarcely recognize that they exist at all. According to Taylor and Cameron (1987):

> [T]he ethnomethodologist takes actors to design their behavior with an awareness of its 'accountability'. That is to say, aware of the rule relevant to the situation in which they find themselves, they choose to follow (or not to follow) the rule in light of what they expect the interactional nature consequences of that choice to be. For they assume that their co-interactants also know the rule and will be judging their behavior accountable for its confomity or non-conformity to the relevant rule (p. 102).

One of the goals of the CA method, then, is to render as explicitly as possible the conversation in a tangible, printed form for the purposes of analysis. If the conversation is reproduced in as much detail as possible, then an analysis becomes easier, and it becomes possible to identify the common features of a particular conversational type. From this is may be possible to intuit the social dynamics–the hidden rule structures–that conversation analysts believe underlie and govern conversational structures.

The conversations of the six final groups were recorded on the day that revision was normally scheduled to take place in Greg's class. On a prior date, recording devices were introduced during a five-minute practice session in order to acclimatize the students to the presence of the recording equipment. On the day of the revision session, as soon as

the teacher gave out some preliminary instructions and distributed revision sheets, the students were spread to separate corners of the room (in the second class) or taken to separate areas (in the first class) in order to facilitate a clearer recording of each group with less background noise.

The conversations were transcribed in intimate detail in accordance with the notation system developed by Gail Jefferson. Some of the symbols used in transcription were slightly modified in an effort to make them more uniform for the purposes of analysis. For the reader unfamiliar with CA, it is important to note that conventional capitalization and punctuation were not used. Certain punctuation marks have special meanings in CA transcription, and capitalization indicates a loud tone of voice. Also, the transcription symbols used were limited to features occurring on the data tapes. The transcription symbols actually used will be discussed more in depth in the following chapter. The notation system is itself a form of analysis, and as such will be discussed in Chapter 4. Suffice it to say for now that the system employs attention to verbal pauses, elongated syllables, rising and falling inflections, cut-offs, repeated words, mispronunciations, louder and softer speech, and other things that occur in everyday speech.

Conclusion

This was an exploratory study, and was intended to focus on the influence that talk has on rewriting efforts, and as such did not attempt to make sweeping generalizations about revision groups, or describe the broad features of, or otherwise taxonomize, group "types." Instead, this study attempted to describe some general features of revision conversations as they occurred on a particular occasion in a specific context. For this reason, two college composition classes were chosen that were given

identical instruction by a single teacher (in as much as "identical instruction" is possible). Though it must be recognized that each class was in some way unique, it was my hope that the data gathered on this occasion provided some clue as to the internal dynamics of cooperative learning conversations in a revision group setting. Specifically, as the following analysis will bear out, the data collected in this study served to illustrate the social dynamic of cooperative learning groups. It made it possible to examine the fluctuating social contexts within such groups, the roles the individuals played in the groups, and the sorts of conflicts that arose within these groups. The data collected here, consisting of pre and post revision interviews, before and after drafts, and the revision conversations themselves, provided a good preliminary look at the structure of conversations as they occurred within these groups.

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Chapter 4

Results: Prerevision Interviews

The data for this study was collected in three phases: (1) prerevision interviews, (2) rough drafts/revision session discussions, and (3) final drafts/postrevision interviews. The data were analyzed following the same sequence by focusing on the prerevision information first, the revision conversations second, and the results of those conversations last. The final stage consisted of the postrevision interviews. The pre/postrevision drafts are dealt with in Appendix 1.

Overview of Data Analysis. The first stage of the overall data collection concerns the prerevision interviews. This stage serves primarily to respond to sub question 1: "What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences and expectations that participants bring with them?" This is the first part of my attempt to describe the social dynamic of the cooperative learning groups represented in this study. The most complex stage of the analysis consisted of evaluating the revision session conversations, which was itself divided into two phases: a traditional function-based coding, founded in Chafe's (1980) concept of idea units, in a fashion similar to those utilized by prior researchers into revision session talk. Studies by Gere & Abbott (1985), Gere & Stevens (1985), and Freedman and Sperling (1985), as discussed in Chapter 2, provided the basic template for the method followed during this phase. The purpose of doing this was to obtain a picture of (1) what functional categories occurred during the talk; (2) at what frequency they appeared; and (3) to what extent individual participants contributed to the coded functions. This stage of the analysis should provide insight into sub question 2: "In what ways are such contexts not 'solid,' but mutable entities that may change literally from moment to moment as the conversation goes on?" These functions are important

because they relate directly to the prerevision interviews in that they provide insight into the individual roles each student may have played in helping to construct the group as a social entity. The second phase of the analysis of the conversational transcripts consisted of a coding based on the conversation analytic method, for the purpose of identifying the structures of the revision group conversations. This method contributed an understanding of the structural parameters of revision conversations, and afforded the opportunity to discover what structural traits (more specifically, preference structures) the different groups may have in common. The third stage of the analysis process involved evaluating the postrevision interviews in order to discover what effect the cooperative learning group had on their decision to accept or reject the advice of their peers. This was done by categorizing the interviews in and effort to discover the student's general attitude toward the group he/she participated in, as well as to find out what changes the students had made (or planned to make or not make) as a result of the revision day conversations.

Purpose of Prerevision Interviews. In general terms, the purpose of collecting and analyzing the prerevision interviews was to get a sense of the participants' sub/base world concepts, as well as their prior experience with, and general attitude toward, revision conversations in general. In response to the overall research question, "what appears to be the social dynamic of revision groups in a college composition class," this data was the first step toward revealing a picture of the social construction of each CL group. It was first necessary to get some sense of the sub/base world complexes that the students brought into their groups. Toward this end, the data in this chapter address the first sub question (see p. 22), "what social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences and expectations that participants bring with them?" This data not only

revealed the social contexts that are ultimately formed within each group (That topic is taken up in the following chapters), but described–in as much as such a thing is possible– what "raw materials" the participants brought with them to their groups. At a later stage in this analysis, this sketch of the social diversity of each group made it possible to see how different base/sub world complexes affected how roles were formed and how conflict was managed within each group, and to what extent the participants had to negotiate to create a sub world of their own within their group.

The data here was divided into two parts. Some common demographic threads are discussed first, in order to describe in some fashion the cultural make-up of the volunteering students as a whole. Group demographics (admittedly, I am taking some liberty in applying this term in a qualitative study) served to give some indication of how the participants perceive their base words. While I do not propose to separate base world and sub world information (such a task may be impossible, since they are intimately woven into one another), I allowed the students to speak for themselves in terms of describing their own self-concepts. But in general terms, the base world may be thought of as their primary identity, their deeply-ingrained values and sense of who they are, which in most cases appeared to have been rooted in their families, their ethnicity, and their religion. Their sub world identities were those more mutable features of their self-concept which involved activities and groups they had been involved in. These may have included those things such as school, work, sports, and aspects of their social lives. One sub world that all of the participants appeared to be adjusting to involved finding their place as university students.

This participant-by-participant evaluation was followed by a careful breakdown of each group, one individual at a time, for the purpose of understanding the general

personality of each group, and what each individual may have contributed to the group as a whole. This begins to address the first part of sub question 1 (p. 22): "What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences that participants bring with them?" This description of group participants offered in this chapter served to give some indication of how the different backgrounds of the participants relate in terms of similarities and differences. It allowed some insight into what cultural values and experiences they may have in common. In addition to providing a sense of the ways in which each group's members are similar or different, it contributed valuable information at later stages of the analysis for discovering how the students' various backgrounds may have contributed to such issues as role and conflict as they arise in the discussions of the revision session transcripts (to follow in Chapter 5).

Prerevision Interviews

As explained in Chapter 3, the prerevision interviews were active conversations led as much by the participants' responses as by the interviewer's interests. No specific questions were written beyond general topical guidelines covering the participants' backgrounds, base/sub world self-concepts, level of leadership within groups, attitudes toward cooperative learning, and previous experience with cooperative learning. Conversations were allowed to proceed "naturally" as long as they remained on the topic or continued to be active in nature. As often as not, a student's response allowed the interview to proceed in new, unforseen directions. As a result, a wide variety of responses occurred, from none at all to high levels of elaboration. Not all participants reported the same content in each individual interview, so the data summarized below (Table 2) represents the most common threads that occurred in the prerevision conversations. As a general rule, every attempt was made to avoid pat answers and

encourage the participants to elaborate as much as possible. The first part of the information summarized below was organized as a whole rather than broken down group by group to paint a broader picture of the makeup of the participants than could be obtained by focusing on each student or revision group one at a time. It should also be noted that pseudonyms were randomly assigned to each student (along with the names of prior teachers mentioned by the students in some of their interviews as well as in the conversation transcripts from phase two). Additionally, they are generally referred to in the context of the groups they eventually participated in, though at the time of these interviews, no groups had yet been assigned. The groups that were eventually formed are outlined in Table 1.

Demographics. The interviews revealed that the twelve students who participated in this study may be generally thought of as "homogeneous" in at least two respects: firstly, in relation to their backgrounds, and secondly, in relation to the similarity in their values. The participants were asked to describe themselves in terms of their social identities. After the first two students offered descriptions of their most important values and where they got them, others were encouraged to report this information as well. It was hoped that this data would provide a general picture of the base worlds of the participants, as described by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Generally, the participants may be thought of as primarily middle class. Eight of the participants described themselves as middle or working class, whereas the remaining four identified themselves as upper middle. While nine of the students were native Oklahomans, their living environment seemed to be of a mixed nature. Four identified themselves as urbanites, while four reported that they came from rural backgrounds or small towns, two called their living conditions suburban, and two indicated that their

families had moved a lot. In very broad terms, nearly all of the participants in this study come from strikingly similar cultural backgrounds. Most are native Oklahomans with the exception of Malachai (the only African-American in the study), Thomas (whose family moved a lot), and Troy, who, though born in Oklahoma, spent most of his life in Dallas, Texas.

In terms of their beliefs, hard work (9 participants), respect for others (7), honesty (6), religion (6), self-respect (5), and family (5), independence (4), friends (2), education (2), open-mindedness (2), morality (2), the value of saving money (1), and upward mobility (1), were cited as life-shaping values. The students were never prompted to report certain values, but were asked what values they considered most important, and where they got them. Most, naturally, reported the origin of their values in their family, while a few indicated that some values originated from outside sources such as teachers, coaches, and clergy. None, interestingly, indicated having received any values from their peer groups. This information was deemed important as an indication of whether or not the participants identified strongly with their families (all did), and thus could still be considered to be strongly situated in their base worlds. If any had gravitated toward another group, that might be an indication of a strong affiliation with a sub world. All participants denied having rebelled against their families in any significant way, and none claimed to have yet formed strong alliances with college or work-related groups which they had not already been a part of in high school. Indeed, most of them seemed firmly entrenched in their "home" identities, or base worlds, to use Berger and Luckmann's (1966) term. Teresa reported that "The most rebellious thing I ever did was dye my hair black," while Samantha offered this insight:

> [My father] never forced us to do anything. Like churchwise, he never made us go to a church. He let us make our own decisions so that we wouldn't like go against him, so that we wouldn't rebel. He was really easy with us, both my brother and I. He, you know, I'll let you do whatever you want, you know, as long as it's, you know, comfortable for you, and, you know, as long as you're honest with me.

Though most of the participants cleaved to the value system provided by their parents, a few claimed to have become more independent and to have differentiated themselves from their families in some way. Frank was the most significant example of this tendency:

> My relationship values . . . I've got a girlfriend . . . I think I got pretty much on my own. I mean like my parents what they show you doesn't really coincide with what they told me. You know like my dad told me you should be polite like showing respect, you know. My mom, same way, but they don't show one another very much respect.

Frank's response was a rare exception, perhaps accented by the fact that his father had lost a lucrative job as a bondsman and became a handyman. His prerevision interview revealed that, unable to respect his father in some ways, he chose his role models primarily among his sports coaches. For the most part, however, the students appear to have thoroughly identified with the base world in which they were raised. One sub world issue that seemed to have affected all of the participants was going to college. All participants expressed that it caused them generally to become more focused and task-

oriented in their day-to-day activities. Julie's response was fairly typical: "I feel like a stronger person. I feel like I have a direction now. I'm not just roaming out there." However, on nearly all other issues, there was some degree of difference in responses.

Revision groups. The second phase of the prerevision interviews concerned the general attitude of the students toward cooperative learning generally, and then toward the upcoming revision session in particular. Since these responses might have an immediate affect on how students conducted themselves in their groups, it was deemed best to group responses in terms of the revision groups that were eventually formed, though it must be remembered that at the prerevision stage the participants did not know any of the other members of the class, or with whom they would be grouped on the revision session day. In fact, that decision was made arbitrarily by the instructor just prior to handing out the revision sheets, and without prompting from the researcher (though the researcher had asked that students who knew one another not be grouped together). In one case, two group members did know each other, causing that group to be eliminated from the study.

The groups, with their pseudonyms, were eventually assembled as follows:

Group 1.	Group 2.
Dave	Thomas
Julie	Haley
Travis	Frank
Group 3.	**Group 4.**
Laura	Dominique
Malachai	Teresa
Samantha	Troy

Table 1. Participants and their groups.

The two remaining sections of the prerevision interviews, consisting of (1) the students' experience with and attitudes toward cooperative learning, along with (2) their expectations regarding the revision session they would eventually participate in, are discussed below, group-by-group. As discussed in Chapter 3, the interviews were not conducted in a strict question-and-answer format, but took the form of directed conversations in which the participants were encouraged to play an active role and elaborate on their perceptions as much as possible. One of the side-effects was that not all of the prerevision interviews touched upon all of the same issues, though every attempt was made to maintain an air of consistency. In some cases, the participants were nonresponsive or had no insight to offer. The most common responses, summarized on Table 2, are detailed in the following section.

Group 1. The first student interviewed in what eventually became group one was Dave. His answers were short and direct, and he generally resisted elaborating on his answers. Dave indicated that he preferred to be part of a leaderless group, and that he had had very little prior experience with cooperative learning. He had done some revision

work in the previous semester, indicating that he accepts and rejects revision advice "after I've considered it for a few minutes and I go through my paper at least once." Additionally, he said that the adviser's "voice and attitude" contribute to his decision to accept or reject revision advice.

Julie was more outgoing in her interview, indicating that she was more independent than other members of her family. Though she said she preferred to work on projects alone, she indicated that "I don't have a problem cooperating with other people. I like listening to other people's ideas. If it can help me change mine in a positive manner then I can do that, but I won't sway easily." Julie's familiarity with cooperative learning reached back into high school. In Julie's view, its value lies in that "it gives you insight that you might not see. A different perspective. [. . .] I mean you can take people and ideas at first hand, see what they thought about something, something you might not have thought of." Like Dave, she indicated that attitude toward the group would play a role in her willingness to listen to their advice.

The third member of this group, Travis, indicated a passive willingness to work with others, indicating that "I take their opinion and if I like it or believe in it, I look over it and try to see things how they see it and if I decide that I like it I'll use it aid if I don't then I won't." He very strongly expressed a reluctance to take a leadership role in a cooperative learning group. His prior experience with cooperative learning had been limited to Composition I in the previous semester.

Group 2. Thomas contributed the first interview for what was to become the second group. Unlike the members of group one, he was excessively talkative, and identified himself as a very social person, having attributed this skill to having been raised in a family of eight children, which he described as "a kind of Darwininan

struggle, survival of the fittest." Thomas was the first to identify himself as a leader in his own social circle, indicating that one of the qualities of a strong leader is "probably being direct," adding that if you "set the example that people look for, people are more ready to accept what you're doing and they're more willing to take that chance, that gamble that you're worth following." Though he indicated that while he was "content" to work on a project alone, it was good to work with others on projects that required feedback. He was new to cooperative learning in Composition I during the previous semester, indicating that "it gives a different perspective and it gives you an idea of what another person might feel who does not know you." Finally, he offered this insight about creating a mutually-beneficial group relationship:

> It creates a trust and a mutual bond between each person, with each individual, and holds firm. People tend to be more accepting of whatever you've written or uh they're less inhibited by their own writings, more willing to share their ideas and thoughts on things. It's quite enlightening at that point.

The second interviewee for this group, Halley, was much less optimistic. She had the mystique of an outsider, and unlike Thomas, is an only child in a from a financially-struggling family in its second marriage. While Halley did not define herself as fiercely independent as Julie did, she described herself like this: "like most of the time I'm gonna go on my own. I mean sometimes I'll be with friends, and sometimes you know I just kinda go between crowds." Even though she said that she could "pretty much work with anybody" in groups, Halley revealed that college had "pretty much made me see that trying to conform to everybody and everything, trying to be 'in' or popular just doesn't work. You gotta be your own person." After describing her Composition I class as "a

pain in the butt," she had this to say about revision groups:

> I didn't really like showing my work to total strangers. It was like, here you go, here's my work. You can go ahead and judge it as you wish. If it sucks, just say so. I mean, I have more pride in my work than that. It's like I put my effort into that work and I don't want to show it to anybody to say . . . who're going to tear it apart because I mean . . . my pride's at stake.

When asked why she didn't respond well to student criticism she reported that "these are students with no more experience than I have so . . . I mean if they find an error or they think I'm erring, who's to say that they're correct?" Furthermore, she admitted that she didn't like giving criticism to other students "because I don't take well to it," and that it was better to write down criticisms for the writer to review later because "that way they don't feel defensive about it."

The third member of this group, Frank, expressed a similar reluctance to take the advice of peers, though his reasons appear to be somewhat different. Having come from a combative home life in which the defining feature was his father's choice to give up bond trading for the much less lucrative life of a carpenter, this student turned to sports for his primary role models. Though it may sound like a pun, it seems very true that Frank learned to be a "team player" from his participation in sports of various kinds. Frank reported that he likes "being with a social group." He explained how sub-groups formed in the restaurant where he worked:

> And I don't get along with some of the slackers in the back of the house too well and that annoys me because it makes my job harder. I gotta pick up some of the

slack if they aren't. But I probably communicate with some of the hard workers, but if we're both workin' hard and jokin,' those are the guys I get along best with.

While very few items recurred in all of the prerevision interviews, a number of the students made similar comments. The recurring theme was simply that when revision group members share a common agenda, that a more productive revision session is the result.

However Frank felt about his friends at work, he expressed little faith in the revision activities he participated in Composition I. His reason is similar to Halley's.

> I didn't think the peer editing helped that much 'cause a lot of people, I mean, I didn't feel knew what the hell they were talkin' about. You know, they would correct some things on your paper, but a lot of times you know they'd--I'd say more than not--people would go correct stuff people would go correct stuff on your paper and I'd go have my conference with the instructor and she was just like, you could do that, it really isn't that big a deal, or this correction shouldn't have been made, or stuff like that you know.

Naturally, Frank reported a reluctance to take the advice of his fellow students, making a point to emphasize that he would almost always take his initial opinion over that of another student, even if the other two group members encouraged him to make a change. Also, Frank shared another similarity to Halley in his reluctance to give revision advice to his peers because he "didn't want to offend them."

This group begins to demonstrate a pattern that continues to be affirmed in a small way by Group 3 and in a more pronounced way by Group 4. Some individuals

approach the groups as leaders (such as Thomas), who places a great deal of faith in the advice of his peers, while others approach the group sessions with a great deal of trepidation and the overall attitude that they are a waste of time and even more to the point, an interruption of the writing process.

This group proved to be one of the most interesting from a number of standpoints. Several role-related issues emerged which would lead to conflicts during their revision session. Thomas described himself as a leader, a role he would try to reinforce throughout his group's meeting. Frank indicated that he preferred not to lead groups, but stressed the need to cooperate with others who were willing to work together. Frank also commented on his dislike of "slackers," people who did not seem prepared to work on group tasks. A third issue related to role that the prerevision interviews brought out was the tendency to trust or not trust peer response. Both Halley and Frank said they believed that only the teacher had the right to critique their work, while Thomas, who was from a large, close family, expressed trust in what others had to day. During their revision session discussion, Halley would even reveal her tendency not to trust what one of her teachers had said, arguing that her teacher's comments were too vague. The issue of teacher versus peer authority became an issue that was touched upon by every group in this study. (Interestingly, Frank reported in his postrevision interview that he had changed his mind about at least this cooperative learning situation, because Thomas had earned his trust.)

Group 3.

The members of the third group, known pseudonymously as Laura, Malachai, and Samantha, are not as easy to define. This group differs from all of the others in at least one significant way. It is the only racially-mixed group. Laura, who identified herself as

"country" and "a homebody," indicated that until she left for college (the first in her family to do so), her social activities involved primarily her family and a small group of friends from Jones, Oklahoma. Like Thomas, she named her primary role within her social circles, but as "the type that cracks the jokes" instead of as the leader. I took this to mean that she saw her role as the group peacemaker, or perhaps mood-maker. In a fashion similar to Frank, who indicated that groups can use humor and "just try to make the day fun," Laura described the value of groups like this:

> . . . it seems like when you're with other people, you can have more things to do. I feel that if I can entertain them instead of entertain myself . . . 'cause when I'm by myself I can just sit there, you know . . . well when I'm with other people it tends to seem like you can entertain them instead of just trying to entertain yourself.

One of the advantages to working with others, she added, was that "you get more than just your opinion." The disadvantage, she indicated, occurred "if you want your ideas to stick." This pair of observations also became an echo as the interviews progressed. Virtually all students who discussed the advantages and disadvantages of group work mentioned very similar concerns in these two categories.

This struggle between the authority of the individual and that of the group is at the core of the enigma faced by students as they enter CL contexts. The third sub question posed on page 23 of this study, "In what ways do individual goals appear to differ from group goals, and how do these differences manifest themselves?," concerns this issue. Essentially, as each student enters a revision group, he or she certainly does so with a certain degree of apprehension, at least if it is a social context they have not entered before. Each approaches the group with a text about which he or she has drawn certain

conclusions (Interpretants). As others apprehend the same text, they may draw different conclusions. They will most likely arrive at different Interpretants. It is through the verbal interplay that takes place as students discuss their agreements and disagreements concerning that text that learning will take place. The great difficulty that each and every learner must face is to recognize that differences of opinion are not personal attacks, but a part of the learning process. It is through these differences that new Interpretants may be formed, and potential improvements can be made.

Laura was one of the participants who reported a positive experience in Composition I. She put her comments into very memorable language. She said, "I really enjoyed writing. I liked my teacher and I had a really good time. [. . .] We got to write about ourselves, you know, and you got to explore 'you .'" Though she described overall positive experiences with her revision sessions in that class, she did echo the same concern mentioned by Halley and Frank--namely, that "people will say a little bit more negative stuff than I want to hear." Also, she indicated that she was inclined to make revision changes other students suggestions, but makes her decision not necessarily on the basis of what criticism they give her, but on the basis of how well she likes <u>their</u> paper: "When I read their paper . . . and I see what they write sounds good, you know, sometimes maybe they do know what they're talking about." She did, however, indicate that she was reluctant to give negative advice to others ("I won't tell them if it's god-awful") though she would be willing to make positive comments. Finally, she made remarks similar to those others said about group cohesion, though she put it in negative terms. An aggressive person destroys a group, she said, because students "won't concentrate on what they need to be concentrating on. Because that person's pretty much ruined the mood."

Laura made an important point that address the formation of a social context that allows the creation of a positive "mood." I find this term interesting, though elusive. Though she did not actually use the term "positive," it seems implied within the context of her comments throughout the interview. I took "mood" to mean that the group had formed an identity, a sense of cooperation and common purpose. Laura's comments about an overall class experience were extremely important in my mind. Though this study focuses on up one CL event, the effect of the greater class upon each group seemed to lurk somewhere in the background. I gathered my data for this dissertation as early as possible in the semester, so that I would be able to observe group relationships as they were being formed, though certainly the general atmosphere of the classroom must have had some kind of effect. However, analyzing that effect goes beyond the scope of this study.

The second interviewee for this group was Malachai, who was not only the single African-American in the study, but also the only participant who did not appear to have been cut from the typical middle-class, European-American, protestant mind-set that the other students seemed to represent. Malachai's social life centered around three activities: his family, his church, and wrestling. He said that he liked to do things in groups, indicating, as others did, the value of having multiple perspective brought into play. He admitted that he didn't like it when someone tried to dominate the group in a leadership role, and reported that the same thing that is valuable in a group, multiple perspectives, can cause problems of its own: "What makes it bad is not agreein' on which way to go. If you got four people in a group and three of 'em goin' this way, and one of 'em goin' the other way, that may get a little shaky." It is interesting to note that the one thing that might stabilize a group in such a context, a strong leader, is the one thing that he rejects,

preferring to optimistically suggest that "everybody can take a vote on it." To solidify the emerging pattern just a bit more, in the minds of a number of the participants in this study, the same thing that is advantageous in a group context is also its greatest weakness: multiple perspectives. While multiple points of view may be advantageous to the prospective writer, the same social forces that make them possible may also present a danger that may cause the group to be ineffective. The common mission of the group, the "sub world," if you will, may break down if the social mix causes the thoughts expressed to be too divergent. One of the questions that occurred to me while I was conducting these interviews was at what point, or under what conditions, might such breakdown occur? I will return to this question in the discussion that ends this dissertation.

In spite of his reservations, Malachai's experiences with revision activities in Composition I (his first time to experience CL), were generally positive, though he approached such advice with caution. He indicated a greater willingness to make smaller changes, but a reluctance to alter major portions of his paper. He expressed such reluctance when their advice, "sometimes when they thought I, uh, needed to drop out this part, and I thought it was the main part." Malachai did not appear to differentiate between the types or sizes of changes, but preferred to keep something in his draft if it was important to him in an intuitive sense. He seemed most worried that other group members would not say what was on their minds ("don't pull no punches. If somethin's wrong, they gotta tell me"). He indicated that he would try to invoke responses by quieter members of the group by asking specific questions. In terms of his own feedback to others, he promised "to give them my honest opinion." Finally, he also offered an insight into the functioning of successful groups: "First you gotta know you don't always gotta be right. Not always gonna be wrong, but everybody's got a different problem. But

you ain't gotta get mad. [. . . .] That holds it together right there."

Malachai made a point that is also mentioned by Troy in the last group. He mentioned his own intuitive self-trust, his sense that something he has written is "right." Participants who mentioned this quality in their interviews were unable to define what the meant in more specific terms. Both Malachai and Troy indicated that there were certain things that they didn't mind changing, that there were others that they felt very strongly about, and would not negotiate. While Malachai said that he would change something if the teacher told him to do so, Troy noted that there were some things that he would not change, even if it resulted in a reduction in his grade. These items might be thought of as "deal breakers," as those issues, if pressed, would not result in a successful group negotiation, but only conflict. But at the same time, Malachai recognized the need to respect differences of opinion, and to quietly move on when moments of unresolvable dispute arise.

The third member of this group, Samantha, differed considerably from the other two. A middle-class suburbanite from a Christian Scientist family, she had attended a private Christian Science high school, then college, in Illinois, to which she attributed much of her attitude toward working with others. She described that environment in these words:

> Public school was really hard for me because it was such a competition to look good and to act good, but when I was in this school that was very much not a part of the daily activity, and not who had the most money or who drove the best car because on a religious standpoint, our religion was the same, so we understood each other. We didn't have any difficulty understanding each other, which

brought us a level up.

Samantha was unique in this study in that she was the only participant who expressed membership in what Berger and Luckmann (1966) defined as a "sub world." Her response also echoes what other students indicated about cooperating with others: namely, that a comma agenda is necessary in order for groups to function well.

Samantha was not the only participant to identify herself as part of a strong base world. Thomas expressed similar sentiments regarding his large and very mobile family. However, Samantha's situation had some of the qualities of a base world as well as those of a sub world. It was a religious residential high school, and as such would act as an extension of the family's primary value system, but it was also a place where Samantha had the opportunity to form identities separate from those related to her upbringing, and what might be thought of as her core identity. In this setting, the common agenda, the Social Interpretant that was shared by members of the group, was very solid indeed. She commented that when she returned to a conventional high school, she was not prepared for the complex social interactions she that occur when diverse groups of people from very different backgrounds are brought together. In the religious high school, since they came from similar backgrounds and held a primary belief system in common, it was not as difficult for then to form social bonds.

In terms of defining how she functions in groups, Samantha indicated, "I'm outgoing when I know the people around me, and I'm definitely like the leader type when I'm comfortable with the people I'm around."

Samantha's self-identification as a leader, in a fashion similar to Thomas in Group 2 and Teresa in Group 4, could potentially lead to moments of conflict within the group

when others do not see her in that role. It is especially worth remembering that Malachai noted in his interview his reluctance to accept others as leaders, indicating that groups should be operated on democratic principles. Preferring to work in groups, she made a comment reminiscent of that made by Laura: "I don't like working alone because I bore myself." The virtue of group work, she noted, echoing a number of other participants in this study, was "just the communication you get from other people. The feedback. You know, asking people about the way they think about things, you know, their opinions." Interestingly, this student approached the revision activity almost therapeutically. She summarized the value of the session like this:

> And it was always beneficial to have somebody there for me or even to read a story. Even if I read a story to a person who didn't know who it was, if I went through a similar experience or had a similar feeling or similar problem, um, then it was kinda like even though I don't know that person, they helped me. And so I've always kind of wanted to give back what I've been given.

I believe that what Samantha described here the sub world that can form when members of a cooperative learning group find social points of contact that allow them to begin working toward a common goal. She did not report any downside to group work as others did, but emphasized that if someone gave negative feedback she "didn't have to take it," and went to great lengths to describe her desire to pull reluctant people into the group and "encourage them to any way that they could, you know, talk." Samantha fits the type represented by Thomas. She was someone who has belonged to a social group characterized by trust brought on by a shared goal. In Thomas' case, it was his family, bound together tightly not just by the large size of their family, but the fact that they

relocated frequently, possibly minimizing the social bonds that might have been formed elsewhere. Samantha found that bond in a religiously-affiliated high school with a common purpose. Some others (Frank, for example) had to seek their social lives outside of a troubled family.

Group 4. These participants were also mixed in terms of personality and social niche. The first student interviewed for this group was Dominique, who turned out to be very uneasy in new social situations. She indicated that she had difficulty making new friends. In social contexts, she reported, "I'm kind of shy. And when it comes to groups I'm not real outgoing, though she admitted that the clear advantage of working with others was hearing the opinions of others. She generally admitted to being reluctant to give her opinion to others because "someone could take it personal." Further, she indicated a willingness to follow someone else's lead, even if she didn't necessarily agree with their opinion. If she asserts herself, she said, "I feel like I'm being pushy."

Dominique's shyness caused her to be the polar opposite of individuals like Teresa, Samantha, and Thomas. She was very uncomfortable venturing into new territory, and expressed a great reluctance in giving constructive criticism to others. Like Halley, she was reluctant to attempt to form a sub world with people she did not know. Her fear of offending others might cause her to sit quietly in a group, virtually unnoticed. If, as I have proposed, a common social agenda can only be wrought out of semiotic acts, then someone who is hesitant to participate, while physically present, may not invest much in forging the social dynamic that the group members must work together to build.

Dominique admitted to having done "a little bit" of cooperative learning in high school, though none was employed in her Composition I class during the previous semester. She indicated that she was "comfortable with it," and in spite of her reluctance

to give feedback to others, she said that she was willing to consider the advice that other students offered. In an intuitive way she admitted that she would be inclined to make changes to her paper if "it will make sense to me. If I like what they say, like if, ohh, you need to change this, and if I like how that sounds, if it sounds more intelligent, or better, that's how I'll know." Like others in this study, Dominique said that she accepts or rejects peer advice on the basis of intuition. What she may have meant by "makes sense" is that it must have certain points of contact with her mental self-concept of the paper. What she did not say, but implied, was that if the advice offered does not fit well within her own mental model, then she may reject such advice.

Teresa, the second member of this group to be interviewed, presented a stark contrast with Dominique. She emphasized her independence and non-conformance, especially in the way she embraced feminism in the midst of a very conservative, patriarchal family. Though her independence may have contributed to her expressed preference for working on projects alone, she described herself in social terms: "My personality? Very outward. I love being on stage, on camera, on radio, being able to talk with my opinions." She also mentioned that she held a lot of positions of responsibility in a wide variety of clubs in high school. Perhaps this combination of independence and desire to be at the center of attention contributed to her reasons for desiring to work on projects alone: "I'd just rather know that I'm gonna get it done than depend on some other person that I don't know if they're gonna do it or not. And if they do it, that it's gonna be what I wanted them to do. I'm kinda bossy, so . . ." She indicated that she preferred to take on leadership roles, saying that she tries "to get a consensus and see if there's a certain job that they want to do and what they're good at and from there divide out what everyone's going to do." It might be possible to say that, as a leader, Teresa viewed

herself as the "brains" of her group, and the other students as the "limbs." Her description of her leadership experiences seems to bear out a way of thinking in which she conceives of a mental model, of an Interpretant, of a task at hand, and "assigns" others to carry out the task. This way of approaching a cooperative learning activity is a far cry from Malachai's concept of a leaderless group in which all participants have a hand in executing a project. When she was asked to describe the advantages of working in groups, her responses fell in line with most of the other participants. She noted that working on a project alone takes longer, and that

> the advantage is that I do get a lot more ideas. You have different perspectives then coming out at you, people that can look at this and have a whole completely different take on it than you had. If you're stuck on one part you can say, "hey, what's up with this?" You can get more ideas going and it moves along quicker as long as everyone does their share.

However, if members of a group fail to cooperate, Teresa commented that "it makes it a very hard atmosphere to work in," and that she tries "to find out why everyone is not happy and fix it." In this situation she once again revealed her self-concept as the director of an operation. Her very use of the term "fix" implied that she possessed a mental schematic of the social structure of the group, and took it upon herself to analyze a problem and direct its repair.

Teresa's experience with cooperative learning began in Composition I, with the typical cycle of revision activities the class session before each paper was due. This experience did not come without difficulties, however:

> The only problem I had was, um, like I told you, I get bossy so that when I get to other people's papers, I'd like critique them. I had like little marks all over their paper and they wouldn't put anything on mine. And that frustrated me 'cause I wanted someone eslse's opinion after I'd written it and tell me, you know, what do I need to change and they wouldn't tell me, so that bothered me. [. . .] Oh, I'd ask them, I'd say "it won't make me mad, you all can write anything on here," I said. "Anything," I said. They said, "oh, no. It looks fine."

Teresa proved to be insightful about the issue of the lack of feedback, more so than any other participant in the study. This topic has been at least the partial subject of a number of researchers who have investigated group talk, several of whom are discussed in Chapter 2. However, when asked why she thought students avoided giving feedback, she was mystified: "I don't know. I really didn't understand that." I would predict that the answer may lie in three areas. There may be students like Dominique, who are fearful of causing discord within a group, or those like Halley, who are resentful that they are being forced to participate and have a disdain for the entire process. Others may fear that their voice is being overpowered by strong leaders like Teresa, Samantha, and Thomas and become frustrated and withdrawn. If these reluctant students do not participate in creating the group's social dynamic, in semiotic terms, it is not "theirs." I mean that they have not invested in its creation, and so have no sense of ownership of it. Anyone who has been the "third wheel" in a conversation dominated by two speakers will understand this situation. In Teresa's situation, her overpowering nature may make the group seem to be "hers" rather than the collective property of everyone involved.

Her tactic for drawing reluctant people into a group is similar to Thomas's

response:

> Talk to them. That's my key thing. Communication for me is everything to me. I think that if you get to know someone a little bit by talking to them then you can convince them that it's not that bad to be part of the group for a little while.

This comment, like that made by Thomas, seemed to intuit an understanding that the cooperative learning group is indeed a sort of base world, and that the role that the leader plays within the group is to help the group members form an identity and a sense of purpose so that rather than the group consisting of three individuals forced together by the context of the classroom, it becomes a social entity in its own right with its own purpose and objectives defined by the individuals that compose it. Unfortunately, she may not have viewed communication as a two-way street. In her case, there may be the possibility of too much talking and not enough listening. It is through listening that others would have the opportunity to contribute to the social dynamic of the group.

When asked what type of advice she would give, Teresa indicated that she would "mark down anything that . . . I think they need to word differently, find a different word here to make it more clear, just basic little changes in structure." This description falls in line with what some of the other participants said. Though most did not elaborate on what kind of changes they thought should be made, speaking almost exclusively in broad, general terms ("whatever I think needs to be changed"), those that did mention specific types of changes almost exclusively indicated word and sentence level revisions as opposed to larger rewrites at the paragraph level or higher. But unlike most other participants, Teresa said she would push for the revisions she suggested "pretty hard." But to her credit, she indicated a willingness to accept the criticism of others (in strong

contrast to Halley and Malachai, who indicated a reluctance to accept the advice of their peers):

> Only if I feel really, really strongly about a piece do I want to leave it. But when I talk to someone and they say, "Look at this. I think it would look better like that." Usually if I go back and look at it I think it would work better and then I change it, but if I still feel, "No," then I don't. I leave it and if it's a mistake it's my mistake.

The issue of being reluctant to take peer advice when a student ambiguously "feels strongly" about what he or she has written, came up a number of times during the prerevision interviews. Once again, this addresses the third sub question, "In what ways do individual goals appear to differ from group goals, and how do these differences manifest themselves?" The Interpretants that students have associated with their texts, may be buried deep within the psyche, and difficult for the participants to articulate. As a "feeling," it poses a difficult problem in the study in the sense that one of the objectives is to discover when and why students accept or reject peer advice. This issue of "feeling strongly" becomes especially important for the third and fourth groups, where a strong-minded writer seemed unwilling to accept much of the advice that he (Malachai and Troy, respectively) had been given.

In the final prerevision interview, Troy shared several strong points of contact with Teresa, especially in his tendency to perceive himself as a leader, which, naturally, sets up this group for potential conflict. Unlike any of the other participants, Troy came from a privileged background, though one that had in recent years resulted in the divorce of his parents. Both factors, his social status (accented by his popularity as a high school

athlete) and the split in his family may have contributed strongly to his attitude toward cooperative learning experiences. Interestingly, he attributed his leadership status primarily to his loud voice:

> I'm and up-front kind of guy. I'd rather be up speaking than in the back writing the speech. [. . .] My voice carries very well, and so I think that when you're in a situation and you're doing some kind of discussion, the guy with the biggest voice seems to dictate the conversation. And those people who don't speak loudly . . . those ideas just never get heard. And just so by the way I act, the way I carry myself, people expect, "Yeah, he's a leader. He's somebody that can lead." I can see the big picture.

In addition to this, one of the comments that Troy made about his learning experiences at U.C.O. was that the classes were smaller, like in high school, and that he found that "very comforting." This points to a sub world that is similar to one he was more familiar with. His prior experience with cooperative learning was, like some of the other participants, limited primarily to revision exercises in Composition I, though he also had had the experience of working on group projects. He had this interesting thought: " I remember that in Dr. Cary's class we were just asked to pick out groups. Because the people we were in the groups with we stayed in groups with. As a result we developed closer friendships than we did as the class as a whole." This observation echoes others that have been reported in this study. Troy noted the value of creating an immediate social context, group identity, and goal, which I have described in terms of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of the "sub world." However, Troy made a further reference which no other student has mentioned (at least directly): the value of maintaining the same group

throughout the immediate educational context (a single class). Here, he posits value in creating and maintaining a social context where he feels comfortable with others as well as having them comment on his own work.

In spite of these considerations, Troy was not without reservations. He had this to say:

> I'm totally behind this cooperative learning from what I've seen, but some of it is scary. Because there I am, putting my thoughts and ideas down on paper, giving it to someone that I don't know. [. . .] Especially this early in the semester I don't know what they're like, what they're capable of, what level they're on, and it worries me a little becuase I touch on some important issues to myself.

Unlike most of the other participants, Troy offered some insight into why he might be reluctant to take the advice of his peers. Troy appeared to recognize the difficulties associated with creating a sub world, at least initially. When he said, "I don't know what they're like, what they're capable of, what level they're on," he seemed concerned about a combination of his comparability with them and their level of skill. A number of participants noted that they were concerned about sharing their work with others because they did not feel they could trust the advice they were given. Troy's concerns were similar to those of Frank and Halley in that he did not appear to trust his peers as critics, and preferred, be default, to rely on the hierarchy implied by the attitude that the teacher resides over the class as the only legitimate vestibule of discursive authority.

A second, related consideration (though implied rather than stated) was the idea that it was the teacher that the students had to please, and not their peers. It was the teacher who had the official sanction of the institution, by virtue of degree and

employment, to comment upon their work. However, Troy commented on not only the skill of those involved, but his level of comfort with them.

When people have worked together for some time, Troy suggests, "that's a whole different ball game." The members of the group are members of a community that has (I would intuit) built in its own authority system based on a mutual mission and group cohesion. "I think differently if we've known each other for a semester," Troy said, "and I say 'hey, come read this', and you read it as a friend of mine." He conceded that a group that was composed of people who did not know each other might consist of advice that was more direct than among friends who might have feelings for you: [It's] "a good thing because they'll give it to you straight. It's a bad thing because they're givin' it to you straight." What Troy hoped to gain from his session and the type of advice he hoped to provide to others he characterized in terms of audience. I found this thought enlightening, since this is in fact what some of the other participants mentioned as a benefit of cooperative learning--namely, bringing in perspectives other than your own.

Summary. In spite of the diversity represented by this group, a number of common threads became evident, as summarized in Table 2. The only item all of the participants appeared to have in common was prior revision experience, though the extent of that experience varied from individual to individual. Most had practiced revision activities in Composition I, and the few that did not had encountered some form of cooperative learning in high school. Though this sample was admittedly too small to arrive at any definitive conclusions, some patterns regarding types of participants began to emerge. By "types" I mean that the participants had similar expectations regarding the roles they would play in their upcoming revision sessions. The clearest category I termed "Leaders," and included Thomas, Samantha, Teresa, and Troy.

	Groups											
	1			2			3			4		
	D	J	Tr	T	H	F	L	M	S	Do	Te	Ty
Leader Concept				X					X			X
Follower Concept			X			X	X			X		
Social Person				X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Works Alone		X			X					X	X	
Works in Groups				X		X			X			
Leaderless Group	X					X		X				
Prior Rev Experience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wants Peer Advice				X					X		X	
Shuns Peer Advice					X	X						
Accepts Some Adv.	X	X	X			X	X		X			X
Prefers Teacher Adv.					X	X						X
Likes to Give Adv.								X	X		X	X
Avoids Giving Adv.					X	X			X	X		
Cohesion Important				X		X	X	X	X		X	X

Table 2. Summary of Results of Prerevision Interviews.

The second group I called "Followers" and was represented by Travis, Frank, Halley, and Dominique. The final category I call "Independents," and was represented by Dave, Julie, and Malachai. The Leaders had the most characteristics in common. All had made statements that they tended to lead others in group situations, and, as might be expected, they considered themselves to be social people. Thomas and Samantha both indicated that they preferred to work in groups, though Teresa, a fiercely independent person, preferred to rely on herself. Troy stated that he had enjoyed his prior group work, though he did not express a specific preference for it. All of the Leaders also expressed a desire to hear the advice of their fellow students (though Troy was more reserved about accepting such advice and preferred to consult with his instructors), as well as an equal willingness to give advice to others. Thomas was the one exception. He was willing, but

expressed a greater faith in the advice of others than his own.

Of the four students identified as Followers, two considered themselves to be social people (preferring a group, but not in a decision-making capacity) whereas Dominique identified herself as "shy" and noted that she does not make new friends easily. Travis did not make comments about his social relationships with others in any significant detail. Another interesting detail is that none of the Followers appeared especially enthusiastic about accepting the advice of their peers. They either reluctant to take such advice (they very likely would not take it), or they would accept such advice with reservations (in most cases indicating ambiguously that they might take such advice if they "like" it). None of the Followers was eager to give revision advice to others, generally indicating that they were afraid that the person they were giving the advice to might become offended. Interestingly, only one of the Followers, Laura, made any comment about the importance of group cohesion. Generally, these participants seemed less concerned about, or at least less aware of, the need to have a group working in agreement toward a common goal.

The final category, which I have labeled "Independents," is more difficult to define. One student particularly stood out, and almost deserved a category of her own. Halley identified herself as what might be best termed a loner, or in her words, "one of the weird ones." Moreover, she indicated that she did not identify with any particular group, and had a tendency to "move between crowds." She shared a trait that the other Independents and the Followers have in common: all are hesitant to either give or receive rewriting suggestions. The other three students categorized as independents preferred a leaderless, or democratic, group structure. Malachai was particularly insitant on the members of the group voting "on which way to go." Malachai was also the only

Independent who seemed concerned about the importance of group cohesion and cooperation. While all of the groups that were eventually formed were of a mixed nature, Group 1 seemed to have the most in common. Unfortunately, as all three participants also gave the least informative interviews. With two Independents and one Follower in this group, it would be reasonable to expect them to conduct themselves in a different manner than those groups with members who professed to be strong leaders. This lack of a definite leader may have contributed to the positive experience they reported in their postrevision interviews, to be discussed in chapter 6.

Generally, though the demographic origins of the students' base worlds seem similar in many ways, their prior experiences, both in coopertative learning and life generally, appeared to color how they would approach their upcoming revision activity. In short, their base and sub world complexes had already set into place rather firm ideas about cooperative learning that would figure in very strongly to how they responded to group revision. Their prior attitudes, as will be seen in Chapter 5, had a very strong effect on how they reacted to the social dynamic that they entered into once they were in their cooperative learning situations. As shall be seen in the next chapter, even those who seemed reluctant to participate in the formation of the sub world within each group had as much to do with forming it as those who were more willing participants. Those who had life experiences that had involved positive events in group contexts, whether they were religious groups, sports teams, gatherings of friends, family situations, or school-associated activities, carried with them a more positive outlook toward cooperative learning generally. It did not seem to matter where those activities had taken place. What did matter is that they had invested in a sub world and felt that they were part of a group and had some say-so in how the group functioned. I had initially expected that

those with prior cooperative learning experiences would have positive attitudes toward revision groups, but this was not always the case. Their prior experience with revision does not seem to have mattered. What did make a difference was their feeling of belonging to a group, the sense that they had contributed something to the task at hand and had gotten something out of it. Those who had not had positive group experiences outside of a classroom setting seemed significantly less inclined to attempt to participate in the formation of a group sub world. And by "participate" a mean that the student approaches the activity with the idea that he or she will be a part of something greater than him or herself, that in giving feedback to others, he or she will benefit as well.

How these students use language to interact and form sub worlds is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Results: Revision Conversations

In this chapter the greatest portion of the data for this dissertation is analyzed. It consists of the transcripts of the revision conversations that the students were involved in. The procedures for collecting and transcribing this data were discussed in Chapter 3. The overall research question this dissertation asks is, "What appears to be the social dynamic of revision groups in a college composition class?" Chapter 4 in part focused on answering the first sub question, "What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences and expectations that the participants bring with them?" Chapter 4 attempted to define those experiences and expectations as they were described by the participants in their prerevision interviews. This chapter addresses the first part of that question, and describes the social context that these very different students created as they came together for a common purpose. In carrying out this analysis, the second sub question, which is the most elusive and complex, comes into play.

The social dynamic. In Chapter 1 I suggested that the social contexts that students create through semiotic acts of speech are not immutable entities, but change from moment to moment as conversations progress. This idea, which is far from new to semiotics, I have termed the social dynamic. Indeed, one of my reasons for studying revision groups that were made up of strangers working together for the first time was so that I could capture the formation of a social entity as the participants' base/sub world complexes came together for the first time. In doing so, the students had to work together to carve out a niche in the social fabric of the classroom (which perhaps itself was a subset of the social context of the school, which was part of a larger set of social contexts,

and so on). The participants then had to form identities within the group, develop roles, and lay down the ground rules, so to speak. To accomplish this, much of this analysis, while also descriptive of groups in a more general way, attempted to consider two broad issues that quickly became apparent as these conversations were transcribed. The first concerned the laying down of these ground rules, whether self-assigned, group negotiated, or entered into in some intuitive way. The second considered moments when group members disagreed with one another. These disagreements did not always concern differences of opinion regarding revision suggestions in a student paper. As often, they concerned group procedures, teacher instructions, and topics even distant from the issues at hand.

Dual methods of analysis. In order to capture as much as I could of these subtle social complexities, I deviated from the commonly-used procedure utilized in discourse analysis within composition studies of cooperative learning groups, wherein utterances are coded for their function within a conversation. To this I chose to add a second phase of analysis, and analyzed the transcripts for structural features as well by adopting the Conversation Analysis method. The purpose of this two-part analysis was to discover, firstly, what functions utterances appear to have served in the conversations (in terms of informing, critiquing, monitoring, and so on). By analyzing these utterances, and separating them into categorical types, it became possible to see how they contributed to the formation of a sub world within each group, in addition to providing insight into the roles that individuals played within the groups, as well as how conflicts between participants were managed. The purpose of the second method, Conversation Analysis, was to see how the structural features of the talk correlated with the functional data. The

assumption was that the CA method might reveal aspects of the social construction of the sub world that may not have been have been revealed by more traditional methodologies. This procedure involved a bit of heresy. Since CA has traditionally focused on small segments of conversations rather than lengthy transcripts, my adaptation of it has involved some necessary liberties.

Conversation analysis and research questions. One part of the purpose of carrying out this type of structural analysis was to address the concerns of sub question 2b: "When group members do not agree, what sorts of conflicts arise within the groups?" The CA method, as discussed in Chapter 2, made it possible to identify certain structural tendencies within conversations. Of special interest here was the idea of the preference structure, wherein certain types of utterances (requests, for example) tend to elicit particular expectations regarding the sorts of responses that are most often made. This method of analysis made it possible to discuss the structural tendencies of certain types of utterances that recurred within these conversations. Another area of interest was to discover what appeared to elicit conflict, what types of responses were made, and how students moved from conflict (or lack of response) that effectively stops the conversation and toward talk that allowed the purpose of the sub world to proceed.

Meshing CA with functional analysis. In carrying out this research, it became nearly impossible to isolate elements of the transcripts as either "function coding" or "conversation analysis" because the features that both methods evaluate often overlap. For this reason, they are sometimes discussed together in what follows. However, CA has the unique advantage that more traditional coding methods lack. It pays very close attention to the physical structures of talk, including such things as louder speech,

accelerated speech, changes in pitch, and verbal pauses. Examining the physical features of talk made it possible to add more information to the data that was available when the verbal talk was transcribed. For this reason those features are discussed briefly at the end of this chapter, in order to define what physical structures appear to be characteristic of revision group talk. Where both methods applied, however, they were discussed together.

Function Coding

Background. A number of studies of CL group talk discussed in Chapter 2 utilized a method of dividing the transcripts of the recorded talk into codable units and then proceeded to code those units for the function that they appeared to serve in the talk. In one of the earlier studies of group talk in the environment of a writing class, Gere and Stevens (1985) first divided verbal data into "idea units" (Chafe [1980]), then developed categories based upon the function that those utterances served in a conversation: collaborative (in which students worked together to solve a problem), informative (where readers told writers factual information about their writing), and evaluative (in which students made valuative judgements about the author's writing). Similarly Gere and Abbott (1985) coded data in several functional categories based on their general area of attention (to writing, procedures, or off-topic talk). Coding for the topic of discussion of utterances in writing conference talk, Walker (1992) found that students valued conference talk the most where their concerns were addressed. Similarly Forman and McPhail (1993) coded the talk of two young girls engaged in problem-solving tasks, and found that the girls had to negotiate a common goal before collaboration could proceed. These researchers coded talk exclusively for function, as did Freedman and Sperling (1985), who divided writing conference talk into two general areas of attention:

intellectual (with emphasis on subject matter) and affective (with consideration to the writer's feelings). They found that when the participants failed to share an agreed-upon focus, whether intellectual or affective, one or the other participant would try to refocus the conversation on their agenda. Diaute and Dalton (1988) coded talk that occurred between pairs of children engaged in responding to each others' writing, and in a pattern similar to some of the other studies reviewed here, identified a number of functional categories. Most of the talk, they found, involved composing, evaluating, or made conversational directives. In a similar fashion Galda and Pellegrini (1988) recorded the talk of children engaged in narrative play with functionally ambiguous (blocks) and functionally explicit (doctor kits) toys. They, too made functional observations, and determined that the children maintained play as long as they agreed upon a common "behavioral script." Freedman (1992), in a study of two ninth-grade classes, coded for the function of talk in writing groups by recording the conversation that took place in those groups. She found that students placed more emphasis on proceedural talk (even overapplying the rules) and mechanics while resisting the kinds of talk that would place students in conflict with one another.

Coding procedure. Following the pattern of these studies, the transcripts of the revision groups were coded for function first, and then for structure seperately. No codes were predetermined in advance. The structural coding, utilizing the CA method, was done second. This procedure involved identifying adjacency pair constructions, preference structures, and verbal pauses. Though they occurred less frequently, attention was also given to overlaps of speech, raised tones of voice, and quieter speech. The codes that are outlined below resulted from a series of careful readings and "dry runs."

The final codes were verified by a second coder, Dr. Robert Lamm of Arkansas State University.

Idea units. Before the coding could proceed, a method for dividing the discourse into codable units had to be divised. Chafe's (1980) concept of "idea units," as utilized by A. R. Gere, was selected for this purpose. Chafe (1980, 1982) suggests that at least a sense of a subject's focus of mental attention can be intuited by dividing a conversational transcript into "idea units." By studying a combination of syntactic structures, verbal pauses, and rises in intonation that occur in conversational speech, Chafe contended, a notion of the speaker's focus of consciousness can be gained. Chafe claimed that this focus of consciousness "moves in jerks" (1980, p. 12) of about two seconds, and that those seconds of speech, marked with changes in tone and bordered with pauses, can be identified as individual "idea units."

Notation system. When the tapes of the revision session discussions were transcribed, the Jeffersonian notation system (with modifications), as created for conversation analysis was utilized (see Appendix 2). This "system" is by no means uniform. CA researchers have adapted it to serve their own purposes in a variety of different studies. While certain features of the system remain more or less consistent, researchers use notations that appear in the conversational extracts they are evaluating, while leaving others out of their schemes. For this reason, the symbols that they use to mark the physical features of talk may vary from one study to another. The codes listed in Appendix 1 correspond to the physical features of talk that I encountered in this study. A few of the symbols were altered to match to the symbols readily available on a modern computer keyboard. Some of the symbols developed by Gail Jefferson and Harvey Sacks

resulted from symbols that appeared on an old-fashioned manual typewriter. One of the most important things to remember is that ordinary conventions of spelling, grammar, and capitalization are ignored, because many of those symbols take on special meanings in CA transcription. For example, the pronoun "i" is presented in lower case unless it is spoken more loudly than the surrounding speech.

General findings. While such a method of transcription is very time-consuming, and in most situations must be done by the researcher rather than an assistant, it has the virtue of preserving many aspects of talk that simply cannot be put into words. Verbal pauses (timed by tenths of a second), louder speech, whispered speech, affected voices, rises and falls in intonation, and elongated syllables were all represented on the transcript. All of these clues were used to decide where "idea units" began and ended in each instance.

Coding procedure. Each transcript was coded at least three times, following the old "three on a match" concept. The first time, an excessively large number of codes were conceived. The second time, they were focused, and the third time, they were finalized. The codes, along with their definitions, are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Definition of codes describing utterance function.

Code	Definition
Negative Assessment	A group member suggests that a part of the text being discussed be deleted, moved, or rewritten.
Positive Assessment	A group member indicates something that he or she likes about the text being discussed, and that it should not be changed.
Confirmation	A group member confirms what someone else has said, most commonly by agreeing with the statement and adding reinforcement or further explanation.
Simple Agreement	This code was provided to account for simple affirmatives with no elaboration and an ambiguous purpose. Utterances such as "um-hm," "yeah," and "sure" are of this type.
Explanation	A group member elaborates on what he has said by offing an explanation, providing information, or clarification of a point.
Reading	This code accounts for moments of "dead air" when a group member reads from his/her or another student's text.
Monitoring	A group member makes a reference to the context of their discussion, especially such things as time frame, teacher instructions, or other "rules" that come into play.
Off-topic Talk	A group member directs the conversation away from the topic at hand.
Other	Uncodable utterances with an ambiguous purpose. This code includes unintelligible speech as well.

Once the total number of codes was calculated for each group, the percentage of the number of idea units for each code was figured, giving a rough numerical estimate of the

percentage of total idea units that were utilized for each particular function. These were figured initially by group, and then averaged together, as indicated in Table 4. The codes were then figured participant by participant for the purpose of getting an idea of what functions particular students appeared to focus on more than others.

Table 4. Coding breakdown by group.

	Revision Changes	No Revision Changes	Confirmation	Explanation	Reading	Monitoring	Off Topic	Other Codes
Grp 1	.06	.12	.18	.21	.11	.14	.07	.06
Grp 2	.11	.08	.14	.32	.06	.07	.13	.02
Grp 3	.14	.03	.13	.32	.04	.16	.11	.03
Grp 4	.11	.07	.15	.28	.13	.13	.08	.03

If certain participants produced codes that correlated with the categories already determined by the prerevision interviews, then it might be reasonable to conclude that students were engaging in certain roles within the groups based upon the self-concepts they revealed in those interviews.

Codes for All Groups

Table 4 shows the percentage of total idea units that were shared by each code in each group. The following discussion breaks down a description of the general findings by function code group.

Assessment codes. The assessments that will be discussed in the following pages are primarily of two types. I have termed them positive and negative assessments. It is not intended that the use of the terms "positive" and "negative" should indicate an attitude on the part of the individual giving the critique, nor that the advice was good or

bad. Positive assessments indicate that the reader liked something in a writer's paper, something that I more casually refer to as praise. Negative assessments are criticisms, or suggestions that something in a writer's paper should be changed. In what follows, the structural similarity of these functions will become more clear. They differ primarily in the preference structures associated with them, which will be addressed in the analysis to follow. Generally, positive assessments tended more often to be followed by confirmations, while negative assessments sometimes led to disagreements, or more often, explanations.

If the scores are averaged, only .11 of the total codes were spent on making rewriting suggestions (criticisms, codes of Revision Change). This is alarming, since this is the actual task that the revision group session was supposed to accomplish. Put in terms of a revision session in a fifty-minute class, considering that forty minutes was spent in actual group work, this means that only about four minutes was actually spent making productive rewriting suggestions. This data suggests that each student receives hardly more than one minute's worth of actual revision advice. It is also worth noting that Group 1 (the only group without a self-identified leader) provided almost half of the critical advice as the other three groups. Though the average of the amount of praise provided within all groups stands at .07, the range here is certainly wide--from .03 to .12. While on average most of the groups provided less praise than criticism, Group 1 did the reverse, providing twice as much praise as criticism.

One of the most interesting findings is the fact that the first group engaged in more praise than negative criticism, while with the other three groups the situation is reversed. This was also the only group to have seemed more or less "democratic" or

"leaderless," with authority and role shared somewhat equally by all of its members. In the other groups, some degree of struggle between participants ensued. Another point to be gleaned from Table 4 is that Group 3, in which the greatest number of writing decisions were made, was in many ways the most turbulent (at least the writer of the single paper discussed within this group expressed the greatest resentment toward the primary critic in his postrevision interview). These initial facts may suggest that these groups existed in a delicate balance between individual goals and group goals as individuals met for the first time and tried to form a common identity and sense of unified purpose.

Explanation codes. Upon reviewing the Table 4, the fact that most of the participants spent most of their time explaining themselves should be obvious. These explanations, upon further analysis, tended to be of two types. Firstly, once a criticism was given, writers tended to explain their reasons for writing in the way that they did. Sometimes these explanations were rather short and direct, while at other times they were very lengthy and drawn out. These tended to be defensive explanations, and most frequently resulted when a writer appeared to feel strongly about what he or she had written, and did not feel inclined to change it. Troy tended to make rather long defensive explanations. At times, when both writer and critic felt strongly about their opinions, rather long exchanges of criticism/explanation (a preference structure, to be discussed later) could result. If the student did not appear to feel strongly about what they had written, they were much more likely to merely confirm a criticism (or even agree with the critic's assessment). A second type of explanation also occurred, related to the criticism/explanation preference structure mentioned above. Critics would also make

engage in a second type of explanation. When a critic made a comment that the writer (or the third group member) questioned, they tended to explain their reasons for the criticism. When either critic or writer engaged in explanations, they would use their own experience, or refer to teacher authority, or a combination of both as the basis for the explanation.

Confirmation codes. At first glance, these codes reveal less about what may have transpired within the groups. Each of them will be considered later in more detail. Confirmation codes seem to be "neutral" in that they were about the same for all groups. These were instances where speakers merely confirmed that they understood what someone had said, or offered non-explanatory agreement to what was said. Statements like "uh-huh," "yes," and "I understand" were coded as confirmations when they followed someone else's explanation or assessment.

Reading codes. Reading codes had to do with the procedures that students had decided to follow within their groups. When students read, they brought in information from an outside source. Most of the time, reading codes consisted of reading from the revision sheet. On occasion, papers were quoted, or read in their entirety out loud. In the former case, segments were quoted so that they could be discussed, and in the latter case, entire papers were read out loud prior to beginning the discussion of that paper.

Monitoring and off-topic talk. Monitoring consisted of moments when students discussed procedural issues such as the time, teacher instructions, and how to deal with the revision sheet questions. These codes were extremely important, because they served as indicators of role and helped establish the rules that the students negotiated, or that they think they are supposed to follow. Monitoring was important because it was a

significant part of the social dynamic that took place as the students worked to form a viable social entity, a sub world. Off-topic talk seemed to form a similar, though perhaps less productive purpose. Far from the mere irritant that such moments are perceived to be by many teachers, they provided opportunities for the groups to forge common identities by sharing experiences and finding things in common with one another. Off-topic talk codes were the highest in the two most turbulent groups (2 and 4). This may be an indication that they provided a necessary function in terms of "smoothing over" relations between individuals in such groups. In the pages that follow, an interesting (and in my view, necessary) incident of off-topic talk that occurred in Group 2 will be discussed in some detail.

Breakdown by Group

What follows is a breakdown of the codes, with examples provided from each study group. Conversation Analytical features and other observations are reported in this section as well. Generalizations will be discussed first, with examples of those patterns and their variations discussed within each group. As this analysis was carried out, I found that the discussion of the function codes often overlapped with the preference structures that seemed evident, so rather than discuss them separately and risk repeating myself, I thought it best to integrate the discussion of the preference structures with the analysis of the function codes. In the end, these two methods of analysis are inseparable, since a preference structure of one kind or another may serve one or more particular functions within these conversations.

Preference Structures. Two preference structures seemed evident in the following analysis. The first might be called "assessment/agreement." When speakers made

particular assessments during the course of these discussions, the conversational "preference" was for agreement rather than disagreement. In other words, since the cultural "rules" of conversation call for consensus within a group, agreement is called for because it contributes to group cohesion. Disagreement, however small, endangers the cohesion of the group, and thus the possibility that the conversation can move forward on a common agenda. I do not mean to suggest that disagreement is bad, but rather that the more disagreement that occurs, the more the group must discuss a particular point in order to move forward on a collective task. Too little disagreement, and the group fails to benefit from the meeting of minds; too much, and the group cohesion potentially breaks down. The group members indicated (using other words to describe this phenomenon, of course) that they were acutely aware of this balancing act when the critiqued one another's papers. As already reported, the general tendency was to err on the side of caution rather than to create discord within the group.

Assessment codes and preference structures. The discussion of calls for revision changes (criticism) and no change (praise) is interesting in light of this. Criticisms are going to more often lead to trouble spots where discussion has to take place, because the social rules call for that assessment to be agreed with. In an ideal world, when A says, "I think you need a new thesis statement!," B responds, "You're right! I'll write a new one straight away!" In the real world, B is at least as likely to go on the defensive, and C (a third group member) may decide to avoid further disagreement by taking B's side. Praise will tend to be agreed with because they help reinforce the group's solidarity. But like everyday complements, when they are excessive, social rules call for denying them. If A says, "You look stunning in that dress," B might reply, "This old thing?" Likewise,

excessive praise as another student's paper could be perceived as window dressing, and cause a writer to disagree, and perhaps call for more criticism. In the analysis that follows, I found that writers tended to respond to praise either with polite thanks, humility, or sometimes disagreement. Two social forces seemed to be at work here. The first is the tendency to agree with an assessment, and the second is the requirement of humility.

A second type of preference structure that occurred frequently (but one that was much less volatile in nature) was that of "explanation/confirmation ." Explanations most frequently followed assessments, both praise and criticism. Writers often spent a considerable amount of their time explaining why they had made certain writing decisions. Most often, these long explanations were followed by simple confirmations. However, they occurred very frequently, and made up a very large part of the discussions.

Group personalities. One of the problems faced in the analysis of this data involved deciding whether to discuss functional codes and conversational features in general, or to discuss the prominent features of each group in an effort to grasp the "personality" of each group. In the end, I decided to discuss each group separately, partly because one of the main purposes of this dissertation is to describe the sub worlds that are formed within each group. Each section begins with a general description of the group, followed by an analysis of the more interesting features of the group's conversations. These "hot spots" were selected because they exemplified moments when the participants were engaging in discourse that concerned the formation of a sub world. Some of these moments featured disagreements and conflict, while others demonstrated periods of agreement. Through these excerpts, two features occurred again and again: role and

negotiation. Students appeared to take on various roles within their groups, and encountered moments when their different base/sub world complexes collided, and they had to (at least attempt to) negotiate agreement. Sometimes these negotiations were successful, while at other times they were not.

Social space. Before entering the first of these discussions, I would like to return to some of the theoretical ideas that were outlined in Chapter 1. The first thing to keep in mind is the concept of social space. Linguists who follow Searle (1995) might argue that makes little sense to talk about social space since it merely exists as an idea in dissimilar copies in various human minds (see Deacon [1997]). I freely admit that the idea of "social space" is a fiction, albeit a useful one for understanding what happens when people try to come together and engage in conversation with the idea of accomplishing some collective task. When they form "Social Interpretants," their ideas are not identical, but as parallel as they can be without actually sharing experiences and thoughts.

The base/sub world complexes that the students bring with them into their CL groups should not be thought of as some kind of static entity, but something that will change–must change–when they interact with others if any sense of common purpose is to be achieved. At some point, the participants must move from "me" to "us" (though "me" certainly reasserts itself over and over in the discussions analyzed here). I found the struggle between these two concepts to be a constant feature of the groups I studied. The "me" appeared as the self-concept, the role each person chose to play within each group, and the "us" the moments of negotiation as the students attempted to influence one another and forge a common purpose.

The way I believe this occurs, as I tried to outline in Chapter 1, is that each

base/sub world complex was engineered by what Saussure (1986) termed langue and parole. Each base/world complex may be thought of as a tapestry of interlaced signs. Langue, the system of rules that makes language possible, which itself is made up of signs, provides the machinery for interpreting new signs that are "imported" from the outside, and for "exporting" signs to others in the group. The process is revisionary, for as signs are exchanged between speakers, the individuals involved are trying to adapt to one another. In essence, they are building a sort of database of shared signs that will make common ground possible.

Within the sub world of the CL group, the participants, each of whom brings a personalized langue, must reserve a small part of it for building a linguistically-determined social unit, a sub world, which they will attempt to share. To invoke Peirce again, each participant came to the group with a web of Interpretants, a network of sign-meanings which made up their concepts and expectations. These semiotic complexes were primarily the subject of Chapter 4, which purported to describe the social experiences and expectations that the students would enter the group with. What follows, organized by group, addresses sub question 2: "In what ways are such contexts not 'solid,' but mutable entities that may change literally from moment to moment as the conversation goes on?" The upcoming analysis cannot hope to capture the utter fluidity of the social experience, and can certainly not report what goes on in the minds of the participants. What it can do is offer a series of incomplete snapshots, and through that allow us to draw some initial conclusions about how learners form social contexts in which they can benefit from the points-of-view of their peers. The following discussions were arranged by group, so that the "personalities" of the groups, the roles that

individuals play, and the differences between the group will be more readily apparent.

Group 1

General comments. Group 1 could probably be thought of as the most balanced off the three groups represented in this study. The students got along quite well, with very little tension evident in the group. All three participants noted in their postrevision interviews that it was one of the best cooperative learning experiences that they had ever had.

They shared group authority fairly evenly. As I transcribed this group's tape, it became clearly evident that the revision sheet had a role to play in representing the teacher's authority in the group. This group was able to share this authority as they passed the sheet around while they proceeded from question to question. This group also monitored itself quite well, and was the only one to give roughly the same amount of time to all three student papers.

Assessment patterns. This group demonstrated a pattern that occurred to some degree in all three groups, though it was most evident in Group 1. Before a criticism was made, it was usually "primed" with a statement of praise:

Praise
(No Revision Change)
↓
Criticism
(Revision Change)
↓
Explanation

Based on their postrevision interviews, it seems evident that the members of this group were not aware of their use of this tactic. Also, the explanations that followed the criticism appeared to be of two types: (1) the author explained his or her reason for

writing in a particular way, or (2) a critic explained reasons why a specific change should be made. In the case of the writer, a "defensive" explanation may be an indication of their reluctance to make a change, and in the case of the critic, due to their feeling that such a change is indeed necessary. Many times, of course, criticisms were not followed by lengthy explanations. Sometimes the author simply confirmed the explanation with simple affirmations like "um-hm," or "I see."

Roles. Like the other groups, certain members seemed to take on certain role functions within this group, even though the roles seemed to be shared most evenly in this instance. Julie functioned as the primary critic, and unlike the other groups, where criticism was received with some degree of tension, all three group members seemed to appreciate what she had to say. In the following sequence, the group is discussing Dave's thesis statement. Roles seem evident here, with Julie functioning as critic, Travis to inform, and Dave to confirm what his friends are saying:

01 J: but uh ⌜it seems like your topics are (clearly) stated
02 T: ⌞i couldn't find anything else really wrong with it (0.1) i mean it
03 read (0.9) real real nice and easy an-
04 J: one person that- (0.3) >(y'know) kinda confused me (0.2) was how you go
05 into this part right he::re ⌜about-=
06 D: ⌞oh yeah
07 T: =about the three different things (0.1) ⌜yeah
08 J: ⌞yeah=
09 D: =yeah

This brief exchange, transcribed utilizing the Jeffersonian notation system designed for

Conversation Analysis (with my own modifications--outlined in Appendix 2), demonstrates a fairly complex mixture of conversational functions. Julie began with praise, which is reinforced by Travis' own evaluation. In fact, Travis' statement demonstrates one of the greatest problems that I encountered in coding this data. It is naive to think that any given utterance serves only one purpose. While I coded this statement as praise (a statement of what the writer did well), it also serves a secondary function as a Confirmation of what Julie just said. But after these incidents of praise are made, Julie offers a criticism, which is itself followed by a simple Confirmation from the writer. Also of interest here is the way that Travis offers a clarification (coded as Explanation), within his Confirmation with his statement "about the three different things."

With almost equal frequency, critical assessments are followed by explanations by the author:

01 J: when you're >goin about talking about< something like that

02 T: it kind of goes astray

03 D: i was tryin to fit (0.6) fit six hundred words into this ( )

At this point in the conversation, Julie pointed out to Dave that he has strayed off of his topic. Travis confirmed her point and elaborated on it in an interesting way through uptake. When she paused her utterance enough for him to "jump in ," he finished the statement. The utterance then became the collective property of the group, socially constructed by two of the three participating members. The writer responded by explaining his reason for including the material that was being discussed. Dave's comment here contrasts with the more lengthy and defensive explanations engaged in by

writers in the other three groups, but it demonstrates well the negotiation that must take place as the participants move toward a common understanding. Julie and Travis shared similar Interpretants ("it kind of goes astray") and attempted to convince Dave to accept their point-of-view. Instead of confirming (and thus indicating agreement with the criticism, or at least unbiased neutrality), Dave offered an explanation of his own. The sequence was followed by 1.3 seconds of silence, which effectively ended this conversational "block."

Explanation. Travis became the primary Informer in the group. His was the first paper discussed, and he responded to criticism and praise by explaining his reasons for writing in the way that he did. However, he also used Explanation to summarize or clarify what a writer has said. He seems to utilize this summary to prepare the writer for his comments. Note the following excerpt from their discussion:

01 T: the main ideas would be (0.4) to me would've been to talk about
02 your patience (1.6) that your parents had (1.2) and you being a
03 !selfish! person=
(0.5)
04 J: =(hhhh)
05 T: and they ha- their giving nature
(0.5)
06 D: #mm hm#
(1.3)
07 T: and the courage your family had as the three er four or whatever it was
08 (0.2) that i (0.3) come up with

09 D: #mm hm#=

10 T: in my reading (1.0) and you back those up well (1.2) and you back those

11 up well (1.3) throughout the paper (1.8) with examples n-

(1.3)

12 D: you have very good examples=

13 D: yeah

Long exchanges of this type occur in other groups as well. It may simply be that, lacking a specific criticism of any type, the student attempts to fill up the silence by offering a simple summary of the students paper. Only at one moment, at lines 10 and 11 in the above transcript, does the speaker offer a criticism of any kind, a positive assessment, which is repeated and reinforced by Dave. Only after Travis' confirmation of Dave's statement, followed by a silence of 4.1 seconds, does the discussion move on, and only then when Dave turns to the next revision sheet question.

Travis is a more or less passive group member in a way characteristic of the other three groups. Generally, within these groups one person functioned as leader/critic, another as writer/defender, and a third, more passive member as explainer/confirmer. One exception is the third group, where both Laura and Samantha played active roles, though in somewhat different ways. These roles may have rotated as groups move from one paper to another. That seemed to happen in Group 1, but it was the only group that engaged in an earnest discussion of all three papers. Though the participants in Group 2 read and evaluated all of their papers, it contained a member who indicated that she was not going to use her paper for the class, and expressed strong reservations regarding peer criticism. In groups 3 and 4, only one paper was discussed. However, there seems to be

enough evidence within these groups (1, 2, and 4) to suggest that a "third wheel" syndrome may have occurred within some groups, causing them to consist of a writer and critic engaging in a discussion while a third student quietly observed.

Monitoring. This function appeared to be a way of moving the conversation along when a subject was dropped, indicated by an unusually long pause between utterances. While all members of Group 1 contributed significant Monitoring idea units, Dave produced almost twice as many such utterances as the other members of the group. Dave did not seem to function so much as the group's leader as the "pilot." This is an intriguing point, because in the other groups, when certain students asserted themselves in leadership roles, they tended to take on both Monitoring and Assessment functions. The "leader" in this apparently "leaderless" group appeared to be the revision sheet. Dave functioned to keep the group on track, whereas Julie led up the critical commentary.

Isolated monitoring statements tended to occur as the students piloted themselves from question to question within the revision sheet, and in bundles as they negotiated an end to the discussion of one student's paper and began another. Monitoring occurred sporadically within the body of the paper discussions themselves, but occurred in blocks as one paper discussion was wrapped up and another one begun. Dave helped to carry the group's authority as these transitions were made. As they ended Travis' paper, the participants had the following exchange:

01 T: okay that was three

02 J: ah it was number seven

03 D: i skipped=

04 T: =A::H O:kay

05 D: four through whatever

06 T: okay

(3.8)

07 D: i guess we'll go on to the second essay done by Julie

Monitoring consisted of a special type of informing that focused on the procedures that were followed in the group work, and thus should be of special interest to anyone curious about who leads the group discussions. In most of the first third of this conversation, Dave led the discussion by either directly reading or paraphrasing the revision sheet questions. (Most of the reading scores in this study consisted of questions being read from the revision sheets, though on occasion someone quoted a few words of text from a student's paper.) In the exchange quoted above, the group members attempted to clarify what question they had just finished. Dave admitted he skipped certain questions, and when no one indicated that they wanted to cover those questions (indicated by a long verbal pause), Dave announced the next paper (by addressing the tape recorder directly. Unlike the other groups, this one never seemed to "forget" that they are being monitored). It is interesting to note that Dave maintained his "authority" by reading the questions off of the revision sheet more often than the other participants, though he began to trade this role with Julie after her paper was begun. Travis read only two questions during the entire discussion.

Off-topic talk. Casual conversation in this group differed from the others in that it was engaged in about evenly by all of the students. In other groups, the off-topic conversation was led primarily by one speaker. The reason may reside in the unusual level of comfort that these particular students reported that they felt with one another. It

is possible that the ease these individuals felt with one another made off-topic talk unnecessary. In the other groups (and most notably in Group 2) off-topic talk may have served to allow the students to find common ground or to "repair" the group and recover from uncomfortable moments when the sub world seemed to be in some danger of breaking down. Whether or not such talk is some way relational to the formation of the sub world is beyond the scope of this study, and would probably be very difficult to estimate with such a limited number of participants. It may be that the occurrence of this type of talk may have more to do with personality than with interaction. However, I found it very interesting that this group, the one that engaged in the greatest amount of role-sharing and the least conflict, participated in the most evenly-distributed as well as the smallest amount of "small talk."

Group 2

General comments. Group 2's conversation contained several interesting features. Thomas attempted to assert himself as the group's leader almost immediately, and would probably have dispensed of the revision sheet altogether had it not been for Halley, who did not seem impressed with his leadership at all, and struggled to return to it. Halley was this study's most reluctant group participant. Having written about values generally instead of where she got her main values, she came into the group with a paper that she declared that she did not intend to use (because her instructor had told her that it did not match the assignment requirements, apparently minutes before class began). Moments of tug-o-war ensued between Halley and Thomas as she struggled to follow the revision sheet and he attempted to lead the group in a more independent direction. Frank was a more passive participant, though he eventually fell in line behind Thomas. He expressed

in his postrevision interview that he thought that Thomas knew what he was doing, and resented Halley's attempts to redirect the group.

Assessment. The second group revealed two participants functioning as critics. Thomas provided negative and positive assessments almost equally, whereas Frank offered almost twice as many suggestions for revision changes as he did endorsements of what the author did well. Halley also offered about two-thirds more negative assessments than positive comments, though her level of response was so much lower than the others that she appeared to be playing a separate role. While she seemed somewhat passive in this group (in terms of contributing fewer IUs), her brand of passivity was different from others who said relatively little. She made her opposition to the entire business of peer feedback plainly clear–directly, in her interviews, and indirectly in her aloof response to her peers.

Thomas was quick to sprinkle his comments with short positive assessments, often giving short, positive responses to questions on the revision guide and informing the writer briefly that he/she did something well. When he did provide a critical comment, he did not always lead into it by making a positive comment first, following the pattern first discussed in relation to Group 1. He prepared for his comment by summarizing the part of the paper he wished to comment on:

01 T: you gave examples earlier your parents uh you said your mother
02 and your father (0.4) went off on both of them (0.4) uh >if you're
03 gonna go ahead and uh< establish that precedent like your mother
04 did this for responsibility your father did this towards responsibility
05 (0.1) you might as well continue it (0.1) by saying your stepmother

06 did uh your mo::m (1.1) added and contributed in this way for uh

07 (1.5) uh saving money (0.2) and your father did this=

08 F: =#right# (2.6) you might wanna think about doin that on the uh

09 (1.0) (the) last paragraph too

In this segment of talk, Thomas offered Halley some revision advice. In order to prepare for his comment, he first summarized the section of the paper that he was talking about, and then offered his specific criticism. Thomas' pattern of making a criticism differed slightly from that which was identified in Group I. To this he added a summary of what he has just praised before making his critical comment:

Praise
↓
Summary
↓
Criticism
↓
Explanation

In this instance, praise did not come immediately before this critical comment, though Thomas did pepper frequent instances of praise throughout his contributions to the discussion. Summary was not coded as such, but as Explanation (the case here) or Reading (if quoting directly from the student's paper). The point is that some form of summary or praise, and sometimes both, was used to "set up" for the critical comment (Negative Assessment) that would follow. Both seem to be tactics that the critic was using to prepare the writer to accept what he or she had to say. In the case of praise (which was more common), the critic may have been hoping to "soften the blow." This would seem to point out the inherent tension that exists in making a critical comment, especially to someone the critic does not know well. Summary was apparently used to

provide evidence, and probably for purposes of clarity, so that the writer would be certain to know what the critic was talking about. Thomas, who seemed especially sensitive to how others felt about what he is saying, was inclined to use both methods, sometimes in combination.

It is interesting to note that he didn't lead in to his criticism with a positive comment first, though he peppered his utterances with short compliments throughout the discussion. When Thomas did make a critical comment, it is usually a turn at talk that was lengthier than those generated by most of the other participants in this study. Though I did not calculate an average number of idea units for each turn at talk, Thomas's utterances are frequently twice the length of the other participants' utterances. This had the effect of equalizing his No Revision Change and Revision Change assessment scores. Though his statements of praise were made much more frequently, they tend to take the form of short compliments. Though his criticisms were few, they tended to be significantly longer utterances. Note also that Frank confirmed Thomas's assessment, adding his own suggestions regarding Halley's conclusion.

Uptake. What followed Frank's assessment in the above excerpt was a lack of uptake. By "uptake" I mean that the person to whom the utterance is directed engages the speaker, and gives a response back. (This is what Conversation Analysis refers to as the second pair part of an adjacency pair construction.) This response (or lack thereof) was rather typical of Halley. The failure to respond to a first pair part adjacency pair construction was, effectively, a "conversation stopper." Everyone has experienced this type of conversational failure at one time or another. It creates an uncomfortable social situation because the receiver of the utterance fails to respond, possibly out of refusal, and

possibly out of social discomfort and not knowing what to say. Though it is impossible to know what Halley's reasons were for failing to respond, her comments in her pre and postrevision interviews suggest that both forces may have been at play, since she identified herself as a "loner" of sorts as well as reported her dislike of peer feedback.

One possible response to the lack of uptake was to turn to the revision sheet and move on to the next question. This is what occurred in several other situations in this study. Frank used a different tactic below. He responded to this silence by suggesting a possible addition:

01 F: >no i'm sorry< your second (value) but (0.1) but the last value you talk
02 about #i donno# you know a small battle with your father or somethin-
03 (# #) y'know=
04 T: (h-h-h) ((CLEARS THROAT))
05 H: =#mm hm#
06 F: just somethin (for you to think about)
07 T: (#yeah#) (1.4) all right ((COUGHS)) (5.8) this is the point of the
08 morning where i wish i had to:ns of caffeine

Halley gave only the mildest confirmation that Frank has said anything at all (line 05), and he followed up, almost apologetically, in line 06. His comment here seemed almost intended to soften his prior critique. This was far from the more congenial, active discussions that occurred with Group 1. It would seem evident that Halley's lack of interest in anything her peers had to say was making the formation of a common social purpose extremely difficult here. The two long pauses in line 07 seemed even more indicative of the level of discomfort the participants were feeling at this moment. It was

finally Thomas who seemed to be attempting to release the conversational stoppage, the social tension caused partially by Halley's reluctance to respond, by making a humorous off-topic comment.

The "all right" in line 07 was coded as monitoring, and was possibly an attempt by Thomas to declare an end to that issue and begin a new one, but led to a fairly long segment of off-topic talk. This issue by itself is interesting, because off-topic talk is rarely addressed in relation to revision group conversations. When it has been coded, it has usually been mentioned that it occurs infrequently, noting that most students stay on task. My observations here have led me to intuit that it may, in certain situations like this one, actually contribute an important function. When talk "fails," as it seems to have in this instance, it may serve to re-engage the student's in talk, and bring them closer together in a social sense. Later in the analysis of this group's conversation, I examine an unusual (and rather lengthy) instance of off-topic talk that appears to serve this purpose. I believe that in many instances, off-topic talk can be crucial, because it allows students to discover what they have in common, and it can also allow individuals to recover from uncomfortable moments when the sense of community and common purpose appears to be in danger. In this way, off-topic talk may actually be a leadership quality. It may allow the apparent leader to bring a fracturing sub world into closer union. Of course, in a more "leaderless" context such as that created by Group 1, it can help cement the feeling that the students have a common identity and purpose.

Monitoring. This category serves a leadership function within the group. It is a method by which a group attends to "rules," watches time, discusses teacher instructions, and refers to the revision sheet. Since reading was not coded separately for quoting from

student papers (which was relatively rare) and reading from the revision sheet (which was common), some items coded as Reading could, in retrospect, have been coded as a type of monitoring. Since Monitoring is a leadership function, and since Thomas has made no secret of the fact that he fancies himself a leader, then it should be no surprise that he (who does a great deal of speaking anyway) quoted frequently from the revision guide. The passage that follows demonstrated something that occurred to some degree in all groups, though the effect is perhaps more pronounced here. Overwhelmed by a long list of questions and limited time, the group chose to skip over several questions. Here Thomas read a question, and made an "executive decision" to move on:

01 T : ((READS)) find the area of the essay that might (1.0) that needs (0.1) uh::
02 the most work (0.1) and write (out) how it could be better (0.7) i think the
03 only piece of (the) paper that needs uh work is the last paper uh the last
04 piece of paper where he's- where he gave a >really< good idea (0.7) write
05 an example of an argument that you should pick (0.6) a battle that you
06 might pick instead of like the ones that you say:: (0.3)
07 H: #yeah#
08 T: let's walk away from this one (0.1) it's not worth arguing (0.7)

The most interesting feature of this brief exchange (with only the mildest Confirmation from Halley) was the tension between the authority of the teacher, represented by the revision sheet, and the authority of the group, spoken for by Thomas. The revision sheet continuously emerged in all of the groups to keep the conversations on topic. One effect seemed to be causing the discourse to exist in short bursts, or blocks. When one block no longer generated discussion, then the group moved along to the next topic. However,

Thomas was especially adamant about expressing his authority over that of the revision sheet at times. In the previous excerpt, he decided for the group to avoid a question (line 08). When no one raised an objection, Thomas moved off to the next question. But this was not the only place that the group deviated from the revision instructions. During the discussion of his paper, Frank objected to one of the revision sheet questions:

01 F: it might [take a little [while to go find th[ose
02 T: [>but< [>yet< [y'see yeah i'm gonna go
03 ahead and move it /NUMBER THIRTEEN/ be stricken from the record
04 because it just
05 F: yeah we're gonna pass on that one
06 T: yeah it's (0.6) i'm gonna- it's you're gonna be hard pressed to [fi:nd it
07 F: [if we
08 had an hour or so to sit here and do this but

Thomas appeared to defend the revision guide's intentions (if an inanimate object can have intentions) momentarily, but confirmed Frank's statement (line 01), reinforcing his statement with explanation (line 06). This is a moment of negotiation, when two members of the group had different Interpretants in mind regarding the best procedure to follow. The negotiation was very brief, and Thomas accepted Frank's decision. Authority, then, appeared to be shared, primarily between Thomas and Frank, though admittedly Thomas made the greatest number of statements that might be thought of as "directive" in a more traditional sense of a leader. Frank added Monitoring statements as suggestions that Thomas then conceded to. When Halley made Monitoring statements, she did so by asking questions or making brief announcements as a prelude to what she

had to say. It is worth noting that unlike the others, she added some of her own questions to the conversation, rather than relying on the revision sheet as a crutch, as the other two members of her group seemed to do.

While she was willing to make occasional comments about the work of others, at no time does Halley seem terribly interested in what the other members of her group have to say. While her paper was being discussed, most of her statements were simple confirmations, of the "yeah" and "uh-huh" ilk. What she did contribute was a particular brand of explaining that the other participants displayed infrequently. She would make occasional references to the teacher, to her prior experience in classes, and even teacher expectations in a more general sense. Though some other students did make comments of this sort, they were rare. This may be due to Halley's mistrust of her peers as sources of sound advice, and her desire to find authority in more traditional sources. The result is that she reached out beyond the group context, and toward a sub world she was more comfortable with–the top-down authority represented by the teacher, and the educational institution that he represents. She seems to have been reaching not just for one particular teacher and his school, but for the idea of the educational institution in general. It is worth noting that during her postrevision interview she felt that only her teacher, who had the education, had the proper authority to judge her paper. So, Halley functioned as an archive that reached beyond the limits of the immediate group and into the larger context of the classroom and the information she had received from the teacher and the textbook.

Off-topic talk. This conversational function, within CL groups, can help build or maintain group identity. Group 2 was one of the most interesting from this perspective because it, at times, appeared to be struggling to maintain its unified purpose. Halley's

rather jaded attitude at times threatened the group's unity when she rather bluntly rejected revision advice. At one point Thomas suggested that Halley make an addition to her paper comparing her parents to super heroes. He suggested the following rewrite:

01 T: >you know< my mom and dad (0.3) superman and wonder woman >who
02 knows< (1.0) just have fun with it
03 F: #(yeah)#
(1.9)
04 T: i tend to get ah ridiculous ⌐in my papers=
05 H: i don- └yeah =i don't do !fun that much!
06 F: (h-h-h)
(1.2)
07 T: yeah i tend to-=
08 H: =my my-=
09 T: =if you've read mine i tend to get- (0.2) i tend to start out with something
10 like #>y'know<# my my parents are meticulous masterpieces uh or
11 masterpieces of meticulous exactitude (0.1) an uh (0.8) in moral and
12 ethical standards (0.1) <u>who knows</u> (0.1) you know something just- (0.1)
13 something fun that people read and go /^wha::t^/ ⌐(0.1) so they have to
14 keep reading
15 F: └yeah
(0.2)
16 T: y'know they have to figure #out# what in the world i was talking about 17
(0.6) #so#

18 F: (yeah)

(0.6)

19 H: yeah my applied speech teacher last semester:=

20 T: =>mm hm<

(0.9)

21 H: she liked to us::e (1.4) like she always liked to write on my little

22 presentations (0.9) use more pizza::zz (0.5) i'm like (0.4) what the heck is

23 pizzazz (0.4) >and she goes< (0.2) oh that's just you know the feeling of

24 wo::w (0.2) i'm like (0.1) i don't do wo::w (0.6) (h-h-h) i never- (0.6) i've

25 never- (0.1) i don't think i've ever said wo::w in the almost twenty years

26 i've been ali:ve

27 T: (h.h.h)

28 H: (h-h-h)

29 T: peop- teachers do that (0.2) they way ⌐stuff like y'know

30 H: ⌊#(yeah)#

31 T: i want wo:w (0.1) i want pizzazz (0.9) okay pizzazz and wow are abstract

32 terms at best (0.1) give me something i can work with=

33 H: =>YEAH<

This long excerpt represents what was easily one of the most interesting exchanges of talk in the entire study. I have reproduced it in its entirety here so the functions, and their accompanying tensions, can be more readily appreciated.

Three things occurred here. (1) Thomas made a rewriting suggestion, which Halley bluntly rejected. This rejection was followed by silence, and the block effectively

ended. (2) Thomas attempted to restart the talk with a block of apologetic explanation, as if to say, "I write like this. You don't have to. I accept your rejection." (3) Halley, apparently sensing the discomfort, opened a block of off-topic talk that served to repair the rift between the participants and make it possible for the discourse to continue.

This part of the discussion also created one of the most problematic coding dilemmas within this study. Initially, I coded the sequence from line 07 as Off-Topic talk, which it unquestionably is. However, it also contains a complexity of functions within itself, and begged to not be treated so lightly. It is indicative, perhaps more than any other passage, of the important role that off-topic talk can play in "repairing" the rent (or perhaps never woven) social fabric of a new group. The segment began with a rewriting suggestion in which Thomas suggested the rather small addition of the exaggerated image of Halley's parents as super heroes. Frank immediately offered a mild confirmation, and, following a silence (Halley fails to respond to the suggestion in any way), Thomas offered an explanation for his idea ("i tend to get ridiculous in my papers"). Halley rejected his idea ("i don't do !fun that much!"), a statement accentuated with nervous laughter. Thomas followed with further elaboration, almost as if the explanation somehow apologized for the suggestion that Halley seemed to think was inappropriate. Halley followed with an explanation of her own, saying how she rejected the vague suggestions that her speech teacher had made to add "pizzazz" and "wow" to her papers (which may perhaps be in the same category as Thomas' "fun"). Here, then, two separate ideas were offered: "fun" would contribute to this paper, and "fun" would be unacceptable for this paper. In the end, Thomas accepted Halley's refusal. The writer's loud, accentuated "><u>YEAH</u><" would seem to indicate an acceptance of Thomas'

concession. This sort of negotiation is necessary and healthy for any cooperative learning group. In this particular case, the participants were negotiating a disagreement that was strong enough to stop the conversation, at least momentarily. Thomas' concession healed the rift, he dropped the issue, and allowed the group to move forward. Off-topic talk affected that repair. This, of course, was an unsuccessful negotiation with a student who seemed determined to reject the advice of her peers.

One-paper groups. Groups three and four were different from the first two in that they both resulted in only one paper being discussed in each. This was not due to the failure of the participants to bring their drafts, but to the length and complexity of their discussions. (In the postrevision interviews, the students generally had a tendency to blame the long, complex revision sheets provided by their instructor.) In both groups, the writers tended to have low (almost nonexistent) assessment scores, as might be expected, as well as unusually high explanation scores, which might also be expected.

Another aspect of the last two groups is that roles became more fixed and tended not to rotate. Individuals in Group 1 shared role functions, though some members tended to be stronger in some categories than others. Roles also rotated in Group 2, with the members taking turns to play critic (give assessments) and writer (provide explanations for writing in a particular way). In Group 2 the roles did not rotate as much because Thomas asserted himself as leader, Frank was somewhat passive, and Halley played a unique part as dissenter. But in Groups 3 and 4, the roles did not rotate, because the full time was spent discussing only one paper. So in each case, defending writer and dominant critic roles emerged. In Group 3, the third participant shifted roles between monitor and critic, while in Group 4, the third student, Dominique, said very little.

Group 3

In the third group, roles quickly become apparent. Laura appears to have functioned primarily as a monitor, whereas Samantha seems to have taken on the role of the primary critic. Malachai, as the writer, spent most of his time explaining his reasons for writing as he did.

Assessment. Malachai, like Halley, proved to be another "difficult customer" for his group. One of the reasons that so much time may have been spent on his paper is that he also tended to approached peer advice with caution, and like Halley, spent a lot of his time explaining the reasons for that rejection. As he explained in his interviews, Malachai did not reject peer advice out-of-hand, but if it contradicted his own intuitive concept of what was right for the paper, he was not likely to consider it further. Like Frank and Halley, he preferred the advice of the teacher. One possible reason that this group covered only one paper is that this group chose to read their papers out loud. Following the reading of Malachai's paper, Samantha offers praise, followed by a critical comment:

01 S: (#i like it a lot#)

02 M: uh uh (0.6) when i got uh (1.2) ( ) (1.2) ih is=

03 S: well i didn't really (0.8) #think that# there was a clear enough thesis (0.4)

04 there was [but

05 M: [um >um hm<

06 S: i think that it needs to be clearer:: (0.6) it needs to stick out from the rest

07 of the paragraph

08 L: yea::h now which sentence is your thesis

09 M: like the <u>last</u> sentence (0.5) (talkin how) both parties go to church and

10 believe in god for a relationship to last stronger than the couple who

11 doesn't

12 L: #ri::ght#

13 M: i think that's arguable enough (0.1) #so::#

This exchange of talk, which occurred immediately after Malachai's draft was read to the group, set the pattern for the discussion. The author's approach to criticism was guarded, as he indicated it would be in his prerevision interview. But what made this body of assessment even more interesting was its very bold and direct character. This may have been part of the reason that Malachai did not respond warmly to her advice, and why he seemed to characterize her assessments in his postrevision interviews as a form of attack. She whispered a brief statement of praise in line 01, but then proceeded directly into a no-monkey-business criticism of Malachai's thesis. It is also notable that Laura's only significant comment in this exchange (line 08) was a procedural question, a request for information, and thus a monitoring issue. Here there was something of a split in the leadership function within this group. Laura monitored and handled decorum and procedure, whereas Samantha primarily critiqued. Perhaps it may be said that Samantha's rather direct method might be thought of as a "bulldozer approach," a quality she seemed to share to some extent with Teresa in Group 4. (As will be seen shortly, Samantha softened this method later in the group's discussion.) Instead of priming the criticism with praise first, Samantha made her criticisms up-front. Malachai's response is interesting in that he defends his choice. The "so::" at the end of his statement was a recurring structure, almost as if to say, "the discussion is over," and announced that the

speaker was ready to move on to another subject.

Cooperative assessment. An event that rarely occurred in the conversations in this study was a tendency for the two participants critiquing the paper to actively make comments about the same issue. This is somewhat startling, because the purpose of revision groups is for students to make collaborative comments about another person's writing. As a teacher, I have used revision groups for many years, and always imagined two sorts of criticism taking place: (1) one student makes a critical comment, which the group then discusses, or (2) several students, together functioning as critics, build a constructive criticism together, as part of a group effort. This is what I had hoped to find happening in all of the groups. In this study, I have found (1) to happen occasionally, but without much discussion beyond simple confirmations. The following excerpt focuses one of the few situations in which (2) occurred. This was an actual act of negotiation, in which two critics, having slightly different, but not opposing ideas, were able to work together to construct a Social Interpretant. This was valuable not only because the idea was "thrashed out" and the writer had a chance to engage the idea discursively (he does in line 08), but it also may have served to solidify the social bonds within the group, as the less productive off-topic talk seems to have done in other situations. Both assisted in the formation of the group's sub world. One is productive for the student's writing, and the other is not. Generally, one student made a criticism, and the other confirmed the comment with a simple "yeah" or "I agree." On a few occasions they would disagree, and offer a different analysis. But in the following block of talk (I found that "blocks" of the conversations were often marked by verbal pauses, and sometimes brought to an end with a change of subject), both Samantha and Laura participated in the critique and

worked together to construct an idea that did not come from either of them alone, but was built by both of them together in social space.

01 S: the only thing i would say::=

02 M: =mm hm

03 S: is don't use <u>for example</u> (0.1) <u>so muCH</u>

04 M: <u>ye</u>[<u>ah</u>

05 L: [yeah [( )

06 S: [i mea:n (if you want to) then you have to um

(0.8)

07 just kind of say um::

08 M: (just think of more [things)

09 S: [(if you want to but) it's like you use the word <u>nice</u>

10 (0.5) all the time=

11 M: =ye[ah

12 L: [like (you) DID [GOOD ( )

13 S: [yeah ( ) gimme

14 another description !y'know! (0.4) i mean um- (0.5) i guess um i guess

15 >what i'm trying to say< is (0.6) you see he:re there's one he::re=

As these conversations were transcribed, several features emerged as indicators of active, engaged conversation. Overlap (where students talk over or interrupt each other), and a lack of any significant gaps between turns at talk (indicated by the equal [=] sign), indicate an enthusiasm to have one's turn at talk. While all groups experienced these moments, periods when all three participants were actively engaged in the discussion

were rare; on average, one of the participants (sometimes the writer, or the person with the higher Confirmation and Explanation codes) tended to take on a more passive role. In this segment, Samantha offered a criticism ("I don't think you should use 'for example' so much"). Malachai confirmed, and Laura agreed with Samantha's criticism. She elaborated her statement, which Malachai finished with his own informational statement in line 08. What he was doing here was summarizing in general terms the meaning of her comment. Interestingly, after Samantha added another critique ("It's like you use the word 'nice' all the time"), Laura interceded with praise (line 12), as if she sensed discomfort on Malachai's part, or somehow felt the need to "even the load." (Note in Table 8 that Samantha's assessment codes are one-sided, whereas Laura's are more balanced.) Samantha continued this pattern throughout the study by strongly suggesting specific rewrites by offering concrete examples. However, this was a rare example of a situation in which all participants were actively building a verbal text between them.

Laura's assessments. When Laura made a critique, she often leads into it with explanation, and makes a much less forceful statement:

01 L: ((READS)) causes peopl::e (0.7) to:: (1.2) >let's see< rushing into a
02 marriage early (2.0) causes people to:: (1.0) >end in divorce early< (0.1) i
03 donno (0.3) i jst=
04 S: =yeah ┌( )
05 L: └i kinda feel like the two sentences need to be combined=
06 S: =( ) it sounded kind of- it sounded odd to me:
07 M: like i just set it out there

Laura used "softer" language when she made her critiques. Her pattern here was to read (present evidence) and follow with a critique. Her language was less certain and direct: "i donno" (lines 02-03); "i kinda feel like" (line 05); "it sounded kind of–it sounded odd to me" (lines 05-06). This may have been indicative of her uncertainty in terms of putting her criticism in more concrete and less impressionistic terms, and it may also point to the monitoring role that she phased in and out of in this conversation. It is also worth remembering that in her prerevision interview, she noted that she liked to be the individual who maintains an air of good will within a group.

Working together, Samantha and Laura modeled several possible rewrites. And when Samantha did enter another strong critical mode, she followed on the heels of Laura's Explanation, and offered a softer, gentler critique:

01 L: THIS SAYS how can he better use renns (0.1) give at least two examples
02 *of how he can better use em=
03 S: =oh
04 L: that's why i was gettin a little confused (0.2) because-
05 S: well (0.1) he could probably (0.5) you know in that last paragraph (0.3)
06 you could probably make that last conclusion paragraph a little bit longer
07 because (0.5) um: (1.4) um >even though< >even though< the last
08 assignment says you need to say what you wanna (0.5) dis guard discard
09 and what you would keep=
10 M: =uh=
11 S: =you also need to make sure that <you're> (0.5) um #you're# restati:ng
12 (0.7) your intro ^basically^ (0.6) that's wh- >your intro and conclusion<

13 are almost the same paragraphs (0.2) i mean n n not- they're not >but i

14 mean< ┌you have ta have to

15 L: └so:

16 S: <restate that> (0.2) you have to restate i:t

This selection began with Laura reading an instruction from the revision sheet provided by the teacher. This, incidently, was the most common type of Reading code encountered in this study. A smaller number of codings accounted for instances where the students read from the writer's draft, as in the previous paragraph. The "renns" referred to in this discussion (which became a matter requiring discussion in other conversations as well) referred to the textbook the students used, and was an acrostic for the several categories of suitable paragraph contents: reasons, examples, names, numbers, and senses. After Laura noted her confusion over the question, Samantha interceded (she didn't interrupt, since, as the dash indicates, Laura cut off her own utterance). Following this, Samantha seemed less bold with her critique. Her emphasis on the word "probably" (line 05) and her retraction ("i mean n n not–they're not") in line 13 would seem to indicate that at this point in the conversation, she cannot use a bulldozer approach in making her criticisms. In lines 07 and 08, she also seemed less willing to make imperative statements, and paraphrases the revision sheet instructions to back up her critique. (It is also worth noting that her comments were far from smooth here, and accentuated with bursts of quicker speech, emphasized words, slower speech, quieter words, and one word spoken at a higher pitch than those surrounding it, perhaps suggesting that she felt less at ease in making this criticism than that she began with.)

She had revised her approach as the (possibly) self-appointed leader/critic of the

group, and has became more sensitive to Malachai's quiet resistance to criticism. This change in tactic may have been an attempt to repair the Social Interpretant the group was building and to level the playing field. She was modifying her approach because she had become aware of Malachai's resistance. In order to cause him to be more receptive to what she was trying to say, she spoke here with a less authoritative voice. Her concept of the center of authority may have shifted from herself to the group. In the end, Laura seemed to accept Samantha's criticism. At that moment (line 16), when Laura repeated what Samantha had said, Samantha's Interpretant effectively passed into social space. It became appropriated into the social dynamic of the group. (Whether or not Malachai appropriated it into his own mental model is another matter.)

Explanation. The explanation codes for this group were generally typical of the other groups. They involved readers summarizing a section of the paper they were about to comment on, and writers explaining why they made a particular writing decision. However, I would be amiss not to mention Malachai's tendency to deviate from the revision sheet and seek information on his own terms. While other groups focused on a question-and-answer format, basically allowing the revision sheet to structure their conversations, in this group Malachai took a leading role long enough to clarify some issue or seek some particular piece of information. This happened a a few times during their conversation. He was similar to Thomas in this respect, but with a difference. Whereas Thomas seemed to want to have the group take on a life of its own and establish its own authority, Malachai appeared to carefully consider his own needs. He was looking to the group as a potential repository knowledge, of experience beyond his own. Though he indicated in his interviews that he preferred teacher advice to group advice, he

seemed to believe that others may have had information he lacked. In asking his own question, he was effectively pulling private Interpretants out of the mental models of other participants and causing them to enter the social dynamic, and as a result become a part of the group's Social Interpretant. One of the most profound examples follows:

01 M: i have a question (0.1) uh (0.1) when i was at the conference (0.1) said
02 somethin bout (0.8) uh (1.6) #ra::ts# (0.4) uh ^coher::ence^ or >somethin
03 like that< (0.1) said like hintin (0.4) like (you ready) for the sentence to
04 sto:p (0.1) i did that (0.1) did (it) go along pretty goo:d (0.1) did ┌ it
05 ( )- │
05 L: └o:::h
06 yeah (0.1) it went along really ┌smooth yeah ┌ but
07 M: └okay so i │
08 S: └ it wasn't choppy at all
09 (0.4) it ran it ran together #really well#

There were a few moments like this, when the students really took control of their own narratives by actively seeking out criticisms from their fellow students, that I felt were important to their writing efforts. Unfortunately, they occurred so infrequently that I could not justify creating a code expressly for this purpose. In this particular instance, the student's announcement, "I have a question," was coded as monitoring, because it was the moment that the writer wrestled the control of the conversation away from the powerful influence of the revision sheet to address an issue that had been bothering him. In Conversation Analysis, this sort of statement is called a presequence, and announces, effectively, the block of discourse that follows it. After his choppy summary of the

advice that the teacher had given him (his halting speech might indicate that he did not fully comprehend what his instructor had told him), Laura and Samantha finally gather that he is talking about coherence, and provide a Positive Assessment.

Structural considerations. The interesting thing is, at this moment when the writer was actually calling for a critique, the other group members seemed reluctant to do so. While it is certainly possible that the students had no opinion or could not think of a critique on the spot, they may also have been reluctant to provide a critical comment. The reason may lie in a CA preference structure. When the student calls for a critique of his or her own paper, his "preference" may be to receive revision advice regarding something he is uncertain about. On the other hand, the "preference" of the critics may be to disagree, and thus indicate that nothing is wrong with the passage in question. In this case, there may have been be a discrepancy in the mental models that each participant brings with them in relation to their expectations regarding the appropriate response to a call for criticism:

Malachai (author) call for criticism ↓ provide criticism	←CONFLICT→	Samantha and Laura (Critics) call for criticism ↓ avoid criticism

A conflict occurred because of the Interpretants that were associated with the preference structures. As Social Interpretants were formed, as the preference structures were manifested as questions and answers, critiques and explanations within the realm of the social dynamic, the participants' different concepts of what was appropriate or polite in this context may have restrained their ability to give or receive honest, helpful criticism.

This sort of call for assessment was different from the revision guide questions

because it was generated by the author and thus personal. The revision sheet questions had the virtue of coming from the outside, and were insulated from the personal feelings of the participants. They came from the teacher, and as a result carried the weight of his authority as well as that of the idea of the institution he represented.

In another instance, a few moments later, Malachai returned to his "for example" problem he had on page one (discussed above):

01 M: i guess one of the main problems i've had is thinking of another transition
02 where i was=
03 L: =#um hm#=
04 M: =(let's see) for example for like just a buncha times just on the front
05 pa::ge (0.1) well at least one time=
06 S: =yeah yeah (1.2) >i mean< you can use it- y- y- keep it ther::e (0.5) but
07 try to find something on the other page

Here Malachai explained an ongoing problem that had already been established. Samantha responded with a criticism, instead of praise, as she did in the last passage. The above excerpt is different from the previous one because Samantha did provide a criticism. However, in this instance, Malachai did not ask a question that was utterly his own, but summarized an issue he had raised earlier in the conversation–namely, the problem of repetition. By this point, Malachai seems to have accepted that idea. When Samantha agrees with his self-assessment so enthusiastically ("yeah yeah") in line 06, she possibly does so because this was the first sign that he had appropriated one of her criticisms. This was an important moment for this group, because these few seconds of agreement helped build the sub world by giving the participants something in common.

At that moment, they shared something–a Social Interpretant.

Generally, these moments when the student took the reigns of the conversation, so to speak, and set the revision sheet aside were rare. They occurred a few times here, and a few times in Group 4, though hardly at all in groups 1 and 2. This tendency to seek out criticism apart from the teacher's specific guidelines, while unquestionably valuable, may in part indicate why groups 3 and 4 only finished critiquing one essay.

Monitoring. Aside from Off-Topic Talk, which occurred characteristically toward the end of the conversations as it did with the first three groups, Monitoring is the last issue yet to be discussed. (To discuss the single block of Off-Topic Talk that ended this conversation would be redundant at this point. Suffice it to say that it functioned much as it did for the first two groups, consisting of the participants making small talk and discovering what they had in common.)

As with the previous groups, Monitoring in this group consisted primarily of brief utterances in which students announced or suggested a course of action, made reference to the "rules" as they understood them, made reference to the time or the whereabouts of the teacher, and indications of "where they were" on the revision sheet or in the paper being discussed. The following passage typifies the students negotiating the "rules" as they understand them:

01 L: ((READS)) how does the thesis reflect an appropriate response to the
02 assignment (1.0) if it strays tell ho::w
(1.4)
03 M: am i spose to be answering this too
04 S: well we're gonna=

05 M: =okay=

06 S: =we're gonna ┌write on hers for yours and mine for

07 L: └we're gonna write on our own but yeah

08 S: (0.2) whatever (0.1) you know (0.1) we'll use em all: but

(4.3)

09 L: well (0.2) the assignment was:: >talkin about< va::lues and

10 S: and relationships

11 L: and relationships

12 S: right and it says describe what relationship values (0.3) you have obtained

13 from your parents and grandparents

This was an instance of the "rules" being imposed from the outside. The students were discussing what they were "supposed to do." Laura began by reading the first question from the revision sheet, and following a pause of silence, Malachai asked a procedural question. Samantha and Laura appeared to give two competing answers. Samantha, in her rather commanding fashion, appeared to issue an edict in line 06, proposing that a reader write the answer on her sheet for a writer, and vice-versa. Laura seemed to prefer, with her interjection in line 07, that each writer use their own sheet. In line 08, Samantha may be "giving in," and it seems that, following a lengthy silence, that the matter was unresolved (though soon after Laura took on the role of scribe and began to write the answers for the group). The silence was only broken when Laura changed the subject by paraphrasing the requirements of the assignment. Samantha's completion of Laura's paraphrase, and especially Laura's confirmation, would seem indicate a group acceptance of the change of subject, a move which was "set in stone" when Samantha returned to the

looming authority of the revision sheet.

This was a very interesting moment for this group. The members had to negotiate a procedure before they could proceed with the revision guide, and this indicated an interesting shift in their discourse. Unlike other groups, which began with the revision sheet right away (Group 2 is a prime example), this group engaged in an open critique for a few minutes before beginning to proceed with the revision guide-led discussion. (This may yet be another element that caused this group to complete discussing only one paper). At that point, the group was operating "on its own authority," if only for a moment. However, after this point, as each point of discussion ended (as the students finished responding to the revision sheet's question), they returned to the revision sheet time and time again to structure their discourse.

In another selection of text coded partly for Monitoring, Samantha took on her characteristically authoritative stance as she attempted to convince Malachai to adopt a procedure of reading his draft out loud, seemingly in an attempt to convince him that her critique was a worthy one:

01 S: =>i tried to underline them ((MISTAKES OF REPETITION)) when i
02 found them< (1.5) >bt< (1.1) maybe like (0.3) read it out lou::d
03 L: you know when we read it out loud and you started to find things
04 (0.2) [>so when you let other people read it out loud<
05 M: [uh huh
06 L: you can (you know) /umm hmmm/ (0.3) you know i uh i must be
07 um um ( )
08 S: NO:: um:: (read) ( ) pa::ragraphs

09 L: READ IT read it with another:: (0.2) >try th stick another

10 word in there< ⌜while reading it out lo::ud

11 M: ⌞kay

(0.5)

12 S: and see if you can fi::nd (0.2) um like als- >>you can say<< <al:so he

13 taught us> (0.5) like umm (0.1) i'm on the second (0.4) pa::ge=

14 M: =uhhuh

(1.4)

15 S: somewhere around ther:e

16 M: i see=

17 S: =says ((READS)) #>my father often taught (taught)# my

18 brother and i values< he was also taught (0.4) <he also taught us::> (0.4)

19 insteada for exampl::e

20 M: allright

(0.7)

21 S: I'm #jst# (2.3) #um#

(2.3)

22 L: okay do you want to go ahead and start looking at this shee:t

This excerpt consisted of blocks, divided by pause after line 11. In the first block, Samantha attempted to convince Malachai that he needed to vary his word choices by suggesting the technique of reading his paper out loud to himself. This follows Samantha's first, and much more direct criticism to which he didn't respond beyond some requisite confirmations. This time, however, Laura joined in. When this elicited no

response, Samantha resorted to reading a selection of his text, and suggested a possible replacement. The long pauses after lines 20 and 21 seem indicative of the discomfort that the participants feel, especially regarding Malachai's failure to respond. This lack of uptake can become a conversation-breaker. When the writer failed to respond in either a positive or negative way, the only way to move the conversation forward was to refer to the revision guide for the next topic.

When Malachai failed to respond positively to her critique of his repetition problem, she suggested a procedure for him to follow in looking for replacement words. This passage was interesting to me primarily because (1) she suggested a technique that could be followed outside of the revision session, something rare in this study (a particularly authoritative thing to do), and (2) it represented a shift in her tactics in her effort to convince Malachai that he needed to make a particular revision. This occurred fairly early in the discussion, when Samantha was attempting, in my view, to establish her role as a group leader. This was a role that Malachai did not seem ready to accept. This by itself made it a unique block of text because the speaker was assuming a teacher-like authority. However, Malachai's lack of response did not seem to frustrate her. It is only when Laura (who had remained conspicuously silent during most of the proceedings) asserted her own authority by directing Samantha's attention back to the revision sheet that the first "phase" of the discussion ended and the revision sheet discussion began, suggesting that the first, open discussion was part of Samantha's "plan" for how the group's talk should have been carried out, whereas Laura clearly preferred the question-and-answer structure provided by the revision sheet. It is at this point that Samantha's attempt at leadership appears to have failed, and though she did not recover

that authority, she made several attempts at it in earnest. It quickly became apparent that the real "leader," drifting out of sight in the shadows, was the teacher's authority represented by the revision sheet.

Group 4

General. Another group that managed only to discuss one paper was Group 4. This group shares certain features with Group 3. In both groups, the writers tended not to function as critics but spent most of their time explaining, as might be expected. However, in the latter case the monitoring was a bit more evenly distributed, which perhaps suggests that the participants more evenly shared the authority (or, alternatively, equally struggled to gain control over it). The most interesting feature of this group was the alarmingly high Off-Topic score generated by Troy. This was a feature that Troy shared with Thomas from the second group. Both described themselves as leaders in their prerevision interviews, though the Off-Topic talk performed a very different function here, as I will discuss below.

Monitoring. The Monitoring codes for this group were interesting in that two group members (Dominique and Teresa, the critics) engaged in frequent and lengthy procedural discussions. Whereas the Monitoring codes for groups 1 and 2 revealed fairly even participation by all members hovering around the ten percent level, and Group 3's monitoring was clearly dominated by Laura, here the negotiating took place between the two critics, at twice the level of participation as Troy's. They began by deciding on the procedure they would follow:

01 Tr: i guess we" just go ahead and start with the questions (0.4) and run
02 through em

03 Te: okay

04 Tr: um: (1.2) who wants to write on this one (0.3) >i guess we're supposed to

05 take ┌turns<

06 Te: └>yeah we're supposed to take turns after (each one)< (0.1) you want

07 to go ahead since you started with your name ┌and start writing

08 Do: └#yeah that's cool#

However, soon the process had to be renegotiated:

01 Te: (you're supposed to) write your name at the top beforehand (0.2) like

02 Ty: uh

03 Te: figure out-

04 Ty: are you ^sure^ that's how it's supposed to go

05 Te: >i ^think^< (0.8) he said (0.4) take turns being secretary >by changing

06 secretary< after every answered question

(2.3)

07 Ty: i thought we were just supposed to like she's gonna write on mi:ne ┌and

08 ( )

09 Te: └>we

10 can< that's ┌fine

11 Do: └(┌)

12 Te: └if you all wanna do ┌tha:t

13 Ty: └it doesn't matter

(3.0)

This segment of talk had several interesting features. It was blocked off with two

significant verbal pauses (though both blocks seemed to be a part of the same block of discussion), had an unusual number of overlaps, and was accentuated by more than ususal instances of accelerated speech, elongated syllables, emphasized speech, and pitch raises. The group was in full negotiating mode here, and was spending time trying to determine the "ground rules" before going further. Dominique said relatively little during this exchange, and what she did say was often inaudible. Troy and Teresa seemed to be engaged in an authority struggle as they debated how the mechanics of the revision discussion would proceed. The most notable point was when Troy questioned Teresa's leadership from line 01 (she was giving Dominique an instruction). She responded by invoking the authority of the teacher to reinforce her own. After an uncomfortable pause, Troy asserted his understanding of the procedure. As it turns out, their method was a compromise. They did take turns reading the questions, but they answered only on Troy's sheet, with Dominique functioning as the scribe. (Most of the groups followed this two-part procedure, though the instructor did not give this specific instruction either on the revision day or during the prior session during which the class was observed. The instructor did not recall giving such an instruction in the two weeks of class prior to this revision session, but admitted he could have made a comment out-of-hand.)

The tension that seemed apparent in this group, especially between Troy and Teresa, continued throughout the discussion, perhaps due to the fact that both identified themselves as strong leadership types in their prerevision interviews. Troy took on the role as his own critic (when he is not spending time in long, explanatory soliloquies) to which Teresa responds with praise:

01 Tr: um:: (0.8) *y'know n then (1.0) the story about jst (1.0) >i tell ya what<

02 #dad loves this story about >the sweater< (0.6) he just can't get away

03 from it# (0.6) i hate that story (1.3) UM:: (1.4) >i don't know if i really

04 have a lot of support for the second one<

(2.6)

05 Te: about your hard work (1.0) um >i think< (1.2) you do with (0.1) um:

06 talking about how he built his business up from <you kno:w> (0.5) the

07 back of a massage parlor to what it is now (0.4) he had to work hard for it

08 (1.3) um:

In this particular case, Troy criticized his own writing in line 03 and 04. The beginning of the comment was marked by a 1.4 second pause, and was emphasized with accelerated speech. But after Teresa had taken a few seconds to consider what Troy had said, she first confirmed what part of his thesis he was talking about ("about your hard work"), and disagreed with him by providing praise (" i think you do"), which she felt the need to back up with a few seconds of explanatory speech. Following the excerpt cited above, Troy reemphasized his criticism, and Teresa followed with even more positive assessment/explanation, until Troy finally seemed convinced. I found this exchange both interesting and unique. Generally, students do not make self-criticisms, but leave it to the other students to do for them. This may perhaps indicate that Troy saw himself in a slightly different role than the other students. He seemed to view himself as an active, participating critic rather than as a passive receiver of criticism. Teresa seemed somewhat uncomfortable with the arrangement, as if to say, "wait a minute! I'm the critic here! You're supposed to listen to me!" By the end of the exchange in which Teresa had insisted that Troy's use of the phrase "hard work" was backed up in the body of his paper,

she appeared to have succeeded in asserting her position as critic. She indicated in her follow-up interview her discomfort in the group, and this discomfort may have been due in part to a difference of opinion as to what roles the participants should play.

Such moments can serve the purpose of group cohesion, as did the following discussion of Troy's use of the word "Pops:"

01 Ty: i was debatin there whether to say dad there or pops (0.4) because ⌐i
02 never (0.5) because i never (0.2) y'know i never
03 Te: └(it's
04 cute)
05 Ty: it was never my father or father (0.2) it's just not the relationship i have
06 with him (0.6) and so i kinda wanted that to say somethin about the
07 relationship too
08 Te: pops is cute (0.9) use that (0.1) (0.1) i like that
09 Ty: about pops
10 Te: i like >that one< (2.1) i like that (0.1) straight (0.1) short (0.1) >to the
11 point<

This was notable because it was the most congenial moment in the entire conversation. Troy asked whether he should substitute the word "pops" for "my father." Teresa praised what he had written ("it's cute"). Troy elaborated, and Teresa reinforced her praise with speech punctuated with bursts of accelerated speech and emphasized words. These moments were rare, however.

Troy accepted ego-boosting praise well, but he had a tendency to wander far off the topic by telling personal stories that the other participants (according to their

postrevision interviews) found unnecessary and perhaps even a bit tiring. In what follows, Teresa failed to respond to his off-topic explanations, and attempted to direct the conversation back toward her criticisms:

01 Te: so if you're- (0.2) if you're gonna talk about your dad come up with
02 something about [him (0.5) make it mor::e=
03 Ty: [( )
04 Ty: =my mom could throw the hardest pass in football=
06 Te: =(!!!)=
07 Ty: =she could throw a ten yard out (0.6) that could bust a:::
(1.3)
08 Te: !uhhh!
(0.9)
09 Ty: she has to throw one of the smaller footballs, though because her hands
10 are so tiny (0.3) >yeah<
11 Te: oh:: (0.8) ah (0.2) (I think) (0.4) to make it more unified in
12 the (0.4) intro:: (0.5) come up with an example and then kinda refer
13 back to that once in a while (1.0) maybe ( )

This sequence occurred a number of times within Group 4's conversation. It was unique from the other groups in the study in that the off-topic conversation tended to occur primarily in a single block toward the end of the group discussions. However, that was not the case here. Troy frequently responded to Teresa's criticisms by digressing into personal storytelling that, at least initially, seemed only marginally related to the revision session conversation. This could be compared to the other groups (and other instances

within this group) in which such criticisms resulted in explanations or confirmations rather than digressions. In this instance, as in others, Teresa responded only marginally to Troy's digression, and seemed to want to discourage it. One of the signs of her disinterest in his personal stories can be seen in line 11, where she continued her utterance from line 01, almost as if Troy had said nothing at all.

The difficulty may not be entirely Troy's, however. A few moments later, Teresa "came on strong" with her criticisms (perhaps a variant of the "bulldozer approach" apparent in Group 3's discussion), and Troy said very little, and when he did finally speak, his explanation took on a more defensive tone:

01 Te: i think to make that one unifi:ed wouldn't you like to come up with the::
02 (1.2) just the detail for the intro
03 Ty: #mm hm#
(0.4)
04 Te: *then like in the conclusion you cn (0.7) tie back into the intro (0.3)
05 >just like< (0.5) sum it up sort of (0.4) you know what I'm talkin about
06 (1.2) >jst kinda refer ┌back< ( )
07 Ty: └yeah but i can't do that with this paragraph

This was fairly representative of one of several intense moments between Teresa and Troy in which Teresa was overzealous with her critique and Troy appeared equally determined to reject it. There was more stress in Teresa's voice than in Troy's. She emphasized more words, and utilized accelerated speech, rising intonation, and abbreviated words. This incident demonstrated the danger of bringing two strong personalities together. Both indicated in their prerevision interviews that they were

strong-willed people who considered themselves leaders, and in this exchange of talk, as elsewhere in their conversation, these two participants seemed almost engaged in a kind of struggle for a leadership role in the group. Perceiving herself as a leader-critic, perhaps Teresa expected Troy to "shut up and listen," while Troy perhaps desired to direct her comments toward his concerns.

Conversation Analysis

The general trends emerging from the foregoing analysis become even more clear once the excerpts of the conversational transcripts quoted above were subjected to a structural evaluation utilizing the Conversation Analytic method. Conversation Analysis (CA) is especially useful for the purposes of this study because it affords a look at the structures of the participants' utterances in comparison with the functions that have already been examined. CA contains a variety of analytical instruments in its tool box. One of those, the Jeffersonian annotation system (which users such as myself modify to suit the needs of their analyses), with its information-rich transcription symbols, has already been taken advantage of in the previous section. Indicators such as pitch changes, faster/slower speech, elongated syllables, exhales, laughing speech, emphasized words, louder and softer speech, and overlaps can provide clues to the nature of the conversation. Though this tool is by no means considered a major player in the analysis, it has proven useful in the analysis of the function codes. Two other characteristics of the CA method, adjacency pair constructions and preference structures, will be used to evaluate the passages that are cited below. Generally, (1) adjacency pair parts can serve dual functions, though this is not always so; (2) and as a result, preference structures sometimes overlap; (3) preference structures of interest in these conversations include call

for assessment/denial, assessment/agreement, assessment/explanation; explanation/confirmation (4) and finally, uptake plays an important role in the "flow" of the conversation.

Physical Features. By "physical features," I refer to the elements of student conversations that frequently are not recorded when tapes are transcribed. Within the talks involved in this study, I often found that such features were indicators of "hot spots" in the conversations when the students became energetic and involved in what they were saying rather than passive. Though it is not my purpose to analyze such physical features and indicate what each may possibly mean, I shall mention those which occurred more frequently and served to draw my attention to particular moments in the tape. Those indicators included overlapping speech, cut-offs, verbal pauses, lack of a pause between utterances, accelerated speech, slowed speech, softer speech, and emphasized speech. The examples were drawn from those excerpts already cited in the foregoing section.

Overlapping speech. This feature occurred frequently. It can be contrasted to verbal pauses, which occurred most often when someone did not take their turn at talk. Consider the following instance:

01 S: the only thing i would say::=

02 M: =mm hm

03 S: is don't use for example (0.1) so muCH

04 M: ye ah

05 L: yeah ( )

06 S: i mea:n (if you want to) then you have to um

07 (0.8) just kind of say um::

08 M: (just think of more [things)

09 S: [(if you want to but) it's like you use the word nice

10 (0.5) all the time=

11 M: =ye [ah

12 L: [like (you) DID [GOOD ( )

13 S: [yeah ( ) gimme

14 another description !y'know! (0.4) i mean um- (0.5) i guess um i guess

15 >what i'm trying to say< is (0.6) you see he:re there's one he::re=

This was a rather typical occurrence within the conversations that took place in this study. The overlaps, or utterances that interrupted the previous speaker's utterance, occurred most frequently when a writer was listening to a reader's criticism. They would interrupt momentarily to confirm what the critic was saying, with an "um hm" or "yeah." Sometimes, however, the writer would interrupt with an explanation. This is interesting because it demonstrates disagreement in a conversation analytical sense. When a critic explains her critique, the most common response is to confirm the explanation, making it the apparent "preferred" response. But when a reader intercedes with an explanation of her own, she is making a "dispreferred" response, and would appear to disagree with the critic.

In the broader picture of the sub world that I am discussing here, I took such responses as a moment of negotiation. When the speakers remained within expected roles and provided expected answers, the social "rules" of the situation are clear to the participants (if not articulated). Once disagreement occurs, the social context is out of balance. Balance can only be reached once the parties either agree, or agree to disagree,

and move on. This was the situation with the excerpt from Group 2 discussed earlier. This moment in the conversation was heavy with overlaps as well. When Halley refused to accept Thomas' criticisms, an unbalanced situation occurred. Only when they agreed to disagree and move on, was the social balance restored.

Cut-offs. Participants in this study also cut one another off on occasion. This is different from overlapping speech in the respect that one person's utterance overpowers that of the prior speaker. In this situation, the speakers are competing for a turn at talk. In the more aggressive moments of this type, one speaker may raise her voice in order to assert her turn at talk. I observed cut-offs of two types. In one situation, a person may suddenly stop speaking in mid-sentence, and have their turn "taken over" by another speaker. It is possible that they cut themselves off, or that they are cut off by a nonverbal gesture by one of the participants. Obviously, such a gesture would not be recorded on tape. However, it was more common to witness an overlap in which one speaker overpowered another:

08 S: NO:: um:: ┌(read) ( ) pa::ragraphs
09 L: └READ IT read it with another:: (0.2) >try th stick another
10 word in there< while reading it out lo::ud

In this situation, two critics were competing to make similar criticisms to the author. The second critic overpowered the first by speaking loudly. The first speaker ended her utterance, and lets the second speaker "take over" the utterance. While this may appear rude in some sense, it is interesting from a semiotic standpoint. Here two speakers were working together to form a group Interpretant. Both would seem to share similar thoughts regarding what the writer should do. It is possible that the second speaker

wished to clarify the first speaker's utterance. Together, they construct a single sentence for the reader. This is a Social Interpretant is formed into a sign by two individuals–and articulated idea manifested in social space.

Verbal pauses. Frequently what a speaker says is not as interesting as what goes unsaid. In this study, many verbal pauses were noted, most frequently as a failure to respond to a first pair part in conversation. This may indicate a rejection of what is said, a failure to understand, or simply a lack of anything else to say. Verbal pauses, timed in tenths of a second, made up an alarmingly significant portion of the time spent in these groups. Consider the following example:

01 Tr: um:: (0.8) *y'know n then (1.0) the story about jst (1.0) >i tell ya what<

02 #dad loves this story about >the sweater< (0.6) he just can't get away

03 from it# (0.6) i hate that story (1.3) UM:: (1.4) >i don't know if i really

04 have a lot of support for the second one<

(2.6)

05 Te: about your hard work (1.0) um >i think<

In this case, the speaker, Troy, was engaging in an explanation regarding a point he included in his paper. He elaborated on the point with a bit of off-topic explanation. After a pause of 1.3 seconds with no uptake on Teresa's part, Troy attempted to return to the topic. She failed to respond for 2.6 seconds. When she did respond, she responded to his first pair part, "i don't know if i really have a lot of support for the second one." This pause did not appear to be a rejection of his first pair part. Teresa was presumably concentrating on his paper. But such a "work pause" may create some level of discomfort, since she failed to respond. I suspect that it may be our natural tendency to

expect a response to a first pair part within one second. In general, a review of the conversational transcripts revealed that a second turn at talk usually came within one second. Longer pauses might be considered a break in the conversational "flow."

The following segment demonstrates a "break" in the conversation:

06 S: =we're gonna [write on hers for yours and mine for

07 L: [we're gonna write on our own but yeah

08 S: (0.2) whatever (0.1) you know (0.1) we'll use em all: but

(4.3)

09 L: well (0.2) the assignment was:: >talkin about< va::lues and

10 S: and relationships

Here, the participants were engaging in conversation primarily coded as Monitoring. As Samantha and Laura negotiated the procedures they would follow in filling out the revision guide, they seemed to disagree over the procedures that they should follow. While this moment has already been discussed, it is worth noting that after Samantha suggested one procedure (the critics should keep fill out the revision sheet), Laura suggested an alternative. Samantha appeared to give in to Laura's suggestion, and then cut off her statement. After an uncomfortable silence, Laura offered a new first pair part. This silence resulted from a moment of discomfort in the conversation. When Laura made a new utterance, she changed the topic, and moved the talk forward on the task at hand. I believe, then, that silence can be taken to have semiotic content. A failure to give an expected response to a first pair part functions as a either a rejection of what was said or a misunderstanding of what was said.

In any event, it is often the endpoint of discussion of a number of topics, and

serves as a signal that the discussion must move on to another point. As has already been pointed out, while such utterances may be made by the students (as with Laura's utterance above), in many cases the participants referred back to the revision guide, and simply read the next question on the sheet. The fact that long pauses were often followed by a return to the revision sheet helps illustrate the importance of the sheet in keeping the groups focused and on task (though it appears to have frustrated a number of the students as well by heavily structuring their conversations).

Accelerated speech. This type of talk occurred when participants seemed to be attempting to emphasize what they were saying. Many times, they were trying to "cut in" or may have had the habit of using the same phrase over and over as a repetitive element in their speech ("you know," for example). In some cases, however, such utterances occurred when a writer disagreed with their utterance, or seemed to be approaching their suggestion with caution. Consider the following example:

13 S: [yeah ( ) gimme

14 another description !y'know! (0.4) i mean um- (0.5) i guess um i guess

15 >what i'm trying to say< is (0.6) you see he:re there's one he::re=

In this utterance, which also came from Group 3's transcript, Samantha and Laura were trying to convince Malachai, who, by his own admission, was reluctant to take peer advice. Samantha's attempt to add emphasis occurred to some degree in all of the groups. It is possible that this is an example of a repeated phrase of the type that occurred throughout the transcripts. However, in a number of instances, accelerated speech followed a rejection of advice that had already been offered.

Accelerated speech also occurred when participants made apologies or self-

corrections:

01 F: >no i'm sorry< your second (value) but (0.1) but the last value you talk

02 about #i donno# you know a small battle with your father or somethin-

This is a form of emphasis that is less common in this study, and appears to have little bearing on how advice is given or taken. But it is a type of emphasized speech that demonstrates the rather editorial nature of faster speech. In many cases, accelerated speech seems to come in to perform some type of social function. To apologize, to correct and utterance, or emphasize something that is about to be said. The accelerated voice does not appear to make many critical comments (slower, quieter speech may perform this function), but works to support or ad more emphasis to the what is being said in a constructive fashion. It may be a social monitor that lurks in the background, appearing only when some form of apology or reassurance is necessary.

Slower speech. I found slower speech to be more often associated with making explanations or giving advice. In the following segment from Group 3, Samantha and Laura were trying to convince Malachai that he needed to make revisions. Notice that certain words were emphasized and "drawn out" as Samantha tried to drive her point home:

11 S: =you also need to make sure that <you're> (0.5) um #you're# restati:ng

12 (0.7) your intro ^basically^ (0.6) that's wh- >your intro and conclusion<

13 are almost the same paragraphs (0.2) i mean n n not- they're not >but i

14 mean< [you have ta have to

15 L: [so:

16 S: <restate that> (0.2) you have to restate i:t

This particular excerpt demonstrates how a number of different forms of emphasis might be used in daily speech. I took the presence of so many variations in speech patterns as an indication that this was a "hot spot"–a moment when the speakers were under stress, and having difficulty communicating. Samantha was trying to relate and idea that Malachai does not seem to understand. Unlike Halley, he was not rejecting what Samantha was saying outright, but was trying hard to understand her criticism so that he could take it into account later. Generally, quicker speech is punctuated speech. It is more certain speech, and contrasts with slower speech, which probably serves as an indicator of uncertainty, and a desire to communicate more carefully.

Softer speech. Both slower and softer speech seemed to occur in similar contexts. Softer speech appeared to be a defensive posture in some cases, and sometimes served an explanatory function. It may be a signal of disagreement, but instead of disagreeing outright, the speaker offers an explanation, hoping that the listener will accept their explanation. The following segment from Group 2's discussion contains several examples:

01 T: >you know< my mom and dad (0.3) superman and wonder woman >who
02 knows< (1.0) just have fun with it
03 F: #(yeah)#
(1.9)
04 T: i tend to get ah ridiculous ⌜in my papers=
05 H: i don- ⌞yeah =i don't do !fun that much!

Initially, Thomas invoked a repeated, habitual phrase with "you know," marked by accelerated speech. He then made a revision suggestion that Halley does not respond

positively to. She "marked" her reluctance to accept his criticism (or at least her lack of enthusiasm) with a soft, barely audible confirmation of his remark. Her failure to take up what Thomas had said resulted in a silence of almost two seconds, and, apparently sensing her rejection of what he had said, tried to jump-start the conversation by offering an explanation. Having sensed Halley's rejection, he implicitly "apologized" for making an unpopular suggestion with the statement, "I tend to get ridiculous in my papers." Halley offered her own explanation for her understood, but unarticulated, rejection of what Thomas had said. Overall, quieter speech appeared to function to indicate a discomfort, if not disagreement, of a criticism or comment that was just made. Most often, those utterances probably functioned as "listening markers." I mean that by saying "yeah" repeatedly as someone offered a criticism is tantamount to saying, "go on, I'm listening." At other moments, as was the case with the excerpt from Group 2 above, it marked an implicit rejection of what the other speaker had said. In this case it created such a level of discomfort that both speakers felt the need to "repair" the context by offering explanations.

Emphasized speech. Various kinds of speech add emphasis to what the speaker is attempting to say. Slower speech, louder speech (which occurred very rarely), raising and lowering of pitch all add emphasis to what the speaker has to say. Another form that occurred with a reasonable amount of frequency is emphasized speech. For lack of a better word, this is speech that was not slower, louder, or higher or lower in pitch than the surrounding speech, but yet the speaker placed an audible emphasis on the word or phrase being spoken. Such speech, indicated by underlining in the transcript, also occurred when the speaker was offering a criticism or explanation, and seemed to be working hard

at "driving her point home."

Since I have already tried to address the preference structures in the main section of this analysis, I will not repeat that analysis here. As this research was carried out and the data evaluated, it became apparent that the Conversation Analysis and conventional coding aspects of this study were intertwined, and could not be treated separately without a great deal of repetition. What I have tried to accomplish in this section is an awareness of the physical features that occurred in the conversations, and suggest how those features aided in identifying hot spots in the transcripts. The physical features of the talk also made it easier to identify starting and stopping points within the flow of the conversation. Such elements as pauses, accelerated speech, and emphasized speech helped indicate where turns at talk began and ended, and movements of the text, seeming to be microtexts within themselves, came to an end. Even more importantly, the physical features helped indicate the level of stress within a particular movement in the conversation, and suggested the attitude that the participants took toward certain moments in their discussions.

Conclusion

In this somewhat protracted discussion, I have attempted to describe some of the functions that I identified in talk within the revision conversations that were the focus of this study. I have also tried to correlate this to some of the more significant conversational structures by employing the CA method. Together, these methods may shed some light on the internal dynamics of talk within revision groups. They may serve to shed some light on the overall question considered in this study: "What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social experiences and expectations that the participants

bring with them?" The physical features and functions of the talk provide clues to the ways in which individuals form roles and work together to achieve common goals. In this study, the participants had to find ways to make critical comments about one another's work in a constructive fashion that at the same time avoided breaking down the social structure of the group.

Following the CA method, two preference structures were identified in this study. The most significant, and most characteristic of revision session conversations, I believe, is that of assessment/agreement. Assessments came in the form of criticism (suggesting paper changes) and praise (suggesting that something should not be changed). The implied social preference was for agreement, though the internal dynamics and social rules surrounding those choices would appear to be very complex indeed, and deserving of a more focused examination beyond the more exploratory scope of this study. The second type of preference structure that was identified was one of explanation/confirmation. This sort does not appear to be as dynamic as assessment/agreement, but occurred with such frequency in this study that it needed to be reported. It generally followed upon the heels of assessment, and often served to allow the participants to explain why they had made particular writing decisions. It also served at times to allow critics to back up their assessments with further evidence.

The transcripts that resulted from the taped conversations were also coded for positive assessment, negative assessment, explanation, monitoring, and off-topic talk. While much of this discussion has focused on the first three, the latter two functions were not insignificant. Monitoring often served two purposes: to manage the revision sheet questions and to manage the group on its own authority. In the first case, the revision

sheet appeared to carry the authority for the group, and in the second situation (which was rare) the students took on authority for themselves, and attempted to independently manage the group. Off-topic talk, long considered the bane of many English teachers, at moments seemed to function to help the group form its own social identity. The off-topic talk, surprisingly, may have served a constructive purpose.

In the chapter that follows, the responses of the students to their conversations will be discussed.

Chapter 6

Results: Postrevision Interviews

As already discussed in Chapter 3, the postrevision interviews were conducted for the purpose of discovering and confirming not only what they talked about in their revision sessions, but their reasons for conducting themselves in the ways that they did. This information aided both the functional and structural analysis of the talk conducted within these revision sessions because (1) it helped to understand whether or not the students recalled their revision conversation with any reasonable degree of accuracy; (2) it demonstrated the perceived "hot points" in the conversations worthy of analysis; and (3) confirmed whether or not the students believed that they had established a "common ground" in which honest, helpful criticism could take place. This information made it possible to see how the students reacted to the sub worlds they had helped form, and how they responded generally to the social dynamic that tool place there. This chapter primarily addresses the third research question: "In what ways do individual goals appear to differ from group goals, and how do those differences manifest themselves?"

Let me say again that the interviews were not formally structured, but rather free-flowing conversations which allowed the students to express their feelings regarding the revision sessions they had participated in. As such, they were not asked identical sets of questions, but were encouraged to elaborate on issues that they addressed. The conversations were only redirected in the sense that they were required to stay on the topic at hand. As a result, the information summarized in the tables that follow is not all-inclusive. Not all participants discussed the same issues, and no attempt was made to bring information artificially into the conversation out of an effort to avoid creating "forced" or otherwise false responses. Also, the categories represented here were not

conceived of in advance, but indicate common threads than ran through many of the interviews.

Advice Received

All participants were asked to describe what advice they were given. Table 5 below summarizes those findings.

Table 5. Criticism reported received by each participant.

		Intro/Thesis	Body Paragraphs	Conclusion	Organization	Focus	Diction	Format
GROUP 1	Dave		X				X	
	Julie	X					X	X
	Travis	X				X		
GROUP 2	Thomas					X	X	
	Halley		X			X		
	Frank	X	X	X				
GROUP 3	Laura	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Malachai						X	
	Samantha	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
GROUP 4	Dominiq.	X*					X*	
	Teresa	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Troy	X		X			X	

These results do not indicate the number of times that a particular issue was brought up, but merely that the indicated participant reported having been given advice of that type at some time during the revision session discussion. A result of "n/a" means that the issue was irrelevant. In the case of groups three and four, this resulted because only one writer's paper was discussed. One item that is conspicuous in its absence is any

references to discussions of grammar. In the prerevision interviews, many of the students indicated that in the past, their revision group activities had consisted primarily of checking for grammar. A number of participants had mentioned that they expected to comment on each others' grammar in these revision sessions as well. But at no time in the revision transcripts, and only twice in the postrevision interviews, was grammar mentioned at all. The two times grammar was mentioned in the postrevision interviews, it quickly became evident that what the students were talking about was not mechanics, but word choice. As the analyses of the conversational transcripts revealed (Chapter 5), a large portion of the students' time was spent giving advice regarding diction. Though no one reported having received advice regarding organization, the category was included above because several participants recalled having given advice of this type to other group members. Though this information was sketchy at best and far from inclusive, this may be one indicator of selective recall on the parts of the study participants. They may have remembered what they wanted to remember, may have recalled only the advice that the teacher reinforced, or what they understood or thought was "easy." They may simply have remembered what they chose to remember–whatever reinforced, or otherwise addressed, their conception of the assignment at hand. Simply put, one student's understanding of the assignment, or what was important about it, may have differed to some degree. This is reminiscent of Freedman's (1992) observation that one of the problems that exists between students and teachers is that students struggle to create a "real" text even as teachers attempt to model and "ideal" text. Perhaps what happens between individual students is that their idealizations as they struggle to create this "real" text differ. If this is a valid point, then these interviews may serve to hint at the complex of separate conceptual worlds that students work with. Within the social setting of the

cooperative learning group, they must struggle with these various idealizations as they attempt to work together in order to create "real" texts that will meet the instructor's expectations (an idealized text the students in all practicality never expect to reach, which may be at the root of Troy's analysis of the difference between student and teacher advice detailed later in this chapter).

Introduction and thesis statements. Five of the participants recalled having received advice regarding their introductions and thesis statements. This runs a close second (for all practical purposes a dead heat) to those who indicated having received advice about word choice, as discussed below. One of the participants from Group 4, Dominique, indicated that she benefitted from the discussion of Troy's introduction even though her paper was never directly addressed. In most cases, participants recalled having discussed primarily their thesis statements and the "details" from their thesis statements. Though this wording did not come up in my classroom observations, the use of this term occurred enough to spike my curiosity. According to the instructor, the term "details" may have been used informally to refer to the breakdown of the thesis statement into specific parts, as in the five-paragraph theme. It may also have been tossed around as a term used to indicate word choice, an issue which dominated much of the advice given in these conversations.

Body paragraphs. Only three of the participants recalled having discussed body paragraphs during their conversations. Dave and Frank reported that their groups suggested that their body paragraphs lacked clear topic sentences, whereas Halley indicated (with considerable reluctance) that she intended to follow her group's advice and delete one paragraph from her paper that did not need to be included. Interestingly, no one recalled having received advice regarding rearranging paragraphs or other

materials though a number of participants recalled having given such advice. Though Troy admitted that his group did discuss one of his body paragraphs briefly, it was only in the guise of telling them that he had already decided to eliminate it and refocus his paper on his father by leaving out his mother. Since that issue was decided in advance, it wasn't included in this category.

Conclusions. Both Frank and Troy indicated having been told that they needed to add concluding paragraphs to their papers. In their interviews both admitted having known this prior to entering the revision session, and indicated that they would follow the advice of their groups.

Focus. This issue was given a separate category even though it crosses over with "Introduction/Thesis" and "Body paragraphs." The reason is that the three participants who reported having been told about a focus problem indicated that it was an issue that was a general problem for the entire paper, and not isolated in one particular area. Halley in particular said that she entered the revision session knowing she would have to completely rewrite her paper, which may explain her detachment during the session to some degree. She indicated that after she visited with her instructor, "he told me to write about relationship values. I wrote about values in general."

Diction. Word replacement was the type of advice most frequently reported as being given to study participants. Two of the strongest examples come from groups 2 and 4, as mentioned in the function and conversation analysis sections of the discourse analysis chapter within this study. In group two, the participants spent a considerable amount of time debating over Thomas' tendency to use difficult words, and thereby alienate his audience. Group 4, on the other hand, deliberated over Troy's choice of the word "Pops" in the place of "father." And even though Dominique's paper was not

discussed in Group 4, she indicated in her postrevision interview that she benefitted from discussing the diction in Troy's paper, and would apply some of those ideas to her own rewrite. Malachai also reported having received advice regarding his use of isolated words and phrases, though in his case it was less a matter of style and more a matter of avoiding the repetition of a word or phrase over and over.

Advice Given

Table 6 below summarizes the advice given by each participant to other members of the group, but does not specify to whom the advice was given. Most participants reported giving advice in reference to introductions (especially thesis statements) and diction. In many instances, the participants reported that they could not be certain to which group members advice was given. No attempt was made to triangulate each point of advice the interviewees reported that they gave with subjects actually discussed in the taped transcripts. Participants memories, as indicated by researchers cited in Chapter 3, may or may not be necessarily accurate. It is also possible that the subjects discussed–the categories the participants use to describe the advice–may not be necessarily the same as the categories determined by the researcher. Also as researchers have indicated, the memories of participants tends to fade with time, so every attempt was made to collect this information as soon after the group discussions took place as possible. However, in general, the information provided in these interviews appears to correlate to the items actually discussed in revision session discussions. In no case did the participants report subjects of discussion that did not actually occur in the conversations, though the may have discussed items that they did not recall, or at least report, in the interviews. In general, in terms of both advice received and given, the participants tended to recall the more substantial issues discussed. In terms of advice received, they tended to recall

Table 6. Advice reported given by each participant.

		Intro/Thesis	Body Paragraphs	Conclusion	Organization	Focus	Diction	Format
GROUP 1	Dave	X	X		X		X	
	Julie	X			X			
	Travis	X						
GROUP 2	Thomas	X						
	Halley	X						
	Frank						X	
GROUP 3	Laura			X			X	
	Malachi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Samantha			X			X	
GROUP 4	Dominique	X		X			X	
	Teresa	X	X	X			X	
	Troy	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

items that were debated, while in terms of advice given they tended to remember those things that they emphasized the most or that either debated with another group member. They also tended to recall when they agreed with the criticism that another group member had made. Finally, though a quick look at the first two tables will reveal a general agreement between the advice perceived as received and the advice reported as given, there is an apparent tendency to remember advice given with more accuracy than advice received. I suspect that this may have something to do with the tendency of writers to ignore certain points of advice when they had already decided against that option.

Introduction and thesis statement. Participants reported having made rewriting

suggestions concerning the introduction of the paper most often, though diction ran a close second. Though some students specifically focused on the thesis statement and others referred more generally to the discussion, it was clear from most of the interviews that the students who discussed these issues were concerned with issues of focus and specifically stating the "subjects" of the thesis statements. By "subjects," as already mentioned, it became evident that the students were talking about sub-topics listed in a clause attached to the thesis statements in the fashion common in the five-paragraph theme. It is worth noting that seven students reported giving such advice, whereas only five students reported having received such advice. The first explanation for this discrepancy is that Tables 5 and 6 do not summarize which students gave what advice to whom, only that the issue was discussed. For example, a participant may have suggested that two other group members work on their introductions, but whether that student had discussed this issue with one or two other students would not matter as far as this summary is concerned. The tables above would only report that this issue had been discussed. Secondly, since in two of the groups only one paper was discussed in each group, four participants in those groups were free to give advice, but only two were free to receive advice. Thirdly, participants may have disproportionately recalled whether or not they were giving or receiving advice.

Body paragraphs. Two students reported having been given advice in terms of rewriting, repositioning, adding or deleting paragraphs. This finding is fairly consistent with the advice reported given in the previous section, where two participants reported giving advice suggesting rewriting, repositioning, adding, or deleting paragraphs. It is not entirely surprising that this was not a focus of discussion for these groups, since those rewriting suggestions that the students tended to make were those that students reported

as having been discussed in class or emphasized by the teacher in individual conferences. This suggests that students will tend to emphasize information discussed in class or with the instructor, and may be reluctant to bring outside experience into play. Though this suggestion is far from confirmed by this exploratory study, a number of statements made by participants in both their pre and postrevision interviews suggest that students tend to focus on teacher expectations rather than rely on their prior experiences as writers. The general sense of the sentiment was, "I need to focus on the expectations of this teacher in this class. I should not rely to much on what my prior teachers have told me, and even less on what my peers might think."

Conclusions. Four of the participants reported having advised other students to make revisions to their conclusions. This issue was discussed third most frequently behind introductions and diction. Interestingly, it did not hold this ranking in the prerevision interviews. While this discrepancy may have to do with a lapse in memory, it may also suggest that two other group members may have collaborated in discussing the conclusions of one other group member. A review of the revision sheet and conversation transcripts suggests that this may have been "forced" by revision sheet questions (as was unquestionably the case with the introduction, the discussion of which was clearly prompted by the revision sheet). In every case, the students indicated that they had mentioned that either the paper being discussed lacked a conclusion, or that the conclusion introduced new information. The students reported either suggesting deleting the paragraph, making it a body paragraph, or adding a new concluding paragraph.

Organization. It is also interesting that though no students reported having discussed organization per se, two participants indicated having received organization-related advice. Generally, this advice usually consisted of suggestions that involved

moving a paragraph. Rarely were organization issues talked about. I suspect that this may be because the issue was not emphasized by the teacher in the classroom and did not come up in individual teacher/student conferences. It may also be a "higher order" issue that students did not feel comfortable grappling with. Finally, it may simply have been a non-issue in many of the participants individual papers.

Focus. No student reported having given focus-related advice. This would seem to contradict Table 5, which reports that three students reported having received focus-related advice. This may be because most students tended to discuss focus issues in terms of thesis statements and topic sentences, and thus conceive of it in concrete rather than abstract terms.

Diction. Six of the participants reported giving advice related to word or phrase choice, which agrees with Table 5, in which five of the participants reported having been given diction-related advice. Interestingly, this is one issue that the students seemed to bring with them from outside of the class. Whereas the tendency was to stick with the specifics discussed with the teacher in terms of such issues as introductions, conclusions, organization, and structure, the students gave advice regarding rewording rather freely. A preliminary review of the conversational transcripts suggested that the students were generally working "off" of the revision guide during these moments, and were bringing in their experiences from prior classes and writing experiences in general. Though no definitive conclusions can be drawn, the reluctance many students expressed in their prerevision interviews about giving writing advice to people they don't know, coupled with the intuitive way that individual students expressed their suggestions in the conversation transcripts, perhaps suggests that while individuals may be reluctant to give advice on higher level issues without some authority to back them up (which is perhaps

why several of them invoked either the teacher or the textbook in their discussions), they may be more willing to express their feelings on more localized issues. The general sense might be summarized like this: "I'm not telling him to rewrite his whole introduction; I'm only suggesting that he change one little word."

Format. No technical or formatting issues were reported as having been given by any of the participants.

Social Interaction

While the issues discussed in the two foregoing sections are undoubtedly important, they primarily serve to (1) confirm that students were honestly and, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, reporting what was actually discussed in the revision sessions; (2) indicate how students categorized their own discussion; (3) and hint at some of the issues that come out more completely in this section. One important issue that came out of these interviews was the discrepancy between the purpose of the group conversations as assigned by the teacher (namely, to critique one another's writing) and the natural desire the participants had to maintain the "peace" in the group. Specifically, the participants behaved such a way as to not introduce any ideas that might endanger the social cohesion within the group or otherwise create an atmosphere of discord. This tug-of-war between self and group was revealed by the analyses of the revision session conversations. The students' comments in the prerevision interviews served to further clarify (their interpretations of) these reactions. In these interviews, the students' comments appeared to confirm two types of tensions. One was the discrepancy between the teacher's advice and peer advice. The scale weighed heavily on the teacher's side, which may be part of what caused the second reaction–a general reluctance, if not unwillingness, to take the advice of peers who had no more experience to think of than

the writers themselves. Table 7 below further summarizes the students comments regarding their concerns.

Advice given or received. The first two columns indicate whether the participants indicated in their postrevision interviews a general willingness or intent to take or give advice. Generally speaking, the revision session did not appear to affect the willingness of participants to give or take advice in either a positive or negative way. Those who expressed that the took advice reluctantly in their prerevision interviews, namely Frank, Halley, and Malachai, indicated in their follow-up interviews that they would take the advice of their peers only if they "felt good about it" or had been also told to do so by their instructors. Frank seemed to have changed the most. In his prerevision interview he indicated that he would prefer to take the advice of the teacher, and would most often only accept the advice of a peer if his teacher had indicated that the change should be made, indicated that he had bonded with Thomas in his group in such a way that he was easily inclined to accept his advice over Halley's. Frank said of Thomas, "I know me and him were kinda on the same wavelength," but said that Halley was "just a lost soul it seems like. She's funny and all, but I think she needs somebody to tell'er like exactly what needs to be done." He expressed a desire for Thomas to lead the group, saying "he seemed to know the purpose of the group a little bit better," and admitted that Halley's attempts to lead the discussion by referring back to the revision sheet "kinda bothered me a little bit." This was interesting not just from the standpoint that the bonding that seemed to form between Thomas and Frank inclined Frank to be more willing to take his advice, but it was the only group in which a member expressed a desire to work more closely with one group member and alienate another (though perhaps Teresa's comments about Troy come close to this).

Table 7. Social interaction.

		Gave Advice	Took Advice	Conflict	Common Ground	Group Helped	Leader Group	Democratic Group	Teacher-Reinforced Revision
GROUP 1	Dave	X	X		X			X	
	Julie	X	X					X	X
	Travis	X	X		X	X		X	X
GROUP 2	Thomas	X	X	X	X	X	X		
	Halley	X		X			X		X
	Frank	X	X	X			X		X
GROUP 3	Laura	X	n/a	X					
	Malachai	n/a	X	X		X			
	Samantha	X	n/a			X		X	X
GROUP 4	Dominiq ue	X	n/a			X	X		X
	Teresa	X	n/a	X		X			X
	Troy		X	X	X	X	X		X

Within the same group, Halley indicated that she felt that the revision session was not helpful:

> I personally don't benefit from peer evaluation. Because I feel like it's the teacher's job to tell you where you're going wrong because he has the Ph.D., he has the degree. He should know about this. Other kids, they might be kids your age, and they might be heading toward the wrong direction.

She admitted having taken a more passive role in the session, indicating that she let Thomas lead the group "because he pretty much knew his stuff so me and [Frank] just went along with it. I didn't really care one way or the other how we did it. I mean, as

long as it got done." Though when pressed she did admit that she would probably delete a paragraph that the other two group members had suggested she delete. Still, it was clear from the both the pre and postrevision interviews that her attitude of disinterest not only affected her revision decisions, but also the decisions of at least one other member of the group.

In this group, the postrevision interviews seemed to confirm both of the patterns mentioned earlier–suspicion of peer advice coupled with a preference for teacher advice. Both Halley and Frank expressed a reluctance to accept advice given by their peers, though Frank indicated a greater willingness to listen to Thomas' suggestions, and flatly declared that he preferred to have Thomas lead the group. It might even be possible to suggest that Thomas and Frank bonded and alienated Halley to some degree, though Halley's own comments would suggest that she alienated herself by rejecting the implicit "rules" of the revision session context. It might be more accurate to say that she preferred to conduct revision according to a different set of rules. In Halley's mind, the procedure called for going down the revision sheet rather mechanically in order to get the questions answered. This may have resulted from the fact that, having just returned from a conference with her teacher, she brought a draft of her paper to the session that she had no intention of using. Thomas, conversely, endorsed a method of adhering to the revision sheet only loosely, and preferred to talk about the papers in a more open, conversational style rather than simply proceed through a list of questions. Frank indicated that he felt he had things in common with Thomas, and endorsed his method against Halley's. However, Halley's desire to adhere to the revision sheet was not the only problem. It appeared to grow out of her inherent mistrust of her peer's advice, taking a 'what-do-they-know' attitude.

While Group 2 shows a situation where two of the students appear to have forged a common ground but a third wants nothing to do with it, Group 1 illustrates a situation where all of the participants seem to have established a common purpose. All of the members of this group expressed in their postrevision interviews that they would take the advice of their peers to heart. One of the questions that arises from this situation is, why did the members of only one group appear to form such a bond? The answer, I believe, originates in their assumptions regarding the purpose of the cooperative learning group. Only in this group did the participants' prerevision interviews indicate that all three group members had a positive attitude towards peer advice. In all of the other groups, at least one member expressed a reluctance to listen to the advice of their fellow classmates. In their postrevision interviews, all three expressed an 'we're-in-this-together' attitude, and indicated that they expected to make revision changes as a result of what their peers said (Julie even indicated that she would rewrite her entire paper as a result of the advice she was given).

I suspect that the reason the members of this group cooperated so well is because their backgrounds had made them "socially positive" people who, unless given reasons to believe otherwise, felt they could trust their peers. Others, like Halley, may be "social negatives" who were reluctant to trust anyone (except perhaps authority figures like the teacher who held some kind of power over them). Most of the students, I think, fell somewhere in between.

Conflict and Common Ground. Seven out of twelve group members reported that some conflict or disagreement occurred during the course of their conversations. In only the first group did all participants indicate that no conflict occurred. Interestingly, Travis commented that Group 1 was "One of the best I've been in," while Dave indicated that "I

felt at home with them." This was also the only group in which all of the members indicated that they followed a shared, democratic process when discussing their papers, and the only group in which none of the members recognized a dominant leader. (It is also interesting to note that with the exception of Travis' long explanations, this is the only group to have more or less evenly balanced function codes during the function coding phase of this analysis.) However, this does not necessarily suggest that a group that "gets along" will always produce the best criticism. Julie suggested that the reason for this lack of conflict was that "either they [i.e., we] all see it the same way or they just don't want to admit to it [that they disagree]. You know, they just don't wanna rock the boat." While they may not necessarily be healthier for the social cohesion within the group, a diversification of roles may contribute to more active criticism, as the function codes may suggest.

The other groups in this study, though, all reported some degree of conflict. As discussed above, in Group 2, Frank indicated that he and Thomas had formed some degree of common ground, but that he felt alienated from Halley. Whether or not this alienation had to do with Halley's negative attitude toward the group activity can only be a matter of conjecture. Thomas didn't confirm Frank's dislike of Halley, either because he did not notice it, or because he was unwilling to make negative comments about her. His unquestionable preference for compliments and positive thinking, perhaps brought about by his upbringing in a large family and the requisite need to cooperate with others, may have affected his response.

The members of Group 3 were somewhat more forthcoming. Laura indicated that she took Malachai's failure to respond to her criticisms as a sign of disagreement. (Conversation analysts refer to this as a "dispreferred turn shape.") While she reported

that he didn't actively argue with her criticisms, she didn't always know how to interpret his silence. She said that "I donno, maybe he thought we were right, or maybe–there were some times he wouldn't agree, but he wouldn't say we were wrong, either. Sometimes I think maybe he just wanted to be quiet so we wouldn't say any more about it." Though Laura seemed to understand silence as a form of unspoken disagreement, Malachai indicated that he listened to his peers comments quietly and respectfully, as he understood he was supposed to do. This seems to point toward a cultural difference in which these two participants understood appropriate behavior differently. Whereas Malachai thought he was being polite, Laura thought his behavior indicated aloofness.

Though she recognized the conflict as well, Samantha saw this subtle form of disagreement in a more positive light: "I don't remember anything where he went 'well, I don't know about that'. He was really optimistic about it and just said, 'thanks', like he was gonna take it or leave it." She is similar to Thomas in the respect that she has a positive attitude toward group learning. Like Thomas, in her prerevision interview she indicated that she came from a social environment in which cooperation with others and positive thinking was a way of life. In Thomas' case, it was a large family that moved a great deal and became a community in its own right, whereas in Samantha's case she had gone away to a religious high school where she was infused with a sense of community and a common purpose. Both students displayed very positive attitudes toward cooperative learning and took on leadership roles in their respective groups.

Malachai approached the comments of both of his critics with caution. Though race was not an obvious issue, the undercurrent of cultural differences, accented by his profoundly religious nature, underscored his cultural dissimilarity from the other two group members. He was most critical of Samantha, who seemed to emerge as the group

leader, or a least its primary critic by saying "I guess she thought she knew more than anyone else or somethin' like that." However, he explained his silence in this way: "I knew I had some mistakes in there. I was open to all their suggestions. I just listened. Just because I listen don't mean I'm gonna take all of them. No, I just showed her respect and listened to her." His reaction was consistent with his statements in his prerevision interview, and echoed things said by some of the other participants as well–namely, that they preferred teacher advice over peer advice, and approached peer advice with extreme caution.

Group 4 was similar to groups 2 and 3 in that the participants indicated that there was some level of disagreement within the group. The person who did not report conflict was Dominique, who was admittedly shy and reluctant to assert herself in a new group situation. Only Troy seemed to feel that the group had established any degree of common ground. Interestingly, Troy contrasted the benefits that came from the group with the benefits that came from the teacher. He put it like this:

> I feel [the teacher] gave me a real broad thing, y'know, 'Well, you really think you're . . . followin' the instructions of the paper here? And strayin' a little bit?' Vaguely, just to see what . . . I think he was leadin' us in the direction, but if we didn't get it, he just wasn't hittin' us over the head with a two-by-four. But the group kinda helped slap me into it, like, 'what about this?' Y' know. Does that make sense? I got a whole different thing instead of just this teacher, um, student relationship. I had this we're-kinda-in-this-together relationship. That we're gonna try to better this project for you.

Here, Troy indicates at once that the group had common ground and that he expected the group to contribute to his writing. But also worth noting is that he characterized the type

of advice given by the teacher as being general in nature while he said that the group indicated specific things that he needed to change. Though no others described the differences between peer and teacher advice with such clarity, this issue came up several times in the postrevision interviews. While the differences between teacher and student advice are not the focus of this study, it seems evident that the disparity between teacher and student roles, not to mention the issue of knowledge base, caused the teacher's shadow to always loom somewhere in the distance. Whether students placed value in peer feedback or not, these interviews, along with the taped conversations themselves, help illustrate that peers provided feedback of a highly specific nature, whereas the teacher provided more general encouragement and guidance. But what cannot be forgotten is that the teacher's authority never leaves the groups, represented by the omnipresent revision sheet.

What Troy confessed he did take away from the group focused on word choice: "I took in some wording, some of how things are phrased, some things that wasn't as clear as it needed to be." Most participants indicated that their decisions whether or not to accept peer advice were based rather impressionistically on how they "felt" about the advice or how it "sounded." A few indicated that they would be more inclined to accept peer advice only if it was confirmed by the teacher.

While it is certainly beneficial that the group members receive specific advice, it can be the source of points of disagreement as well. If the writer agrees with a criticism, it can serve the solidarity of the group, which makes it a two-edged sword. Nearly all of the participants indicated in their prerevision interviews that the effect that a critical comment might have on group cohesion would be a factor in deciding whether or not the criticism should be given.

When he rejected group advice, Troy indicated it was a balancing act between what advice the other group members gave and how he had envisioned the paper. His comments are strikingly similar to those made by Malachai, who indicated that he had to weigh the advice he was given against his own desires for the paper. This concept of something that should not be changed was not put in highly specific terms. Malachai called this vague notion "the main part," while Troy describes it like this:

> . . . there were some things that they wanted me to leave out, the little details, um, I think, that I just thought that was essential too. And I think really the hardest part for me in dealing with this is, some of the stuff that I found essential they didn't think mattered. And so I had to think of a way to reword it, restructure it, to where I could get that across, so that it makes more sense.

In striking this balance, Troy even indicated that he would be willing to sacrifice a portion of his grade in order to keep his vision of the paper intact:

> Maybe I could get rid of this and make a higher grade, but then it doesn't seem as real to me. [. . .] Y'know, just little things that I wanta leave in there that maybe I could clean up, I could get rid of, I could leave out, and still have the same overall meaning, but it doesn't have the same overall feel.

This tug-of-war I believe to be at the center of several of the moments in these conversations in which the students spent a considerable amount of time debating whether or not to make a particular change. The social forces encouraging the group to move toward agreement appeared to check even the more zealous, and as such prevented most criticisms which were debated from lasting more than a few seconds before the issue was dropped. If a student indicated that they had no desire or intention to change something, no one participating in this study pressed the issue (though, as discussed in

the last chapter, "damage repair" talk was engaged in when disagreements were pronounced).

Teresa also indicated that the most significant moment of conflict concerned the wording of a particular phrase: "It was something . . . 'family is family and business is business, and family should come before business'. It was just a real, drawn out sentence, and [we] thought he should reword that, but he said he liked the way it read, so he was leaving it that way." Teresa noted that their response was "to debate it not a real long time, I don't think" before pressing the issue any further. They reported, as did others, that when they hit a rough spot, they just "went on to the next question." As a result, the revision sheet seems to have acted as a buffer during those moments when conversation stopped, whether from disagreement or the lack of something else to say.

Revision Sheet and Group Leadership. The revision guide, as much as it seemed to bog down the participants' conversations, at times seemed to allow the students to get their conversations back on track. Teresa characterized their response to such points of disagreement like this:

> We did come to a disagreement . . . where we thought he should change a word or phrase and he didn't. Then we'd just write down on the revision sheet, '[Teresa] and [Dominique] think, you know, he should change the sentence to blah blah blah. [Troy], however, thinks it should remain the same.' And that was fine. [. . .] And so we would write that, pass the revision sheet to the next person, read the next question, and go on and not think about the previous question.

In spite of her share of turns at talk in the actual revision conversation, plus her admission in the prerevision interviews that she tended to be a leader, Teresa did not particularly define herself as a leader (though the other two group members seemed to think she had

at least a partial leadership role). Like Thomas, she seemed to think that the authority was shared within the group. Unlike Thomas, she appeared to posit that authority in the revision guide. Both Dave and Halley also reported that the revision guide helped structure their group conversations. Group 4 was unique, I believe, in that two strong leaders emerged in the guises of Troy and Teresa. While both groups two and three had strong leaders and participants who appeared to question their authority (Halley and Malachai, respectively), only in group 4 did two participants both describe themselves as leaders in their prerevision interviews.

Another interesting feature of this particular group was that this was the only group in which all three group members indicated that they thought the revision session would help their revision process. This is interesting, since this was one of two groups in which only one paper was discussed. Laura (Group 3) indicated that since her paper was not discussed that the session "didn't do anything for me." However, both Teresa and Dominique reported that they expected the act of discussing someone else's paper to aid them in their rewriting process. While Dominique, who gave one of the least responsive interviews in this study (and talked the least in her group session as well), did not elaborate, Teresa indicated that discussing Troy's paper helped her by:

> . . . trying to make it so it's clear. Because there were things that he knew what he meant that we didn't have the background knowledge [to understand]. Clear some of that up for us. I think that was part of my problem in my paper. I had to go back and reevaluate and say I know what my parents are like, but everyone else doesn't. So therefore I need to make this more clear so that they can understand what they were like.

She further indicated that discussing whether or not Troy's paper met the criteria for the

paper laid out in the revision sheet helped clarify her own understanding of what the assignment called for. Whenever disagreement or confusion arose, she commented, "We were like this is on the sheet. It said you need a thesis, a conclusion, and over here you don't have one." Teresa emphasized, as much as anyone else, the central role that the revision sheet played in helping to contextualize the responses within the group.

As the interviews progressed, the central role that the revision sheet played in shaping the conversations that took place began to emerge. While I have already discussed some of the participants' responses to the revision sheet above, it seemed to me to be an important enough issue to deserve at least some brief discussion in its own right. The participants comments, arranged by group, as they pertain to the role the revision guide played in their respective groups are summarized below.

Table 8. Response to revision guide.

		Followed guide	Deviated from guide	Liked guide	Guide too in-depth
GROUP 1	Dave	X			
	Julie				
	Travis				
GROUP 2	Thomas		X		X
	Halley	X			
	Frank				
GROUP 3	Laura	X			X
	Malachai	X			
	Samantha	X			
GROUP 4	Dominique	X		X	
	Teresa	X			X
	Troy	X			

In general, the postrevision interviews revealed that most students believed that they had made an earnest attempt to follow the revision sheet. In the case of Group 1, neither Julie nor Travis elaborated on the sheet, whereas Dave noted that they followed it without significant deviations or side-conversations. As Dave put it, "We read the papers, each person's paper and then we went through an outline discussing the thesis, main ideas, and what we thought could use improvement, um, what we thought was really good they could expand on." What Dave suggests, and what the revision conversation transcripts reveal, is a question/discussion/decision process that was followed by the groups. As a decision (hopefully a consensus) was reached, the discussion went on to the next question on the guide. If a consensus wasn't reached, examples of which have been discussed for groups two, three, and four, then the disagreeing individual(s) had to "give in" and move to the next question so that the discussion could proceed. The latter event occurred to some degree in all three groups, though Group 1 unquestionably demonstrated a tendency toward agreement and back-patting. While polite disagreements occurred in the third group, pronounced disagreements occurred in groups two (Halley's rejection of Thomas's 'my parents are superheroes' suggestion) and three (Troy's insistence on keeping 'family is family and business is business' in his paper).

In group two it was the reluctant group member, Halley, who more than once expressed her contempt of the entire business of peer revision, who seemed to cling most strongly to the revision sheet and generally unwilling to deviate from it in order to engage in student-prompted discussions. This may tie into her expressed reluctance to take peer advice as well as her preference for the teacher's advice. It may also partially result from the fact that before class she had just returned from a conference with her teacher and had discovered that her paper did not conform to the requirements for the assignment. They

were to write about where she had gotten her most important values, and she reported in her postrevision interview that she had initially written about values in a more general way. The result was that her paper had to be completely rewritten (a fact which may have affected her mood in the revision session, though her statements in her two interviews would seem to confirm a "loner's" attitude and a general mistrust of others). Though it might have been expected, their appeared to be not strong correlation between students who expressed that they followed the guide and those who indicated that the preferred the teacher's advice. While Halley indicated a dislike of the revision process and that she preferred to accept the teacher's advice, Frank indicated that he had to some degree bonded with Thomas even though he had previously stated that he preferred the suggestions of a teacher over that of a peer. As discussed in some detail in the last section, Troy believed it was important to balance both. These three responses may indicate three possible "attitudes" that students may have toward revision: (1) those who approach the session as a chore and merely want to go through the mechanics of filling out the sheet (Halley), (2) those who believe it is important to take the group on its own terms and look at it as an opportunity for feedback, unfettered by teacher instructions (Thomas), and (3) those who would prefer to have a balance of both (Troy, along with all other participants, with some variation among them).

A second issue that many of the participants raised was one of the suitability of the guide. Only one student indicated that she liked the guide. Three went so far as to comment that the large number of questions slowed down the critiquing process and made it difficult to discuss all three papers. The first of these three, Thomas, is unique in that he indicated that he preferred a revision session that operated primarily on the students' authority: "I'll be honest. I didn't actually fill out my worksheet. Uh, I was

better just listening to it and gathering information. There were some questions on the worksheet that didn't need to be answered. They were already taken care of." On the other hand, while Frank expressed in his postrevision interview to have enough faith in Thomas to follow his lead ("he seemed to know what he was doing"), Halley disagreed with this procedure. As Thomas tells it,

> [Halley] seemed to want to take more from the worksheet. [. . .] She wanted I guess some pretty definitive answers. She wanted to get everything that was on that worksheet answered, to find out what was going on with it, to relate it to the paper, fill it out, turn it in. Admitted, I was looking more for their feedback to see exactly what they thought–if they thought it was too wordy, if they thought it was too long, too short, didn't have enough personal reference.

Some of this tug-o-war was discussed in the last chapter. Suffice it to say that within most of the groups, the revision sheet was followed, the questions were read, answered, and discussed before proceeding to the next question. In three of the four groups, the revision sheet served to structure the conversations. In Group 2, though, the revision sheet still controlled much of the discussion, the procedural disagreements with Thomas on one side and Halley on the other seem to suggest a struggle that is more fundamental than two group participants vying for leadership roles. In fact, there is every indication that Halley would have scoffed at such a role. However, if it can be assumed that the revision sheet represented the ghostly presence of the teacher, then the struggle was one between a student authority that Thomas was trying to create and Halley refused to accept. The sheet may have functioned as a placebo for an actual group leader by representing the teacher's authority <u>in absentia</u>. This role, symbolically represented by the revision sheet, had to be temporarily "borrowed" by students as the sheet was passed

around. Some students (Halley being the prime example) became uncomfortable when students assumed authority on their own merit apart from that which the sheet, with its high-sounding questions, appeared to represent.

The other two, however, were from groups that were not able to discuss all three papers. Laura and Teresa all indicated that the process was significantly slowed by the number of questions on the sheet. Teresa said, "I like the revision guide, but maybe next time not so many questions! Just a couple of questions about each body paragraph and the really big things, making sure they're all there." However, she felt that "it controlled the majority" of their conversation and that:

> Some of the questions seemed a little repetitive. They were good points that we needed to address, but I think that we could have gone a little faster if it had been shorter and condensed and like all the questions about the conclusion had been in one part so you could look at it all at one time instead of looking at like the body paragraphs and then going back to the intro and going to the conclusion and going back to the body paragraphs. I think that took up more time because we'd talk about one thing and then readdress something we already talked about pretty good, a point that we'd made.

Teresa's more in-depth critique echoes some of the more general comments that several of the other participants made. Generally, the consensus seemed to be that there were too many questions to answer that took up too much time. Several others, most notably Thomas, also indicated that the some of the questions in the revision sheet were repetitive and didn't need to be answered. This is interesting in that it indicates that a few of the students evaluated the context of their assignment rather than blindly following instructions, as Halley may have been wont to do. This may suggest that some of the

students felt enough confidence to tackle revision advice on its own terms, while others felt the need to have the teacher's authority to guide them along.

While Troy did not indicate directly that the revision sheet slowed them down, he did comment that at times when they would get bogged down on one issue or another, whoever held the sheet would pass it along to the next person. This sort of "passing the authority" functioned in all four groups. In Group 1, each of the three speakers reported that they read through the sheet in its entirety, and when another paper was discussed, it was someone else's turn. In the other groups, though, each question was "passed" whether or not the revision sheet itself was physically passed along. The "passing of the sheet" might then be considered to stand for the teacher's authority in the group, an authority that was held by whomever's turn it was to read the next revision question.

Conclusion

Participants reported receiving advice from others in a number of areas, including introductions, body paragraphs, conclusions, organization, and focus. Diction, however, was the type of advice participants most frequently reported having received. The students in this study reported giving advice primarily in the areas of introductions, thesis statements, and diction.

The postrevision interviews also revealed primarily two patterns of student thinking. While one of the participants rejected student advice out-of-hand simply because such feedback did not come from the teacher, and a few other seemed to trust their peers and embrace criticism openly, the tendency to approach peer criticism with caution, with the idea of cross-checking such advice with the teacher before taking it to heart, appeared to be representative of how many students approach revision groups. Generally speaking, most participants seemed to agree that peer advice tended to focus on

specific changes, which in part explains why so much attention was given to wording issues. Teacher advice, though not a subject of this study, was characterized as being more general in nature. These interviews also indicated that the revision sheet helped structure the conversations in both good and bad ways. It helped when the conversations hit a rough spot or conversation ceased. The sheet kept moving the talk forward as it proceeded from question to question. However, as some participants suggested, it may also have limited some constructive talk and frustrated the students by preventing them from finishing their papers due to the sheet's many repetitive questions. What these insights may offer in terms of understanding how revision groups function socially will be considered in the discussion chapter to follow.

Chapter 7

Discussion

In this study I have attempted to investigate, in a purely exploratory fashion, the ways in which talk–at least in part–functions to help students construct a positive learning environment that will allow them to give and receive feedback on their freshman composition papers. As I have already outlined in Chapter 2, a number of studies have discussed the types of advice that students tend to give one another. Other investigations have examined that students do in fact provide feedback to one another, and that such feedback, both positive and negative, results in revision changes in student papers. I did not feel it necessary to replicate the findings of such studies, but chose instead to focus on the internal dynamics of revision groups and consider how students used talk to create the social environment of the group which would allow criticism to take place.

Research questions. Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed and made some attempt to answer, in part, three questions:

1. What social contexts are formed out of the diverse social expectations that students bring with them?
2. In what ways are such contexts not "solid," but mutable entities that may change literally from moment to moment as the conversation goes on?
3. In what ways do individual goals appear to differ from group goals, and how do these differences manifest themselves?

I do not pretend to have definitive answers for these questions, but will discuss, in what follows, the ways in which I believe the findings of this dissertation offer some insight into the social dynamic of cooperative learning groups generally, and revision groups specifically.

Why revision groups? I chose to focus on college-level revision groups not only because they are so prevalent, but also because they are highly personal in nature. While it would have been possible to study groups in a literature class (for example) where the students were asked to focus on their responses to particular works, in such groups students would have little personal investment in the conversation beyond their own personal interest and whatever (likely minor) grade they would receive for such an activity. In revision groups, students must discuss something they have personally written. Additionally, revision sessions frequently focus on the rough draft of a paper which will eventually result in a major grade for the course. It was my feeling that revision groups would offer some insight into situations where the personal goals and interests of the individuals involved would sometimes conflict with the those of other group members. This insight resulted as much from my experience as a teacher as it did from the preliminary research that eventually led to this study.

Whether or not these things would occur in small group discussions in a literature class I cannot say for certain. I suspect that they would occur, but to a lesser degree of intensity. However, as the data appear to have bourne out, moments of conflict and agreement did occur within the four groups that participated in this study. I believe a number of generalizations can be made based on this data. I would like to point out that I do not mean to suggest that all revision groups would behave in the ways that I will outline shortly. Indeed, each of the four groups had its own "personality," and this data set is to small to identify any definitive conclusions. Some patterns have emerged, though, and I will discuss them in what follows. The resounding theme of these group discussions seemed to be one of the "individual versus the group" as opposed to the "individual with the group." I believe both tendencies existed in a tug-o-war within each

and every participant. In some, the struggle appeared to be more or less balanced, whereas in others, it seemed to pull in one direction or the other. Generally, I believe that when individuals pulled to strongly in one way or the other, they damaged the group's dynamics. Those who resisted cooperation caused difficulties within their respective groups, as might be expected. But also those who sat through their group sessions without participating had an effect on the effectiveness of their group. By being physically present in the group but failing to participate, such group members created an automatic tension. This situation could force another group member to recognize their lack of participation, and thus cause the group to engage the non-participating member and bring him or her into the group. It could also be dealt with merely by ignoring the fact that the person was not participating, in which case the tension would not be alleviated, but would loom like a specter over the entire revision discussion.

Theoretical Considerations

Semiotics. But before I address more specific matters, I would like to revisit the three key concepts introduced at the beginning of this study: Saussure's concepts of langue and parole, Peirce's idea of the Interpretant, and Berger and Luckmann's thoughts on the base and sub worlds. Since the appropriate parts of the Course in General Linguistics have already been discussed, I will not repeat them here. Langue, you will remember, corresponds to "language," and may be thought of as the rule system that governs language, which could not exist without the parole, or individual speech acts that compose it. The rule system which governs language (or for that matter any other formal system) could not exist without the component parts that make it up. Each individual utterance, each act of parole, contributes to the greater system and may in some way modify it. I would like to suggest that individual speech acts not only modify langue as a

language system, but also serve to contribute to and modify other systems of meaning that language serves to express.

Another significant point made by Saussure is that language is arbitrary. Meanings of words do not exist in their own right, but exist by the agreement of a community of speakers. As Bickerton (1992) has pointed out, phrases such as "familiarity breeds contempt" have meaning while sentences such as "procrastination drinks serendipity" do not because members of a group have "decided" that one has meaning and the other does not. However, the ability of the speakers to define what words will mean is not a free-for-all. The linguistic system, with its established meanings, must necessarily constrain the conversation. The point is that members of a group are not free to make up their own rules. They must obey the rules that are in place, within reason. They may modify and depart from the rules, as the members of the groups in this study demonstrated time and again, but they never "broke the mold" by discarding the rules altogether.

Negotiation. In any social setting where talk is the primary means of semiotic interaction, language may be used to discuss, inform about, debate, and alter the rules (both implicit and explicit) that govern any particular social setting. Any social context, any collection of people who talk together and consider themselves to be a "group" working on a "group project," may discuss and modify the rules that govern how that particular group is going to proceed. They may negotiate, for example, what movie they are going to go see, how to select a president, whether to open their presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, or who will read the questions from the revision sheet in their cooperative learning group. Such moments of negotiation might be thought of as the "hot spots" in a particular conversation. It is interesting to note that, in the Postrevision

interviews, the students most frequently recalled those things which caused the students to discuss or in some way debate one thing or another. The participants generally did not recall to any degree of specificity moments of benign agreement, but showed considerable recall when discussing points that either they did not agree with, or that another participant indicated that they did not agree with. These moments of negotiation did not always result from critical comments. As the data revealed, students also spent a considerable amount of time discussing procedures. Though there is no way to be certain how these recollections affected student revisions (it would take another study to accomplish that), student comments in the postrevision interviews would seem to indicate that moments of discussion and debate, which were unquestionably the most memorable, would likely make significant contributions to student revision efforts (after all, they would not be likely to follow advice they did not remember).

If it is reasonable to say that the participants in this study produced individual acts of parole which, at least to some degree, were used to negotiate procedures and discuss various opinions about student writings, then it makes sense to return to another concept that was introduced at the beginning of this study: the concept of a social interpretant. In Chapter 1, I used the term "social interpretant" to indicate a negotiated, shared meaning within a group as opposed to an individually-conceived interpretant as Peirce had proposed. First, it is important to consider whether it is logical to talk about a "Social Interpretant" at all. To review, Peirce contended that a sign, which he termed a "representamen," consisted of three parts: a sign, an object, and an Interpretant. The object corresponded to the external physical reality that was being represented. The sign was the internal concept that was used to indicate it, and the Interpretant the mental association between the sign and the object. Putting the idea in scientific terms, the

linguistic anthropologist Derek Bickerton (1992) puts it like this: "three things . . . have to be present for a concept to be formed: an object in the external world; patterns of cell activity, in an observer's brain, that are directly or indirectly, triggered by the object; and the observer's responses . . . to these patterns" (p. 90). If the sign is actually "in the brain," then how can shared knowledge be possible? Part of the answer, I believe, lies in the fact that langue, if extended to mean not just a system of language but a complex (or complexes) of rules governing a particular social context, can be internalized and transported by individuals ready-made into a variety of social settings, including cooperative learning groups. These complexes of rules Dennett (1991), borrowing Dawkins' (1976) term, has called "memes," which he defines as "identifiable cultural units" (201) which obey the principles of evolution and individual people carry with them through their lives. These units, or rule systems, as I would prefer to think of them, do not exist as exact duplicates, but vary from individual to individual. This can explain how a social interpretant is possible, or perhaps impossible. If individuals in a group can negotiate a meaning so that it is close enough that they can cooperate on a particular point, then a Social Interpretant has been formed, though each individual interpretant (or complex of Interpretants) must by necessity differ from one another in some way.

Practical Considerations

From individual to group. This problem, the attempt to work toward personal goals in cooperation with others, can explain both the benefit and the fundamental problem presented by the discussions that were carried out for this study. The individuals in the groups, if they approached the revision session with a positive attitude and an open mind, were bound to benefit from the various experiences and points-of-view of the other group members. However, the same differences were also likely to create disagreements

and cause strife within the groups. The result is that I am forced to draw a conclusion that is very much contrary to the popular myth that where CL groups are concerned, the more diversified, the better, because the students will receive the greatest benefit from the greater diversity of opinion. Within this study, I found individual and cultural diversity, while it had its benefits, to also loom dangerously in the background. If the groups are too diversified, if there are too many cultural and personality conflicts, then the students are bound to remember the conflicts rather than the advice that was given. As the postrevision interviews bore out, in a few cases the negative feelings that one group member had toward another appeared to overshadow whatever positive feedback the advising student might have given.

Negotiation. A certain amount of discussion and debate, then, became an essential part of the attempt of each group to become a "whole." To borrow Berger and Luckmann's terms once more, each participant brought with them a base world. These base worlds might be thought of as semiotic complexes of personal and cultural knowledge. Since each one was different, when the participants came together, each group had to spend at least some time trying to create the common ground that would make the sub world possible. Much of this work was already done for them, for as the interviews (both pre and post) revealed, all of the students had had prior experience with school in general, something which carried with it a heavy load of cultural knowledge and assumptions, or to borrow from Dawkins and Dennett, memes. Also, each had had prior experience with the first freshman composition class, and each had been exposed to revision groups to some degree. In addition to that, all shared the context of the same writing assignment, and all had received similar kinds of instruction from the same teacher. There were differences, however. As revealed by the prerevision

interviews, a number of the students had had a great deal of experience with cooperative learning, while a some others had experienced only a little. In addition, some students had had writing conferences with their teacher, while others had not. While it would not be amiss to describe this group as generally culturally homogenous (at least the cultural differences, as revealed by the prerevision interviews, were not greatly pronounced), enough variety of culture, social class, and experience existed to make some degree of negotiation necessary.

Role of the revision sheet. I had expected that participants would negotiate their procedures early on in their discussions. While all of the conversations began with some brief procedural talk, no lengthy exchanges of this type occurred. Instead, procedural discussions, coded as "monitoring," tended to be of two types, and tended to be almost evenly distributed throughout the conversations. The first type consisted of open negotiations when the participants wanted to decide how to proceed. The brevity of theses exchanges, which at times seemed to hardly have occurred at all when the students jumped with lightning speed into their revision sheets, I found surprising. The second type occurred only a few times, and happened when the students either deviated from the guide or had to stop to discuss "what they were supposed to do."

External authority groups. The first type occurred to some degree in all four groups as the participants talked in order to agree on the procedures or rules that would govern their discussions. These discussions were very short-lived, as the group "authority" was shifted to the inanimate revision sheet. These negotiations generally consisted of a single question followed with a positive reply (the "preferred" response). Sometimes, the negotiation was short-circuited altogether. Consider the following from Group 1:

D: a::nd ((EXHALE)) aw oh gosh

S: #the first question is ((READS)) how does the thesis directly reflect (or vary your) response (to the assignment if it) strays (ha ha)# ((LAUGHS))

T: ok

Consider also this exchange from the beginning of Group 4's talk:

Ty: i guess we'll just go ahead and start with the questions (0.4) and run through em

Te: okay

Ty: um: (1.5) who wants to write on this one (0.3) >i guess we're supposed to take ┌turns<

Te: └>yeah we're supposed to take turns after ( )< (0.1) you want to go ahead since you started with your name ┌and start writing

Do: └ yeah that's cool

In the first example, the group jumps directly to the first question on the revision sheet. No negotiation is necessary because of the authority carried by the revision sheet. Though this may not be a fair assumption, I took the speaker's exhale and statement ("aw oh gosh") as if to say, "I don't know what to do. I don't want to assume authority here." So he turned the "authority" over to the revision sheet. Instead of negotiating the rules of context in the social situation in earnest, the authority for directing the critiquing session is shifted over to the revision guide, which I believe carries with it the teacher's hidden authority. In my view, this short-circuits, at least in part, some of the purpose of the revision session, which is to hand the critiquing authority over to the students, at least for a time.

In the second case, the students negotiate briefly the rules of engagement, but the artificiality of this exchange becomes apparent when both Troy and Teresa invoke the teacher's authority by using the phrase "we're supposed to." The students do not decide how to evaluate each others' writing, or even what parts of the work will be discussed, or even in what order. The procedure is already laid out for them in advance. This, in my opinion, cripples each student's ability to create an honest social context and construct an atmosphere in which the participants actually learn to value one another's opinion. Time and time again in this study, participants demonstrated a reluctance to trust each other's advice. They stated repeatedly that they preferred the opinion of the teacher over that of their peers. Several even stated in their interviews that they planned to reject the advice of their peers out-of-hand. In my view, the instructor should do as much as possible to remove his authority from the group's center in order to allow the participants to create a unique social environment in their own right. By not doing so, the group is not given the best possible opportunity to create a base world that stands on its own, apart from the greater authority of the classroom.

The second type consisted of "short circuiting" the negotiation process by referring to the revision sheet. This type of negotiation, which occurred much more frequently than the first, was characterized by the tendency to refer to the revision sheet ("the sheet says . . .") or the teacher's authority ("I think he wants us to . . .") for instructions. This had the effect of removing the authority from the members of the group and placing it in the hands of the teacher, who, while not physically present in the group, was tacitly represented by the revision sheet. This undercut the authority of the group, and may have caused the members of the group to invest less authority in each other and more in the teacher. The result may have been that some participants paid less

attention to each other's advice, and would seek the teacher's feedback instead.

Internal authority groups. It remains interesting, however, that a few of the students grew tired of the guide's overbearing questions, and at moments took over the authority of the group for themselves, while others were clearly fearful of putting it aside to let the responsibility for leading the discussion rest squarely on their own shoulders. Most of the students were uncomfortable with the idea of doing this. Only in group two, with Thomas functioning as the group's de facto leader, did the group attempt to "pull away" from the revision guide agenda and form its own identity in its own right. I must say "attempt" because, though Travis supported the direction that Thomas was taking the group, Halley resisted this move with all of her strength. In this particular case, the proposed move failed, and the attempt to "pull away" was only momentary. In the end, Thomas and Travis had to give in to Halley's insistence that the continue along the trajectory implied by the revision sheet.

This situation was curious in that it illustrated the struggle that can take place as one sub world pulls away from another. Up to this point I have been talking about sub worlds as if they are all neatly sub-classed beneath some base world that contains them. In fact, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, it is probably better to imagine the relationship between sub worlds as a box of hula hoops thrown on the floor. As they intersect one another, the at first appear chaotic, and no clear pattern can be discerned. In fact, any number of social forces may influence any attempt to form a cooperating group of any kind. But common sense and day to day experience dictate that certain social contexts are more or less enclosed within others, and operate by the rules of those contexts that contain them. The cooperative learning group within the two freshman composition classes that were involved in this study can be subclassed under a wide variety of learning

experiences that each participant has been engaged in over the years. In the more immediate context, though, the college context, and the context of a particular writing class, "enclose" the group and create certain assumptions on the part of the participants, as they demonstrated in their pre and post revision interviews. When Thomas attempted to pull away, he wanted the group to form its identity in its own right, and create its own base world on a more self-sustaining ground than Halley was willing to allow. By insisting on returning to the revision sheet, she was reaffirming the authority of the teacher over the authority of the group. She was resisting Thomas' suggestion that the group could form its own identity, and provide valuable feedback, outside of the context provided by the revision sheet's ominous questions. I cannot help but wonder that if the group had been allowed to continue, perhaps meeting outside of class, with the fiat that it could create its own critical agenda, if it would have blossomed into a sub world in its own right.

Implications. It might be argued that the revision sheet played a legitimate, and much-needed role in solidifying the groups purpose and allowing it to accomplish its goal. It might be argued that even without the presence of a revision sheet as specific as the one utilized in this course, that the group would form its own context only within the constraints that they understood to govern the particular class in which they were participating. Undoubtedly, this is true. However, I do not believe that these students were responding as much to explicit instructions given by their teacher as to the implicit understanding they had from prior educational experiences regarding "how revision sessions work." The revision discussions evaluated in this dissertation took place just over two weeks into the semester, and I observed class during the two sessions prior to this revision activity. In that time, the teacher modeled only one five-minute group

activity (during the class session immediately prior to the revision session for the first paper), and certainly offered no hard-and-fast rules regarding how the revision session was to be conducted. In my interview with the instructor, he indicated that no prior information regarding how revision sessions should be conducted. During each session in the two classes in which the revision conversations were recorded, the teacher passed out the revision guide, and monitored the groups for time. Yet all of the groups seemed to have the understanding that they were "supposed to take turns" reading questions and passing the revision sheet.

In two of the groups, the speakers alternated questions; in two others, one speaker asked the questions while another wrote the answers, and the sheet was passed only when one paper's critique was finished and it was time to begin discussing another. My point is that the students' understanding of "what they were supposed to do" appeared to descend on them from above, handed down to the group from the instructor in the guise of the revision sheet. However, this does not appear to be the case. Each group generated its own rules, established its own social interpretant on this ground, but offset the responsibility of defending that procedure by positing the responsibility for that "rule" at a higher level in the hierarchy, if you will. So it would appear that the groups did negotiate certain procedures, and the participants were unaware that they were entering such negotiations, or chose to avoid conflict by resting the authority on the teacher's shoulders rather than their own.

In the end, the revision sheet helped provide a buffer that would allow certain issues to be settled more easily so that criticism could go forward. On the other hand, the long list of questions so heavily structured the conversation that a free-flowing conversation could not occur. There were certainly moments of honest discussion and

debate, but they were short lived because of the need to constantly return to the guide and proceed through the rest of the questions. (It should be remembered that the questions had to be answered not only in discussion, but briefly in writing, and for each one of the three groups. This is why, according to postrevision interviews, that two of the groups completed discussions of only one of each groups' papers.)

Group identity. While the revision sheet certainly provided direction and structure, it placed the group in a stranglehold that did not allow each group to invest in itself and create its own social identity. I believe that groups, whether for revision or other purposes, if they are given the time necessary to develop their own identities, along with the freedom to develop their own social roles and rules of conduct within the group environment, that they will create a sub world that will profit all of the members of the group far beyond the limitations of talking about one another's papers for ten minutes or so with the authority of an ostentatious revision sheet leaning over them. The groups must be given the time to develop their own sub worlds. This means that they cannot meet one time, but must meet repeatedly, both in and outside of class. With each meeting, as each individual member does more and more to contribute to the group as a whole, the individual members will feel the reciprocity of the others, and will feel that they have something invested in the group, as they might in a group of friends.

Roles. The preceding analysis of the revision session discussion transcripts, along with the evaluation of the prerevison and postrevision interviews, suggests that each group did begin to develop social structures in which people played different roles. As discussed in previous chapters, those participants who considered themselves to be leaders took more active roles in their groups. Their contributions to the group conversations often consisted of statements that were coded as monitoring. When groups

contained more than one individual who considered themselves to be a leader, conflict over group direction resulted. To some extent, this occurred in Group 4. Both Troy and Teresa had said in both sets of interviews that they considered themselves to have functioned to some degree as the group leader. Which of these individuals would have eventually emerged as group leader, if this particular collection of writers were to continue working together, is hard to say. It is possible that they would have continued competing, or would have reached some other understanding. However, the revision sheet did aid in intervening in the struggle that appeared to ensue between Teresa and Troy as each tried to assert some level of control over the group.

Teresa, having had a significant amount of experience with cooperative learning, and having announced that she tended to take control of the groups she was involved in, utilized a tactic of leading by taking on the role of critic. Troy resisted some of her criticisms. He asserted that he needed to consider his paper "his own" to some degree apart from the opinions of his peers or even that of his teacher (He admitted that he would make the necessary adjustments for a grade, but would maintain personal elements even if it cost him some portion of his grade). Troy took a more defensive stance, and spent a good portion of his time in an explanatory mode by defending his writing decisions.

In this particular situation, the revision sheet served to help maintain the group's focus. The sheet reminded the students of their agenda, and of the presence of the teacher, and his ultimate authority over the paper's criteria. Such authority, though, appeared to hover at some distance in the background, and was brought into the forefront only when a conflict needed to be resolved or the group needed to be redirected back to the task at hand.

Group 2 faced a situation in which one of the group's members appeared to

challenge the authority of the "leader." Thomas clearly led the conversation, if his share of idea units is any indication. In this situation, a third group member, Travis, indicated in his postrevision interview that he accepted Thomas' leadership. However, the third group member, Halley, seemed to be determined to reject contributions that the other two members of her group might choose to make. This caused a conflict, in effect, inverse to that presented in Group 4. In the latter group, two members struggled to control aspects of the discourse that occurred in their particular group. In effect, Teresa and Troy went "head to head." In Group 2, Thomas struggled to get Halley to participate, and she might be thought of as rhetorically stepping back to avoid discourse, only to be "followed" by a step forward from Thomas.

This particular disagreement appeared to have two aspects. On one hand, as Halley indicated in her postrevision interview, she considered the session to be completely irrelevant not only because of her mistrust of peer review in general, but also because she had intended on writing an entirely new paper. The second aspect had to do with a disagreement over the particular way in which a cooperative learning group should be run. Halley wanted to follow the revision guide very closely, whereas Thomas (and more quietly, Travis) wanted to allow the group to discuss the papers in a more open-ended format. This results from a fundamental difference of opinion over where the authority for criticism, indeed, the power for criticism, should lie. Halley considered the opinions of her peers irrelevant because they were not the teacher, did not have the education, and more to the point, they did not have the power to grade her paper. It is possible that she was thinking more in terms of the value of the end result of the writing process in the form of a grade rather than the value of benefitting from others with the broader purpose of improving her writing in a more general way.

Thomas had the opposite opinion. He expressed a strong belief that as an individual, he benefitted almost as much from the opinions of his peers as from those of his teacher. His "leadership style" differed from that of Teresa in that he attempted to direct the group through making positive, supportive comments (complements, generally) in an effort to gain not only the involvement of other group members, but their allegiance as well. In short, he tried to build self-esteem and group involvement by saying nice things with the hope that such an effort would generate a community spirit. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) terms, he tried to create a sub world in short order by causing generally positive feelings within the group so that everyone would feel like working together toward a common goal. Teresa took a more direct approach. Instead of leading in with small talk and some very encouraging feedback (positive assessments), she preferred to assume some degree of authority, an assumption perhaps borrowed from her experience as a group leader in a number of prior social and academic organizations, and begin with some polite critical comments (negative assessments).

The disagreement over how Group 2's discussion should proceed demonstrates a fundamental problem that can occur in cooperative learning groups, and especially in groups where work of a very personal nature, such as writing, might be involved. It also demonstrates the important, but sometimes overpowering, role that a revision sheet can have over the group. I have already suggested that the revision sheet distributed to the students in this particular study had a tendency to control the discourse in the group, and that it can stymie the very helpful conversation that might otherwise very naturally occur. Its long list of questions made it impossible for two of the groups to complete more than one paper discussion, and a number of the participants complained about its lengthy, repetitive questions. The long pauses that occurred during the revision sessions (while

students wrote answers to the questions) testify to the tendency of this particular revision sheet to overpower the discussions and perhaps even distract from the task at hand.

But it must be recognized that the revision sheet served to help each group, at least for a short time, focus on its purpose and share a common goal. When the members of a group did fail to see eye to eye over how they should proceed, the revision sheet could provide some direction for them. It became a point of focus, and functioned as a "fourth" group member that could be turned to in order to generate another question when the discussion of a particular point within a group died down. It could also became a cause of disagreement, when the parties involved did not appear to have the same idea regarding how it should be used.

In this particular situation, I believe that the revision sheet prevented the negotiation necessary to create the social interpretants that are the building blocks of the sub world. It "short circuited" the conversation that might otherwise have occurred. To those students who were less likely to respond to the advice of their peers, with its high-sounding questions, it stood as a constant reminder of the teacher's authority, and seemed to suggest, with its long list of queries, that the students would not be able to conduct adequate discussions on their own. Instead of a freely-flowing conversation, each time a question was read, the teacher reentered the group. His observations and interests led and controlled the group, instead of the interests and observations of the group's participants. And since the sheet had to be referred to over and over, discussions that might have gone on at some length were cut artificially short out of the need to write the answer to each question on paper and then read the next question on the list.

I do not mean to suggest that a revision sheet should not be used. Indeed, revision guides help the students stay on track, and give them a sense of direction when they can

think of nothing more to say. However, in this case the guide was so domineering, and took so much time to complete, that it was difficult for the participants to go through the process of forming a social bond that would allow them to trust and respond to one another's advice. What each individual ultimately contributes to a group is verbal utterances. Those utterances are semiotic signs that (hopefully) carry meaning for all of the members of the group. However, no two participants are likely to agree on the meaning or interpretation of any given utterance. They must be given time to talk and negotiate so that they can form social interpretants, or group understandings. As the members of the groups contribute more and more and agree on more and more, they begin to feel that they have invested in something. What they have invested in is a sub world, a social entity that they have created through their own utterances. What I am suggesting is that an effective cooperative learning group must be formed from the inside out, and that it can never be created from the outside in.

The value of conflict. One final issue I would like to bring up in this discussion is the lack of discord within Group 1. There was no noticeable conflict within this group, and all of its members reported positive experiences. All said that they took to heart what the other participants had to say about their papers, and that they intended to apply what the others said to their revision process. The question that comes to mind is, was this a "leaderless" group in which all shared equally in the creation of a mutually-beneficial sub world, or did the revision sheet emerge as the de facto "leader"? Firstly, I would like to suggest that in this particular group, all of the members, if their interviews are any guide, accepted the principle of cooperative learning and approached the group with the intention of taking the advice of their peers seriously. All seemed to be social individuals, which would also seem to be a major factor affecting the potential success of

a cooperative learning group. Certainly, this intention to cooperate, a willingness to balance individual concerns with group concerns, mad the process of forming the sub world an easier task.

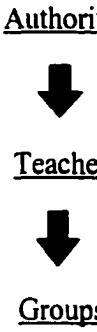
It is interesting to note that the participants in this group tended to share conversational functions more evenly than did other groups. I will not repeat that analysis here since it has already been done in a previous chapter. However, I do not believe that this was a "leaderless" group as the participants might suggest. Rather, I would like to propose that the revision sheet functioned as the leader in this group, and as the sheet was passed from individual to individual, so was the teacher's authority. This might be considered good if the group is fortunate enough to be made up of individuals who endorse the idea of cooperative learning, and enter to group with the intention of endorsing its principles. In the other three groups that were involved in this study, the participants did not all seem to view cooperative learning in the same way, with some endorsing it fully, some rejecting it, others wanting to put the revision sheet aside, and still others unwilling to heed the advice of anyone who did not carry with them the power to place a grade on their work.

The revision sheet, even in Group 1, I believe, did more to undercut the group's potential authority than it did to help guide it toward a common goal. If a sub world is to be formed, the authority must be posited in the students and not in the teacher. As long as the teacher's authority maintains such a prominent position in the group, the sub world can never truly form in its own right. I am not suggesting that the teacher be removed from the process completely, or that revision instructions should not be given. What I would like to suggest is that such instructions can be lessened, so that more authority, perhaps even the authority to determine part of the grade, might be placed in the student's

hands.

Order can be imposed from the outside. Students can be required to participate in cooperative learning exercises by the force of the threat of a bad grade if they do not participate. In fact, this as Halley indicated, this was really her only reason for participating. Several others seemed reluctant, and expressed in their prerevision interviews that they would participate primarily because it was required. A few of these participants indicated that once the session was over, they had been glad they participated. Travis, for example, was reluctant, but once he and Thomas had "hit it off," he decided that one of his peers had interesting and valuable things to say after all. Travis utterly rejected what Halley had to say, though. This was because Halley had not invested in the group, but tried her best to remain "outside" its sphere of influence. The only way for the group to become effective is for it to be "built" from the inside out, and it must be "built" out of the utterances of its members.

A model for group interaction. Before going on to the final business of making some suggestions for conducting cooperative learning groups within the classroom, I would like to offer a semiotic model of the authority structure of cooperative learning groups. As they are conventionally used in writing classes today, revision groups in college composition classes allow the students to have some of the authority within the classroom, but for a very short time. Since groups generally meet only four or five times a semester for about an hour each time, and since each group is frequently composed of different individuals on each occasion, a "top down" approach in which authority trickles down from the teacher to the students in small increments, is maintained. This procedure might be graphically illustrated like this:



To once again invoke Berger and Luckmann (1966), The base world consists of primary concepts of reality shared by individuals within a particular social group. This macroscopic concept of reality, this interdependent and practically indefinable complex of rules, beliefs, and values, is carried by individuals as the go forth from their homes and enter educational institutions, the workplace, and other social groups and begin to enter sub worlds which they help create along with other people in the network. In a traditional educational setting, the sub world is imposed from above in the form of an institution. The institution is made up of a vast complex of semiotic interactions which have resulted in a system of beliefs and rules. When an individual enters a new sub world, they must try to find their place within it by forming relationships with other people and "learn the ropes."

If they have the opportunity to invest in the system, they have established some sense of ownership, or belongingness to the system. For example, a worker who operates a machine in a factory has nothing invested in it. It is simply a "job." He or she may quit and go somewhere else without remorse, and can be replaced by someone else. However, if the worker joins a union, or helps design a new safety procedure for operating the machine, he or she has invested in the workplace, and may develop loyalty and a sense of belongingness. Similarly, a participant in a cooperative learning group becomes involved with his or her educational process. The more involved the student becomes, the more

her or she feels that he or she has invested something in the class, and in a sense has "participated" or helped "create" the learning environment. The student is no longer a passive participant, but is an active one.

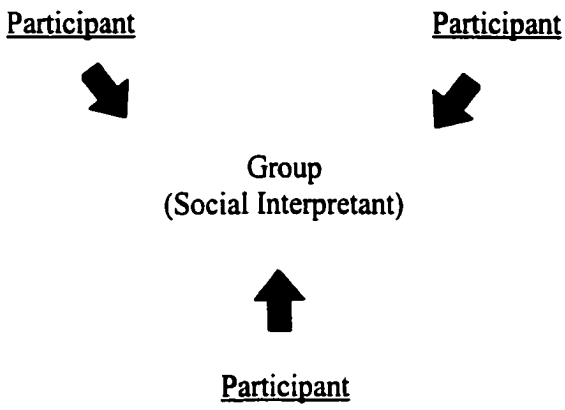
I believe that the traditional way that students are involved in cooperative learning in an average college composition class causes them to maintain a passive rather than active role. The teacher represents the authority of the institution, and, if he or she teaches primarily through non-participatory methods such as lecturing, the cooperative learning that the teacher uses is effectively an afterthought, and does not substantially affect the rather static nature of learning in that environment. I am not saying that reciprocity does not exist, but that the direction of communication remains primarily one way, and the students naturally adopt a passive attitude toward learning. They could be expected, of course, to carry this passive attitude with them into the cooperative learning group. If the students meet only infrequently, and each time with a different set of peers, they have no chance to form a solid working relationship with each other.

In order to form an environment in which the students can work effectively together, they must trust one another, and value each others' opinions. Within this study, it was evident that most of the participants did not value the opinions of their peers, but valued only that of their teacher. This is because of the "top down" nature of learning not only within the two composition classes that were studied here, but also because of the cultural assumptions that students are subjected to in their prior educational experiences. Perhaps it is best to say that the current state of cooperative learning withing college writing classroom suffers from a de facto dedication to a traditional, lecture-oriented, authority-centered style of learning that has changed very little in the last thirty years, in spite of all of the rhetoric and attention that has been given to the idea of student-centered

learning. It does little good to place a student in a student-centered environment when twelve years or more of educational experienced have placed them in a top-down environment. By this point, the students have been throughly indoctrinated in a top-down sub world.

Those students who demonstrated a willingness to cooperative learning in a constructive way (and by this I mean they were willing to posit authority in each other, not just the teacher), seemed to have been involved in more extensive cooperative learning experiences. Thomas, who participated in Group 2, Samantha, who was a member of Group 3, and Teresa, who was in Group 4, all made efforts to allow the their groups to exist on their own authority. All three of these students also indicated in their prerevison interviews having had extensive prior group experiences. All three had been involved in sub worlds where authority was of a shared rather than linear nature. Interestingly, in all three situations, the students had received their cooperative experiences from vastly different (and primarily non-educational) sources. Thomas had learned the value of cooperation from living in a large family that moved frequently, while Samantha had obtained this attitude from a religious secondary school, and Teresa had gotten it from participating in numerous social activities. This would seem to indicate that it takes much more than throwing three students together with a revision guide to make a successful cooperative learning experience.

What I would like to propose instead is that writing classes be composed on a more even playing field in which the instructor acts more as a facilitator than as a dictator. Consider the following model, which is a graphic representation of what has already been argued about the social construction of cooperative learning groups.



The social context the participants in a group create through their social interactions, whether it is termed a Social Interpretant or sub world, is an illusion. Terrence Deacon (1997) has considered to problem of constructing social space in some depth:

> Because of our symbolic abilities, we humans have access to a novel higher-order representation system that not only records experiences . . . but also provides a means of representing features of a world that no other creature experiences, the world of the abstract. We do not just live our lives in the physical world and our immediate social group, but also in a world of rules of conduct, beliefs about our histories, and hopes and fears about imagined futures. (P. 423)

This, in different words, summarizes much of what I have already said in semiotic terms. Where the problem occurs, Deacon observes, is when we try for ourselves to understand the abstractions and ideas that are contained in other minds:

> When we speculate about others' "inner" states, the only data we have to go on are what they tell us and what we observe of their physical states. [. . .] We can, it seems, have only direct knowledge of ourselves. (P. 424)

Each person carries with him or her a mental model of the world in which he or she lives. Even if two individuals are part of the same sub world, their mental models are going to

differ to some degree.

Ultimately, social space is an illusion. Nothing called "society" has any real physical existence beyond the mental associations that are attached to particular objects with which each individual interacts. A champion of the "multiple drafts" theory of human cognition, Deacon notes that just as "millions of brain structures produce a unified subjective experience of self" (p. 439), "[l]anguage functions as a sort of shared code for translating certain essential attributes of memories and images between individuals who otherwise have entirely idiosyncratic experiences" (p. 451). In the cooperative learning groups studied in this dissertation, those objects consist of student writings. Those papers are made up of signs, and only through the rules and other agreed-upon signs and their meanings do they carry any meaning for the individuals involved at all. Inevitably, no two readers will perceive a given paper in the same way, making negotiation and discussion a necessity.

This leads to two observations, and a struggle that I believe takes place within all cooperative learning groups. Freedman (1992) has suggested that one difficulty with cooperative learning is that students struggle to manufacture "real" texts while the instructor models and "ideal" text. Since the students "real" text will never achieve the criteria for the "ideal" text, a fundamental rift between teacher and student, along with the appropriate degree of frustration, will always exist. I believe that what Gere describes is the struggle as individual minds utilize signs in order to "synchronize" their mental worlds so that they can cooperate. That is, their concepts of sign/object relations are close enough that they can be effectively said to "understand" one another or to have achieved some level of "agreement." They have achieved some degree of a sub world, hand have created social space, even though that space is only an illusion, and exists in

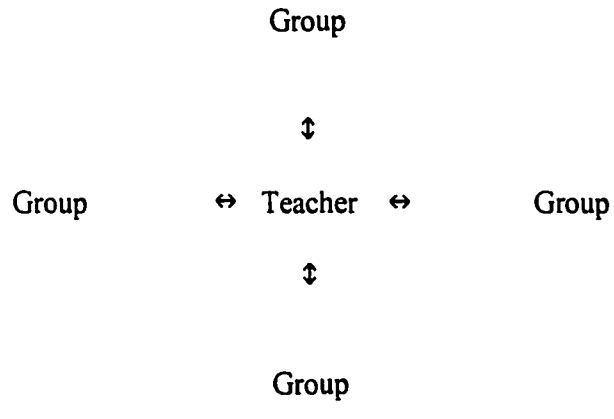
various copies within their own minds.

To Freedman's analysis I would like to add the idea that by necessity, both teacher and students work with real and ideal texts. Each student produces a real text, and each teacher grades a real text. Also, each student conceives of an ideal text that exists only in his imagination, and works to cause the real text to approach that idealization. Similarly, the teacher conceives of an ideal text, and tries his or her best to help the students come as close to that idealization as possible.

In a classroom that involves cooperative learning exercises, the sub world must exist on two levels. Within a particular class, the students must absorb the rules and expectations that govern the work they will produce. The teacher models ideal objects, and the student attempts to produces complexes of signs that will come as close as possible to matching those idealizations. On the level of the class the teacher remains the center of attention, and maintains the traditional authority structure of the classroom. While the students certainly do participate in contributing to and authoring the sub world that is their class, the instructor maintains the ultimate authority in determining what contributions will be made when, and can edit the contributions of individual students at any time. The playing field is not level, and especially when the class is large, individual students do not have man opportunities to control their educational experience or influence other members of the group. The result can be a lack of a sense of "ownership" of the class, and a passive attitude toward learning. The responsibility for learning is put on the teacher, who is expected to deliver what the students will absorb.

Within each individual group, while the sub world would be a sort of subset of the greater class, the participants may have more say-so in the social construction of their groups. They can "own" the group in a more realistic sense, and can influence members

of the group, and exercise direct control over their educational experiences. However, if group members meet only once a semester (four or five times for about an hour with different people each time) the have no opportunity to form a sub world in earnest and invest in each others' learning experiences. If the group is placed at a distance from the authority of the teacher, and given ample opportunity to work together over an extended period of time, then I believe that the students will form true base worlds that can exist on a more level playing field, and form an educational context that might be illustrated like this:



I have placed arrows going both directions to represent reciprocity within the learning environment. I believe that when students are placed within permanent cooperative learning groups with which they will meet on a frequent basis, that they will create sub worlds in those groups. This will have several positive effects for learning generally, and writing specifically. Rather than discuss each of these recommendations paragraph by paragraph, I have broken it down into the following list, and discussed each one briefly.

Power shift

Within a cooperative learning group, the students enter an environment that has a different social structure in terms of who controls the environment, and thus holds the social "power." In a traditional classroom, everyday discussions cannot take place

because of the power differential between the students and their instructor. In a cooperative learning group, the participants are on an even playing field. Unless the teacher attempts to control the group with by exerting direct control over it through an extensive revision sheet or other means, the participants are free to develop their own social structure. In this study, that struggle to form a social structure is evident. A struggle existed between those who favor a traditional power structure with the teacher taking the active role while the students remain passive and those who attempted to create their own social structure, with the participants assigning roles (explicitly or implicitly). In this study, the presence of a long, detailed revision sheet served as a constant reminder of the more traditional top-down authority structure, and aided in causing a struggle to insue between two different social structures. While the teacher gave "lip service" to the value of cooperative learning, he continued to impose a more traditional power structure through his actions.

A cooperative learning group that allows the students to create their own sub world and posit authority in each other as opposed to placing most of the authority in the teacher, would be more productive in the sense that the teacher's implicit authority would not constantly undercut what the participants were saying about each other's papers. The students would be free to create a social setting in which they could decide whether to take the advice of their peers on its own merit, rather than dismiss it out of hand. I believe that this would help the students build their critical thinking skills, as well as understand their own writing efforts better. Rather than make a change because "my teacher said so" they would make writing decisions on a more informed basis. In essence, they would understand why they were making changes, or keeping things as they were. The rewriting decisions reported by several students in this study indicated that

their thinking was moving in this direction. However, in a number of cases, deference to the teacher's comments prevented the participants from considering the advice of their peers. While the teacher may have been correct in providing certain advice, he may have also have inadvertently short-circuited the learner's thinking processes as a result. The student may have made a change recommended by a teacher, but may not have understood why that change needed to be made. In the long run, it may be better for the students to learn about writing by struggling with their text in a community of peers rather than blindly make corrections simply because they were told to do so.

Reciprocity

Within a cooperative learning group, especially one that builds over time with the same members meeting on a frequent basis, may build confidence among its members because each member has invested certain ideas in the group. If each member's ideas are respected, and everyone is involved in the decisions that are made within the group, they should be more willing to trust what their fellow group members have said, and would be more willing to "stick it out" with the group. Nearly all of the participants in this study revealed in their prerevision interviews that they had belonged to groups of friends, and tended to value what their friends thought, and would consider carefully whatever comments their friends might make. Only one participant in this study, Halley, seemed to mistrust nearly everyone. She characterized herself as a loner, saying that she tended to move between groups.

If a class is composed of cooperative learning groups that meet together frequently, they may feel that they have more power within the class generally, and may be more willing to discuss their ideas with each other and with the instructor when the class meets as a whole. In this situation, the instructor must be willing to act more as a

facilitator of learning rather than as the sole dictator. The teacher would direct discussions, rather than give lectures. More naturally-occurring conversation may result as well. This is, certainly, conjecture at this point, but I think that it is certainly an issue worthy of further investigation.

Independence

I believe two issues related to independence are important for cooperative learning groups. One is the independence of group members that is fostered by group membership, and the other is the independence of the group from the teacher and the classroom as a whole as a context for learning. The participant in a cooperative learning group is an active learner rather than a passive one. The learner must take responsibility in the sense that, to quote and old adage, the student will only get out of it whatever effort he or she puts into it. Naturally, this points to an issue that is bound to occur in cooperative learning groups: the non-participating member. In this study, several participants disagreed over how the group should be operated. Some members were more passive than others, and at times contributed little. One member was opposed to the process altogether. However, these were new groups, and the students were working together for the first time. If the groups had continued with the same members, and had they met on a regular basis, they would, I believe, for the most part have developed their own social structure and worked out their differences. Sometimes an obstinate member would be bound to enter a group. I can only say that this situation would allow the participants to develop some of the social skills they would need later in life–namely learning to deal with difficult people.

The independence of the group apart from the authority of the teacher allows it to develop itself as a social entity in its own right, with its own unique social structure. I

would argue that this will allow students to be:ter understand their own writing, for each group becomes an interpretive community with its own preferences and biases. As the students struggle with each other on a level playing field, they do not merely write in a certain way because the instructor dictates it. In this study, when particular writing suggestions were made, the more strong-willed students tended to defend what they had written. If the critic is equally strong-willed (as was the case in the banter between Troy and Teresa), then both participants must be prepared to argue their case. As a result, each has earned some ownership over the writing being discussed. Each would benefit from the discussion since they were not told why they should write in a particular way by an authority figure, but were convinced to do so by their peers, who make up their own microscopic interpretive community. This, I believe, is discourse at its most basic: the essential relationship between writer and reader/critic.

Interdependence

In any social system, interdependence must necessarily be the flipside of independence. In each cooperative learning group, the individuals do not exist separately, but in relation to the other members of the group. Likewise, the discourse they generate belongs not to them alone, but collectively to the other members of the group as well. The standards that they develop for discussing and judging one another's writing comes from this give-and-take not only within the group, but also between groups in the class, and between the groups and the teacher. And always, in the distance, are the vast complexes of signs that make up the nature of discourse, both within the academic community and without. The group cannot develop standards that are not defensible in relation to the other groups in the class, or in relation to the standards that the teacher-as-facilitator chooses to share with them. The students that make up the class as a whole are

also bound to bring with them their understanding of a wide array of other types of discourse, drawn from literature, the media, everyday conversation, and any number of sources that they are exposed to on a daily basis. This concept relates closely to reciprocity in the sense that discourse communities, and the rules, standards, and beliefs that compose them, are ultimately composed of individual utterances. Langue and parole are fused parts of the same whole; it is not possible to extract the threads from a fabric without unweaving the whole of it.

Ownership

I would like to finish by proposing that the end of cooperative learning, and the result of its various parts working together, is "ownership." By this I mean ownership of one's own writing, but also the awareness that it is "owned" in some sense by the other members of the group. Even though one individual person writes a paper, and ultimately approves and writes down the revisions that have been made or rejected, all of the members of the group have to some degree influenced its writing. They may have contributed words, sentences, general ideas, or suggested deletions. In the end, the reciprocity and interdependence within the group, and the associated struggle that the participants engage in, causes each member, in the dual roles of writer and critic, to better understand their texts, the contexts in which they are written, the audiences to whom they are written, as well as the writing of others. In struggling to understand one another's texts, they grasp all texts all the better. It is one thing to be told why a particular work is great; it is another thing to comprehend what makes it great.

Just as the participants own their texts and the texts of their fellows, they also come to own the group. If, through careful discussion, work out the "rules" by which their conversations will be conducted, they will have shared in "building" the group and

will care more about what takes place there, as well as care about the writing that others bring to the group. Instead of passively doing what they are told and understanding little, they must take responsibility for their education, and play an active role in not only formulating their own writing, but by becoming involved with the writing of others. By this interaction, they will ultimately become more thoughtful writers.

Conclusion

Admittedly, this study has painted its picture in very broad strokes. Within the scope of this project, there are many areas that deserve to be studied in greater detail. It was my intention to examine the inner workings of revision groups in a general way with the purpose of identifying trends and areas that were deserving of more scrutiny and study. I would like to close this dissertation by mentioning a few of those areas.

Though I did not plan to focus on the function of revision guides at all, they became a very interesting focus point within this study. I had not anticipated the use of revision guides when I prepared to collect the data, and was quite surprised to see how they affected how the groups managed themselves. Though I did not make it a point of focus in my literature review, I now think that different styles of revision instructions very strongly affect how groups interact with each other. This is something that teachers may take for granted, and may think about very little when they prepare to have their students evaluate one another's papers. Revision instructions may run from the very exhaustive lists of questions like the ones represented in this study, to a few brief questions or instructions written on the board as Peter Elbow (1973) in Writing Without Teachers. I think it would be very interesting to research how students react differently to extensive revision guides that rely heavily on teacher authority, and "light" revision instructions that hand the lion's share of the authority over to the students.

A second feature that came out of this research is the authority structure that the groups developed. In this study, group authority was often represented by the revision sheet, and did not appear to have the chance to be developed within the groups in its own right. When some group members did attempt to challenge the authority of the revision sheet and carry on with criticism on their own terms, other students were unwilling to accept the group's authority independent of the teacher's instructions. This struggle between teacher and student authority, I believe, goes beyond the focus of any cooperative learning group, and is deeply imbedded in the methods of learning that the students have obtained all through their pre-college educational experiences. In my opinion, it would be valuable to study students with different predispositions toward different learning styles by testing them and placing them in groups based on their educational attitudes, so to speak.

Another area that deserves more investigation is the social structures of revision groups in regard to the leadership roles that individuals play. Within this study, those roles were not as apparent as they might have been, since these groups were studied in what might be called their formative period–when they worked together for the first time. If individual groups were studied for a longer period, say, over the course of a semester, then I suspect that different social structures would probably begin to manifest themselves. Again, if these groups were allowed to create their own authority structures rather than rely so heavily on a teacher's instructions, then the "natural" structures of the groups might begin to emerge.

On the level of discourse analysis, I believe that something that deserves much more attention is the kinds of groups and group contexts that allow students to engage in constructive and meaningful criticism. One of the goals that I hope that I have

accomplished in some small way is an examination of the group situations where students feel free to make constructive rewriting suggestions, as well as those situations where group members do not feel comfortable in providing each other with feedback. One area that is worthy of further study is the ways that students react to disagreement. The group represented in this study was too small to identify in any definitive way the strategies that students use for such negotiations, and where they succeed or fail. Such an undertaking would be ambitious to say the least, but worth the effort.

Undoubtedly, this study has only begun to scrape the surface in terms of studying the internal dynamics of revision groups. The study sample was small, if labor-intensive, but in my opinion revealed, if nothing else, the incredible complexity of even the simplest social interactions. I hope that I have made some contribution in this area, and God willing, shall have the opportunity to conduct other studies in this area in the future.

Appendix 1

Paper Revisions

As a part of the peripheral data collected for this dissertation, the rough drafts and final revisions of the participants' papers that they discussed within their revision sessions were gathered as well. This was never considered part of the main body of the data, but additional data that might provide information relative to the revision session conversations themselves. It was never the focus of this investigation to determine if, or to what extent, revision session discussions "improved" student papers, or otherwise affected rewriting efforts. Other studies, several of which are cited in Chapter 2, have done this much more effectively than I can do here. While this does not directly address the research questions considered in this study, some analysis of these papers may demonstrate what sorts of revisions were made, and how conversational issues may have affected revision.

Data. The data that will be analyzed here is somewhat incomplete. Travis, from Group 1, turned in only the first page of his rough draft, causing the final numbers to be skewed somewhat. Another factor which may have affected the revisions of these papers was the individual conference scheduled for each student. The teacher did not report his intention to use conferences, and the fact that they had even been held at all only came up off-handedly in the interviews and revision session discussions. Some of the conferences had been held before the revision session, while others occurred afterwards, so it is difficult to judge what effect the teacher's advice may have had on the rewriting efforts of the participants. Given the comments made by some of the students in their interviews regarding the importance of teacher feedback in contrast to peer response, it is likely that

the teacher's comments may have very strongly influenced some of the students' rewriting decisions, though there is no way to gage this. That reason alone makes it difficult to intuit that some of the revision changes represented here were primarily the result of peer advice (though two relatively clear cases will be discussed later). Also, since Groups 3 and 4 discussed only one paper, only the papers discussed from each of those groups is included in the data, which also may affect the figures that are reported here. The data discussed briefly below, then, results from a collection of ten papers: rough draft/revised draft sets from Groups 1 and 2, and rough draft/revised draft sets from Malachai and Troy in Groups 3 and 4, respectively.

Coding procedures. The papers were first divided into Idea Units, discussed earlier in this dissertation, and utilized in the analysis of the transcripts of the revision sessions. The IUs were then totaled, and each paper was coded by comparing it, literally word for word, to its companion draft. In the rough drafts, IUs which did not appear in the revised draft were coded as deletions, material which was moved, in whole and unedited, from one position to another in the paper was coded as moved. Material was only considered to have been moved if it was take out of one place in a paper and put in another part of the paper, such as transporting it from one paragraph to another. It was not considered to have been moved if material had been added on top of it, for example, and physically "bumped it down" to another location. It was considered moved if its rhetorical position in the paper had changed, not merely its physical location. In all but one of the papers, a certain amount of material appeared to have been rewritten. This means that, while maintaining its general meaning, some, but not all, of the words has been replaced or "switched out" (a word deleted in the rough draft and an different one

with a similar meaning replaced for it in the revised draft), or if the words in a sentence or phrase had been partially rearranged or reworded in some way. The original meaning was kept generally intact, and it was not a matter of deleting a block of old material and replacing it with something entirely original.

The revised drafts were coded in a similar fashion. Instead of being coded for deletions, they were coded for additions. This means that new material not related to any of the original material was added to the paper. Additions are not rewrites, but "fresh" writing. The revised drafts, similarly, were coded for rewrites. In order for an IU to be considered a rewrite, it had to exist in some form in the rough draft, and must have been reworded or changed in some way in the revised draft without drastically altering its meaning (at least to the extent that it would be considered "new"). The revised drafts, of course, were also coded for moved material. For writing to have been coded in this way, it must have changed its rhetorical position within the paper between the rough draft and the revised draft. In a few cases, material was double coded. In one situation in Julie's paper, for example, the following block:

> However, they somehow manage to find time for everyone in their life. I don't think I could juggle having four young children at home, having five children that are grown, working and finding time to have a great relationship. However, they seem to manage.

This block was moved to begin, rather than end, a paragraph. Thus, it changed its rhetorical position within the paper. It was also revised to read like this:

> My parents somehow manage to find time for everyone in their life. I do not think I could juggle having nine children, working and finding time to

have a great relationship. However, my parents seem to manage.

Not all of this segment was coded both ways. Only the IUs where changes were made–"However, they" becomes "My parents" and so on–were "double coded" as rewrites.

Raw Data. The following two tables summarize the IUs that resulted from the coding process. The individual cells are split, with the raw IU scores on the left side, and the adjusted percentages on the right. The totals at the bottom represent the total number of IUs counted for each draft. The totals at the far left calculate the average percentage that the rough drafts dedicated to that type of revision.

Table 8. Rough draft Idea Units.

	Dave		Julie		Travis		Thomas		Halley		Frank		Malac		Troy		Averages
Deletions	72	.24	72	.40	78	.86	1	.004	99	.35	52	.20	0	n/a	81	.49	.32
Rewrites	17	.06	24	.12	4	.03	0	n/a	20	.12	36	.15	8	.04	8	.04	.06
Moves	0	n/a	14	.08	0	n/a	7	.03	7	.05	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a	.02
Total IUs	293		181		91		234		149		245		152		161		

The results of this table are revealing in two ways. Firstly, it shows that there seems to be no relationship between the degree of revision engaged in by participants and the groups they participated in. Obviously, the degree to which the other members of Groups 3 and 4 might have revised their papers as a result of the revision session discussions cannot be known, since their papers were not discussed in their group conversations. However, a look at the data from the first two groups, represented by the first six columns, shows a great deal of diversity in relation to deletions. Travis disposed of approximately .86 of the IUs associated with his paper, whereas Thomas threw away a negligible amount–a

single coded IU segment. While rewrites fell within a more moderate range, they ranged from .04 for Malachai and Troy to .15 for Frank. The tendency to move text occurred the least frequently of all. This would seem to indicate that there was nothing in particular about at least the discussions within the first two groups that would have caused the participants in that group to engage in any particular types of revision.

A second pattern revealed by this table is the general finding that the participants in this study tended to engaged in what I would term "low order" revisions that involved cutting old material and replacing it with new writing (as shown in Table 2 below). It is possible that this "cut and paste" approach to revision is easier for students with limited writing experience, and probably is indicative of writing habits learned over time (in high school, for example) rather than something that is a response to something that took place in the groups. In fact, there were very few revisions within these papers that had anything to do with the group discussions at all. Those that were made, which I will address in two examples shortly, were in most cases matters of superficial editing and word replacement rather than higher order issues. "High order" revisions, as both tables illustrate, occurred infrequently. Text was rarely moved in any of these papers, and when it was, it usually concerned one block of text, a phrase, as sentence or two, shifting its position within a paragraph or being moved to another paragraph. The example from Julie's paper already discussed represents the largest block of text that was moved within these papers. The fact that text was not moved very often may not be due to the complexity of the procedure, but may have to do with the need to move material as well. This is a very limited sample size, and no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Text was rewritten at a slightly greater rate. This I would like to think of as a

"high order" revision activity, one involving a certain amount of thought and skill, and certainly an activity that is more difficult, if possibly less time-consuming, than cutting and rewriting large blocks of text. This does not mean that someone who engaged in rewriting was a better writer than someone who did not. Indeed, an accomplished writer (at least within the confines of this class) may need to reword parts of his or her paper less than someone who has more significant problems with expression. The rewriting scores are helpful, however, because on a few occasions they were helpful in identifying issues that were discussed in the revision sessions. Sometimes those suggestions appeared to lead to actual revisions, though more often they did not seem to.

The following table, which resulted from the IUs counted for the revised papers, adds one code: Additions. While the rewrites codes fall within a reasonable range of each other in both tables, they are not identical. This is because the number of IUs counted for the revised drafts was not the same as those counted for the rough drafts. Also, the dynamic nature of rewriting could either increase or decrease the number of IUs associated with the rewrite (the rewritten portion could be condensed or expanded), and whether the overall paper was increased or decreased in length could have an effect as well. (In most cases, with the exception of Travis and Troy, the papers were increased in length to some degree.) The moves codes stayed the same, because the material was not altered, just repositioned within the paper.

Table 9. Revised Draft Idea Units.

	Dave		Julie		Travis		Thomas		Halley		Frank		Malac.		Troy		Avgs
Additions	188	.58	36	.23	65	.78	230	.54	144	.70	104	.34	10	.05	110	.74	.49
Rewrites	11	.02	23	.14	5	.06	0	n/a	25	.11	42	.14	5	.02	14	.09	.06
Moves	0	n/a	14	.08	0	n/a	7	.03	7	.05	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a	.02
Total IUs	316		148		82		426		204		307		162		146		

This table helps demonstrate that on average, the revisions done by these students resulted in added length. In two cases, the papers written by Travis and Troy, the papers were actually shorter, but not significantly. Thomas increased the length of his paper the most, about forty-five percent. Most of these increases were due to added text. When the deletions are compared to the additions, students deleted an average of .32 of their rough drafts, while adding to that .49 in new IUs. When the first two groups are considered separately, each added new material at the rate of .53. Troy added considerably more, and Malachai almost none. This tendency to add new material may have been greatly due to personal writing decisions, teacher feedback, or peer advice. This data would seem to indicate that it is an overall pattern involved in rewriting, and not something bound to group behavior.

Summary. The data presented above would seem to indicate that overall, students tended to engage in "low order" rewriting activities that involved deleting large blocks of text and replacing it with new text. Rarely did they engage in "high order" revision activities that consisted of revising or moving text. None of these activities appears to be directly relational to what may have been discussed in the groups, though there may have been some degree of influence. Other factors, including teacher conferences, may have

nullified or otherwise affected the participants' rewriting decisions. However, a closer look at two of the revised drafts may offer more insight into the sorts of influences that the groups may have had on their individual members. Two examples are discussed in what follows.

Malachai and Troy: Two micro-case studies. The participants in this study gave relatively little indication, beyond vague generalizations stated in their interviews, regarding whether or not they would be willing to take the advice of their peers. Many of the papers were so completely rewritten (Dave, Travis, Halley) or so little rewritten (Thomas) that it was difficult to see whether or not the group discussions had had much of an effect on their revision efforts. In two cases, those of Malachai and Troy, the students did appear to make some changes that were relational to what advice they were given in their revision groups. In both of these cases, their rough drafts had been significantly annotated by other members of their groups, so it was easier to trace what revisions they had made. In these two cases, it is also likely that the rather extensive annotations that their peers put on their rough drafts may have helped them decide to follow the advice of their fellow group members. In the other groups, the members did not annotate the papers of their peers. In the first two groups, the advice tended to be of a more general rather than of a specific nature. In Groups 3 and 4, the discussions focused on specific word choices, which made it easier to be certain whether or not peer advice had been taken.

Malachai. This student made surprisingly few revisions to his paper, which perhaps makes the revisions he did choose to make all the more interesting. It should also be remembered that he made statements in his pre and postrevision interviews to

indicate that he would consider advice given by other students with a great deal of caution. Malachai's paper was the more lightly annotated of the two. The annotations that were made on his paper concerned repetitions, grammatical errors, and idiomatic language. Malachai corrected the first grammatical error (a double-repetition of "to talk") but left the second: ". . . then the relationship is busted." This is an error that is such a common element in everyday speech that it may fall under the umbrella of idiomatic speech. Malachai left the other idiomatic usage alone that Samantha had pointed out. Interestingly, he did take her advice in terms of replacing one of his uses of "for example" with "He also." Additionally, Samantha had made a suggestion regarding both grammar and style. Malachai originally wrote, "Many more marriages end in divorce now than it was twenty years ago." Samantha had stricken out "many" and "it was" and added "more." Malachai's rewrite: "More marriages tend to end in divorce." Malachai could have adopted her editing and left it at that. Instead, he rewrote the phrase, which led to a rewrite of the rest of the sentence as well. Though this may seem a small matter (English teachers often complain that revision sessions result in simple editing), what began as a grammar correction turned into a style issue. I can only intuit that, once the grammatical considerations were pointed out, that Malachai's intuition took over, and he rewrote the sentence in a way that "sounded good" to his ear. This, in some small way, may have aided the student in finding his own voice as a writer–one step at a time.

Troy. This student's rough draft was the most significantly annotated in this study. It was also one of the most difficult to analyze, because so much of it had been changed. The annotations, along with the revision session transcripts, helped to point out some ways in which Teresa and Dominique helped Troy make some rewriting decisions.

The first thing that should be pointed out is that when the group began to discuss Troy's paper, he indicated that he had decided to write about how his father had influenced him, instead of both of his parents. As a result, the first paragraph had to be rewritten, and the second half of the paper was discarded. Most of the discussion of this paper–which took up the entire forty minutes that were allotted for revision–focused on two body paragraphs (at least when Troy wasn't digressing into story-telling or long explanations). Troy began his first body paragraph, "The biggest thing I've learned from my father is that family is family and business is business and business never comes before family." Teresa had argued that this sentence was awkward and needed to be rewritten. She had tried to convince him that the phrase, "family is family and business is business" was too wordy. She had also suggested that he replace "biggest" with "most important." This situation is similar to the one that occurred with Malachai's paper. The reader/critic corrected his text on the paper, but the writer, while recognizing that there was a problem, did not accept the correction. Instead, he rewrote the beginning of the sentence so that it read, "One thing I am able to take from my father is that . . ." While this may not seem to be an improvement in terms of clarifying the sentence, it did lead Troy to write a strong, simple topic sentence for the paragraph: "Dad has taught me many valuable lessons about life." Teresa also encouraged Troy to rewrite the sentence, "The most important thing I've learned from my father is that family is separate from business." While Troy did keep the wordy phrase ("family is family and business is business") as a later detail, he employed Teresa's suggestion in his rewrite.

This demonstrates one situation where the suggestions of the reader and the point-of-view of the writer have merged effectively. The writer did not take the literal

suggestions of the critic, but utilized them as a launching point to think about what he had written, to take their point of view into consideration, and employ it as he considered a possible rewrite. This, it seems to me, demonstrates much of what I have been talking about in this study. It demonstrates the value of having people with different perspectives come together, even if they do not seem to agree with each other. Indeed, much of the transcript of Group 4's discussion sounded more like a debate at times than a team working toward a common goal. However, that interweaving of Interpretants ultimately resulted in a Social Interpretant, in an understanding, that would allow the writer, in this case Troy, to better understand what he had written. It allowed him to understand his text in a new light, to rewrite it, and potentially improve it. And that, in my mind, is what cooperative learning is all about. If nothing else, this lone example is indicative of the struggle that learners must engage in if they are to form a sub world, a sense of social unity, a bond, a trust that will allow them to benefit in some way from what the others know.

Conclusion. This brief sketch of the results of the coding of these papers is but a cursory glance at the types of changes that resulted from the revision session discussions that these students participated in. It was never my intention to evaluate them in depth (for that perhaps would be another study altogether), but to gain a sense of the types of changes the students made, and how those changes may or may not have related to their revision session discussions. Identifying points of contact between the discussions and actual rewriting efforts is partially a matter of opportunity. First the advice has to be given, and then the writer must decide what to do with that advice. In some small way I think that I have helped to demonstrate that this is not just a matter of "taking" advice. I

am not sure there is an instance where a student "took" someone's advice and that was that, except perhaps for a few minor grammatical corrections. What they have done, I hope this study has in some way demonstrated, is that revision advice may be appropriated, brought into their mental concept of the text they are working on, and then used as a tool to aid them as they write. The group's Social Interpretant, carved out with such great force through the efforts of the speakers, becomes a part of their own semiotic complex, is modified, and then becomes some tiny part of their knowledge base. It is in this way that social action influences individual efforts.

Appendix 2

Transcription Symbols

The following symbols were used in the transcription of the taped conversations utilized for this study. They are modified from the Jeffersonian Notation System used by conversation analysts, and modified to use symbols readily available on a modern computer keyboard.

Symbol	Meaning
ALL CAPS	Speech louder than surrounding speech.
Underlined text	Speech in which the words are stressed.
<Angle brackets>	Accelerated speech.
>Reverse angle brackets<	Slowed speech.
Colons:::	Extended sound.
#Pound sign#	Whispered or softer speech.
*Asterisk before	Rising intonation.
Asterisk after*	Falling intonation.
Equal sign=	No measurable pause between adjacency pairs.
Dash-	Speech is cut off by the speaker.
( )	Unintelligible speech.
(Enclosed in brackets)	Probable transcription of a difficult segment of the tape.
Brackets between lines	Overlapping speech of at least two speakers.

Symbol	Meaning
Numbers enclosed in brackets	
(1.3)	Pauses between (or within) utterances timed in 1/10 of a second.

It should also be noted that no conventional punctuation or capitalization is used. This is done to preserve, in as much as it is possible, the physical features of the text.

Appendix 3

Revision Guide

What follows is a reproduction of the revision guide sheets that were actually given to the students in this study.

Collaborative Learning Fun Sheet

A. Directions

1. Respond by writing on this sheet to the following questions as the group believes they should be answered.

2. If the group is not in agreement, indicate the group's response followed by the responses that varied from the group's.

3. Take turns being secretary by changing secretary after each answered question.

4. Return this sheet to the author upon completion.

B. Questions.

#1 How does the thesis DIRECTLY reflect an appropriate response to the assignment? If it strays, tell how.

#2 Write out the main ideas, and tell how EACH supports or lacks support for the thesis.

#3 Does each paragraph have UNITY? See p. 74 of the SS. Tell how EACH paragraph could be better UNIFIED by giving a specific example.

#4 Is each topic sentence clearly worded and placed at the beginning of each body paragraph? Write at least one example of how the wording might be changed for clarity for each of the topic sentences.

#5 Does each paragraph have coherence? See p. 82 of the SS. Tell how each paragraph could be better UNIFIED by giving a specific example.

#6 Does the introduction make you want to read the essay? Tell how it

could better seduce the reader into being interested.

#7 Does the essay fulfil the assignment? Why or why not?

#8 How can the author better use RENNS? See p. 80. Give at least two examples.

#9 Point out the area of the essay that needs the most work and write out how it might be better-give specific examples.

#10 Point out what you liked most about the essay-be specific.

#11 The concluding paragraph should have no new information introduced-check to make sure that this essay conforms to this rule.

#12 Does each paragraph read with clarity? Give two examples where you think that the word choice could be clearer.

#13 Give two examples of sentences that sound awkward or unbalanced and give an example of how they should be worded.

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