CONTEXTUALIZING COLLABORATION:
PORTRAITS OF WRITING GROUPS IN COMPUTER-SUPPORTED CLASSES

DISSERTATION

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By

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INTRODUCTION

At the 1991 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) convention in Seattle, a group of English teachers heard novelist Maxine Hong Kingston tell the story of her California house burning to the ground with the manuscript for her next book still inside. Kingston told the group that after the fire, when she began to think about the painful task of rewriting, she wondered "whether she should write the second draft not alone in a garret but 'in a more communal way,' with friends helping" (167-68). Although Kingston's idea that she might choose to experience writing as a collaborative venture rather than to endure the rewriting of her manuscript in solitude was born of a shocking loss, her idea may not have surprised many of the English teachers in her audience. As active members of NCTE, they would have been familiar with the growing corpus of literature which advocates "collaboration" as an effective means of writing instruction. Many of them would have experimented with peer response groups such as those described in Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers (1981), Kenneth Bruffee's A Short Course in Writing (1985), or James Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968); some may even have asked students to go beyond peer response and to have group members draft single texts together.
Whatever the case may be, it is certainly not unusual in most process-oriented writing courses of the 1990's to see students engaged in a variety of group-oriented activities. According to Anne DiPardo and Sarah Warshauer Freedman's 1987 report for the Center for the Study of Writing, many teachers of writing recognize that "groups present an arena for intervening in the individual's writing process, for working collectively to discover ideas, for underscoring the writer's sense of audience, for interacting with supportive others at various points in the composing process, and even, perhaps, for developing the writer's intuition (3). Teachers and researchers often characterize writing classrooms in which students work together for such purposes as "collaborative classrooms."

During the last ten years, various aspects of such classrooms have been the focus of a growing number of research projects. A brief discussion of one experimental project that examined the writing of college-age students in a "collaborative classroom" describes in detail some characteristics of a collaborative pedagogy and points to the effectiveness of collaboration as an instructional method. A critical look at the project also suggests that researchers studying collaboration need to think carefully about their choice of methodology. The study in question is John Clifford's 1981 "Composing in Stages: The Effects of a Collaborative Pedagogy." In

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1 For the perspective of a teacher who feels strongly that groups have no place in any writing or literature classroom, see College English 54 (1992): 356-358. This letter by Robert M. Martin was written as part of an on-going dialogue in response to Jane Tompkins' "Pedagogy of the Distressed" (College English, October 1990), an essay in which critical theorist Tompkins describes her discovery of the benefits of student-centered learning, benefits that have long been recognized in composition communities.
the study, Clifford set up an experimental, collaborative classroom that met the following criteria: Writing was considered "a process that encouraged meaning to evolve as drafts were written in response to feedback" from both peers and the teacher (44); instructors served as "facilitators, resources, model writers, and learners" and students, working in groups of six, "collaborated with each other and the instructor"; and authority was shared in the classroom, with the primary audience for writing being a writer's peer group. In the experimental collaborative class, grading was done holistically by an elected class committee. In the control class, however, the instructor assigned grades and served as a teacher and evaluator in the classroom. In addition, "only finished products were considered" for response and evaluation, with teachers being the audience for students' writing. Students sat in rows, and commercial texts served as examples of specific guidelines for organization and developing ideas in writing, guidelines which were taught directly by the instructor (44). In examining data from the collaborative, experimental class and the more traditional control class, Clifford found that "the experimental group made significantly greater gains on a holistically scored writing sample" and that "there was no difference in mechanical knowledge or performance even though the control group was directly taught every class" (37).

Taking issue with Clifford's findings, David Smit has argued that time in the experimental classroom was spent primarily in writing and responding workshops, whereas little time was spent practicing writing and receiving responses in the control classroom (54). Smit contends that these differences between the two kinds of
classes have nothing to do with "collaboration." I want to suggest, however, that
time spent with in-class writing and responding are natural by-products of a
collaborative pedagogy. Since, by their very nature, social approaches to the teaching
of writing open up students' writing processes for input from peers as well as
teachers, they do usually result in students' receiving more and more varied kinds of
responses. And, in collaboratively-oriented classrooms, where teachers spent less time
presenting material directly in class, there is inevitably more time in class for students
actually to write and respond to writing. Smit, however, is correct in pointing out
the difficulty in isolating variables when studying the effects of something as complex
as a collaborative pedagogy. In fact, most researchers suggest that, at this still early
stage of research on collaboration, it is necessary to build a base of qualitative work
that seeks to discover rather than to isolate variables. For that purpose, richly
descriptive work that points to patterns among various collaborative classes is needed
(e.g., Forman, Lunsford and Ede).

In response to this need for qualitative research on collaboration, from January
to March of 1991, three computer-supported, collaborative classrooms at The Ohio
State University became the focus of an eleven-week long ethnographic research
project which is the basis for this dissertation. The classes included a third-year
business communication course (English 304C), a first-year basic writing course
(English 060), and a second-year critical writing about literature course (English
302C). Each of the classes was supported by 21 networked Macintosh personal
computers, and each course required students to engage in a range of group-oriented
activities, including at least one group-authored essay. In keeping with the
ethnographic nature of the project, the questions driving the study were relatively
broad and open-ended; they can be summarized as follows:

(1) In what ways were the three classroom environments "collaborative,"
according to the teachers, students, and me (I played the role of
ethnographic participant-observer in the classes).

(2) Did the dominant features of the classroom environment before and during
the group-authored assignment play a significant role in shaping students’
experiences in writing a group-authored essay?

(3) Did factors internal to the peer groups shape the group writing process
significantly?

Questions 2 and 3 are similar to ones posed by Freedman and DiPardo in the Center
for the Study of Writing report cited earlier (12). My questions, however, differ
slightly from theirs because, going into the project, I decided to focus specifically on
group-writing processes and on how such processes are shaped by features of the
classroom contexts. These contexts might include, but are not limited to, students’
experiences with collaborative activities such as peer response to individually-authored
texts, the primary focus of Freedman and DiPardo’s report.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation provides a rationale for my focus on group
writing processes. I argue there that as potentially the most "extreme" form that
collaboration can take, a group working together to author a single text has the most
to teach us about what factors are likely to influence collaborative writing processes in
general (including, for example, the more common classroom collaborative activity of "peer response"). Embedded in this rationale is an exploration of the problematic issue of defining "collaboration." Because—as composition theorists such as Andrea Lunsford, Lisa Ede, and Melanie Schneider have pointed out—in the past, problems with defining collaboration have posed significant roadblocks to the process of accumulating knowledge about collaborative pedagogies, it is important to deal with that issue up front. With a clear sense of how terms such as "collaborative classroom," "collaborative learning," and "cooperative learning" are defined in a particular project, it will be possible for future researchers to draw upon that study as part of a theory-generating process (Schneider 27). Indeed, for the validity of this project itself, it is important to explore the various denotations and connotations of these terms that I brought to the project as a participant-observer and to review briefly the scholarship on collaboration that has most strongly shaped the biases with which I began the project.

The second half of Chapter 1 describes the research project's ethnographic methodology, focusing on criteria for selecting the classes studied, the nature of my participant-observer role in the student groups, procedures for data collection, and some general characteristics of the three classrooms as settings and as "cultural scenes" (Spradley and McCurdy 22). Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of modes of presenting ethnographic data and provides a rationale for using a narrative mode to describe the writing processes and group dynamics of writing groups in the three classes studied.
In Chapter 2, I describe the dominant features of the business communication classroom as a scene for collaboration, providing significant background information about the course, the teacher, and the students. This chapter examines the ways in which and the extent to which teachers, selected students, and myself as participant-observer saw the courses as "collaborative." Chapter 3, then, focuses on the five-member writing group itself. Beginning with a narrative of the group’s interpersonal dynamics, which focuses on distribution of power and leadership in the group, the chapter concludes with a detailed ethnographic description of the group’s process of composing a direct mail letter. The four chapters that follow are paired in the same way: Chapters 4 focuses on the basic writing classroom scene and Chapter 5 on the collaborative work of one group from the basic writing class as its members investigated gender issues in university classrooms; Chapter 6 describes the critical writing classroom scene, and Chapter 7 describes one group’s interpersonal dynamics and writing processes as its members explored together the issue of socioeconomic class in Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie." These portraits of writing groups in the context of the classroom scenes in which they were formed constitute the heart of the dissertation.

My decision to center the dissertation around these pairs of largely descriptive chapters in which data is presented primarily in a narrative mode was influenced by two book-length studies in the field of composition: Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson’s 1986 Through Teacher’s Eyes: Portraits of Writing Teachers at Work and Catherine Dorsey-Gaines and Denney Taylor’s prizewinning 1988 work Growing Up Literate:
Learning from Inner-City Families. Both works are based on ethnographic research and both sets of authors present their data similarly. *Growing Up Literate* begins with detailed ethnographic descriptions of four different families and their literacy experiences, shifting in later chapters to begin categorizing and analyzing similarities and differences among the literacy experiences of the four inner-city families. In *Through Teacher’s Eyes*, the authors first describe the school district upon which their study of the classrooms of six teachers who had gone through a National Writing Project Summer Institute is based and tell the story of their process of formulating research questions. The majority of the text, however, is devoted to what is described on the back cover of the book as a process of taking “readers inside classrooms to show how six teachers committed to a writing process approach make writing--its discovery and its power--available to their students.” It is only in the final chapter that Sommers and Wilson ask themselves "how these individual portraits come together and offer us larger views of what it means to teach writing" (247). Significantly, in both texts, it is clear that the authors recognize that the ethnographic narratives are as important--and arguably more important--than any of the analyses subsequently offered by the authors. They are the means through which readers can participate in the ethnographic experience, and, through that experience, readers can share in the researcher’s process of making meaning.

Like the later chapters in *Growing Up Literate* and *Through Teacher’s Eyes*, the final chapter in this dissertation identifies patterns that emerge from the analysis of ethnographic narratives as I compare and contrast the group and writing processes
of the business communication, basic writing, and critical writing groups studied. Inevitably, different readers will construct different patterns, and this fact is both an advantage and a risk that goes along with a researcher's presenting detailed narratives based on fieldnotes, taperecordings, and the participant-observer's memory. Chapter 8 draws upon data from all three classes studied to present an enriched view of collaboration and to elaborate upon the pedagogical implications of such a view.
CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout the process of conducting research for this study, I operated under an assumption that, broadly defined, a "collaborative classroom" is a learning environment where activities center around students working in groups and in which both teacher and students are conscious of the fact that learning is taking place primarily through a social, rather than a competitive and/or individualistic, process.\(^2\) This assumption was strongly influenced by the existing scholarship on collaborative pedagogies in general and by the growing collection of works which specifically address how theories of collaboration might inform the teaching of writing. My thinking was also influenced by literature I read prior to this project that offered sometimes competing and conflicting definitions of specific terms that fall under the umbrella term of "collaboration." The following four strands of related background materials are important to this research: (1) Teaching in collaborative writing classrooms, (2) Computers and collaborative writing classrooms, (3) Definitions of

\(^2\) As John Trimbur points out, the ideal collaborative writing classroom is usually characterized as one which (1) shifts the initiative and responsibility away from the teacher and toward groups of students, (2) involves students actively in their own learning, and (3) assumes social interaction is valuable for learning to write ("Collaborative Learning" 89).
cooperative and collaborative learning, and (4) Definitions of collaborative writing.

Teaching in "Collaborative" Writing Classrooms

As the following paragraph in Gertrude McVenn's 1918 text Good Manners and Right Conduct suggests, social methods of learning have a long, rich history in education, and a particular philosophy of teaching has long been associated with the task of effectively teaching students in collaborative groups. McVenn writes:

Teaching should be chiefly by the indirect method. The formal didactic method should be for the most part avoided. . . . For example, if a spirit of selfishness seems to rule the class, then until that is in a measure broken up, plan your lessons with a view toward inculcating habits of generosity and helpfulness by the practice of working in groups, the members of each group having a definite result of their cooperative behavior to look forward to—an end which requires not one or two but everyone of the members to accomplish. (iv)

Although McVenn's prescriptive tone might seem to belie her own belief in the power of indirect teaching, the advice itself that she offers here to teachers is strikingly similar to a contemporary definition of collaborative learning: "Collaborative learning is a form of indirect teaching in which the teacher sets the problem and organizes

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3 In her dissertation, "Collaborative Learning from 1911-1986: A Sociohistorical Analysis," Mara Holt found that calls for the use of collaborative pedagogies in the United States date back to the early 1900's. The long history of collaboration in writing classrooms has also been documented in at least two recent book-length studies (Anne Ruggles Gere's 1987 Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications and Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede's 1990 Singular Texts/Plural Authors).

4 For another example of an early 20th century text which advocates social learning see Sterling Andrus Leonard's textbook English Composition as a Social Problem (1917).
students to work it out collaboratively" (Bruffee "Collaborative Learning" 638).

In keeping with the notion of "indirect" teaching, it has become common practice for compositionists to refer to "collaborative classrooms" as "student-centered" places where a traditional "banking concept of education"--as described by Paulo Freire--is rejected in lieu of a less hierarchical system in which students and teachers learn together and from each other. Collaborative pedagogies, generally, aim to empower students as authority is decentered in the classroom; they offer a critique of traditional "top-down" structures of teaching and learning. They are generally perceived as emancipatory, empowering alternatives to traditional "teacher-centered" instruction (Trimbur, "Collaborative Learning," 89).

To achieve in practice the compelling vision of students writing and learning from each other in groups described by advocates of collaborative pedagogies, however, poses a significant challenge for most teachers. Almost any writing teacher can tell horror stories of group-oriented assignments that resulted in disaster. And even when group-oriented work seems to go relatively well, teachers often report, as Jone Rymer did in a presentation at the 1990 Association for Business Communication Conference, a sense that when students are working in groups, instructors are left without a clearly identifiable role to play in the classroom. For some instructors, the loss of control that can come with discarding conventional roles in the classroom results in a feeling of being "threatened by the sheer force of peer influence in its potential to undermine organizational norms of the school" (DiPardo and Freedman 4).
Indeed, whether teachers feel threatened by having relatively autonomous student groups in class may affect the extent to which and the way in which they intervene in the groups. According to Anne Ruggles Gere, the issue of just when and how much teachers should intervene in student collaborative groups is usually dealt with differently by different teachers, with some of them participating nearly equally with students, some leaving groups completely alone, some stepping in only when problems seem to be occurring, and some moving from group to group to monitor behavior, offer suggestions, or model ways of interacting in a group (Gere 108). To help teachers make decisions about issues such as intervening in groups and establishing a classroom environment that is conducive to effective collaboration, researcher/teachers such as Harvey Weiner, Anne Ruggles Gere, Thomas Tryzyna and Margaret Batschlet, Jone Rymer and Elizabeth Malone, and Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede offer fairly specific, concrete advice to instructors of collaborative classrooms.

Some of the most practical suggestions available for setting up "student-centered" classrooms can be found in Harvey Weiner's frequently cited "Collaborative Learning in the Classroom: A Guide to Evaluation," an article that, at one point, was distributed to teachers of computer-supported, collaborative classrooms at The Ohio State University. Citing his colleague Kenneth Bruffee, Weiner emphasizes that for learning to take place collaboratively, teachers must not allow themselves to remain the central authority figures in the classroom; they must give assignments that "call on what students can be expected to know in a way that will lead them together beyond what they already know" (241-243). Otherwise, he claims, students will be
working in groups, but they will not be true "collaborators." To encourage collaboration, Weiner suggests that teachers pay attention to the physical layout of the classroom (chairs should be "organized in well-spaced clusters"), to how well group members work together, and to whether questions posed to student groups have more than one answer. He cites Peter Hawkes' observation that "[s]ometimes in mere group work the teacher sets a task or poses a question that has an answer that the teacher has already decided on. Groups take on the role of the smart kid in class who guesses what's on the teacher's mind" (241-243).

According to Weiner, teachers may guide students in beginning a task by leading a brainstorming session or explaining a point, but they should then avoid joining student groups uninvited. Keeping busy with other tasks or even leaving the room are perfectly acceptable ways for the teacher to spend group-time. As Kenneth Bruffee writes, teachers must "be able to bear the acknowledgement that learning can go on without their immediate presence," for their role is not to provide information but to serve as a "metteur en scène whose responsibility and privilege it is to arrange optimum conditions for others to learn" ("The Way Out" 470). Finally, Weiner claims that the teacher must at some point play the role of "synthesizer," drawing upon knowledge made by student groups to "help the class move further toward joining another community of knowledgeable peers, the community outside the classroom, the scholars who do research in the discipline, who establish the conventions of thinking and writing in those disciplines, who write books and articles and read papers on the problem at hand" (245).
Other possible roles for teachers of collaborative classrooms to play are described by Anne Ruggles Gere in her 1987 monograph, *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications*. She argues that a teacher's first task is to establish a positive, supportive climate of trust between student and teacher and among students themselves. Unless time is invested in "establishing trust, developing collaborative skills or discovering those developed outside the classroom, and learning to critique writing," Gere claims, school-sponsored writing groups rarely work (103). Teachers can establish an appropriate classroom climate by modeling a respectful attitude in how they deal with students, by giving all students a chance to talk in class at least briefly--perhaps as part of a daily attendance routine--and by ensuring that student writing is frequently read aloud in class (103). According to Gere, students also need practice in responding to writing in whole-class critique sessions, perhaps with experienced writing group members doing a "fish bowl" demonstration of how they work together for the whole class to observe (105).

Establishing a nurturing, cooperative classroom atmosphere is also important to Thomas Trzyna and Margaret Batschelet, two experienced teachers who argue that the most common problems that occur in collaborative classrooms evolve out of the tension between "the desire to cooperate and nurture on the one hand and the desire to compete on the other" (24). Problems range from students abdicating their responsibility to participate in a group to individuals taking over the work of others (26). Students act in these dysfunctional ways in response to what Trzyna and Batschelet characterize as an ethical dilemma: If it is necessary to choose between
the objective of collaboration producing the best possible product or collaboration resulting in the best possible learning experience for all group members, how should the choice be made (27)? They suggest that teachers have a responsibility for making students who choose to freeload, for example, aware of the fact that they may be making an unethical choice. At the same time, group members who sit back and let a fellow member do nothing should be encouraged to see that they have a personal, ethical responsibility for making sure the group process is just (32). The teacher's first job, though, is to make clear whether the group members will be evaluated on their process as well as the merit of their product. Trzyna and Batschelet consider the most egalitarian approach to be one in which "groups would not compete against each other, every group would work to achieve a standard of competence, and any final public presentation of the products would include both a demonstration of competencies and a discussion of the group process" (29). Discussion of ethics, altruism, and justice should either be built into the topic of group assignments or made part of the class in some other way throughout a course. The ideal course, then, would move from general discussions of collaboration and ethics, to brainstorming sessions with no graded product, to peer editing, to graded group assignments, with ethical issues being brought to the fore whenever possible during the latter activities (31).

Consideration of ethical issues can also take place in the context of student journals which focus on interpersonal and group communication. For Jone Rymer Goldstein and Elizabeth Malone, journals give students the opportunity to write to
release tensions, to assess the progress of their tasks, to analyze participants and the interaction, to plan ways to influence their group's process, and even to build team spirit (119-123). The instructor, then, can use the journals to "see the group's world through the eyes of each member and . . . facilitate and monitor the team process without stepping in and taking over" (127). Rymer Goldstein and Malone recommend that teachers write comments on journals which "encourage students to move beyond their present status of group and self investigation" rather than ones that demand answers or ask for a response (128-129). They suggest that comments accept the validity of and empathize with students' comments, be adapted to students' personalities, and draw upon the teacher's knowledge of group interaction processes (129).

Although journals are not specifically mentioned, recommendations that students in groups be given opportunities to "monitor and evaluate individual and group performances and to reflect upon processes that made for effective--or ineffective--collaboration" also appear in Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede's 1990 *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. To date, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors* is the most comprehensive exploration of collaboration as it relates both to writing classrooms and the workplace. However, the book focuses as much or more on raising questions and pointing out possibilities than it does on offering specific advice to teachers of collaborative classrooms. For example, the authors raise the important question of how issues of gender, race, and class impinge on collaboration (so far, Mary Lay's work on gender, which recommends that
students develop "androgy nous" interactional styles for collaboration, is the only study
to examine closely how an issue of difference shapes work students do in a post-
secondary writing classrooms where students write together). In terms of specific
advice to teachers, Lunsford and Ede suggest that, in addition to asking students to
monitor and analyze group processes, successful collaborative writing assignments
have these characteristics:

(1) They allow time for group cohesion (but not necessarily consensus) to
occur and leadership to emerge.

(2) They call for or invite collaboration; students need to work together in
order to complete the assignment effectively.

(3) They allow for the evolution of group norms and the negotiation of
authority and responsibility . . . .

(4) They allow for and encourage creative conflict and protect minority views. .

(5) They allow for peer and self evaluation during and after the assignment.

Beyond these guidelines, however, Lunsford and Ede hesitate to draw conclusions for
teachers based on their own research or that of others, suggesting that work on
collaboration is still at an early stage. Instead, they point to various options that are
available when it comes to forming groups, determining group size, and deciding
upon the role groups will play in a class. Teachers are urged to look critically at
available advice and models as more informed pedagogies of collaboration are
developed (122). As Lunsford and Ede point out, if we are not careful, "collaborative
practices uncritically imposed on a classroom can yield merely a disguised version of
the same old teacher-centered, authoritarian theory of learning, a version that
confuses students with the mixed and contradictory messages it sends" (Singular
Texts 140).

Computers in Collaborative Writing Classrooms

While Lunsford and Ede's work is rightly noted for its comprehensiveness,
notable in its absence from Singular Texts/Plural Authors is a sustained discussion of
the relationship between collaborative writing classrooms and computer technology.
Research in the last decade, however, has suggested that computers are often an
important factor in collaborative writing classrooms. In fact, I chose to study
computer-supported classes for two reasons: (1) at Ohio State, the classrooms that
are officially designated "collaborative classrooms" are equipped with computers, and
(2) most current research suggests that the presence of computers in a classroom can
contribute to making a writing classroom a collaborative community. For instance,
in a review of studies conducted since 1981, Gail E. Hawisher notes that studies of
computers in writing classes--many of which focus on elementary school students--
suggest that the computer plays a role in "transforming writing from a private to a
public activity" (Reid 1985) and in "creat[ing] a collaborative social organization in
which considerable talk related to writing [takes] place" (Dickinson 1986). A search of
ERIC documents and Dissertation Abstracts International reveals numerous studies
which point to a positive correlation between computers and collaboration among
students (see, for instance, Herreman, Moberg, Reynolds, and Harris et al.). The research cited by Hawisher also suggests that students using computers tend to write longer, more mechanically-correct texts, and that they exhibit positive attitudes toward writing (64). Hawisher argues, however, that many of these studies—even, and in some cases especially, the qualitative ones—"fail to describe adequately the full environment and social milieu by which the activity of writing might well have been shaped" (57). For Hawisher, computers are just one factor—albeit an important one—whose role in the writing classroom may not be any more significant than the role of other factors, including the nature of the writing instruction students receive, the writing habits students bring with them to the class, or even students socioeconomic backgrounds and academic standing (56).

Despite her criticisms of insufficiently contextualized studies, however, Hawisher herself has published an article based on informal, periodic visits to computer-supported classes that she made with Cynthia Selfe (both Hawisher and Selfe edit the journal Computers and Composition). In "The Rhetoric of Technology and the Electronic Writing Class," Hawisher and Selfe argue that phrases such as "student-centered classrooms" and "community of learners" have become buzz words in our profession. They point out that while technology continues to hold out exciting promises for writing instruction, it is often difficult for teachers to look critically at the paradoxes that may be inherent in their own uses of technology. Specifically, in observing computer-supported writing classrooms, Hawisher and Selfe observed "instructors [walking around the room, looking eager . . . for someone in
the class to need them in some capacity." They report on "rather contrived
discussions" in George Hillock's presentational mode which focused on students'
theses projected off of a computer and onto an overhead screen. It was, they wrote,
an environment which simply magnified the power differential between students and
teacher (61). Group activities, too, were problematic, with effort put forth by students
often being "one aimed at pleasing the instructor rather than one illustrative of active
engagement with their classmates of the texts" (61). Of course, Hawisher and
Selke's "spot checks" of computer-supported, collaborative classrooms certainly do not
qualify as research, for they do not account fully for the contexts in which the
observed activities took place; nor do they take the viewpoints of teachers and
students into consideration. Nevertheless, the points they make are important, for
their observations reflect the fears of Lunsford and Ede cited earlier that in
collaborative classrooms--and even in computer-supported ones--traditional models of
teacher-centered education can be difficult to dislodge. Their observations, while not
conclusive, pave the way for future research, for research which looks beyond the
sometimes euphoric feeling that results at first from having computers in a classroom
to examine critically the role of computers in collaborative classrooms.

Definitions of Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

Up to this point, it has been possible to rely upon the rather broadly-defined
term "collaborative classroom" as a basis for discussing general teaching philosophies
and common attitudes toward computer technology held by advocates of collaborative
pedagogies. However, some relatively fine distinctions have been made between the collaborative activities and assignments that are emphasized in different collaborative classrooms. Of course, on one level, it is common to think of a collaborative activity as one in which people are working together in a group. Yet researchers and teachers from different disciplines and even within disciplines often use very similar terms to describe what seem to be significantly different kinds of work in groups.

For example, in 1979, educational theorist Robert Slavin coined the term "cooperative learning" to describe highly-structured activities in which elementary school students work in four- or five-member teams and each member is expected to become an expert on a particular topic. After discussing their topics in "expert groups," students share what they have learned with their teammates and then take a quiz on all the material. As M. L. J. Abercrombie found in her work with medical students in the 1960's, students working in groups can learn "to consider alternative judgements and to choose from among many instead of blindly and automatically accepting the first that comes; in other words, we may become more receptive or mentally more flexible" (17).

However, since Slavin's work comes out of the disciplines of education and behavioral psychology and his cooperative learning activities are not necessarily tailored for writing classrooms, his work is not especially well-known in the field of college composition studies. The term "collaborative learning" is far more common. In his frequently cited 1984 article, "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" compositionist Kenneth Bruffee became the first scholar to articulate a
connection between what he calls "collaborative learning" and an epistemology known as social construction. Social constructionist theory, in fact, had been influencing scholars across the disciplines since the 1960's, with one of the earliest and most seminal works on social construction published in 1966 by two sociologists, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman. And among the movement's subsequent pioneers are philosopher Richard Rorty, author of Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979), anthropologist Clifford Geertz, author of Local Knowledge (1983), and psychologist Kenneth Gergen—who addressed the American Psychological Association in 1983 on "The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology." Basically, advocates of a social constructionist view look at "reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on as community-generated and community-maintained linguistic entities—or more broadly speaking, symbolic entities—that define or 'constitute' the communities that generate them" (Bruffee, "Social Construction" 774). The explanations and applications of social constructionist theory offered by Kenneth Bruffee have led many teachers of writing to follow this line of thought: If knowledge is indeed created in communities through language, why should we expect students to write in isolation, away from the kinds of influences that make invention of ideas and therefore writing possible? Why, in fact, shouldn't we give students opportunities to write together?

Specifically, Bruffee calls upon teachers to set up peer tutoring programs in which students help each other learn established conventions of academic discourse communities through tasks carefully designed by their teachers. The main function of these peer groups, according to Bruffee, is to provide a social context in which
students can experience and practice the kinds of conversations valued by college teachers" ("Collaborative Learning " (652). In other words, what Bruffee calls "collaborative learning" is, in effect, a socialization process by which students help each other learn what the teacher already knows.⁵ His emphasis on socialization, or acculturation, is no doubt related to the fact that his model was designed in part to respond to the problems created by the influx of nontraditional students to universities as a result of open-admissions policies. New pedagogies were needed, it seemed, to serve the needs of students not groomed for traditionally hierarchical ways of teaching. Thus, whereas Bruffee's means for educating these students was, at the time, a progressive alternative to traditional "top down" approaches of education, the legitimacy of his end--to acculturate students into the ways of the academy--has since been called into question. In fact, by using the term "collaborative learning," a term first used by radical education reformer Edward Mason, Bruffee may have set himself up for some of the criticism which has been leveled against his extremely influential work.⁶

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⁵ This emphasis on collaboration as a means of acculturation also appears in the work of Terry Bacon, a writing researcher with 13 years of experience as a business consultant. Bacon suggests that in a corporation, collaborative work socializes new employees to learn about the organization's values and attitudes through the behaviors modeled by experienced workers. See the Bulletin for the Association of Business Communication, June 1990: 4.

⁶ See John Trimbur's "Consensus and Difference" for a critique of collaboration as a process which seeks "consensus as an acculturative practice that produces business as usual" (27).
For Mason, "collaborative learning" is a philosophy of education more than a set of pedagogical practices. In his 1972 book *Collaborative Learning*, Mason argues for far-reaching changes in British and American educational systems. He writes: "Put at its simplest, the charge against the present system is that nobody within it can really act well; pupils can do no other than underachieve; teachers can do no other than overdirect" (107). One of the most important solutions to the problem, Mason argues, is to engage students in "interdisciplinary Enquiry [sic]," a collaborative learning process which should "not be handled as an instructional method, nor as a way of leading to conclusions predetermined by the teachers. No holds, no media, no questions should be barred" (119). This free-form learning would be "a continuous process of collaborative decisions made between a focus group of students and clusters of pupils on what to tackle next and how to proceed" (119). Interestingly, Mason acknowledges that reaching this stage could take "as long as three years, during which time the initiative lies mainly with the teachers" (119). Considering this acknowledgment, Bruffee's teacher-initiated peer tutoring program could be considered a sort of "pre-collaborative learning" in Mason's sense of the term. Yet because of how carefully the teacher structures work in groups in Bruffee's model and because the model's goal is not to set students free to construct their own, or challenge existing, discursive conventions--and perhaps thereby challenge the kinds of discourse privileged in the university--Bruffee's collaborative learning is actually more similar to Slavin's cooperative learning than it is Mason's philosophy of collaborative learning.
Kenneth Bruffee, in fact, is not the only compositionist whose identity as a collaborative learning theorist is currently being called into question. The work of compositionists who Jim Berlin calls "expressionists" is also being challenged on the grounds that it is not truly "collaborative learning." Take Peter Elbow's work, for example. As his method of teaching writing is described in Writing without Teachers, it can be easily distinguished from Slavin's teacher-directed cooperative learning and from Bruffee's accommodationist model of peer response: Elbow's teaching method emphasizes writers expressing personal authenticity in their texts to such an extent that experienced readers and writers--like teachers--are really no more qualified to help writers discover their voices than are other readers. However, in Singular Texts/Plural Authors, Lunsford and Ede question whether Elbow's brand of collaborative learning ought to be labeled "collaborative" at all. They argue that when collaborative learning takes the form of "Elbow grouping," students are not engaging in social interaction so much as they are "mining the depths of the self, searching inside the self for a unique voice" (114). In fact, Elbow's response groups do not ask students to negotiate meaning with their peers as they would if the emphasis of the response sessions were on writers taking readers' responses into account as they work toward constructing texts that would be persuasive in a particular rhetorical situation. Instead, as Lunsford and Ede argue, students in groups using Elbow's model of peer response are expected to "hold implicitly to traditional concepts of autonomous

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7 See Writing without Teachers and Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process. In the latter text, Elbow writes about the "magical" ways in which writers find and express their authentic voices.
individualism, authorship and authority for texts" (113).

It is possible to say, then, that whereas Bruffee's model for peer response tends to emphasize collective consensus and conformity at the expense of divergent points of view that might be offered by individuals in a group, Elbow's model emphasizes individual knowledge at the expense of knowledge that might be constructed by a group. Depending on what actually occurs in practice, however, I want to suggest that it is possible for collaboration--defined as students' sense of having socially constructed knowledge--to occur, or not to occur, in either model. In other words, any time students work together in activities of these kinds, they may or may not recognize that they have made some meaning, or invented an idea, that they would have been unlikely to have created without interacting with other people. Thus, when considering these models in theory only, it is perhaps more appropriate to consider to what degree various models of peer response emphasize a social process of making meaning than it is to ask whether or not they are in some absolute sense "collaborative." In fact, as Schneider suggests, even the larger "distinction between collaborative and cooperative learning is more useful when viewed as a continuum rather than as discrete categories" since collaborative learning can--and often does-- "co-exist with cooperative or individual learning in the same classroom, and even in

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8 Schneider makes a similar point when she notes that cooperative activities may not lead to real learning, even though students may appear to have completed the assigned activity. It is possible, she claims, for students to "participate in the activity, and even arrive at a mutually agreeable solution without really learning anything" (32).
the same writing project" (35).^9

Definitions of Collaborative Writing

The issue of whether the various guises that collaboration takes on in writing classrooms should be viewed as merely different points on a collaborative continuum or as fundamentally different kinds of learning activities is also relevant to a discussion of a third term, "collaborative writing." Until recently, for composition researchers, "collaborative writing" has most often been used to refer simply to collaborative or cooperative learning activities, particularly when they take the much-studied form of peer response groups. However, according to Mary Debs, most researchers and teachers of technical writing define collaborative writing as "two or more people writing (drafting) a document together" (Debs 478).^10 Certainly in the impressive number of publications on the subject by researchers such as Jone Rymer, Janis Forman, Barbara Couture, Meg Morgan, Kitty Locker, and Nancy Allen et al., there is a clear indication that for business and technical communication researchers, "collaboration" almost never means peer response. Business communication researcher John Hagge even considers peer response an impractical use of class time since writers in the workplace rarely engage in it. On the other hand, assignments

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^9 See also the discussion of definition in Lunsford and Ede's Singular Texts: Plural Authors, pp. 116-118.

^10 Lunsford and Ede also use this definition in Singular Texts/Plural Authors when they describe their research project which focused on writing in professions outside of academia.
which call for multiple-authorship are becoming increasingly popular among teachers of business and professional communication at the post-secondary level since research suggests that group-authorship is common in the world of work.\textsuperscript{11} Such assignments follow a principle which Eric Rabin and Macklin Smith call "pedagogic parallelism," a term which refers to having a "teaching activity parallel the real world activity about which it is teaching" (8).\textsuperscript{12} Thus, business communication researchers have led the way in studying group writing, with Allen et al., a research team from Purdue that conducted some of the first research on coauthorship, coining the term "shared-document" collaboration to refer to group-authored collaboration.

In this dissertation, I use the term "shared-document work" to refer to group-authored writing projects, "peer response" (rather than "collaborative learning") to refer to activities in which students are commenting on what are, for all practical purposes, each other's individually-authored documents, and "cooperative learning" to refer to the kinds of highly-structured "expert" groups described by Slavin. However,

\textsuperscript{11} In "What We Learn About Writing on the Job," Lester Faigley and Thomas Miller report that in a sampling of college-educated employees, 75\% of the people surveyed work with others on documents; 10\% of them do so exclusively, and a survey of members of six major professions by Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede revealed that 87\% of the 530 respondents sometimes wrote as part of a team ("Research Update").

\textsuperscript{12} See William Van Pelt and Alice Gilliam-Scott’s "Peer Collaboration and the Computer-Assisted Classroom: Bridging the Gap Between Academia and the Workplace." They argue that teachers should model classroom work on writing practices in the workplace only with the understanding that the degree of developmental maturity necessary for successful collaboration, important management tools, and key institutional resources are usually not present in a relatively short-term classroom writing experience.
whereas this parceling out of collaborative activities into discrete categories may suggest otherwise, I operate under the assumption, perhaps best articulated by Karen Burke LeFevre, that on one level, any use of language—whether written or spoken—is inherently collaborative and social. As LeFevre points out, the social aspects of rhetorical invention are many if, as many modern theorists do, we conceive of the self as socially constituted and of language itself as socially created and shared (2). She describes the social nature of rhetorical invention as follows:

Invention often occurs through the socially learned process of an internal dialogue with an imagined other, and the invention process is enabled by an internal social construct of audience, which supplies premises and structures of beliefs that guide the writer. Invention becomes explicitly social when writers involve other people as collaborators, or as reviewers whose comments aid invention, or as “resonators” who nourish the development of ideas. To create discourses such as contracts, treaties, and business proposals, two or more writers must invent together. Finally, invention is powerfully influenced by social collectives, such as institutions, bureaucracies, and governments, which transmit expectations and prohibitions, encouraging certain ideas and discouraging others. 2

For LeFevre, then, it is even possible for individuals to "collaborate in some sense with dead or absent thinkers who have paved the way for present creativity," (67) and, by LeFevre’s broad definition, a student interacting with a text to produce his or her own text is in one sense engaging in "collaboration."

The fact that, like Lefevre, I see all language as social and all writing as, in varying degree of explicitness, collaborative leads me to see various "forms" of collaboration (i.e., peer response, shared-document work) not as fundamentally different in kind but as different primarily in the degree to which they are obviously
collaborative. Other researchers interested in collaboration have reached this same conclusion. For instance, in a recent article, Mary Debs presents a useful matrix that makes it easy to visualize various collaborative writing activities as different points on a continuum rather than as fundamentally different kinds of activities.

Debs writes:

Understanding collaborative writing, then, requires examining two processes: the writing process and the group process. To capture most variations of collaborative writing, we can set up continuums along two perpendicularly intersecting axes. One axis locates authority: To what extent is the writer's decision-making autonomous or regulated? The other axis indicates the range of social perplexity: Will the writer interact with one person or many? [For example,] ... peer editing and supervisor editing would be considered collaborative activities, but they would be located in opposing quadrants. The multi-authorship activities of group, team, or committee writing would be located near the center of the matrix. 479

Debs' matrix is an important contribution to research on collaborative writing since it promises to create an awareness on the part of researchers that studies to date have

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13 See, for example, Colette Dauite's Written Communication article, "Do 1 and 1 Make 2?". Her project is an example of research on shared-document collaboration in a writing class, although she studied fourth-graders, not college students. Unlike researchers in business and technical communication for whom the relevance of any study of shared document collaboration is basically taken for granted, Dauite finds it necessary to explain her choice to study shared document collaboration as opposed to peer response: "This exploration is not meant to pit [shared-document] collaboration against [student-peer and student-teacher] conferencing; rather, it is intended to identify the value of collaboration as a direct model for developing individual composing processes" (384). Thus, Dauite assumes an audience inclined to see peer response and co-authorship as pedagogical possibilities that might be "pitted against" one another, readers who will see the two forms of collaboration as being fundamentally different from one another and potentially in conflict. The fact that Dauite felt compelled to confront the "issue" of her focusing on shared-document work rather than peer response reflects the tendency to see different forms of collaboration in discrete categories.
often fragmented collaboration by treating activities such as peer response and shared-document work as discrete, fundamentally different categories. As a result of such fragmentation, most studies which examine shared-document collaboration in classrooms, never consider ways in which other collaborative activities, and the overall classroom context in general, might provide insights into the nature of the shared-document work which occurred.

Definitions which fragment the realm of possible activities that might be called "collaborative writing" may also contribute to the reluctance of some first-year composition instructors to assign their students shared document writing tasks, even when those instructors are perfectly comfortable with peer response. That is, when shared document assignments are considered fundamentally different from "individual writing" or "individual writing with peer response, they do not seem like practical assignments. Instructors reason that unless students are majoring in a business-related field, they will probably not be asked to write in groups in their upper-division university courses. Thus, the process of thinking carefully about a definition of collaborative writing is clearly important, for definitions of the term may have significant impacts upon both teaching and research.

The Study

As the research questions listed in the Introduction indicate, this study focuses primarily on shared-document collaboration. However, the ethnographic methodology I used allowed me also to examine dominant features of the classroom contexts in
which the shared-document work occurred. I therefore sought to identify ways in which these contexts may have played a role in shaping students' shared-document writing processes.\textsuperscript{14} I chose to focus on shared-document collaboration because, situated as it is in the center of Debs' matrix described above, it potentially engages writers in what might be considered the most "extreme" form of collaboration. That is, even though students may opt to divide the writing task into parts written by individuals, there is nevertheless the opportunity for them almost completely to leave behind the notion that writing is fundamentally an individual activity. If co-authorship is thus considered an extreme degree of collaboration--rather than a discretely different kind of collaboration--then a study that focuses on co-authorship but that also takes into account other collaborative activities that may be part of a collaboratively-oriented course might be expected to reveal the importance of variables that might otherwise go unnoticed. Often, it seems to me, studying something in its potentially most extreme form makes available data that might not ever surface in less exaggerated circumstances.

This project can be distinguished from published research on shared-document collaboration in two important ways. First, because, while numerous researchers have studied shared-document writing processes in business and technical communication classrooms and in the workplace, studies which focus on other kinds of first-year or advanced composition courses are rare. Virtually all the published, qualitative,

\textsuperscript{14} Examining important aspects of the classroom contexts inevitably included asking how activities like peer response were set up by the teacher and responded to by students.
classroom research on shared-document writing at the post-secondary level can be found in collections such as Mary Lay and William Karis' Collaborative Writing in Industry: Investigations in Theory and Practice, anthologies which focus exclusively on business or technical writing.15 This study examines two very different kinds of writing courses in addition to a business communication course: a basic writing course and a critical writing about literature course.

Second, my role as a researcher in the project was different from the roles typically assumed by ethnographic participant-observers studying post-secondary composition classrooms. In each class studied, I took on the role of student in an attempt to experience collaborative classrooms from an undergraduate’s perspective. According to ethnographer James Spradley’s classification of participant-observation roles into five types ranging from "nonparticipation (1)" to "complete participation (5)," my role in the groups was that of an "active participant (4)" (see sections entitled "Researcher’s Role" in Chapters 2, 4, and 6 for detailed descriptions of the role I played in each class). In no published study of writing groups engaged in shared-document collaboration has a researcher taken on a role that allows for sharing the "environment, background, language, rituals, and social relations" of the groups to the extent which my active participant role did (Van Maanen 3).

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15 See Janet Forman’s "Leadership Dynamics in Computer-Supported Writing Groups," Mary Lay’s "Interpersonal Conflict in Collaborative Writing Groups: What We Can Learn From Gender Studies," and Ann Hill Duin, Linda A. Jorn, and Mark S. DeBower’s "Collaborative Writing--Courseware and Telecommunications." A dissertation study by Mary Ann Janda is also noteworthy since it examines shared-document work at a variety of age-levels and in four significantly different contexts.
The project's overarching purposes can be summarized as follows: (1) to identify dominant features of the three collaborative classroom scenes, (2) to highlight ways in which these features combine with other factors to shape students' processes of co-authorship, and (3) to distinguish between features regarding collaboration that are relevant to all the classes and those which appear to be context-bound.

Criteria for Selecting Courses

Two of the most important criteria I used in selecting the courses to focus on in the project have already been mentioned: I wanted to find courses in which student groups produced shared-documents and in which they had the opportunity to use computers in their collaborative work. Beyond these criteria, I also looked for courses that were in other respects quite different from each other. Ideally, there would be differences in students' ages and majors, or in teachers' instructional styles and position in the academy's hierarchy (i.e., graduate teaching associate, instructor, assistant professor) because such differences made it possible to identify which issues that arose in a particular class seemed to be primarily related to the teaching and learning of collaborative writing and which concerns seemed to be a function of the fact that the course was, say, a basic writing course for freshman students or a business writing course made up of juniors and seniors.16

16 In her 1988 dissertation, Mary Ann Janda applies similar reasoning. She studied shared-document writing processes used by four extremely different groups of writers and then looked for commonalities in their writing processes. The groups included grade school children, college seniors, an interdisciplinary committee concerned with a public health issue, and journalists writing a newspaper column.
Here is a summary of all the criteria used in selecting English 304C (Business and Professional Communication) taught by Katherine Green, a graduate student in English; English 060 (Basic Writing III) taught by Julia Brown, a full-time Lecturer and graduate student in the English department; and English 302C (Introduction to Critical Writing) taught by John Marlowe, an assistant professor of English:

- Each course syllabus should include at least one assignment asking students in writing groups to produce together a single final draft of a document.

- Each course should be taught Winter Quarter 1991 (so that I could study three classes in the same quarter).

- Each course should be taught in a computer-supported classroom.

- Together, the courses should include as wide a range as possible of kinds of students, that is, in terms of number of years in college, level of writing ability, ages, academic majors, and experience with collaborative writing, working in groups, and using computers.

- The teachers should be as distinctly different from each other, if possible representing different ages, sexes (and genders), races, ethnicities, teaching styles and philosophies, positions in academy's hierarchy, attitudes toward and expertise in using computers, experience with teaching collaborative writing, and number of quarters teaching in the computer-supported classroom.
Of course, many other similarities and differences between the teachers and the
courses simply could not have been predicted ahead of time—these differences and
further details about the specific ways in which the classes and teachers studied meet
these criteria are discussed in detail in Chapters 2, 4, and 6.

Research Methodology

To achieve the purposes I had set for the project, a broad consideration of
classroom contexts combined with a close look at the shared-document composing
processes of one group in each class were needed. These needs could best be met by
employing an ethnographic research methodology. Through experiences with
previous projects, I came to this study aware of some significant strengths and
weaknesses inherent in several different approaches to ethnographic research. One
previous project, for instance, involved simply observing collaborative student writing
groups at work in class, taking field notes, and tape-recording in-class group
meetings. In another, I played the role of participant-observer, serving as a sort of
second teacher in the classroom studied. At the same time, like many teachers, I had
often observed my own students working in groups and had drawn conclusions about
what was happening in their groups based on observable group dynamics and on the
nature and quality of written work. In fact, virtually all of what we know about the
nature of student writing groups comes from a similar combination of teaching
experience and naturalistic research projects. However, my experiences made me
acutely aware that the knowledge made by means of these methods is limited because
teachers, observers, and participant-observers playing "teacher-like" roles all necessarily remain almost complete outsiders to the student groups being observed, and they ultimately have little access to the group's social world.

As a result of discussing this problem with sociolinguist and ethnographer Marcia Farr during her autumn 1990 visit to The Ohio State University, Farr suggested that I consider taking on the role of a student in the classroom in order to obtain an undergraduate's perspective on how computer-supported student writing groups work. Taking Farr's advice, I sought to take on a role similar to that played by folklorist Amy Shuman in her ethnography of storytelling in a junior high. Shuman describes the role she played in that project as follows:

>The teacher introduced me to his class as a person who was interested in "what it's like to go to this junior high." In other classes and in subsequent semesters, I became known as someone who was writing a book about the school. In the school, I spent most of my time with students. I attended classes, went to lunch in the student lunchroom, participated in after-school activities and special interest clubs, and spent time in the hallways. Although I did not disguise my purposes, I attempted to fit in with student groups: For example, I dressed according to the norm of some of the female students . . . . I was for the most part accepted by student groups. (7)

Similarly, I became a member of a student writing group in each of the three classes I studied and worked with the undergraduate group members both in and outside of class to complete assignments.¹⁷ I told the students that I was a graduate student . . . .

¹⁷ Previous researchers have focused only on in-class collaborative writing sessions, which means they are often left to speculate about what went on between class meetings. For example, Duin, Jorn, and DeBower did a content analysis of transcripts from in-class group meetings of students in a junior-senior level technical writing course. Because most of the group's discussion of audience took place
doing research to find out "what it's like to do collaborative writing in a computer classroom," but I never divulged the fact that I had taught writing courses at Ohio State because, if I had, I think it would have been extremely difficult for them not to see me as an authority on anything our group wrote. Like Shuman, I spent my time in class with the students rather than with the teachers and asked the teachers to treat me as if I were just another member of the class, with the exception of the fact that I wouldn't be doing all of the out-of-class individual writing assignments. (See Chapters 2, 4, and 6 for discussions of ways in which playing the role of student posed slightly different kinds of challenges in each of the three classes studied).

Data Gathering

As an active participant-observer, I attended all winter-quarter class sessions for each of the three courses. I also participated in a total of twelve out-of-class meetings during the quarter, including four of the five held by the critical writing group, seven of the nine held by the business communication group, and the one meeting held by the basic writing group.\(^{18}\) With just a few exceptions (usually due

\(^{18}\) The significant difference in the number of out-of-class meetings for each group is a reflection of the fact that the students in the basic writing class and the critical writing class wrote only one collaborative assignment (along with a collaborative oral presentation) whereas the business communication students wrote all of their major writing assignments in groups. I missed one group meeting in the critical writing class and two meetings of the business communication class group, both because of unavoidable professional conflicts. Also, the final class session for the basic writing class conflicted with a group meeting in the critical writing class, and I
to problems caused by the noise from the computers interfering with the
taperecorder's microphone), all class sessions, group meetings, and open-ended
interviews with students and teachers were taped. Informal conversations also yielded
useful insights in students' experiences in the classes and with collaborative writing.
I also took field notes, collected copies of students' "individually authored"\textsuperscript{19} essays
and journals, and was allowed to keep the drafts from the writing groups once we
finished working with them. Near the end of the quarter, students completed a short
questionnaire, and I conducted several post-quarter interviews with the teachers of
each class. Finally, both students and teachers completed the Bem Sex Role
Inventory (BSRI), and their responses provide information about how they perceive
themselves in terms of gender, that is, in terms of points on a continuum which the
BSRI labels "masculine," "feminine," "undifferentiated," and "androgynous." The
responses to the BSRI made it possible for me to discuss gender dynamics in the
groups without simply equating gender with sex.

\textsuperscript{19} Of course, in most cases, these so-called individual assignments involved
collaboration with the teachers through the latters' written and oral responses to
drafts. Further, students also engaged periodically in peer response--sometimes as a
planned classroom activity and sometimes at their own initiation.
The "Cultural Scene" and the Setting

Ethnographers such as Shirley Brice Heath and Dell Hymes have questioned the extent to which qualitative studies of classrooms that purport—as I have done—to use "ethnographic research methods" can accurately be considered ethnographies. According to Hymes, a comprehensive ethnography would consider "all the types of scenes in which students and teachers participate, in order to assess validly the meaning of the behavior in one scene" (30). Here, Hymes is using "scene" to denote something other than the kind of physical place about which the word usually makes us think. In their 1987 book on doing ethnography in complex societies such as our own, James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy define cultural scene as "the information shared by two or more people that defines some aspect of their experience" and note that "cultural scenes are closely linked to recurrent social situations" (24). Because my study took place over a period of ten weeks and involved paying close attention to approximately fifteen people (counting only the groups members and the teachers, although I did interview and observe other students), it certainly was impossible to attain the kind of comprehensiveness that Heath, for example, did in her ten-year-long study of the Roadville and Trackton communities. Even so, by participating actively in the groups both in- and outside of class, I did gain a sense of the kinds of different cultural scenes the students were parts of (apart from the classes) and of how the particular scenes they shared or didn't share with each other may have been affecting the dynamics of the writing groups. For instance, the group from the critical writing class included a male who
lived in a fraternity house, another male who lived in Morrill Tower (a dormitory), and two females who rented off-campus apartments. One of the two group members who lived off campus was the only African-American student in the group, and the other a student who was just returning to school after having worked in a factory for several years. Although all were OSU students and potential English majors, the chances that this particular combination of people would ever have associated frequently with one another in any context other than the English class is difficult to imagine. By participating actively in the group, which involved giving and receiving rides home, talking casually with students while waiting for other group members to arrive at a group meeting, and seeing them interact with friends outside the group who they inadvertently ran into as we met outside of class, I gained insights into their social and academic lives outside of this group to which we had all been assigned by a teacher. This perspective added richness to my interpretations of group dynamics and writing processes.

Not to be confused with the cultural scene, which includes the knowledge the students in the three courses came to share as members of the classes (or perhaps as participants in their groups within the classes), the physical place where much of the actual writing and instruction occurred is also an important aspect of this study. The business communication and critical writing classes met in the Ohio State English Department's computer-supported "collaborative classroom" (Denney 343), and the basic writing class met down the hall in Denney 307. In each of the classrooms, students worked with MacWrite II software, with the PC's in the room being linked by
means of a local area network. Each of the rooms was equipped with five Imagewriter printers, although Denney 343 also had a laser printer. That classroom also had five round tables in the center of the room for collaborative work without the computers and individual PC's around the periphery of the rectangular room (see Appendix A). For the first half of the quarter during which I undertook my fieldwork, Denney 307 looked a bit different. It also had PC's against three of the four walls, but instead of round tables, there were four large, rectangular tables in a U-shaped formation, with the teacher's table separate from the students' tables, at the open end of the "U." During the second half of the quarter, round tables replaced the rectangular ones in room 307, making the setup almost exactly like the configuration in room 343. Often, out-of-class group meetings took place in the Denney 343 lab, where many (but not all) of the students came to feel most comfortable working.

Presentation of Data

Moving from fieldwork ("how culture is known") to text ("how culture is portrayed") is in many ways a project of its own, independent of the data-gathering work (VanMaanen 4). As Harry F. Wolcott explains in his monograph Writing up Qualitative Research, upon leaving the field, qualitative researchers must then "determine the basic story [they] are going to tell, who is to do the telling, and what representational style [they] will follow for joining observer and observed" (18). In a 1987 article for Written Communication, Linda Brodkey discusses the dilemmas these kinds of questions create for ethnographers, focusing on the "epistemological crisis
that authorship raises for the social sciences, namely, whether the researcher or the research method is telling the story" (25). In other words, Brodkey explains, a controversy exists between experimental ethnographers who argue that ethnography should be candidly authored by an ethnographer writing in first-person (interpretive narratives) versus traditional ethnographers who cast the method as the narrator by writing in third-person (analytical narratives), a style which conforms to standard expectations for academic prose. She points out that "whereas analysis presumes that researchers discover information in data, interpretation presumes that researchers construct information from data" (31).

While Brodkey ultimately argues for the value of narratives--whether or not they are deeply embedded in academic discourse--other scholars and researchers have taken stronger stands on one side or the other of the debate. In the 1991 issue of the Journal of Advanced Composition, Michael Kleine calls upon writing researchers using ethnographic methods to join radical anthropologists in acknowledging openly that as discourse, ethnographies are inevitably rhetorical and an ethnographer's data is a means by which the ethnographer socially constructs reality. He argues that it's not enough simply to write in first-person and to acknowledge a subjective bias in reporting on the people being studied (123). Instead, he calls for a "meta-discourse that is both reflexive and unpretentious" and that reflects upon the ethnographer's experience, much as Bronislaw Malinowski did in his controversial A Diary in the Strictest Sense of the Word (123-124). Most recently, the rhetorical aspects of ethnography have been discussed by Carl G. Herndl. Herndl argues that we need to
find ways to "acknowledge and integrate the ethnographer's constitutive activity within the ethnographic text . . . . to make the critical gesture at the same time that we describe findings" (323).

In presenting data from my fieldwork in the chapters that follow, I use first-person to describe the groups and the collaborative classrooms as I saw and experienced them over the course of eleven weeks. Because of my active participation in the groups, it also seemed most appropriate to use a narrative mode to present data concerning shared-document writing processes. I decided that making and supporting various arguments about the group's writing processes could not do justice to the complexities of the data, to the richness of the work that went on among students and teachers. At the same time, writing a primarily "confessional" ethnography that focused primarily on me and my experiences as a researcher--as Malinowski's diary does--seemed too self-absorbed. I decided, then, to focus in Chapters 2-7 on telling the stories of groups' shared-document writing processes with limited meta-commentary or analysis. In those chapters, I sometimes present my data in a format similar to what ethnographer John VanMaanen calls "impressionist tales." In Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, VanMaanen describes these tales as follows:

Impressionist tales present the doing of fieldwork rather than simply the doer or the done. They reconstruct in dramatic form those periods the author regards as especially notable and hence reportable. Tales often initiate an analysis of the nature of cultural understanding and the fieldworker's role as student. Reflective, meditative themes may develop from the story and spin off in a number of fieldworker-determined directions. The story itself, the impressionist's tale, is a representational means of cracking open the culture
and the fieldworker's way of knowing it so that both can be jointly examined. Impressionist writing tries to keep both subject and object in constant view. The epistemological aim is then to braid the knower and the known. (102)

As VanMaanen goes on to describe the conventions of these tales in more detail, it becomes clear that this approach works especially well when the researcher is an active participant in the cultural scene being studied and if the people being studied are relatively few. This last criterion can be important in telling an impressionistic tale because the ethnographer must be able to render the people in the study as "real" rather than as representative "types" in order to "draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it, as far as possible, to see, hear and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard, and felt" (VanMaanen 103). In the next chapter, I set the scene for the first of the three tales of shared-document collaboration.
CHAPTER II

THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CLASS AS A SCENE FOR COLLABORATION

In a growing number of contextualized studies of writing in classroom environments, researchers and theorists interested in how social factors affect writing have demonstrated the ways in which the contexts in which people compose greatly influence their writing processes and attitudes toward composing.\(^1\) One collaborative writing researcher committed to a social perspective, Janis Forman, has recently set a research agenda for work on collaborative writing that rests on the assumption that shared-document collaboration, like any act of composition, is always influenced by the context, or the "scene" in which it occurs. Using Kenneth Burke's term "scene" to refer to the "background of the act [of collaborative composing], the situation in which it occurred" (242 qtd. from Burke), Forman explains that according to Burke's dramatistic theory, scenes constrain the activities of the actors performing within them; they are "no mere descriptive backdrop to collaborative activity, but, rather, [they are] an essential constraint on the activity, guiding and limiting [groups'] collaborative practices and products" (242). As a result, the context or "scene" for an act (or process) of shared-document collaboration is complex and fluid, with agents in

\(^1\) See, for example, Bizzell, Beach and Bridwell, Brandt, Faigley, 1985; Nystrand, Rafoth and Rubin, Herrington (1985), Cooper, and Prior.
a scene influencing that scene even as scenes influence the agents within them (Forman 242). Focusing on a business environment, Forman separates her notion of scene into two categories: (1) organizational environment (including organizational expectations about writing practices, organizational structure, top management philosophy/strategy, and MIS policy and (2) external environment (including competitive environment, industry/functional area standard for collaborative writing, nationality/language/cross-cultural concerns, and class/ethnicity/gender/race).

Researchers concerned with classroom environments focus on similar factors--including teachers' philosophies, formats for class meetings, and uses for computers in the classroom--as being potentially important parts of a writing scene. The work of Herrington, Mosenthal, and Prior in particular suggests that studies of students' writing processes should include descriptions of instructors' viewpoints and teaching methods since a teacher's ideology, goals, ways of structuring the class, and even personality can have significant effects on students' writing.

This chapter provides such background and contextual information about the first of the three collaborative classes I studied--Business and Professional Communication (English 304C). In the pages that follow, I set the "scene" out of which the group dynamics and writing processes described in Chapter 3 evolved, seeking whenever possible to provide insights into both the teacher's and students' perspectives on the course. To serve as a basis for comparison with the basic writing and critical writing classroom scenes described in Chapters 4 and 6, I also describe
the role I played as researcher in the class. In short, this chapter identifies significant factors which worked together to create the intellectual, emotional, and social classroom climate in which students participated in processes of shared-document collaboration.

Background: The Course and the Teacher

Business and Professional Communication is a 3-credit English department course which is taken by students in a variety of fields, including advertising, agriculture, marketing, education, and so on. Only junior and senior-level students are admitted to the course, and every quarter, in every section, a long list of students wait to get in. For most students, the course fulfills a requirement for graduation, although students do have several 300-level writing courses to choose from in fulfilling that requirement. The course is designed to give students experience in the kinds of problem-solving and writing tasks that they can expect to face in non-academic settings.

In Winter quarter of 1990, a new version of Business and Professional Communication was created, a computer-supported section called English 304C, making Business Communication one of the English Department’s first upper-division courses to be taught in a computer-supported environment. The new version of the course was taught in the special classroom described in Chapter 1 (Room 343) which was designed for experiments with teaching and researching collaborative learning and writing in a computer-supported environment. The
director of the English department's business and professional program, Professor Kitty Locker, taught one of the first two sections of the new 304C course, and she invited Katherine Gates, a 26-year-old graduate student with almost two years of experience in teaching Business Communication, to teach the other one. As Kitty Locker's research assistant, it was my job to observe a student group in Professor Locker's pilot class, taperecording the groups' in-class conversations and taking fieldnotes. A brief description of the process by which Katherine, Kitty, and I worked together to the new 304C course is appropriate at this point since Katherine was the teacher of the 304C course I studied for this dissertation project, and the history of our work together naturally affected the role I played in her class.

Since 304C was definitely scheduled to be taught in the "collaborative classroom" only a short time before the beginning of Winter quarter 1990 classes, Katherine and Kitty had to work together quickly to adapt the traditional business communication course. They both had previously taught the course in much the same lecture-oriented way since Katherine had been trained to teach the course in a graduate practicum taught by Kitty, a course she took her second quarter as a master's degree candidate. Before that, Katherine had been through a quarter of training to teach first-year composition and was teaching Ohio State's first-year writing course at the time. With little time to design the course, the two of them were in the difficult position of putting together a collaborative writing course without having time to familiarize themselves thoroughly with what the research and advice to teachers was available to them in scholarly journals or books.
Not surprisingly, the collaborative course they designed ended up reflecting the tendency in business communication to view collaboration as exclusively shared-document work. Concerned with covering the material that the traditional course would while engaging students in shared-document writing tasks, Katherine and Kitty asked students to produce roughly the same number of documents in groups that they would have written in the traditional course as individuals. And after students received grades, they were given the option to revise for a higher grade, an option which many of them took because the groups’ first grades were almost always fairly low, the idea being that they could revise as much as they wanted to get potentially whatever grade they sought. Students also wrote "product-process" memos after each project in which they analyzed their groups’ writing processes and products. Like the traditional course, the collaborative course did not involve students in peer response; Katherine told me that she had never had much success with such activities when she taught first-year writing and so she wasn’t eager to attempt them again. In general, student groups in the classes were given little instruction about group writing processes, although they did do some role-playing and reading about group dynamics. For the most part, student groups were left to themselves to discover workable processes for completing what Katherine and Kitty later recognized to be an inordinately high number of collaborative projects.

Unfortunately, Katherine, Kitty, and most of the students considered the newly-designed collaborative course a disaster. As a result, Katherine and I (who were both scheduled to teach the course the next quarter) sat down with Kitty to
brainstorm sources of the problems, a process of rethinking which Katherine and I continued in the following weeks. During this time, Katherine and I came to know each other fairly well and found that we could work together. She brought to our collaboration her undergraduate experience as a double English-Business major and several years of experience in the business world, including a summer working at Walt Disney's Epcott Center and two years as an Employee Benefits Manager for a major insurance company. I brought to our work my perspective as a specialist in composition theory (Katherine's graduate coursework focused on literature), as a writing instructor with several more years of experience than Katherine had, and as an undergraduate educational theory and practice major. The course we designed together is essentially the same as the one Katherine taught during Winter quarter 1991 when I was a participant-observer in her 304C course.\(^2\) By that time, Katherine had taught the course three times, I had taught it once, and both of us had become familiar with much of the literature on collaboration reviewed in Chapter One. Katherine and I were also completing the final draft of a co-authored article describing the course and the rationales behind it.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Katherine made at least one fairly significant change in the course. In Spring 1990 when we both taught the new course, we had assigned students a topic for their first project and provided them with all the materials they needed to write on that topic, even to the point of bringing relevant guest speakers to class. Recognizing that students wanted more freedom and that, given that freedom, could enthusiastically research their own topics, Katherine gave them free rein in topic selection.

\(^3\) The article outlines very specifically some of the views that both Katherine and I held about teaching a "collaborative" writing course at the time when I conducted my research in her class and in the other two classes. The points made in the article, however, reflect a consensus that Katherine and I were able to reach on many issues
The Students

The 17 students who enrolled in Katherine's Winter 1991 304C course included eight women and nine men, all juniors or seniors, ranging in age from 21 to 24. Except for one Japanese student and one Pakistani student (the latter had attended high school in the United States), the racial constitution of the class was extremely homogenous; the remaining students were all Anglo-American Midwesterners. Students' majors included everything from advertising, to fashion merchandising, to economics, criminology, and public relations. Beginning in the second week of class, each student was placed in a group with three or four of his or her peers. Group composition remained the same throughout the quarter so that once students became comfortable with their group members, the groups could stabilize and mature to a point where groups could experiment with different patterns of collaboration for different projects.

regarding collaboration. It almost certainly does not reflect the full range of doubts, questions, and complexities that characterized either of our ways of thinking about collaboration at the time of the study. Nor does a piece of writing that reveals what we say we do or want to do in a collaborative classroom necessarily reflect what goes on in practice. Therefore, I will not use the article as a basis for characterizing Katherine's thinking; I will rely instead upon her journals, class materials, interactions with students, comments made in class, and interviews I conducted with her during the study itself.
How Groups Were Formed

To assist her in putting students into groups, Katherine required class members to fill a brief information sheet that asked them to indicate their class rank, the extent of their experience with the Macintosh computer, and whether their tendency was to be most concerned with the quality of work or the quality of relationships among people in the collaborative group. She also asked students to indicate whether they were graduating because graduating students must complete their courses a week early. If collaborative group members were aware of the special scheduling needs of graduating seniors from the beginning of the collaborative process, Katherine reasoned, the group could make any necessary adjustments at the end of the quarter. The information sheet also asked students to list three qualities that they would like most to see in their fellow group members, three qualities that they would not like to see in them, and the qualities they see in themselves that might account for the responses to the two previous questions. In addition, students had the opportunity to request people they wanted to be grouped with and to provide any other information that they thought should be considered when groups were assigned. Finally, Katherine asked for students' schedules so that she could avoid grouping people together who simply could not meet at the same time. In addition, Katherine also looked at a nongraded memo that students wrote either to introduce themselves to the class or to explain their experiences and attitudes toward writing.

Working with all this information, Katherine spent three hours one evening putting groups together (she allowed me to observe and taperecord this session, and
we discussed some of decisions that needed to be made together although ultimately the final choices were made by Katherine alone). The students in the group to which I was assigned--Tina, Sana, Mike, and Brian--had all indicated that they had no preference as to with whom they were grouped. Except for Sana, these students were typical of the class as a whole in that they were well-acquainted with collaborative projects from previous courses they had taken in marketing or communications, and their experiences in those classes influenced how they felt about group projects.

For Tina, a junior majoring in Family Relations and Human Development who was very active in group activities with her sorority, group projects always seemed to mean that she ended up being the only one willing to take responsibility for seeing a project through to the end. I met Tina on the first day of class when Katherine left the room after having asked us to mingle and get to know each other so that we could introduce someone to the class. Tina’s first reaction made a strong impression on me: She said in a very disgruntled voice, "Why is she wasting our time with this?" She then went on to say that she hated working in groups and that she had just finished taking a course in communications in which all group members didn’t do their share of the work. For Tina, whose closed body language in early class sessions seemed to say very clearly that she did not want to be there, working in a group meant time commitments that would be very difficult to fit into her already busy schedule. Katherine told me that she wanted to make a point of grouping a student with Tina who seemed to have a very good attitude toward the class since she considered Tina potentially "troublesome." That student turned out to be Sana.
Like Tina, Sana had a busy schedule, but her commitments were more academic than social--she was a graduating senior carrying 23 credit hours. A Pakistani woman who always wore traditional Moslem headcovering, Sana was majoring in geography, had a strong background in computers, and was used to getting mostly A's in school. She began to have strong reservations about working in a group after she received a "D" on one of the individual assignments that Katherine had assigned to move students step-by-step through the first group project (see the section below on the first shared-document assignment). She told me that the step-by-step process was better for the group paper but not for individuals' grades (Taped Interview 2-8-91). Her concern about her grade, it seemed, led her to reflect upon her feelings about groups in general, for she proceeded to tell me that she "never really liked groups," especially parties, but even sitting down to eat dinner with both her parents and her brother at the same time. When working in a group, she said, "I think there's always a question of whether you would have done better [by yourself]." In her modest way, she referred to herself as selfish for having that view, but said she could not help feeling that "if someone else can come up with ideas, maybe I can too." Another concern she had about groups was that she disliked dealing with conflict of any kind and became very upset about disagreements, even when with a group of close friends.

Sharing Sana's dislike for conflict, the third group member, Brian, also told me that he preferred individual projects to group ones, mostly because they were easier in that they allowed him greater control (Taped Interview 2-11-91). At the
same time, however, he told me that he recognized that working individually "would be defeating the purpose of this class because it's trying to get people to feel more comfortable collaborating. If you were doing a project like [our group's first project], you would have to bring in people, like, from other departments to help you do it--from research to actual writing to printing it." This kind of positive attitude was characteristic of Brian, a fifth-year senior majoring in Hospitality Administration whom Katherine described as "just a genuinely nice guy" who seemed to be a very "teachable student." In fact, she made a point of putting him in the group with Tina primarily for the same reason she had placed Sana there--she assumed that with his easy-going nature, he would get along with the potentially troublesome Tina.

The final member of the group was a slim, blond fraternity man, Mike, who distinguished himself on the second day of class by wandering into class late and interrupting the computer workshop by informing Katherine that he had just added the class and needed a syllabus. As Katherine and I marveled later, he seemed completely unaware that he had just brought a room of twenty students to a complete standstill with his request. Then, when Katherine asked him to make an appointment with her after class, he did so but never showed up for the appointment. Instead, he was there at the next class meeting waiting for his handouts and ready to ask questions about the first assignment. Katherine told me that his introductory memo seemed to correspond with her first impressions of him as a good-natured, sociable, but less than conscientious student. She slotted him into the group with Tina and Sana because he seemed to share a life-style similar to Tina's with its
emphasis on Greek organizations and because she hoped that Tina and Sana would not "put up with him screwing around."

Finally, based on their introductory memos, Katherine considered the writing skills of all four group members to be fairly average: There were writers in the class who were clearly more skilled and less skilled than Mike, Brian, Sana, and Tina. I was placed in this group in part because all of them had indicated that they would be willing to work with anyone and also because Katherine knew that Tina and I had met each other on the day when she left the room so that students could get acquainted with one another.

**Researcher’s Role**

Surprisingly, as the group began working together, I found it rather easy to play the role of student in English 304C. When I introduced myself to the class, I told everyone that I was a graduate student in English doing a research project and that I wanted to find out what it was like to be in a collaborative classroom from a student’s perspective since working in groups can be difficult, and since teachers need to know how to make groups work well. As a member of a writing group, I made a point of not providing students with information about the course in general—or really about anything else in particular—that I thought it would have been impossible or unlikely for a typical student to have known at that point in the quarter. Following this policy became especially difficult when I perceived myself to have information that would benefit my group members. However, on those and
numerous other occasions, to play the role of student effectively, I felt as though I had to "play dumb," and--often with at least mild reservations--I did just that. The students did not seem to connect the idea of my being a graduate student with the fact that I might teach undergraduates, nor did they seem to understand or think about the fact that as graduate students in the same department, Katherine and I were, at least, colleagues. They seemed to think of me as a student like themselves, just one who knew a little more and was a little farther ahead of them in school. In turn, since they were in their third, fourth, or fifth year at OSU, quite mature, and very well-adjusted to college, I felt in many ways their peer. And, at age twenty-seven, I really was not significantly older than these twenty-one-to twenty-four year-old students.

Most important, however, it seemed that since Katherine and I knew each other well it was somehow relatively comfortable for us to act as though we did not know each other any better than Katherine knew other students in the class. Our mutually high comfort level with this small deceit was, I think, made possible through detailed discussions of exactly how each of us would act toward the other in the classroom; we both clearly understood why it was necessary to maintain a fairly distant but friendly relationship with each other if I were to successfully identify myself as a student. Katherine even put responses and grades on my individual work, and I think that the fact that she evaluated me really defined me as a student in the
eyes of my fellow group members.  

Perhaps my best sense of how my group members perceived the role I played in the group comes from comments in their group analysis memos and journals. In her first journal, Tina wrote: "Kelly is the reality-bound member. She is very down-to-earth and likes to keep what we do fairly simple. Her experience as a graduate student is helpful when it comes to analyzing how a teacher will grade our assignment." Sana, in turn, wrote, "Kelly was essentially an 'encourager,' offering praise and positive reinforcement and a follower being an audience for other group members. I think she deliberately wanted to stay in the background so she could observe group dynamics. She is very flexible about being able to meet with the group." These kinds of comments suggest to me that I was able successfully to present myself as someone that the group members perceived as more of a peer than as an authority figure or teacher.

The Winter 1991 Curriculum

The Winter Quarter English 304C class met on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. On the first day of the course, students were asked to purchase a textbook (Locker's Business and Administrative Communication), a packet of additional materials that Katherine wrote and/or compiled herself and made available at a local copy center, and two computer diskettes. Students had the

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4 As far as individual work is concerned, I wrote a memo introducing myself to the class, a series of memos written in-class, and three short memos which were associated with the first shared-document assignment.
opportunity to understand the purposes and set up of the course from Katherine's perspective by means of three different sources: a Syllabus and Class Procedures handout distributed on the first day, a course packet, and a brief lecture Katherine gave on the first day of class, most of which was based on a 3-page-long section in the course packet titled "Business Writing, Collaboration, and Computers."

Both the lecture and the course packet began with a greeting: "Welcome to English 304C!! The "C" stands for two unique features of our class—collaboration and computers." In actuality, the University had added a "C" to the course number only because of the computers, but Katherine made a special point of defining the course as collaborative, in part by giving the "C" its double meaning. Her class procedures also reflected the fact that the course was "collaborative": The first procedure listed explains that students should read the textbook as a source of help for group projects, recognizing that "we will not normally 'go over' material in class that is assigned in a reading." And the second one, addressing the issue of attendance, reads as follows:

Because of the collaborative nature of the class, your attendance at meetings scheduled by your group outside of class is especially important. When you can't attend a group meeting, demonstrate your commitment to your fellow group members by letting them know in advance that you have a time conflict. Go the extra mile by writing down your ideas or mapping out a rough draft and send it along to the meeting with another group member. After the meeting, use the telephone to catch up with other group members and find out what you missed rather than just waiting to see everyone in class.

Just as this attendance policy does, the Class Procedures sheet in general emphasizes the importance of students' taking responsibility for their own learning and for being
responsible members of their groups. One way in which Katherine sought to help
students do so was to require that they attend group conferences twice during the
quarter. At these conferences (scheduled at students’ convenience), the Class
Procedures sheet tells students, "we’ll talk about group dynamics and ways to handle
conflict. We can discuss any projects you are working on, and you’ll have the
opportunity to suggest ways in which our class might be improved." Interestingly,
this description invites students to view the conference as potentially a two-way
discussion in which Katherine might help student groups and the students might
help Katherine improve the functioning of the larger group she leads--the class.

Like the Class Procedures handout, Katherine’s first-day lecture and course
packet were also very clearly tailored to prepare students for work in a collaborative
course. More specifically, information offered in the lecture and in the course packet
suggest that her approach to collaborative writing is similar to Kenneth Bruffee’s
accommodationist approach. Like Bruffee, Katherine wanted her students to learn
conventions of a new discourse community, for she told her students that they
needed to make a transition from academic writing to business writing, which is
"more practical, with special conventions" (1-7-91 Transcript). One aspect of this
transition, she explained, involves gaining experience with collaborative writing:
Because business people collaborate frequently with each other and with their bosses,
especially when they are new to a job, Katherine said that 90 percent of the writing in
304C was to be done in groups.
Although she did not specifically define "collaborative writing" in her lecture, Katherine’s course packet lists various forms collaborative writing can take in the workplace and offers this definition of "collaborative writing":

For us "collaborative writing" will mean working together to produce a final document through collaborative consensus in which decisions are shared and the final document is approved by the group as a whole. We'll go beyond "group work" in which individual writers accept or reject recommendations from peers.

While this definition reflects Bruffee’s emphasis on consensus in writing groups, it also reflects the field of business communication’s tendency not to define peer response as actually being "collaborative writing," but—as in this case—to consider it mere "group work." Katherine’s lecture, meanwhile, suggests that her rationales for using collaboration extend beyond pedagogic parallelism. She told students that the process of collaboration will help them "think explicitly about how they write."

Role of Computers

Whereas students had reservations about the idea of working in groups all quarter, they were, as far as I knew, enthusiastic about the idea of taking a computer-supported writing course. Sana even told me that she had chosen to take business communication instead of technical writing because she thought it would be fun to work on the computers in a class that was not filled with computer science majors as a technical writing class would most likely be. A majority of the 304C students had, however, at least used computers before for wordprocessing, and Brian was one of
several students in the class who had taken his first-year writing course in a
computer-supported classroom.

In writing about the computer aspect of the class in the course packet (which
Brian laughingly referred to once as "that little book she put out, that little guide"
which, he said, "lets us know what she wants from us"), Katherine emphasized the
practical advantages that computers offer writers, especially writing teams: "Although
collaborative writing does entail additional costs in terms of time and energy, the
computers in our classroom will make our work much easier". And, she explained,
"MacWrite II provides an ideal writing and revising tool for team review and the
constant revision required by collaborative work. Changes can be made quickly and
the computers and printers eliminate the arduous task of retyping." Finally, as for
how computers might facilitate collaboration, Katherine pointed out that the
computer provides a convenient channel for communication between team members
in terms of exchanging disks and ideas (course packet).

Significantly, in the packet and elsewhere, Katherine did not use language that
Hawisher and Selfe would characterize as the "rhetoric of technology." That is, she
never spoke or wrote about computers creating a sense of community in the
classroom or about the computers' very presence breaking down hierarchies in the
classroom to create, almost automatically, a student-centered environment. She told
me that after teaching her disastrous first 304C course in the classroom designated
"collaborative," she became disillusioned about the extent to which the computers can
be relied upon to serve any purposes greater than those basic functions outlined in
the paragraph above, at least given the equipment currently available in the collaborative classroom. In the first 304C course, Katherine said, there were all kinds of computer-related problems—from needing continually to reassign passwords for limited-access group files when students could not access their work, to waiting for promised new equipment that never arrived (i.e., the equipment necessary to project text from an individual computer screen onto a large screen that the whole class could see). As a result, after that class, Katherine didn't concern herself with seeking creative ways to use the computer to facilitate collaboration, focusing her energies instead on designing more effective collaborative assignments and on thinking carefully about what teaching methods might be most effective and appropriate in the collaborative classroom.

Students' Perspectives on Computers

Interestingly, conversations with Sana and Brian revealed that students believed that the computers and the computer classroom itself were important factors which helped to create a distinctive classroom dynamic. Sana, in particular, felt strongly that the computer classroom's design made students "feel more comfortable" than they would in a traditional classroom (i.e., one in which students sit in rows facing the teacher at the front). She said that she usually asks a lot of questions in classes and that other students, including her friends, typically perceive that behavior as "nagging" or "brownnosing." In the 304C computer classroom, though, the atmosphere felt different. Sana told me:
I feel more comfortable. Because I think the attitudes of the people have changed because we’re in a different environment than we usually are every day. So, it’s a little more relaxed—and we all sort of sit around each other. The room is set up so we look at each other. Instead of somebody behind you snickering [when you ask a question], we are all looking at each other. (Taped Interview 2-8-91)

She also pointed out that the computer setting helped create an egalitarian atmosphere because "we sort of all started out on the same ground—we all took English, that was something similar, then we all had access to a Macintosh, then we all had access to printers." The computer training session that Katherine gave the class also contributed to making it possible for everyone to feel on relatively equal footing. In other classes, Sana explained, she sometimes had an advantage over other students because she worked in an IBM computer lab, while students with Macintoshes had advantages over her at other times.

Whereas Sana emphasized ways in which the computer classroom influenced how students felt in the class, Brian told me that he just really enjoyed using the computer itself. He said, "I think it’s just interesting. They’re fun to work with, they’re fun to play around with—you can change all the style in writing with a click." Brian also found it easier to concentrate at the computer lab than anywhere else, explaining that time "sees to go by much more quickly" because the "screen hypnotizes you a little bit—you sit there and work on it longer. It’s beneficial for collaboration, he said, but only once an initial draft is done, at which point "changes can be made very quickly" (Taped Interview 2-11-91).
The positive views expressed by Brian and Sana are representative of the class as a whole, according to a survey that I asked students to complete at the end of the quarter. Out of the 16 people in the class of 20 who responded, 13 students said that, by the end of the course, they found the computer very effective for individual writing (their choices included "very effective," "somewhat effective," "somewhat ineffective," and "very ineffective."). For group writing, 10 of 15 students claimed they found the computer very effective, while 5 students circled "somewhat effective."\(^{5}\)

Interestingly, one student, who wasn't particularly enthusiastic about how the computer had facilitated her group's writing, mentioned in her journal (see below for a description of the journal assignment) that in fact it was her group that actually helped her feel more comfortable with the computer. She wrote, "I like the structure of the class being collaborative. I have learned a lot more about using the Mac from my group members which has made all of my writing easier. I used to be a little apprehensive [sic] about using computers. Now I really like them" (Journal 2-15-91). Perhaps because students had much less past experience with doing shared-document writing without computers than they did with doing individual writing without computers, it was difficult for them to be fully aware of ways in which the computer may have been facilitating their groups' writing processes.

\(^{5}\) I suspect that the fact that fewer students reported the computer as being a very effective tool for group writing may relate to the fact that, in general, group writing processes are more complex and unfamiliar than individual processes; as a result, it may have been difficult for some of them to associate the terms very effective with any group writing process, with or without the computer.
Course Packet and Journal or Memo Assignment

Like the computers, the course packet that Katherine had prepared was an important source of support for both individual and group work in the class. Katherine told me that even if students didn't use all the information in the packet, the fact that things were written down sent students a message that those aspects of the course were to be taken seriously. In actuality, most students consistently brought the packet to class and group meetings, which suggests that they valued the information provided there. I know, at least, that Sana did, for she pointed to it once during an interview and said, "I really like this, this is great. She has a whole thing telling how you do things and what to do about this--little guidelines."

In fact, the thoroughness of Katherine's course packet reflects the energy she put into writing assignments and collecting materials for the course; the packet is also a product of the fact that she had had time to refine the course during several quarters of teaching it. After the introductory section on "Business Communication, Collaboration, and Computers," a 3-page long memo from Katherine to Winter Quarter '91 students offers advice from students who took 304C over the past four quarters, advice which, in a sense, also came from Katherine since it was she who selected which pieces of advice to include. Even so, creating a space for students to give advice to other students reflects Katherine's strong belief that collaborative classrooms are places where students' voices must have as much a right and opportunity to be heard as the teacher's does.
Following the advice memo in the packet is a second memo, this one about "Journals, Memos, or Dialogues." Three times throughout the quarter students were required to choose one of these three forms in which to "record their thoughts and impressions about their own writing processes, their group and its writing processes, and the finished documents they produced," as Katherine explained in a presentation we gave together in November of 1991 at the Association for Business Communication national convention.⁶ A series of questions to guide students in writing their journals or memos (no one ever chose the dialogue option) were available in the course packet, questions such as "Do some people take charge in your group?" and "What role(s) do the computers play in your group’s writing process?" The packet also includes excerpts of articles and books which suggest different conflict management strategies, processes of successful groups, roles which group members could play and so forth. The students were required to complete one of these options to pass the course, but, to give them added incentive to write thoughtfully and thoroughly, they were awarded extra credit based on the depth of their analysis. Katherine hoped that writing the journals and memos would not only improve the effectiveness of the writing groups, but also help students develop their own theory of group dynamics. As she explained in our conference presentation, she might respond to a student’s observation in a journal by writing marginal comments: "How insightful! What can you do to make sure this problem doesn’t happen again in the

future." As she told our audience at the convention, "by asking students how they can make their groups more effective, I hope that I encourage students to see themselves as individuals who have the power to make positive changes rather than as victims who must suffer through another unbearable group project." Finally, Katherine emphasized that in reading the journals and memos, she was not at all concerned with being able to figure out who has been attending group meetings or who wrote which part of the paper. She intended them for students' personal use as they sought to learn about their group's writing processes and interpersonal dynamics. As one student wrote, "I think the value in [the journal] is not in seeing 'what goes on in the group' because this is just one opinion. Instead, I think it provides more insight into 'how I see myself in relation to the group'" (2-10-91).

An examination of the first set of class journals reveals that the students were, with varying degrees of sophistication, able to use the journals and memos as Katherine intended. Although they were not required to, many students used the section in Katherine's course packet on "Group Dynamics" to help them analyze their group's interpersonal dynamics. Topics addressed in the section include "Characteristics of Productive Group Members/Group Roles," "The Processes of Successful Groups," "Conflict Management Strategies," "Organizations as Political Systems," and "Gender Relations."7 As one student wrote in his journal,

Although this may not deal directly with our group, I found the descriptions of

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7 These sections were based on readings that Katherine compiled by authors such as Careth Morgan, Kitty Locker, Lisa Ede, Andrea Lunsford, and Mary Lay.
[gender relations] interesting, and I noticed that I was trying to find out where everybody belonged. Since I was thinking about it, I decided to type it in. I have found that writing things down on paper helps me clarify things in my mind" (Journal 2-10-91).

Students who wrote memos instead of journals addressed topics such as "The First Group Meeting," "Group’s Response to Class Discussion," "How the Group Composes," "Things the Group Could Work On," and "Developing My Role." In all, both Katherine and I--the only two people with the opportunity to read all the journals and memos--found that the journals and memos made fascinating reading. I wasn’t surprised when Katherine told me that when students turn them in, she was always eager to read them and see what they have to say.

The First Shared-Document Writing Assignment

Following the section in the course packet which describes the journal, memo, or dialogue in detail is a 5-page section which includes a memo from Katherine to her students outlining the first major shared-document writing assignment, an assignment for which students in the group would receive one grade. For the first project--writing a direct mail letter which promotes a product of each group’s choice--Katherine "unbundled" the project into steps which lead the groups through the assignment. Her memo begins:

We’ve spent the past two weeks getting to know each other and laying some ground work about the basic principles of effective business communication. Now its time to take a deep breath and piunge into our first group project. Our ultimate goal is to produce a well-written, persuasive direct mail letter (remember the ideal length for such letters is 4-6 pages), but rather than just
racing off to compose our letters with no direction, we're going to break this assignment down into several components. This memo will walk you through the first two steps and also give you directions for the first two individual assignments which lead into the final letter.⁸

The memo's first section is titled "Deciding Who or What to Write About," and in this section, Katherine reminds students of examples that had been discussed in class.⁹ refers students to a page in the textbook they might find helpful, and gives examples of things past groups have chosen to sell. She lists the following criteria for students to use in deciding upon what to sell, criteria that she developed based on her experience with this assignment in past courses:

- Will all group members feel committed to writing about this product or organization?
- Do you have access to the necessary information about this product or organization?

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⁸ Notice the "voice" that comes across in these memos: Katherine uses the terms "we" and "our," terms which seem to situate her as a member of the class, not as someone set apart from students. She never uses 'T' in the memo; it is as though the memos she includes in the course packet are separate from her even though they are from her. Presumably, with a packet of materials which walk students through their writing process for the first project, students will benefit from some support and structure to their group assignments while they won't be in the passive position of having to wait to receive instruction directly from the teacher.

⁹ These comments are interesting since, although the memo is dated January 16, it had to have been written much earlier to appear in the course packet which students purchased in early January. Therefore, classroom examples referred to in the packet had not yet "happened." Katherine simply had her syllabus planned ahead of time in such detail, and had taught the course so many times before, that she could rely on the fact that she would be using basically the same examples in class from quarter to quarter. To my knowledge, no students noticed this.
Can you find and interview several members of the intended audience for your letter so that you will know how to write a letter that will specifically meet their needs?

To provide the group with some structure in making their decision and to get all group members involved from the beginning, the memo tells students: "Because making this initial decision is so critical, you will all be writing individual memos (DUE Wednesday, January 23) which will explain to other group members your ideas for a product or organization that you could sink your teeth into for this first project" (10).

In the prompt for this individual assignment, which also appears in the memo, more specific instructions are given, instructions seemingly designed to serve two purposes: to outline the assignment and, at the same time, to guide students in the process of interacting in their group. For example, one paragraph reminds students that the audience for the memo is "your fellow group members" who "will probably be interested in why this would be an appropriate topic as a first group exercise" (10). The prompt suggests that students consider whether "everyone will be able to contribute equally," whether it will "allow various group members to showcase their talents," and whether all group members will "feel committed to the topic" (10). Finally, students are urged to refer to the textbook for help in organizing the memo, to remember to use "all the principles of positive emphasis, you-attitude, success consciousness, conversational style, etc., and to bring 6 copies to class. An entire class day, then, would be set aside for comparing memos and negotiating an
agreement about which product or organization would work best for the group.

This same level of detail continues in the next section of the memo, which covers the group's process of analyzing their audience. Again, students are asked to recall chapters in the text, to think about discussions in class, and to consider various issues and questions as they go about analyzing their audience. The memo also assigns students to write individual audience analysis memos, copies of which are again brought to class and compared. In this section, Katherine gives students a rationale for integrating individual assignments into the group writing process, using a metaphor she also relied upon when explaining the audience analysis assignment orally to the class:

Have you ever heard the story about the three blind people who are confronted by an elephant? One blind person touches the trunk and assumes an elephant is a long, thin, snake-like creature. The second blind person stumbles into the elephant’s leg and thinks that an elephant is a type of tree. The third blind person walks right into the elephant’s side and concludes that "elephant" is another word for "wall." If the three blind people had compared their impressions of the elephant they would have had a more accurate picture. By having each of you analyze your audience, your group will be able to synthesize your audience’s "trunk," "leg," and "side" and arrive at a clearer picture of who you are writing to.

Using this metaphor is the closest Katherine came to articulating for her students or for me what epistemology influenced her collaborative pedagogy. She did clearly believe that, in most cases, groups could produce better work than individuals, that individuals in a group could learn from one another, that they could help each other learn discursive conventions for business writing, and that learning to write in a group would be useful for students in the workplace. Social constructionist theory,
however, did not motivate her strong belief in collaborative pedagogies. In fact, the "blind person" metaphor implies the existence of an objective Reality that is not consistent with social constructionist thought.

In sum, the written material in the course packet regarding the first shared-document assignment seems designed to serve several purposes:

- It "unbundles" a larger, complex assignment into several stages, providing detailed explanations of the teacher's expectations for the assignment (page length, due dates, type size, audience, and purpose).

- It urges students to think about ways in which the textbook reading assignments and lectures in class can support the work they are doing in writing groups.

- It raises the kinds of issues about working in groups that members of successful groups might be likely to consider (Will my all group members have something to contribute if we choose this topic? Why might individuals' writing up their own ideas before meeting with the group to reach a consensus be beneficial?).

As Katherine told the class in the second week of the course when she was introducing the direct mail assignment, "I've done this [had groups go through the unbundling process] for five quarters. There's no way to get around it. After these first couple of weeks the work load will lighten up. But next week and the week after will be really demanding. We build a foundation for the rest of the quarter and then take off and go. Okay?" (Transcript 1-18-91). Thus, Katherine includes no memo
leading students through the second shared-document assignment (for which groups had to respond to customer complaint letters which Katherine wrote regarding the product or organization promoted in students' direct mail letters) and includes just a brief prompt for the final shared-document assignment (an informal report). By the end of the first assignment, she told me, students should be ready to take what they liked about the process she had guided them through and to leave behind what didn't seem to work for their group.

Students' Perspectives on the First Shared-Document Assignment

Although students never adopted Katherine's term "unbundling" to describe the process she asked them to go through for their first shared-document writing assignment, several of them told me that they really liked the way the first assignment was structured for them step-by-step. As one student wrote on the survey sheet, "The memos that helped set up ideas for the direct mail letter really got the ball rolling on that project." Sana, too, as I mentioned earlier, liked the approach, and when I asked her exactly why, she said, "because of the steps--if I can just conquer this one first and not take this big leap and go 'oh my God, I forgot to do that!'" (Taped Interview 2-8-91). Other factors that students believed contributed in a positive way to their shared-document collaborations include the following:

- Group members being friendly and hardworking
- The computers
- The challenging and new nature of writing with a group
• The fun that can be part of a group writing process
• Time set aside for groups to work in class
• Discussing drafts of group papers on overhead projector
• Willingness of group members to compromise
• Ability of group members to work for a common goal
• The laser printer
• The instructor
• Respect and communication among group members
• Reasonable deadlines for completing projects
• Group members' willingness to have and voice their own opinions, and
• Excitement generated by the group's being able to choose a topic.

On the questionnaire, students cited the following factors as detracting from their collaborative processes:

• Group members not participating
• Computer lab hours
• Needing to come to campus to work with the group
• Other people getting credit for the work of one (or more) group members
• The amount of work the projects required
• The length and scope of the assignment
• Personal problems outside of class
• Difficulty finding time to meet with the group, and
• Group members not being flexible enough to change their own schedule to
help complete a project.

Together, these lists reveal what a wide range of factors might converge in different ways to result in successful or unsuccessful shared-document collaborative processes. (Whereas this list summarizes the views of the class as a whole, Chapter 3 shows how these kinds of factors interacted in the writing process of the group in which I participated).

Finally, in addition to information that students provided on the survey, an interesting student perspective on the effectiveness of shared-document collaboration as a mode of learning was available to me because Sana had taken a traditional 304 course without computer for three weeks in the summer and then dropped it. She said that in that class, "we'd sit in the class and he'd go over the book. Just like a regular format." They also worked through exercises in the book, she told me, so that "it sort of got pounded into your brain and we took quizzes on it." In the collaborative section, by contrast, the set up was "more realistic," which Sana liked, but she also felt that she needed to do exercises in the book in order to apply what she understood intellectually from reading the book. Interestingly, as she talked to me, it seemed to occur to her for the first time that she could in fact go back and do the exercises if she wanted to and thereby have, in a sense, the best of both worlds. In fact, at least one student I know of did choose to take the responsibility upon himself to do exercises and talk them over with Katherine until he felt confident that he could apply the appropriate principles in his writing.
The Classroom Climate

As the instructor, Katherine made a conscious effort to create a classroom atmosphere that would make it possible for students to benefit most from the positive aspects of collaborative work while suffering as little as possible from the problems that she knew inevitably came along with it. Specifically, she sought to create a relatively "ego-less" learning environment, believing that both students and teachers need to "get over themselves" to work successfully on a collaborative project. On page three of the course packet she advises students:

While there is no one game plan for collaborative writing, it's a good idea if we all start with the fundamentals of "ego-less" writing. All of us rightfully take pride in our ability to write polished style which complies with standard edited English, but to collaborate successfully we'll all have to avoid excessive ego investment in the writing process. We'll have to submit readily to criticism and suggestions from others. Strong, successful business documents satisfy the audience's needs (not the author's ego).

Katherine goes on to cite an article in the Journal of Business and Technical Communication as one basis for this "ego-less" philosophy:

Researchers at Purdue University determined that experienced collaborators found the benefits of collaboration worth the costs of time, of energy, and sometimes of ego. The writers interviewed by the Purdue researchers stated that documents they produced collaboratively were definitely better than those any one of them could have produced alone. I hope we'll all reach the same conclusions by the end of the quarter.

Having obviously reached the conclusion some time ago that a person's ego can interfere with successful collaborative work, many of Katherine's actions in the classroom and comments in her teaching journal reflect an effort to avoid excessive
ego involvement in her own role of teacher. For example, on the first day of class, as Katherine gave an overview of the course, she recognized one of the students from the computer lab and it turned out that he did work as a lab monitor. From then on, whenever questions about labs or computers came up, Katherine made a point of directing questions to him. Rather than asserting her authority as teacher, she seemed very comfortable with acknowledging and welcoming the student’s possibly superior knowledge and experience. She also offered to meet with student groups at their--not her--convenience, saying that she had even met with groups at 11:00 at night in the past. Overall, she tried to send students the message that--as long as they followed the guidelines she set up in terms of due dates, attendance and so forth--the class is their class.

Interestingly, however, Katherine’s journal reveals that she constantly struggled with the issue of when to be flexible about her rules. On one hand, she associated flexibility with being student-centered; on the other hand, she saw herself as a model for students’ behavior in the class and in their groups: She didn’t want them to assume that "anything goes." On the day students turned in their first individual writing assignment--a memo introducing themselves to the class--she wrote to me:

I tried to be pretty flexible with everyone, more flexible than usual. I’m tired of using my energy to put the hammer down, but I hope I’m not setting a bad precedent so students think deadlines and details aren’t important. I’m going to try and let go and let the groups do more of the work policing or motivating their own members.
In fact, at one point, Katherine made a public example of her fellow group member Mike, for breaking her rule about printing in class. She "put the hammer down" by telling him sharply in front of the class that the assignment was a day late. She wrote in her journal that she felt sad saying that in front of the whole class, but felt that she had to do it. A few minutes later she dealt with a similar situation in a way she felt more comfortable with—by telling the student (who didn’t confront her in front of the whole class as Mike did) that it was a day late as far as she was concerned but that he should let his group decide whether he should print the document in class. That day she wrote in her journal: "The more group norms they develop the better." As a detail-oriented person herself who rarely missed a deadline, Katherine wanted to give students power in the classroom, but that desire sometimes conflicted with her belief that it was in everyone’s best interest for students to follow certain basic rules that she set as the teacher.

One incident which occurred during the first week of class provides an interesting example of Katherine’s conflicted feelings about asserting her authority as teacher. She wrote in her journal that the first week gave her a "frantic and frenzied feeling," especially when she walked into the room and it seemed like 20 or 30 people were waiting to add the class. After patiently explaining the process of adding patiently to numerous students and being continually interrupted, Katherine lost her temper and flipped the door switch to keep people out. She spoke of this incident numerous times in her journal and long after the class ended. She felt embarrassed about how she handled the situation, writing in her journal that "a sign would have
been a better option." Locking the door on students was the kind of blatant use of authority that Katherine did not want to model for students in a collaborative classroom or in any classroom. Yet to prevent chaos, it seemed to Katherine a necessary step to take at the time.

Mini-Lectures

As the course got underway, Katherine relied consistently on three major modes for teaching and learning: the "mini-lecture," whole-class discussions, and small group writing workshops. She gave brief lectures (usually 15 to 30 minutes) periodically throughout the quarter, usually on days when she introduced new assignments. On days when she lectured, Katherine made a point of using a technique that she learned in a graduate course she was taking about leading discussions. She would announce to the class that she would be lecturing for X amount of time to give students a key to what role they are expected to play (Journal 1-27-91). Her lectures, however, always involved some measure of discussion as Katherine solicited student response to help make her points.

Interestingly, the class session in which Katherine talked the most all quarter was a session that Katherine herself did not think of as a lecture—it was described on the syllabus as a "Computer Workshop" day. On the second day of class, Katherine went through the basic functions of the MacWrite wordprocessing program that students needed to know to write their first memo. I wrote in my fieldnotes for that day, "I didn’t have much, if any, interaction with students today, nor they with each
other. So far, except for Katherine talking about collaboration it doesn’t yet feel like a collaborative class" (1/9/91). This lecture-workshop was the only formal instruction students received on using the computer.

The first lecture that Katherine defined as a lecture was given the next class period and covered material already discussed in the textbook. Katherine told the class that "all I will be saying is in the book, but this is an overview of principles we will be practicing all quarter." My January 9 fieldnotes describe my interpretation of students’ reactions as follows: "I see some glazed-over eyes as she talks. Right when she said the word "lecture" everyone shuffled around for notes and pens; a few people yawned." Then, a few class sessions later, I overheard one student asking whether she had done the reading for that day, to which the second student responded, "Why bother? She covers it anyway." This incident illustrated for me the truth of the cliche that what a teacher does speaks more powerfully to students than does what a teacher says. Just as Katherine had mixed feelings about when and how to assert herself and still create a student-centered environment, the students themselves were receiving a variety of signals as they sought to determine for themselves just how much power they really were going to have in the class.

**Whole-Class Discussions**

Katherine often followed mini-lectures with whole-class discussions. After one mini-lecture followed by class discussion of model direct mail letters, however, I recorded in my notes Katherine’s telling me that she was "impatient to get these
discussions over with and want[ed] to get on with the part of the class where students spent most of their time in-class working in their groups" (1-16-92). Until that time, however, Katherine sought to lead class discussions which were consistent with her "ego-less" teaching philosophy. I noticed that as the quarter went on, she tended to sit rather than stand during discussions, although she was almost always in the middle the room, surrounded by the students who were seated at the classroom's four round tables. To get students in the mood for discussion, she often brought in Snickers bars or other food to "nurture" the group, as she liked to say jokingly, borrowing the term from the graduate seminar on leading group discussions.

In fact, Katherine mentioned the seminar on leading discussions frequently to me during the quarter I was in her class, and taking the course seemed to make her particularly self-reflective about her teaching. For instance, after a class session in which she brought in two sample direct mail letters for the class to discuss, she wrote in her journal that the course "makes me realize how pathetic I am at leading discussion." As a participant-observer, I would not describe her way of leading discussion as at all pathetic (she was probably exaggerating anyway), but I did notice a significant difference between how she led the discussions about samples she brought in and discussions about drafts of students' shared-document essays that were copied onto transparencies and projected onto a screen with an overhead projector. In the former discussions, as Katherine herself pointed out to me after class, she asked leading questions since she had specific points in mind that she wanted to make sure came out in class. These discussions felt to me like lecture-
discussions more than "pure" discussions. In discussing drafts of students shared-documents, however, Katherine seemed to have less of a particular agenda in mind. She told me numerous times that she had full confidence that, as a whole, the class could come up with responses at least as good as those she could have herself if they simply opened up and reacted to the documents as readers. Katherine, then, served as a mediator, and she would follow each student’s comment with a question like "Other reactions?" or a compliment like "Good point, Steve" (She never used the terms "right" and "wrong" in responding to students’ comments). If she noticed that a person seemed about to say something, she asked the student, "Were you going to jump in?" And, at times, she did implicitly offer her own opinions through questions such as, "Did anyone find the second paragraph a little overwhelming?" For Katherine, a good class discussion was one in which "people seem to be asking genuine questions not just of me, but also of their classmates--that’s the sort of environment I’d like to create for 304C" (Notes 1-11-91). She also wanted students freely to express minority opinions, opinions which Katherine would explicitly solicit when it seemed as though the class had reached a consensus.

Katherine, however, was often not particularly satisfied with her handling of discussions of student texts, writing in her journal that, out of the best intentions, she finds herself "interpreting everyone’s comments and mediating everything." She wrote: "I just really [want] to affirm everyone--make all the students feel like they contributed something valuable. I probably [end] up doing the opposite--making them feel like their 'voices' weren’t good enough." And when a discussion seemed to
go well, Katherine was inclined to assume that it was "probably just cause I felt like the center of attention and I know better than to do that." Clearly, her belief in the "ego-less" classroom ran deep, making it difficult for her to be easily satisfied with her teaching even though, to my knowledge, students enjoyed and benefited from class discussions.

**Writing Workshops**

After the first week and a half of class, approximately two out of three class periods were given over to student groups for work on their shared-document writing projects. Katherine expressed strong feelings about the role she wanted to play in the class on group workshop days:

I won't have much to say in this journal on days or weeks when students are really working as a group 'cause I stay out of their hair. I'm a really devoted believer of the idea that groups don't work if the teacher spends all of his/her time moving from group to group. You (as a teacher) just end up teaching four or five mini-classes and the students just wait for the teacher to dispense wisdom. (Journal 1-18-91)

Thus, on the first full workshop day she told the class, "Okay, you've got the hour. I'm just up here messing around. If you need me, ask for me, but you guys are in charge of yourselves, so unless you need to talk to me--I mean ask me if you do need my help, but otherwise go to it" (Transcript 1-23-91). Then, when a student asked how they should address her, she told them, "Oh, you can just call me Katherine." It is, I think, safe to assume that inviting students to call her by her first name was another way by which Katherine sought to grant students authority in a classroom.
where, at least when they were in groups, they were in charge. In any case, never once during the quarter did I see Katherine approach a group uninvited.

Although she never explained to me why she felt so sure students could work effectively with her being only "on call," it is possible to identify several ways in which Katherine may have prepared them for this experience:

- She provided the detailed support materials described in the above sections, including memos leading them stepwise through their first project.

- She scheduled "chat time" for student in class to begin to get to know their group members and made sure people shared background information about themselves with fellow group members through reading each others' first individual assignments (memos introducing themselves to the class or memos describing past experiences with writing).

- She gave students a questionnaire to get their input as she put groups together, a process which took her three hours one evening as she considered factors such as personality, writing ability, and times people were available to work outside of class.

- She had students take an informal personality inventory (a short version of the Meyers-Briggs) and allowed time for the groups to discuss how personality traits might affect their dynamics.

- She knew that students would be communicating with her and thinking about group dynamics in their journals and memos and in the required group-teacher conferences.
• From the first day of class, she tried to shift some authority from herself to the groups, often suggesting that groups make decisions about classroom rules and telling students that they are accountable to her and to their groups when they are absent, late for class, and so forth.

In addition to preparing students in these ways for semi-autonomous work in groups, Katherine's past teaching experiences had given her a fundamental respect for students' abilities in general, a respect which allowed her to trust them. Combined with the trust and respect she granted most students until they gave her reason to doubt them, Katherine also had a sense that her Winter 1991 class in particular was a good class, writing in her journal, "Actually, these students strike me as a little sharper than usual" (1-27-91). Further comments suggest that she continually analyzed the group of students in the class to determine how best to interact with them. For example, at one point she asked me, "Do you think their ready acceptance of the ideas I'm presenting indicates that this is a group where conflict will be suppressed or where people will just say "yes" and want to know how to get a good grade? This class really seems like a lot of nice people--that could be great or it could be really frustrating if they're such good kids they don't dare to question or interrogate each other" (1-18-91). Katherine's comments suggest that she valued a collaborative community where dissensus can occur among students who are being nice to each other even as they disagree.\(^\text{10}\)

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\(^\text{10}\) Interestingly, when a colleague of Katherine's read over her grades and responses to the first individual assignment, he told her that her criticisms were so carefully couched that her largely positive-sounding responses didn't seem to correlate
Finally, despite Katherine's strong feelings about the importance of playing a "hands off" role in student groups, her journal entries suggest that she often found that role difficult to play. She wrote one day as groups were working, "It's hard, though--I feel left out. They're all bubbling along and I'm standing here alone. I really have to resist the temptation to walk around and ask, 'How are you doing?' or 'What's going on?'--but I'll be strong and resist!" (1-25-91). Other times she wrote simply, "No one seems too concerned about me" (1-28-91). And finally she informed me, "Dean called me over to Group One. I feel like a little kid who finally got invited to a party" (2-6-91). Although in theory, Katherine didn't care whether groups solicited her input, throughout the quarter, she continued to have ambivalent feelings about groups who did or did not call her over, asking herself, "Is it good or bad that they want or don't want my input?" (2-6-91). At one point, Katherine began to think that the group that called her over initially, and which continued to invite her to give them feedback, had become too dependent on her and so she tried to make herself a little less available to them.

Students' Perspectives on the Classroom Climate

As for the students, it is difficult to gauge how they felt about her not going around the room checking on various groups. In an interview, Brian mentioned to me that "it kind of has to be that way, just so that groups can get used to working

with the sometimes low grades students received. Using different terms, I heard students say virtually the same thing: They accused Katherine of wanting them to learn to "sugarcoat" everything.
together," and as for him, he "wouldn't want her looking over our shoulders at all" (Taped Interview 2-11-91). The questionnaire responses indicated that 9 of 15 students thought Katherine did her part to facilitate effective collaborative writing "very effectively," 6 students circled "somewhat effectively," and one student chose "somewhat ineffectively."

Interviews with my fellow group members Sana and Brian revealed, however, that both of them felt that there was in fact something different about the overall atmosphere in the 304C class than they had experienced in other classes, even classes which involved working in groups. Both of them associated this difference, in some way, with the teacher's teaching style and personality. According to Brian, Katherine was "really gung ho" and "a very good human relations type person" who tried to get students involved and interested in the class by illustrating points with examples from her own life (Katherine drew upon her experiences working for Walt Disney's Epcott Center, for example). When he tried to characterize class discussions, he told me that when he thought about them, he saw the teacher "in the center of the room with her arms out" (Taped Interview 2-11-91). Overall, he liked her enthusiastic approach despite mild complaints about her tendency to "sugarcoat" everything, including comments on the students' papers. (He sometimes felt that it was difficult to get an accurate sense of how she felt about a piece of writing since even criticisms were worded so positively).11 Most important, however, Brian emphasized that unlike

11 As a joke, Brian wrote at the bottom of his post-course survey, "Kelly, I thought this was a really good questionnaire, it shows good you-attitude and just the right amount of positive emphasis--good job." He then gave me a grade, which was
other group-oriented classes he had taken in the past, this course was far less competitive. He told me about how in other classes assignments were set up so that groups had to compete with each other to get the grades they wanted, an approach that he said was "too much stress for [him] personally." With this class, however, he said, "I've never felt like we're competing against other groups," and even on days when Katherine asked groups to meet with other groups to give each other advice or during whole class responding sessions, Brian told me, "We'd shoot ideas for another group just like we did for our group. Last quarter [in the other class] it was just like a big war—all the time asking 'what are they doing?' and trying to get information on their group. All quarter it was like that" (Taped Interview 2-11-91).

Unlike Brian, Sana had never worked on a group project in a class before, so she tended to compare the classroom climate in 304C with what she knew of the 304C class that met with a different teacher right before our section did and, as mentioned before, sometimes with the 304 class without computers that she had taken for three weeks in the summer and then dropped. In Katherine's class, Sana shared Brian's feeling that it was possible to interact comfortably with students in her own group and in other groups, explaining that "once you are in a group and sort of associated with them, you can talk to other people too, saying my group is doing this, what are you doing?" (Taped Interview 2-8-91). And, like Brian, she felt that Katherine's personality had something to do with why she thought her class was

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an A- instead of the A that his comments suggested I deserved, and wrote, "My impersonation of [Katherine] grading a paper."
different from other classes, in particular from the class she had dropped in the summer. She explained that [the teacher from the other class] "stands behind this podium thing and he teaches. Maybe his class is a little less comfortable than ours is—because of the computers, the groups, and I think the teacher. Because students are basically the same, you know, but our teacher is different, our grouping is different. And of course the room is different" (Taped Interview 2-8-91). In contrast to the other two teachers with whom she was familiar, she said, Katherine "runs around:"

She seems open; she reminds me of a friend of mine the way she talks and the way she dresses and all that. So, it's just more comfortable than with a person in a suit and tie—you sort of don't like to ask him questions because it seems like he is just, just blank when you ask him a question. And she sort of goes into a detailed explanation. And in that respect she's very helpful and into helping us feel comfortable.

Only one student in class made it known to me that he held a minority opinion about this course, and he was a student who, for reasons unknown to me, caused his group members great frustration by frequently missing class and group meetings. Aside from him, however, students seemed basically to agree that primarily because of the computers, the assignments and the guidelines for them provided in the course packet, and the teacher's style as a classroom manager, the business communication class was a relatively ideal scene for collaborative work.
Summary of the Classroom Scene's Dominant Features

Obviously, most of the information provided about the business communication class scene in the preceding sections pertains only to the first seven weeks of the course, the time period during which students wrote the first shared-document assignment. Since the groups in the basic writing and critical writing classes wrote only one shared-document assignment each, I chose to focus on only the first group assignment in the business writing course. Therefore, this study does not treat issues which arose in the classroom or group after the first group assignment was completed. The following generalizations about the business communication classroom scene emerge from my experience as a participant-observer during the first part of the course:

(1) The business communication classroom scene was a strikingly noncompetitive environment where students felt comfortable expressing themselves in both whole-class and small group situations. In this class, becoming "ego-less" in the face of criticism from peers was valued more than was getting "one up" on someone else in order to make oneself look good. Katherine's emphasis on student groups helping one another rather than competing created what might be described as a "feminine" learning environment, an environment not known to be especially common in the academy (e.g., Belenky, Gilligan). This classroom culture contrasted sharply with the competitive atmosphere for group work which Brian said was established by his (male) marketing professor.
(2) Although Katherine gave students great freedom to work autonomously (i.e., to choose their own writing topics and work without her uninvited intervention), the guides that she provided them--such as the textbook, the course packet, and the mini-lectures--all served to steer their efforts toward producing a text that would follow the conventions of the direct mail genre. In general, her tendency to work indirectly, "behind the scenes" in the classroom, might be considered a characteristically feminine approach to leading the class. Interestingly, she adopted this approach because she was influenced by the work of a male researcher/teacher--Harvey Weiner.

(3) Katherine's valuing of collaborative work did not stem from a social constructionist epistemological stance; her commitment to group-centered learning was linked, rather, to her belief in the importance of decentering authority in the classroom and her belief that students are most engaged in learning when the process involves frequent social interaction with their peers. Thus, she encouraged students to establish stronger relationships with their peers than with her, creating a situation in which students came to value each other's ideas as much as they did the teacher's.  

12 Katherine's epistemological view tended to be objectivist or Platonic, as is implied by the "blind person" analogy she used so often: She talked as though there was a "true" or "best" way of expressing an idea or envisioning an audience that a group together was more likely than an individual to hit upon. Her ultimate goal for the groups was for them to develop a group writing style that conformed to the textbook's definition of effective business writing and to reach a consensus about their ideas in order to produce a clear, coherent, document that an audience would find persuasive.
(4) Groups were formed with a primary concern for placing compatible people together, a strategy which reflects Katherine's emphasis on consensus. While a diverse group may be more likely to construct "new" knowledge through a volatile creative process, a group of people with similar personalities and temperaments may be more likely to get along well enough to reach Katherine's primary goal: to learn together the basic conventions of business writing.

(5) Ultimate responsibility for "getting along" in this classroom, however, rested with individual students. Through group analysis journals and memos, students were expected to explore ways to improve their groups through their own actions and attitudes, rather than by placing blame on others.

(6) Finally, the computers were a significant material feature of the classroom scene. As Sana suggested they created an egalitarian atmosphere since everyone perceived themselves to have equal access to the machines. Because many of the students had used other computers before, virtually everyone was able to use the machines for composing with very little training. The machines were seen as a convenient tool that made the mechanics of group and individual writing processes easier.

According to Forman's Burkean model of collaborative writing, each of these and other less prominent features of the classroom scene potentially placed constraints upon the business writing group's shared-document acts. But, at the same time, these same features also had the potential to open up possibilities for group dynamics and writing processes to develop in ways that might have been
unlikely under different circumstances. Chapter 3 describes in detail the business writing group's act of shared-document collaboration.
CHAPTER III

GROUP DYNAMICS AND WRITING PROCESSES OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION GROUP

To gain insights into the role that a classroom scene played in a specific act of shared-document collaboration, a necessary first step is to construct a narrative which provides a means of examining the collaborative process. This chapter includes two such narratives, each of which represents an aspect of shared-document collaborations which has been the focus of research conducted in both classroom and workplace settings: The first one focuses on the business writing group’s evolving interpersonal dynamics, the second on the group’s writing processes. In these narratives (and in analogous narratives on the basic writing and critical writing groups which appear in Chapters 5 and 7 respectively), I seek to contribute to the ongoing process of accumulating knowledge about student collaborative writing by addressing two major topics: (1) How are power and leadership distributed among group members? and (2) what patterns of collaboration are used by student groups and what kinds of writing issues arise in "face-to-face" group composing sessions?
Leadership and Distribution of Power

One of the most common issues addressed by research on collaborative writing is that of how power is distributed among writing group members, and a frequently asked question is who leads the group and why. Is it true, researchers and theorists have asked, that the status of group members within the culture at large dictates the extent to which they are able to participate in and influence the direction of group discussions (e.g., Selfe, Lunsford and Ede, Meyers, Trimbur)? In other words, are white, male students with high socioeconomic status likely to have more influence in groups than women, older students, people of different races or disabled students? Or, as Forman has suggested, is group leadership in computer-supported environments likely to be taken on by the person with the most technical expertise, regardless of other factors ("Leadership")?

Following the example of Forman in "Leadership Dynamics of Computer-Supported Writing Groups," I consider the leader(s) of a group to be the person (or people) having the most sustained influence over the group's actions and decisions. As Forman suggests, leadership in student groups "derives its authority from the tacit or explicit consent of the group," and while student leaders may influence decisions, they lack the formal authority to dictate them. Therefore, leadership in student groups has an usually great potential to "float" from one group member to another for a variety of reasons--for example, a student who is normally not inclined to take on a leadership role may be thrust into that position by happening to be the person with the most knowledge or experience with regard to a particular topic the group is
writing about. In such a case, the student may reluctantly perform leadership functions, at least temporarily (38).

Surprisingly, of the three student groups I studied, only the members of the business communication group characterized their group's leadership as "floating." The power relationships in the group that made it possible for leadership functions to shift among at least three group members at various points in the writing process are described below. (See Chapter 8 for a comparative analysis of leadership and power in all three writing groups studied).

**Sharing Leadership Functions**

In group members' responses to the post-course questionnaire, there was general agreement that more than just one or two of the group members had "assigned tasks, delegated responsibilities, summarized decisions, or [done] other activities associated with leadership." Mike, who was consistently late or absent from group meetings both in- and outside of class, wrote that "everyone did," Sana reported that she and Tina had served as leaders, Tina indicated that she, Sana, and Brian had, and Brian skirted the question by writing, "When progress seemed to be going slowly, I had no problem taking on a leadership role and assigning tasks." (He wrote in a group analysis memo to Katherine, however, that "in our group there never emerged a dominant leader. Everyone worked to share the responsibilities as equally as we possibly could"). Based on the group members' responses to the BEM sex-role inventory, the roles that I perceived them to play in this group correlated
closely with how they thought of themselves in general in terms of potential to
exercise influence in a group: Tina and Brian both indicated that they "usually"
thought of themselves as having leadership abilities, Sana indicated that she "often"
did," and Mike reported that he only "occasionally" thought of himself as a leader (see
Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of students' responses to the BEM
inventory).

Early in the group process, it seemed to me that Tina made a point of trying
to establish herself as the leader of the 304C group. Based on my conversation with
her on the first day of class in which she accused Katherine of "wasting our time," I
was convinced that she wanted to do whatever she could to make sure this class did
not take up any more of her time than necessary and that she was not left taking
responsibility for doing a disproportionate amount of the work, as she claimed had
happened in her communications group last quarter. In fact, Tina could be counted
on to make sure that our group got "on task" without much idle discussion,
beginning with our first group meeting in class. Before the meeting began, Katherine
encouraged all the groups to just take time to chat and get to know one another if we
wanted to, but Tina quickly focused our attention on what we needed to do for the
first assignment. I gained further insights into Tina's perspective on working in our
group when at one point, mid-way through our work on the first project, I gave her a
ride home from class. She told me then that although she thought our group was
doing well, she knew that she could do as good or better work by herself since she
considered herself a good writer (I am almost certain that she considered herself the
best writer in the group). As she wrote to Katherine in her first memo (one in which she referred to herself in third person),

Usually [Tina] is the person who takes charge. It seems as though if she did not, the group would have an even tougher time making decisions. Sometimes she tries to interject in the discussion and state that analyzing little things will only waste our time. Also, in class discussion, when the group is explaining, eye and verbal signals often point to her as leader. [Brian] and [Sana] interject if there is a point that is not being projected by [Tina] well enough. (Journal 2-6-91)

Interestingly, Katherine, who was concerned about the negative vibes Tina’s own body language seemed to send out, took this opportunity to try and alert Tina to a potential problem by writing in the margin, "It’s good that you pick up on these nonverbal clues. Is there anything in your nonverbal behavior that sends out equally strong signals?" In fact, it was Tina’s sometimes closed body language that caused at least one group member to doubt whether we ought to count on Tina to lead the group, even as the group continued to cooperate with Tina’s performance of leadership functions such as introducing new topics, influencing how long we talked about a particular topic, or being our spokesperson to the class. As Sana pointed out to me, Tina would sometimes almost completely turn her back away from the group until someone made a point of soliciting her ideas or opinions, at which point she would snap back and participate again (Taped Interview 2-8-91). More significant than her concerns about what she referred to as Tina’s "moodiness," however, were Sana’s fears that if scheduling group meetings was left up to Tina—who seemed reluctant to spend time with the group outside of class—we would not meet often
enough to end up receiving as high a grade as Sana expected to earn.¹

In an attempt to solve the first of these problems, Sana suggested that I
should just "take charge and say 'okay, let's write down the ideas'" because, she said,
"I certainly don't want to" (Taped Interview 2-8-91). At that point, I told her that I
wouldn't do that because I felt it would be overstepping the bounds of my
participant-observer role, that I was trying to stay in the background. She responded
as follows:

Yeah, I've noticed that. I have a question. Now, would it be too much if I
just said, "Let's meet. We really have to find a time to meet. Should I just
say something like that? Because that's how I feel, and I don't think I would
accept a grade if it came out to be a "C." [She says more about grades.] Do
you think it would really be too presumptuous if I say, well, I think we should
meet because this is a good paper--it has good ideas but I think we need to
expand on them?" . . . . Because I wouldn't mind taking the role of making
people sit down and do something, but I guess you always offend somebody.
(2-8-91)

I told Sana that I didn't think taking such action was too presumptuous, and in the
group meetings after this conversation, I noticed that Sana began asserting herself in
several interesting ways. Most obviously, she began suggesting that the group meet
more often, prompting Tina to write in her memo to Katherine that Sana "is very

¹ Although Sana said she was willing to get a grade as low as a "C" since she was
graduating this quarter and this class accounted for only 3 out of 23 credits, it
seemed difficult for her to lower her standards. In fact, it seemed to me that she
really wanted to get a "A" in the class. She told me that based on observing Brian
and Tina when they got grades on the individual assignments back, she thought they
were both trying to get at least some kind of "B." Because of Mike's poor attendance
and his seemingly "laid back" personality, she assumed--I think rightly--that grades
were not a big issue with him.
hard working and would like to meet as much and as soon as possible" (2-6-91).
Sana also made a point of asking Tina’s opinion often and, whenever possible,
"giving" Tina ideas and allowing her to take the credit for having thought of them, a
strategy she had talked about adopting during our conversation on February 8th and
which I noticed she began implementing the very next class session. Consider the
following exchange, for instance, that took place at the beginning of the February 8th
in-class group meeting:2

Sana: Did [Mike] give any of us his number? Cause we have to meet.

Brian: It wasn’t on the sheet.

(Tina gets out of her bag the first draft of our direct mail letter with
comments on it from Katherine).

Sana: [She talks about how things could be rearranged in the letter and then
turns to address Tina]. Maybe you can think of some description for the
beginning. I’m not very good at that.

Tina: I think we should say . . . [Tina reads a beginning she had drafted at
home].

Sana: And then it could say . . . [Sana adds to what Tina had written]. That’s
a good idea! Okay, when should we meet? (Fieldnotes 2-8-91)

Sana’s new assertiveness and approach to interacting with Tina seemed to pay off for
our group in terms of both writing and group processes. Our initial draft of the

2 Mike had been absent from the out-of-class meeting that had taken place the
night before. He didn’t know about the meeting since he had been absent from class
on Friday and he hadn’t called us to ask what had gone on. Tina had tried to call
him but had been unable to reach him.
direct mail letter had, in everyone’s opinion including Katherine’s, been the worst one in the class. After Sana began insisting that we meet and began almost literally inserting her ideas into those expressed by Tina, we went through several very productive, two- to four-hour, face-to-face collaborative writing sessions outside of class (see the section on the group’s writing process below). It wasn’t long, too, before I began noticing evidence of changes in Tina’s attitude toward the group. She began allowing more off-task conversation in the group, sometimes even taking a few minutes to talk about her own interests outside of class--e.g., her boyfriend or the puppet she had made in art class.

As she seemed increasingly able to trust us and to let her guard down, her memos to Katherine indicate that she recognized that Sana and, to a lesser extent, Brian were playing valuable, although in her opinion secondary, leadership roles in the group. She also seemed ready, finally, to accept that her experience in this group was not going to mirror the negative one she had had the quarter before. She wrote,

Compared to a previous Communications 110 group [Tina] experienced, Kelly, [Brian], [Mike], [Sana], and [Tina] are working very well. In the communications group, members were not willing to work as a team and collaborate like this group is. Members would not come to the meetings and complete their assigned outside tasks. This made group time unproductive because we were usually discussing the people who were not there or their lack of work instead of the assignment. The current group works well and all members participate.

In speculating, finally, about why this group was able to establish such an effective group dynamic, it is interesting to consider the possible impact of at least one key feature of the classroom scene: the fact that, as the teacher, Katherine
herself provided a model of floating leadership in her efforts to decentralize authority in the classroom and to empower students' voices. Like Sana, she tried to exercise her own influence as indirectly as possible, in her case, through prepared class materials such as the course packet. And by encouraging students to reflect upon issues of power and leadership in their group analysis journals and memos, she created an environment where it was as likely as possible that students might actively work to change an unsatisfactory group dynamic. Had Sana not been assigned to write a journal analyzing the group, she may not have examined her own actions and those of the group members to the extent that she did before deciding to claim for herself some significant power in the group.

Writing Process and Pattern of Collaboration

While the kinds of group process-related issues concerning leadership and power that are explored above have recently been of great interest to researchers and theorists interested in collaboration, issues that are associated specifically with writing groups have also been the object of researchers' attention. Naturalistic studies often attempt to identify a pattern of collaboration used by a writing group, commonly by comparing observed group writing processes with patterns previously identified by Lunsford and Ede's well-known, nationwide survey of members of seven major professional associations (e.g., Locker, Janda). As Forman has pointed out, however, more research is needed to learn "when, why, and how . . . groups choose to write together or to work individually on a collaborative writing task" ("Collaborative
Business Writing" 245). And arguments for the benefits of "face-to-face" collaboration such as those made by Rogers and Horton also call for further exploration: Is it true that when group members compose together—rather than dividing up a task—that they help each other understand the rhetorical situation, discuss ethical issues raised by their work, and examine language choices in their writing (i.e., choices regarding semantics, grammar, syntax, tone, argumentation)? If these kinds of benefits are not experienced by most groups working face-to-face, then perhaps a computer-based approach to collaboration—in which group members write rather than talk to one another—may create a more ideal forum for collaborative writing, especially if arguments that computer-based collaboration is a solution to "addressing problems of participation, involvement and distribution of power" in groups hold up under further scrutiny (Selje 151). Below, I describe in detail the pattern of collaboration used by the business writing group; in doing so, I seek to highlight the specific writing issues which received attention on those occasions when group, face-to-face composing sessions took place.

Overview

In writing the direct mail letter which advertised a Hawaiian Island resort for honeymooners, the business writing group used a composing process which combined group members producing text individually, face-to-face collaboration in subgroups, and the whole group brainstorming and/or writing together face-to-face. For out-of-class writing sessions, the group always tried to meet in a computer lab,
although we sometimes worked at tables in the hall outside a lab because it hadn’t opened yet. In all, the group members participated in eleven whole group meetings for the first shared-document assignment, seven of them in-class and four outside of class. Whereas all the group members had perfect attendance at in-class group meetings, Mike attended only one of the four meetings held outside of class (I was the only other person who missed a meeting at all). As an outsider to the group, Katherine often doubted whether the group was working well since, more than other groups, we rarely worked in class with all five of us huddled around the computer engaging in an intense writing session, and we almost never asked her for advice or input. However, despite the fact that the group sometimes looked somewhat unfocused in class (with Mike arriving late and Sana often studying for a test in another class as we worked), the group adapted its writing process well in response to feedback that was received from the teacher and the class. The group, in the end, used a pattern of collaboration that made reasonably good use of each group member’s strengths while downplaying group member’s weaknesses.

Individual Writing Assignments

Unlike the basic writing and critical writing groups, the business writing group was required to complete individual, graded writing assignments to create a foundation upon which the shared-document assignment was to be built. While some stress was created because these assignments were graded and due one after another during a short period of time, the assignments played several important roles
in the group's composing process: They forced all group members to be involved in the beginning of the writing process; they helped group members identify each other's strengths and weaknesses as writers; they encouraged the group to explore a range of ideas before reaching consensus on a single option; and they focused the group's attention on some significant writing issues that must be considered carefully for a successful the final product--i.e., topic and purpose, audience, and persuasive appeals ("reader benefits").

Through discussing these individual assignments together on the days they were due, group members quickly developed a sense of themselves as a distinct "group" within the class, a sense that held the group together even when one of its members, Mike, began missing out-of-class group meetings. Although at one time or another all group members noted in their journals or memos that they felt Mike should participate more, he managed to stay on good terms with the group in part because of respect the group gained for his abilities through the required, individual writing assignments that had been due at the groups' first in-class meetings. Through the memo he wrote suggesting that the group write about a honeymooner's resort, he not only persuaded the group to choose his suggested topic for the shared-document assignment, he also established himself as having something to contribute to the group--a flair for "descriptive writing." Group members began referring to him as "the man with the flowery words," and when he did show up at a meeting he always made a significant contribution to the document by developing a section that the group had identified as needing more description (he had a way of stepping in as
though he knew exactly what was going on even if he had just missed two group meetings). He also demonstrated in whole-class responding sessions an ability to recognize when a text was lacking in fundamental principles of business communication such as you-attitude and positive emphasis. Because of the significant contributions Mike made during in-class meetings, the group tolerated his absences from out-of-class meetings (his friendly, relaxed personality along with his frequent and seemingly sincere apologies also made it difficult to become angry with him). Without the individual, graded writing assignments that began the unbundling process, it seems to me unlikely that the group would have had a chance to discover and imagine ways to make use of the skills Mike could contribute to the group.

The individual assignments in which group members proposed topics for the assignment also seemed to encourage a relatively egalitarian decision-making process. Each group member put so much effort into thinking of a topic and explaining how that topic might appeal to or be appropriate for the group as a whole that the group seemed unwilling to reject anyone's idea out of hand. For instance, Brian began his memo to the group—which suggested we sell sporting equipment, an energy drink, or training information on a specific sport—by writing:

While I was reading everyone's biographical memos, I was trying to find any similarities that we might all have. The first place I looked was in your interest sections. The subjects that kept popping up were those of sports and reading almost anything. Since all of us share these common activities, I think we might enjoy one of these topics. ("Topics" Memo 1-23-91)

Even though it turned out that no one was particularly interested in Brian's idea, it
was given full consideration along with the others as we played a kind of "believing game" in which we talked about the positive sides to each option, one by one, to get a feel for which one held the most potential.\(^3\) (Tina’s first memo to Katherine reveals that she felt that we went through this kind of decision-making process because in the early stages of working together, everyone was reluctant to criticize each other’s ideas. In her opinion, the decision-making process was unduly long even though she admitted that she valued all the different opinions that were voiced).

The group eventually decided upon Mike’s idea to write about a resort primarily because, as Sana wrote, "it was not a real place and we had no limits or restrictions on what this place should be like except those set by common sense" (Journal). Ultimately, however, what may have been the most significant drawback to this choice was never discussed—the fact that the topic was completely irrelevant to Sana personally since in her culture parents arranged weddings and a couple would never decide where to go for their own honeymoon. She told me that she didn’t really mind since it was just a class assignment, although with another topic she may

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\(^3\) In the interest of not "wasting" time, Tina had suggested that each group member simply vote by writing his or her top two choices for a topic on a piece of paper. One person in the group could then see which topic was preferred most often. When Sana asked why we should not go ahead and discuss all of them, however, Tina backed down, seeing that the rest of the group seemed willing to talk them all over. Tina journal entry provides evidence that she saw the benefits of soliciting from group members a wide range of ideas and opinions. She wrote: "The best feature of this group is that all members contribute ideas equally . . . Not all ideas many be accepted by the group, but no one seems to be uneasy about offering their ideas. This variety of ideas and opinions can work for or against a group [i.e., waste time], but in this situation it is working very well because it gives more viable options to choose from (Tina’ journal entry 2-6-91).
well have become more involved in writing descriptive sections of the text. In the end, it seemed to be Mike’s idea that we could give Katherine the letter as a formal invitation with a color-copied picture on the front that generated the most enthusiasm about the resort topic from all the group members, including Sana.

Finally, of the three individual assignments, the one which asked group members to develop a reader benefit ended up having the most long-term impact on the group’s writing process. As Katherine had suggested to the class in a mini-lecture on reader benefits, the group combined the ideas generated from their individual assignments to come up with a list of benefits the resort had to offer honeymooners, some of which we identified as "intrinsic" (e.g., the resort offered a chance for honeymooners to spend time alone together in a romantic setting) or "extrinsic" (e.g., "call now and receive a free pair of sunglasses"). As Sana wrote in her first journal, "We made a list of ideas and reader benefits, and all through the writing process, we looked at it for reference." However, even though all the group members seemed to recognize how working individually and bringing ideas to the group had been beneficial, group members rarely did any writing or brainstorming on their own outside of group meetings after the three required individual assignments. Brian occasionally suggested that everyone write down ideas on their own and bring them in to class, but without the pressure of the grade and the teacher for

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4 It was probably not accident that it was usually Sana who brought us back to the writing task at hand when group members began to get carried away with talking about honeymoons or weddings instead of working on the project. She was also often humorously sarcastic as she poked fun at some of the more exaggerated lines people came up with.
motivation, more than one or two group members rarely followed through on such suggestions.\textsuperscript{5} Thus, the individual writing that took place after the initial required assignments included only Mike writing descriptive sections during whole-group meetings and Tina, or on occasion Sana, taking a draft home to pencil in some revisions to suggest to the group.

**Composing a First Draft**

Having written and discussed in class the initial three individual assignments that were assigned, the business writing group met as a whole group outside of class once and in class once before deciding to break up into subgroups to compose the first draft of the direct mail letter. I was unable to attend the out-of-class meeting, and Mike was absent too, but the other group members taperecorded the meeting for me. The meeting began with Sana, Brian, and Tina complaining bitterly about how hard Katherine had graded their individual assignments. They tried to explain to each other how the grading system worked and what assignment counted for various percentages of their grades, after which the rest of the meeting was devoted to what Tina described as "writing out what our hotel is going to offer" (Transcript 1-29-91). The three students had obviously read the sections in their textbook on Direct Mail since they referred to it periodically as they talked. Other issues that came up were how long the letter was supposed to be, what features of the resort would appeal to

\textsuperscript{5} For example, in a group meeting on January 29th, he asked the group, "Should we assign like a part for everyone to write?" No one responded to his question. Tina simply ignored it and asked him if he could meet at 7:00 on Thursday.
the audience emotionally (i.e., intrinsic reader benefits). Often the group seemed to get carried away as they described extravagant features of the resort (as Brian wrote in his first memo to Katherine, "we spent more time talking about things that did not necessarily help the progression of the paper. We were easily strayed by conversation about our own wedding and honeymoon plans proof positive that we were all just a bunch of sappy fools" 2-9-91). The in-class meeting was spent meeting with another writing group and describing to them our ideas for the project; it was basically a chance for us to continue "creating" the resort. The group we talked with raised a few possible objections to our ideas, but mostly supported us by showing enthusiasm about the invitation and picture idea about which the group felt so strongly.\(^6\)

The decision to break up into two groups--with Sana, Brian, and possibly Mike in one and Tina and me in the other--came about as a result of the fact that we had only two days until our first draft was due, and there was not a time on either of the two days when the whole group could meet. Once it was discovered that Brian and Sana were both free in the afternoon the day before the draft was due and that they could meet in the computer lab where Sana worked as a student monitor, the decision-making process unfolded as follows:

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\(^6\) I never understood why the group was so excited about the idea of sending Katherine the letter as though it were a "real" invitation with a color picture on the front, and, as it turned out, the invitation was not the part of our work that ended up impressing Katherine either. When Mike wrote about the invitation in the memo as if it were the one factor that had earned us our grade of A-, Katherine told him that she saw it as "icing on the cake": It was the writing that she had, consciously anyway, focused on when making evaluations.
Tina: If you two [Sana and Brian] can maybe just get what you can get done-

Sana: And get it to you by seven somehow-

Brian: What do you mean by "get"--I mean what exactly-

Tina: Those two [pointing to Brian and Sana] are actually going to write the letter.

Brian: We're going to put it all together.

Sana: And then get it to her [Tina].

Brian: So you guys [Tina and possibly Kelly and Mike] can revise . . . . We'll get started and get it hammered out and get it down on paper and you [Sana] can pass it off to them. (Out-of-class meeting 1-29-92)7

When the group put this plan into action, however, things did not go exactly as the group had intended, and, in fact, it turned out that Brian had a tendency to be overly optimistic about how quickly the process of producing text would go. First of all, Mike missed the meeting, telling us that he had been unable to find Sana and Brian, and then, when I met Tina at the computer lab in the evening, I learned that Sana and Brian had only been able to write less than one page in the afternoon subgroup meeting. As a result, Tina decided that it was best for us to spend our time completing the draft rather than revising what had already been written.

During this writing session, Tina assumed that she would work at the keyboard, never offering that position to me, although she did ask numerous

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7 Interestingly, too, no one ever suggested that the first group simply leave the text on the computer in the collaborative folder for the second group to access. It was assumed that a member of each subgroup would have to meet for a "handoff."
questions about how to set tabs, change the size of type, center a heading, and so forth. She described our writing process to Katherine in a memo as follows: "As Kelly and [Tina] worked, [Tina] composed on the computer and anything she objected to we would go back and revise" (Memo 2-6-92). Presumably since this process was going so slow, however, Tina eventually asked, "How about if I just write for awhile?" When I agreed, Tina continued writing, using the her copies of each group member's third individual assignment (in which we each developed a "reader benefit" for the letter) as basis for most of what she wrote. She asked me to read aloud sections from these assignments as she wrote, using some sentences word for word, leaving out others completely, and rephrasing yet others. During the writing session, I was particularly struck by her strong sense of her own writing process: She told me that she liked to edit only on a printed sheet of paper, not on-screen, and she said that she wanted to be careful not to print too soon because then she would want to change things rather than complete the draft (Fieldnotes 1-31-91). And, even though she had resisted my participation in the writing she did that evening and even though she used many ideas from the individual assignments, Tina's memo to Katherine reveals a touch of resentment at the group getting credit for something she felt was largely her intellectual property. She wrote, "... it seems as though [Tina] was the one who wrote the whole section of the letter even after it was revised by the group simply because it was her main idea" (Memo 2-6-91). At this point in the group's writing process, Tina was still strongly resisting the idea that the group might be able to produce something better than she as an individual might. She was also unable to
see ways in which the group had helped make her "main idea" possible.

Since Tina and I left the lab the night of our subgroup meeting with a page or so of the four-page letter still unwritten, it took a whole group meeting during class the next day, a meeting which extended into a subgroup writing session after class, in order to complete the draft before Katherine's five o'clock deadline. During class, Tina printed out copies of the still incomplete draft so that people could respond to the printed text, a task which Sana completed before she retreated from the group to study for a midterm in her next class. Again, Tina sat at the keyboard, and Mike read aloud some sections from his individual assignment for possible inclusion in the text as Brian and I looked over Tina's shoulder. At one point when she became momentarily blocked and when Mike seemed to be paying less and less attention to what she was doing, Tina turned to Mike and asked, "Do you know what I'm trying to say, Mike?" As a result of her prompting, Mike made comments from time to time, once pointing out a dangling participle by saying, "It sounds like the patio is being delivered to the front door," another time reminding us that we "need to stay away from using 'our'--we need to direct stuff toward the reader" (Fieldnotes 2-1-91). Mostly, though, Tina and Brian worked together, using one of Tina's individual assignments for ideas, while Mike would offer some lines from his own reader benefit assignment when he came across sections that Katherine had praised in her marginal comments. Significantly, when class ended, Tina made a point of asking who was taking responsibility for turning the draft in, not leaving the room until she heard Brain say, "Mike and I are" (Fieldnotes 2-1-91). At this point, it seemed to me, she
viewed the shared-document as primarily her work and her responsibility, at least until someone else proved worthy of her trust.

While Tina concerned herself with verifying who was taking responsibility for turning the paper in, Sana was concerned about soliciting some of the teacher's input, a concern no other group member seemed to share. Sana, for instance, gave the reader benefit that Katherine had developed to Brian and Steve for incorporation in the first draft, at the same time giving them an advertisement from a magazine that she thought might give them some ideas. While the two men agreed that Katherine's piece of writing could work well as a "hook," they did not express any interest in asking Katherine questions about our draft before we turned it in, as Sana suggested we might do. In fact, after Brian and Mike had worked for about fifteen minutes after class, Brian suggested that they just quickly conclude the letter and not worry about revising yet since Katherine would be responding to the draft over the weekend. "Let her do the corrections for us," he told Mike, who was reluctant to stop writing since he was finishing up a paragraph that he had been working on intently. At Brian's prompting, then, Mike printed the draft without even adding in the revisions Sana had made during class, the two of them having agreed to see what Katherine had to say first.

Thus, during the first draft stage of the project, whereas Sana saw the teacher as a person they could usefully engage in their project as a kind of collaborator, Brian seemed to see her more as an evaluator, someone outside the group whom we were at once trying to impress and to receive "corrections" from. Interestingly, the
students never once mentioned the other source from which they would receive
feedback during the next class meeting--their peers in the other three writing groups.

Adapting to Feedback

Basically, getting feedback from the Katherine and the other groups was
something of a rude awakening for the business writing group: Although Katherine
had made very clear that whole class responding sessions were not "a time to be out
to get each other," it became clear after the responding session that our draft was not
nearly as far along as were those of the other groups (Fieldnotes 2-4-91). And in an
interview before class with Katherine I learned that she thought our draft was just
terrible: It left her feeling worried about our group and wondering whether Tina was
turning out to be as problematic of a group member as she feared. From my point of
view, however, it seemed that we simply had not put much time or energy into the
first draft since, in large part, we were waiting to see what Katherine thought before
we went ahead with any revisions.\(^8\) Brian described the group's reaction to the class's
responses in a memo to Katherine as follows:

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\(^8\) As Katherine projected our text onto a large screen, Sana placed a copy of the
draft in front of each group member so that we could take notes as we listened to the
class's comments. Students commented on how they liked our beginning the letter
with dialogue but that it sounded forced, the sentence structure too formal. Among
other things, class members suggested that we had overromanticized the process of
planning a wedding, raised the issue of whether the letter was targeting brides and/or
grooms, asked what the word "concierge" meant, and suggested that we put the
location of the island up front in the letter (Fieldnotes 2-4-91).
We were hoping for a lot of feedback from you and the rest of the class. Feedback was what we got [sic]! Even though we were a little disappointed with what we turned in we were surprised at the classes [sic] reaction. But now we had something on paper, something that could be revised and written better and that's what we were determined to do. Write a better paper.

The group's first step in writing a better paper was to agree that we would not meet again in sub-groups, despite what had seemed at first to be five people's impossibly inflexible schedules: When Brian suggested breaking up in subgroups, Tina said that we all needed to meet together and Sana strongly agreed (Fieldnotes 2-8-91). Sana felt that "if the second subgroup didn't like something the first subgroup had done, they were hesitant to change it so as not to offend the other absent members" and that with two subgroups came two different writing styles (Journal 2-9-91). I suspect that Tina's reasons were somewhat different since she had purposely not made revisions to the first subgroup's text. In any case, though, the class's comments made it clear that the dialogue with which the letter began was not working, and their response helped Brian who had written it to "swallow [his] pride and forget the idea of having dialogue" (Memo 2-9-91). As he wrote, "This was tough to swallow, the fact that no one liked what I had done," but, he acknowledged, being willing to let his idea go "worked out for the best because we were able to come up with a better star working as a group" (Memo 2-9-91).

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9 Sana interpreted Tina's desire not to revise until a complete text was drafted as a lack of concern for quality, a concern which seemed to contradict Tina's state goal of getting an A on the project. I think Sana misunderstood Tina's motives for wanting to wait to revise: It seemed to be her idea of the best way to achieve a quality product.
Thus, the whole-class responding session proved to be a valuable part of the group's writing process, giving the collaborative writing group reactions from readers rather than "corrections" from the teacher or "criticisms" from fellow group members which, at that stage, might have disrupted the still developing group dynamic. As Brian wrote in his journal, the whole class response session showed him that compromise on the part of individual group members--rather than the competition between groups or group members he had experienced in another class--was going to have to be an essential part of a successful group writing process in English 304C (2-9-91).

**Writing the Final Draft**

After the whole class responding session, the group met four more times to complete a final draft, three times outside of class and once in class. The first of these meetings took place in class, and it was at this meeting that Sana began her efforts to influence Tina and therefore the group more strongly than she had as we wrote the first draft. She tried for the most part to influence the group's decisions indirectly; for example, in one instance she told Tina how the letter could be rearranged to go from focusing on intrinsic reader benefits at the beginning to extrinsic benefits at the end. Immediately, then, Sana made a point of bowing to what Tina presumably believed to be her own greater expertise by adding, "Maybe you can think of some description for the beginning. I'm not very good at that" (Fieldnotes 2-8-91). In this case, though, her approach did not work since when
Sana continued by saying "I guess what we really need to do is decide what order [to put the reader benefits in], Tina responded with "I like the way it goes." And Brian, who often liked parts of the text that I did not find particularly effective, supported her by adding, "I don’t have a problem with the format." Outnumbered here, Sana—who I think had a good point—resorted to calling upon the teacher’s authority to make her case: She succeeded in winning the grudging assent of her group by pointing out that since "she [Katherine] emphasizes intrinsic benefits, we should put those first" (Fieldnotes 2-8-91). It was on this day when Sana smiled at me after class and whispered, "A little talk really helps, you know," referring to our discussion of how Sana might take on some leadership in the group without forcing Tina out of the leadership position she seemed to relish.

In the next group meeting, Sana continued to assert her ideas more than ever before. The meeting was a marathon, lasting over three hours, with the group (minus Mike) sitting in a dusky hallway outside a campus computer lab which we had mistakenly expected to be open when we met at 10:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning (it did not open until noon). In this meeting, Sana read aloud the comments Katherine had made on our draft as we waited for Tina to arrive (she told us she was late because she was "hung over" from party and that Mike was probably absent because his fraternity had had its formal dance the night before). They read and discussed the comments one by one with great interest, and Sana often laughed at

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10 The fact that Tina belonged to a sorority contributed to Sana’s mild dislike for her. She told me she had no use for the Greek system since it required people, in her opinion, to "buy themselves friends."
our writing once she read it in light of Katherine's comments (i.e., "And we were trying to be so sophisticated!"). Although the meeting was extremely long, no one seemed to become frustrated and everyone seemed to maintain a sense of humor about the project and themselves. The group frequently burst into fits of laughter over a humorous comment made usually by Sana or Brian. In this meeting, the talk flowed from task-oriented discussion to digressions in which group members shared personal experiences almost by free association, back to task-oriented talk. And even though it was almost always Sana who asked a question that brought the group back to the writing task, she, too, shared some personal experiences with the group. In particular, she twice brought up the fact that marriages were handled much differently in her culture and even went so far as to describe how her marriage was currently in the process of being arranged. Still, however, no one asked her if she found it hard to work on this topic because of the differences, perhaps because she was able to come up with numerous ideas and seemed to be participating fully.

When Sana shifted the group's attention back to the writing task, the group spent most of the meeting time writing a "Star" or opening to the direct mail letter, something to replace this ill-received dialogue which began the original draft:

"Sweetheart, wasn't Hide-Away Resort the perfect place to spend our honeymoon?"

"Yes it was, I'm glad we received the invitation from the resort."

"And the best part was how simple it was to arrange everything!!!"

To come up with a new opening, the group engaged in several hours of
brainstorming in which we tested out word after word, line after line, seeking the right approach. As we talked, Sana took it upon herself to take notes, with Tina occasionally asking her to read aloud what we had so far when the group became blocked. Often, the group talked explicitly about their writing process and how having access to the computers might affect what composing choices they made. For instance, after we had brainstormed awhile, Sana asked, "Well, do you want to just restart, like, or start writing again and sort of pull ideas from this? Or do you want to work with this draft instead of starting over?" (Transcript 2-9-91). In this case, Brian pointed out how easy it is to change thing on the Mac, which led Tina to add that "all we have to do is, what, do that editing--cut and copy, cut and paste." Then, later, when people were offering line after possible line, Sana became frustrated in her efforts to capture the words on paper, through up her hands, and said, "Like, um, somebody else write--I have no idea? [To Tina] Do you write better?" "We could just write rough ideas down," Tina responded as she took out some paper, "and put it into sentences when we put it on the computer" (Transcript 2-9-92).

In addition to such conversations concerning the group's writing processes other writing issues which arose as the group composed together face-to-face included that of who exactly our audience should be, whether it was sexist to target only the bride or groom in the letter, and whether we could break the "positive emphasis" rule in the letter if our purpose was to be humorous. At this stage in the process, no one even mentioned grammatical issues; the rhetorical focus was solely
on inventing and arranging ideas.\textsuperscript{11}

When the group met the next evening (Sunday) for its second-to-last out-of-class meeting for the project, however, there were two significant differences: The group composed at the computer, and the group's attention shifted somewhat to focus more on sentence-level issues of style. Since Brian arrived at the lab first, he sat in front of the keyboard, and as we worked together before Sana and Tina arrived, I could see that Brian was far less discriminating than Tina at the keyboard. He thought sentences sounded fine that seemed extremely awkward to me, and he was far more careless when it came to details like spelling and capitalization. Although I restrained myself from commenting on things I didn't like since Brian seemed so pleased with what we had written, when Tina and Sana arrived and began working, neither one of them hesitated to point out things they wanted Brian to change. Sana tried to joke about it, probably so Brian would not feel bad, referring to herself and Tina as "picky women" and laughingly saying, "Poor Brian!" when he was repeatedly asked to scroll back on the screen and make changes that just did not seem significant to him (Fieldnotes 2-10-91).

We worked for about thirty minutes on the first paragraph, one which Brian had thought was fine when we first started. At one point, when Tina made her characteristic statement, "Let's just leave it, we can always come back to it," Brian

\textsuperscript{11} Sana, Tina, and Brian did eventually get into the computer lab and wrote there for twenty to thirty minutes, but I was unable to stay for that part of the group meeting and the tape recording they made for me did not work well because of all the interference in the computer lab.
said, "No, let's get this now, I don't want to come back to it again." Although he made this comment in good humor, and it did not seem to cause any tension within the group, it was clear he was serious. It did not seem to be in his nature to focus for so long on what seemed to be insignificant details, so I think he just wanted to do it all at once since we had insisted on doing such detailed revision at all.

Tina, in fact, had come to the meeting despite feeling ill and had brought with her an issue of Brides magazine from which we planned to find a picture to color copy onto the front of the invitation. Many of the changes she suggested came from revisions she had made at home on a printed out version of the draft we had completed at the end of the last meeting (Sana had also written in revisions on the most recent draft). Some of her additions were lines she had boilerplated directly from the magazine, and no one in the group seemed to think of lifting lines from the magazine as plagiarism. During this writing session, the group (again without Mike) also worked on the formatting of the document--experimenting with different size fonts for headings and so forth. At Sana's suggestion, we tried, through trial and error, to find a "romantic-looking" font in which to print the letter. The meeting broke up, finally, when Tina said she really was feeling sick and needed to leave.

The next morning, the group reconvened for the last in-class meeting before the assignment was due, and at last, everyone was present. Tina immediately sat down at the computer and began typing in a descriptive section which Mike had written earlier and which we had been waiting patiently to get from him so it could be incorporated into the text. When she finished, Tina read the letter aloud as we
waited for copies to be printed on the laser printer. At this meeting, for the first time, we approached Katherine with a question: We wanted to know whether we should address the letter to Katherine as if she were a bride. When Tina returned from asking Katherine our question, she told us that Katherine said she would just come back to our table, perhaps because she had been wondering how we were doing (since we had never asked her input or advice on the project). Even then, we simply asked her to read our opening so that we could get her reaction to it, not really so that she could help us. After laughing at the opening as we had hoped a reader would do, Katherine made a few suggestions and then left us alone again, at which time we agreed to meet in the lab that evening to finish up the letter.

All the group members attended the final meeting, although Tina was about forty-five minutes late and Mike had to leave early. We began by Sana asking whether someone had written down the comments that Katherine had made. Mike, it turned out, had taken notes, and he mentioned how good it had been to get a sense of what Katherine expected (Fieldnotes 2-11-92). When Tina arrived, Sana told her to type as Mike read aloud from his notes on the feedback Katherine had given the group. Eventually, Mike fell into his customary role of getting out a piece of paper and writing a descriptive section of the letter on his own, in this case a description of the resort's swimming pool. As he wrote, he occasionally asked the other group members to help him think of a word or spell a word. At the same time, Tina turned to him several times to say, "Mike, help us out with something on this" (Fieldnotes 2-11-92). Often, though, when Tina and Sana were at a loss for words, one or the other of
them paged through the Brides magazine for ideas. They called sometimes called upon Brian's background in hotel and restaurant management to obtain specialized information, saying to him at one point, "Name a fancy shrimp dish, Brian." This writing session lasted just over an hour, ending soon after Sana took over the keyboard and wrote for awhile as Tina paged through the magazine. When the meeting ended, Tina and Mike took responsibility for getting the much anticipated color-copying done before class the next day when the letter was due. So, having initiated the shared-document writing process by presenting his resort idea to the group, Mike also completed the final step in the process by color-copying the picture for Katherine's invitation.

Evaluation

Based on reading the students' journals and from the smiles on everyone's face when we handed Katherine her "invitation," I am certain that everyone was pleased with the work we had done and felt confident that we would receive an "A." Only Sana expressed to me her feeling that a few details could be better (in fact she made some minor changes and printed off the letter in class just before we handed it in). She joked, too, about the picture and the invitation being a little "cheesy," a word the group picked up from Tina and used jokingly throughout the writing process. In fact, Katherine told me that she was very pleased with our work, especially with the progress we made since the first draft. Next to the grade of "A-", she wrote the following summary comment at the end of our letter:
Sana, Mike, Tina, Kelly, & Brian
You've all done a fine job with this letter. It's well-organized, nicely
designed, and it makes a lot of strong appeals to the reader. There are only
two areas in which the letter could be improved. First of all, you might want
to address some of the possible objections the reader might raise, esp. cost.
The only other suggestion for improvement would involve developing the
descriptions a little more, expand the way you place the reader in your resort.
See the marginal notes for specific places.
Overall, though a very fine job.

Thus, the business writing group had created a final product that both they and the
teacher considered successful through a flexible collaborative writing process. On one
hand, the group's process was adapted when necessary to accommodate the schedules
and work habits of individual group members. And on the other hand, group
members, for the most part, showed a willingness to adapt their own schedules so
that the group could find a pattern of collaboration that would give it the best
possible chance to produce a successful final product. Not surprisingly, without this
kind of flexibility--on the part of both students and teachers--the collaborative
classroom can become a scene far less conducive to successful collaboration than was
Katherine Gate's business communication class. The following chapter, which
focuses on the basic writing classroom, depicts such a problematic scene.
CHAPTER IV

THE BASIC WRITING COURSE AS A SCENE FOR COLLABORATION

Like Katherine Gate's business communication course, the second course in which I participated, English 060, was a three-credit hour course; like 304C students, many basic writing students often complained that the course was actually a five-hour class in disguise since the teachers who taught it usually required as much work of students as they have in most five-credit-hour courses at Ohio State.\(^1\) Of the three courses I studied, however, Basic Writing was the only one students were required to take based on their performance on a placement test.\(^2\) Whereas students were relieved to find a space in the business communication course since it fulfilled a graduation requirement, students often resented being forced to take basic writing since they felt that taking it would slow their progress toward a degree (060 credits didn't count toward graduation). Students also felt that taking the course cost them

\(^1\) Unlike 304C and 302C, English 060 was not officially designated a "C" course. Julia had arranged to have the course taught in an available computer classroom even though the master schedule indicated the course was to be taught in a traditional classroom. Since this study was conducted, English 060 has been phased out of the English program and replaced with a 7 credit-hour course which meets requirements for both basic writing and first-year composition.

\(^2\) The test scores of 060 students indicated that they needed one quarter of extra work in writing before taking the "regular" first-year writing course (English 110).
extra money, and many students found it difficult to deal with the stigma of being in "remedial" English.

At Ohio State, basic writing courses are taught in the English Department's Writing Workshop, and teachers of basic writing tend to be influenced strongly by general philosophies of teaching writing about which the 15-20 teachers in the Workshop basically agree. Workshops teachers, for example, usually emphasize connections between reading and writing, ask students to write in response to a sequence of assignments centering on a theme, hold frequent one-to-one conferences with students, value both narrative and explicitly analytical modes of writing, encourage frequent revision of essays, and seek to encourage students to share authority with them in the classroom. They also tend to feel strongly that it is important to challenge basic writing students, in a supportive atmosphere, as much or more than first-year writing students are typically challenged.

The Teacher

In Fall quarter 1991, many Workshop teachers had just begun to experiment with using writing groups and shared-document writing assignments with students, including Julia Brown, whose 060 class I studied for this project. Julia had involved her students in group writing assignments at least three or four different times before the Winter 1991 quarter. All of these experiences with teaching a shared-document

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3 I am familiar with the Workshop's philosophies since I taught in the basic writing program myself and in fact taught an English 060 class the quarter of this study.
assignment, however, came with students who were or had been in Ohio State's Academic Support Program (ASP), a program which allowed a group of "at-risk" students to take courses together and to receive tutoring and other support outside of class. Typically, ASP classes were unusually boisterous and social, a product at least in part due to the fact that students were taking most of their first-year courses together. The basic writing class I studied was not an ASP course; in fact it was the first group of students Julia had taught in some time who had not been associated with the Academic Support Program. (She did teach at a community college in the Fall of 1991 in addition to teaching at Ohio State). 4

When Julia agreed to participate in this study, she was 30 years old, had been struggling to complete a dissertation for several years, and held the rank of Lecturer in the English Department. Whereas Katherine felt comfortable in her position as a graduate student in the English Department, which entailed teaching one course a quarter and taking two seminars, Julia felt under extreme pressure as a Lecturer. She told me that she sometimes thought of being a Lecturer as "a kind of punishment" for graduate students who don't finish their dissertations on time. As a Lecturer, she explained,

I need to teach more to make the same amount of money [I did as a graduate student teaching only one class]. And that cuts into--what the big problem is, that my dissertation isn't done. Now I just kinda teach more [four classes a

4 Certainly my preconceived sense of what Writing Workshop teachers tend to do in their classes frequently colored my perceptions of what went on in Julia's basic writing class. Whenever possible, I try to acknowledge ways in which such biases are influencing my reactions and interpretations.
quarter], so that I'm grading papers more, [and] I'm spending more time preparing for class. I have less time for getting my work done. And so, in the long run, the less I get work done, the more financial burden I'm under.

(Taped interview 2-21-91)

Along with the financial pressures, I could see that Julia's position as Lecturer took a psychological and physical toll as well. Not being a TA made her feel "left out of things" and "insecure," and throughout the Winter 1991 quarter she was frequently sick (only once did she miss class, however, and on that day she had actually gone to the hospital). Like the basic writing students she worked with, Julia was clearly on the margins of the academic world and struggling to find ways to move toward what she saw as the center (i.e., a position where her pay, teaching load, and professional status would be equivalent to that of a faculty member or graduate student still being funded by the department).

Despite the many pressures that she felt made it impossible for her to do her best teaching, however, Julia was known in the Workshop as an enthusiastic and innovative teacher. I asked her to participate in this project for the same reason that she agreed to take part: Although we barely knew each other, we discovered at a Fall quarter meeting of Writing Workshop teachers that we shared a belief that basic writing students could benefit from and were fully capable of participating in shared-document writing tasks, a belief that was seen as somewhat controversial by several teachers attending the meeting. Julia told me: "I just was--I felt really angry that those people were saying basic writers can't do [shared-document] collaboration. I just hate that kind of thinking. So, I knew that you were on the OTHER side of that,
so that's why I was interested in having you in class" (Taped interview 2-21-91).

Usually extremely shy about speaking up in meetings, Julia had spoken out strongly in response to someone who argued that students would not be able to build confidence in themselves as writers if they are working in groups. She felt that after her students completed a shared-document writing assignment, they recognized that "it was a really hard thing and that they DID this hard thing and they seemed really boosted by that" (Taped Interview 2-21-91). Interestingly, when I first asked Julia to participate in my research, she agreed unhesitatingly, but she warned me that she really didn't do anything special in terms of helping students write together, and she hadn't done much reading about collaboration. Students just seem to take off with the assignment and go, she told me. Like Katherine, Julia expressed her belief in students' abilities, pointing out that "students are not stupid and [unable] to do hard things. I think a lot of classes in the Workshop work harder than they do in [English 110]" (Taped Interview 1-21-91).

The Students

Julia's Winter 1991 English 060 section was unusually small, including only eight students, four male and four female, all of them 18 or 19 year-old Anglo-American students who had grown up in Ohio (the fact that the class met so late in the day--from 2:00 to 2:50 pm.--may have accounted for the its small size). Two of the students were commuters, at least two had part-time jobs, and two students were extremely busy with extracurricular activities (one was on the University dance team,
the other a music major who was involved in frequent rehearsals and performances). Yet another student was disabled: He had been born without most of one arm and he had difficulty communicating orally because he stuttered. All of these factors—commuting, jobs, extracurricular activities, physical disabilities—became reasons students cited for having difficulties with various aspects of this class. The most common impediments to collaborative work overall seemed to be difficulties in meeting outside of class in groups and problems having access to (and using) the computers.

Anecdotal evidence from teachers in the Writing Workshop suggests that often students taking basic writing during Winter quarter tend to be less-prepared for college-level work or, at least, less confident about their abilities than students who were enrolled in Fall quarter classes. Mindy Wright, the Assistant Director of the Basic Writing Program, pointed out to me that students in Winter quarter basic writing classes are usually students who have put off English for at least one quarter, who were closed out of Fall quarter classes, who weren’t accepted for Fall quarter, or who didn’t decide to go to college until later than the typical first-year student. As a result, Winter quarter basic writing students had a reputation for being particularly challenging to work with, largely because so many of them often seemed uncomfortable with the idea of themselves as college students. Often, simply attending class regularly often seemed to be a challenge for students in face of the social and academic demands college was making on them.
In short, the Winter quarter students were inclined to be quite different than the ASP students with whom Julia was used to working, and these differences were, I think, significant for a teacher asking students to work collaboratively. Whereas students with a common community in the ASP program might be expected to have some basis for being able to trust and connect with each other without much guidance from the teacher, the Winter quarter students who did not know each other at all could not reasonably be expected to bond so easily.

**How Groups Were Formed**

Julia, understandably, did not think about these differences and their possible consequences as she worked with this population of students. She was, however, concerned about the fact that eight was the fewest number of students she had ever had enrolled in one of her classes; she was unsure about how the shared-document project would work with such a small group and felt uneasy with the idea of having four groups of two. On the other hand, she told me that she considered groups of four ideal (even though she was aware that published literature recommended groups of five), but she was not sure whether having just two groups was a good idea. She was certain, however, that having mixed-sex groups was important since it would allow for a variety of perspectives as students did their fieldwork. She also wanted to split up two students, Cheryl and Julie, because she had noticed that they liked to whisper to each other a lot during class, and she was afraid that the shyer student of the two, Julie, would become too dependent upon Cheryl if they were in a group
together.

With these considerations in mind, Julia put together two groups of four, and when we came into the classroom one day during the fifth week of the quarter, the names Cheryl, Beth, Jake, and Todd appeared on the chalkboard beneath the heading "Group 1." My name was not listed on the board since Julia had not had a chance to ask whether I wanted her to assign me to a group or whether I should choose. Since Group 1 had been assigned to study gender issues in academic settings and Group 2 gender issues in social settings (see section below), I chose to join Group 1 (it would be more convenient for me to participate with students on a study centered on classes on-campus than a study of social activities which might take place off-campus). As it turned out, Julia told me she had placed Cheryl, Beth, Jake, and Todd in the academic group because she felt as though they—with the possible exception of Cheryl—seemed less likely to be "social" and to feel comfortable studying social settings than the members of the second group (Erin, Julie, Tom, and Jerry).

The first member of the group, Cheryl, was a petite, dark-haired woman who had been a cheerleader at a well-regarded Catholic high school and who was at the time a member of the University's dance team. She planned to major in interior design and was the most active participant in discussions held in the basic writing class. In an interview conducted just two days before groups were formed, Cheryl had told me adamantly that she did not want to be placed in a group with any men based on her experiences working in groups in high school. She said, "This is probably another stereotype, but whenever it seems like I've been in a group with a
guy, they never do anything. It's like, they look at the girls like they're smart and go ahead and do all the work, and I'll sit here, and I just don't want that" (Taped Interview 2-4-91). After writing notes to Julie for much of the class period when groups were announced, she left quickly when class ended, slamming the door behind her. She was clearly not pleased with the group in which she had been placed.

The other woman in the group, Beth, was undecided about her major and, like Cheryl, had attended a Catholic high school. She spoke very little in class and when she did, her voice was so soft it was difficult to hear her; she had never written an essay in a group before. I noticed that before groups were formed she had often sat next to Tom in class and received help from him in using the computer (the two of them were the only male and female that associated with each other at all in this class). She seemed to take her membership in a group seriously, for throughout the first weeks of the course, whenever she returned from one of her weekly absences, she very worriedly asked another student whether we had been put in groups yet.

The first of the two men in the group, Jake, came from a working class family background and planned to major in mechanical engineering. I met him on the second day of class when we had to walk across campus together since the course was going to be taught in the computer classroom rather than the room indicated on students' schedules. He did not seem at all willing to talk with me or the other student walking with us; with headphones on and music playing loudly, he did not even notice when we turned down the street leading to the classroom building. He just kept walking until we ran up to him and let him know he was heading the
wrong way. At the end of the quarter, though, he agreed to participate in an interview in which he told me that he did not like writing at all and never tried very hard in English classes. For him, basic writing was a class he simply had to endure so that he could get on with his "real" education, although he really enjoyed learning how to use the computer and found using it to be great fun. As far collaborative work was concerned, he told me that he would rather work by himself because then he doesn't have to worry about messing up or anything. "Whatever work's done, I did it," he told me in an interview at the end of the course (3-15-91). He had written collaboratively in the past in science classes where groups of students were required to submit co-authored lab reports.

The fourth student, Jake, had grown up on a dairy farm and was planning to major in dairy science. He told me that he typically earned "C's" in high school English and that his favorite classes had been physics and shop; his only experience working in groups came from 4-H projects. Like Beth and Jake, he rarely participated in class, perhaps in part because his stutter made it difficult to express himself easily. He was also slowed down when it came to typing on the computer by the fact that he had only one arm. Most of all, though, he seemed overwhelmed by the fact that he was taking 19 credits that quarter; he felt he had no time to work in a group outside of class. In describing his attitude toward the basic writing class, he compared himself to Jake, telling me, "He didn't really seem to like the class, but he did the work just to, just to, to get done with it and say you did it. He didn't seem to really like it, but he stuck it out too, the same way I did" (Taped Interview 3-15-91).
As for myself, I never felt like a full-fledged member of the group as I had in the business communication group. One reason I found it more difficult to fit in may be that the role I played as researcher in this class was somewhat different from that I played in the other two classes studied (see below).

**Researcher's Role**

In part because Julia and I didn't know each other well and in part because age differences between me and the first-year basic writing students were much greater than between me and the business communication students, I found it much more difficult to take on the role of student in the English 060 class as a whole than it had been in 304C. To begin with, Julia seemed much more nervous about my being in the room than Katherine did, and therefore found it difficult to treat me as she did the other students. For example, when we were all locked out of the classroom, Julia asked me if I knew the combination and later showed me it in front of the class, being careful not to let anyone else see it. These actions on her part made it clear that I had privileges in the English Department that ordinary students were not allowed.

Also, most of our in-class work early in the course focused on students' process of composing individually-authored essays. Since I did not write any of the individual essays for this class (there simply was not enough time in the days to do every assignment for all three classes studied), it was difficult for me to do more than simply observe the interactions between Julia and the students. In fact, until the
group assignment, my only significant opportunities to interact with students came before class in the hall, where I often chatted with the women in the class while we waited for Julia to arrive and unlock the classroom door (the men usually arrived later and stood together farther down the hall from where the women waited). I found that it much easier to establish some kind of relationship with the females than with the males. As they had in the hallway before class, males and females almost segregated themselves in the basic writing class, sitting on opposite sides of the room from one another, just like in a high school cafeteria (the only exception was that sometimes Beth and Tom sat near each other when we worked on the computers). Like all the students, I sat in about the same place for every class period, which allowed me to get to know fairly well only the people who sat next to me (in my case, Cheryl and Julie and sometimes Erin).

**The Winter 1991 Course: Overview**

Besides differences in the role I played in class and differences in the student populations, the basic writing class also differed from the other two courses I studied by its being centered around a theme--"Interactions between Men and Women" (or "Gender Issues"). This theme was one that Julia had taught numerous times before; she was extremely enthusiastic about the course's past success and even gave a presentation about it at the 1991 College Conference on Composition and Communication. Like Katherine, Julia was teaching a course that she felt had a proven track record of success, and by Winter 1991, she had already invested
considerable time in polishing writing prompts that made up a sequence of writing assignments with which she felt comfortable.

Just as the business communication students had, during the first week of class, the basic writing students received a syllabus with a course description and class policies, along with a detailed description of the major assignments they would be asked to complete in the course—two individually-authored essays, one shared-document essay, a group presentation, a reading journal, and "process notes" for each piece of writing. The day-to-day syllabus, however, was not nearly as detailed as Katherine’s was; there were numerous days left blank, to be filled in with whatever needed to be done when the time came. Julia’s course description reads as follows:

English 060 is a beginning-level course designed to strengthen your writing by providing you with opportunities to sharpen your thinking, reading, and writing skills. Over the next ten weeks, you will keep a journal in which you record your responses to your various reading assignments and your different experiences with the writing process as you produce your papers. Throughout the quarter, you will work both in small groups and with the class as a whole; you will write your second paper in collaboration with three or four of your classmates. Your thoughtful and enthusiastic participation in class discussions and activities is essential, and it too will contribute toward your final grade for the course.

Unlike the extensive discussion of why English 304C was set up as a "collaborative class" that the business communication students found in their packet, this brief English 060 course description focuses more on what kinds of things students would do in the course than on why they would be doing them. In an interview, Julia talked in more detail about what she was trying to accomplish in English 060: "I get the feeling that they think this is a get me ready for 110 kind of class [first-year
composition], but I don't really think of it that way." Instead, she saw the class
giving students experience with forming, articulating, and defending ideas--"the kind
of writing they'll have to do in any college class." And, she told me that students
often want her to categorize each assignment into a mode (e.g., a "persuasive" or
"cause and effect" essay), but she wanted them to see that all writing, even personal
experience writing, is persuasive because the writer is trying to present his or her
view of an event convincingly (Taped Interview 2-6-91).5

Students' Perspectives on the Course

As Julia supposed, many of the students did tend to view the course in
different terms than she did, and their comments suggested to me that they were
being challenged in ways they never had been before. During the eighth week of the
quarter when students were in the middle of their group projects, I had a chance to
interview the four students who worked in the other group for about twenty minutes
on a day when Julia had to miss class because of illness. I learned that their different
view of the course was causing them great frustration, most of which resulted from
how they felt about the following four aspects of the course (the latter two of which
will be discussed in subsequent sections): (1) the fact that the course did not focus
on how to "structure" an essay, (2) the topic of "Gender," (3) the amount of work
they were being asked to do, and (4) the computers.

5 Julia felt strongly about the value of narratives; her dissertation focused on
women's personal narratives.
Erin, an especially outspoken and high-spirited member of the class, voiced Julia's suspicion that the students expected the course to be modes oriented, an expectation that may have grown out of the fact that the standard English 110 course (which Erin told me her roommate had taken Fall quarter) asked students to write essays that fit into various modes:

Well, I'd like to learn, I mean, I thought you're supposed to write a persuasive paper, an informative paper, a theses [sic] paper, and LEARN what these papers are instead of—we never really learned papers, we're doin' all sociology. (Taped Interview 3-4-91)

Throughout the interview, she and several other students continually expressed frustration that they were expected to learn through trial and error, through the practice of writing about a theme, rather than through direct instruction. Consider the following exchange:

Erin: Well, like that one day all I wanted to know was what the hell she was talkin' about. I wasn't tryin' to be mean, I wasn't tryin' to be nasty, I just wanted to know what the heck she was talkin' about as far as theses [sic] are concerned. . . . I'm like, shit, this is English, she never talked about theses until yesterday, has she? Has she ever, ever, ever, said anything about theses, or told us what a theses [sic] is or when you should put it in? . . . . She never said once [that] you should have an intro., a theses, back up your theses, and a conclusion, never once.

Jerry: Or [told us] how we should format our paper or write our paper or type it up.

Julie: That's what I thought we were gonna learn in here.

Erin: Like how to write a paper-

Julie: Not write a paper and then-
Erin: Guess, and I'll tell you what's wrong with it. I mean that was a trick, her tryin' to tell me just write and theses, and I'm sittin' there goin', you haven't told me I tried to drag the structure out of her that one day and I finally got one.

The fact that they were not directly taught a required "structure" and that they were writing about a theme based on their personal experience seemed to be an approach very unfamiliar to these students. With the course asking students to think of writing as more than just fitting "facts" into a "correct" form, they seemed to feel off balance and reacted angrily, describing the content of their essays as mere "opinions" which could not be graded. Speaking for the three others in her group who nodded in agreement as she talked, Erin asked, "How can you grade something that's all opinion and you haven't taught anything about structure?"

In addition to feeling frustrated with what they perceived to be instruction that was so indirect that it amounted to trickery, the four students I interviewed in class also objected to the theme of the course. Jerry and Tom, for example, said that they disliked writing on one topic all quarter; Jerry told me, "You know, in English you should be able to write what you want to write, you know . . . . but here, we're writin' on somethin' she wants us to write on." Erin, who had been telling me from the first week of class that she didn't like to talk or write about gender issues, expressed her feelings again in the interview as follows:

It's like, you know, we have enough problems as it is, I don't wanna be thinkin', I get all stressed out tryin' to think what I'm gonna do for my kids
when they grow up. I can’t even figure out what I’m doin’ with myself yet, let alone think about that. If I was in a sociology it’s, it’s that kind of class, you’re worryin’ about society here we’re just tryin’ to learn a little bit more English, how to prepare for 110. I don’t care about gender issues. We’re not tryin’ to say this was TOTALLY disinteresting—we found a lot of things with this paper—but it was a real big pain in the-

The views of Erin and her group, however, did not necessarily reflect those of all four of the other students in the class. While interviews with Todd and Jake suggested that they would have preferred having more freedom to write about absolutely anything they wanted, Cheryl, in particular, held a minority opinion; she seemed to welcome the connections between the personal and the academic that the topic of "Gender" encouraged. When we talked in the fourth week of class (several weeks before I interviewed Erin’s group), she told me that when she walked into class on the first day she was "kinda scared" because as she said, "I just despise English, probably because of all the high school classes I’ve had, and, um, I would always sit in the classrooms by myself and I would never talk" (Taped Interview 2-4-91). In English 060, however, she said, "the teacher doesn’t make you feel that way. I can talk and say anything I want that’s on my mind" because "she gives direct questions to be answered and the topics we discuss are topics I know a lot about. Like in high school there were topics I knew absolutely nothing about—like literature and poetry." And with the topic of "Gender," she told me, "There are things that I can talk about,

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6 Erin did not actually have kids at the time of this project. She was just talking hypothetically. When we spoke earlier about the topic of gender, she told me that she has enough trouble with her boyfriend without writing about it. She also told me that her parents are divorced and live in Texas; she said she missed class because she got stuck in Texas and then got sick.
with no problem. . . . And it [is] kind of interesting to find out what everyone else had to say. And how there were different--and some were the same--opinions from mine." Cheryl continually contrasted the class with her high school English class, where, she said, "we were always on such a strict schedule--like if anyone talked, you know, it'd be like, you know, just, shut up, you know, I need to get what I need to get in" (Taped Interview 2-4-91).

Perhaps the fact that Cheryl came from a rather strict parochial high school can account for the ways in which her perceptions differed from those of the other students. It may be, too, that as a woman, she just felt more comfortable--and more empowered by--writing and talking about gender issues than the men did (consider how rare it is to have more than a few men in any course focused on issues of gender or women's studies). The men in 060 were not only taking a course because the university told them they had to, but they were taking a course focusing on gender issues without having made the choice to do so. Aside from Erin, who may have considered any topic inappropriate for an English class that she thought was supposed to focus on "structure," the complaints about gender being too a limiting topic all came from the men in the class.7 However, in writing her final essay for

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7 Listening to the basic writing students talk in this interview and elsewhere, it was clear to me that the problems the basic writing students were facing in their personal, social, and academic lives seemed to be far greater in number and were much closer to the surface than they were for the students in the other two classes. This observation can be accounted for, I think, not only by the fact that first-year students--and perhaps especially basic writing students--do often face more problems than other students do, but also by the fact that the theme of this class itself, combined with Julia's emphasis on personal narrative writing, encouraged students not to separate the personal and the academic. Interestingly, at one point when the
the class, one of the women, Julie, argued that writing and talking about gender all quarter did more than make people feel uncomfortable; it actually turned "boys and girls" in the class against one another. She wrote: "All of our papers had been on gender, which posed as a threat to begin with. Most people don't pay much attention to this topic. And when [they] do it's just to make themselves look good. I believe that some of the comments boys made about girls in general turned Erin and I off to [their] way of thinking."

In all, the students' reactions to the topic of gender suggest that they had not thought much about why this class might be focused on the theme of "Interactions between Men and Women," and as strongly as many of them objected to it, they did not seem to feel any authority to question their teacher, to demand a rationale from her for why the course was focused on that particular theme. By the same token, Julia, having found students to be enthusiastic about the topic in the past, never offered this particular group of students any explanation of why the course was focused on Gender and not on "structure" of essays, even though her comments to me indicate that she knew students often had those kinds of concerns.8

Gulf War had just started, Katherine told me that she was really glad she was teaching business communication rather than a first-year composition course where it would have been appropriate to discuss issues relating to the war. A first-year course focused on interactions between men and women certainly has the same kind of potential to touch off some volatile reactions as a discussion of a controversial war might.

8 One reason why Julia may not have anticipated the theme of "Interactions between Men and Women" being a problem could be that she did not teach the course with a strong feminist agenda; I got the impression that she saw the theme as
Role of Computers

Just as the course theme may have contributed to a tendency on my and the students' part to think of the class in terms of two groups--males and females--the class tended to break down in almost the same way when I shifted my focus to think about what role the computers played in the basic writing classroom scene. Unlike the business communication students, all of whom knowingly signed up for a computer section, the basic writing students had no way of knowing in advance that they were in a computer section since the course was not labeled "C." (The course was also originally scheduled to be taught in a non-computer classroom until my research project came into the picture). Thus, while several of the students were pleasantly surprised, some of them were angry about having been placed in a being in a computer section without having been informed about it. Once more, as with the course theme and with being placed in English 060 to begin with, Jerry and Tom in particular saw themselves as not having been given the opportunity to make choices about their education. Instead, others--in this case, their teacher and the University--made decisions about what would presumably be in their best interest.

Whatever their viewpoints, one thing was certain--students were exceptionally vocal and forthcoming about their attitudes toward the computers, with the male students and Erin all agreeing that--aside from their not having been informed about them--using the machines was one of the best parts of the course. When Julia asked

a rich, interesting one that could fruitfully be explored through reading and writing. If students' consciousness about gender issues was raised as they improved their writing, then that was just a plus.
students on the first day whether they had used computers before, Erin told the class that she had used a Macintosh computer before in a Journalism class and that it was "awesome." Her only reservation about them in this class, she told me, was waiting for other people to learn, which wasn't really a problem. Like Erin, Jake had used a computer before, but only to play games, and he told me that he liked the idea of taking this class better when he found out about the computers. He said: "Every time I hear computers I think of video games. I got video games on my disk now, so I can play video games. I like computers. They're fun." Tom, in turn, described them as "very useful," while Todd—who had trouble typing because of his disability—was a little more ambivalent. When he found out about the computers in the class, he said, "I had a feeling I might flunk it because I type so slow," but since Julia was "pretty lenient" about letting students write early drafts by hand if they couldn't get to a computer, he felt better. In fact, he came to appreciate the spell-checker in particular, and told me that, overall, he decided it was good to learn how to use them since his father had told him that he might as well "stick with it" and "get used to it" because "you're gonna have to use 'm in the future" (Taped Interview 3-15-91).

Unlike Erin and the males in the class, Cheryl, Beth, and Julie seemed to view the computers, most of all, as a source of inconvenience and frustration. Both Cheryl and Julie lived off campus, and for Julie, it was sometimes virtually impossible to get to the lab a day or two before a draft was due since she worked every night and it took her about an hour to drive to campus. Cheryl, who lived about a half an hour's drive from campus herself, explained her feelings about the computers this way:
I've never worked on computers before, and I'm getting used to it now, but it's kinda hard for me, like, to get things done because I'm a slow typer and I write much faster than I type. I just understand my writing and I know where it is and I can go to it with no problem. On a computer, it takes me a while to figure it out, and by the time I figure it out, I could've had it written. (Taped Interview 2-4-91)

Like Cheryl, Beth seemed to struggle in class with basic computer skills, from finding a previously saved document to printing. Beth and Julie, who almost always had a draft written by hand when one was due, rarely used the computer until their final draft unless they were given time in class to type. In fact, even the students who said they liked using the computer did not talk about ways in which using it changed or facilitated their writing process. It seemed to me, in general, that they saw the machines more or less as deluxe, but sometimes inaccessible and incomprehensible, typewriters.

Students were, however, always eager to have time to use the computers during class and, especially on days when drafts or journals were due, they sometimes asked Julia for time to "type in class." During such times, I noticed that students interacted with each other more often than they ordinarily would in class. They often tried to help each other solve problems, with Tom often being the person who took on a helping role. My fieldnotes show numerous occasions when Todd, and especially Beth, asked for his assistance. These discussions, however, were always limited to computer-related problems and never focused on writing issues. Once students got going on the machines, there were usually long periods of time when everyone just sat and typed without speaking. Julia used these workshop periods to conference
with one student or another, usually sitting down beside them at the computer unless the student had come up to her desk with a question. Otherwise, she passed back papers or caught up on attendance or responded to essays; for both students and teacher, computer workshops were times to catch up on whatever needed attention at the time.

Early in the course, Julia had spent time in class on two different occasions showing students how to do some of the basic functions, and encouraged them that the best way to learn was to get their first drafts on the computer; for the reasons mentioned above, though, students rarely did so. Julia then blamed herself for not forcing them to do certain things on the computer and worried that if she didn’t "insist that the work on the group project be done on the Mac," then "in-class 'workshop' time would be a waste" (Journal 1-29-91). Despite some students’ continued reluctance to draft on the computer, though, Julia was able to generate some enthusiasm when she used the computer to publish students’ writing for distribution to the class. When students saw their first essays in print, they seemed amazed, and I heard Julie say, "These are ours--wow!"

Julia told me that the computers would also be useful for making the surveys that were required as part of their collaborative project look professional and that, in the past, creating the surveys on the computers had been exciting for everyone. Some of Julia’s colleagues from the department had even come to class to help. According to Julia, the computers really became important during what she called "the collaborative part of the course," when students began working on their shared-
document writing assignment. She said that, in the past, as students were putting their final text together on the computer, they had a kind of epiphany about how they were putting more than just words together--their ideas were actually meshing. She told me that it was hard to explain what had happened, but it was really exciting. In fact, she said that in a future class, she wanted to give students responsibility for actually getting their document ready for publication by doing some editing and co-authoring an Introduction so that all she had to do was just put the text into PageMaker.

Classroom Climate

The time that Julia spent using the computer to publish student work reflects her belief in the importance of establishing a warm, supportive classroom climate in which students could feel good about themselves as writers. She sought to bolster students' confidence through having them write frequently and receive positive reinforcement. Unlike Katherine, who encouraged students to become "ego-less" writers so that they could work productively with their peers, Julia focused on building up her students' faith in their own abilities. She told me: "With these students I think it's really important to show them that there are things that they do know how to do. [The class] is not always focused on what they don't know--grammar. I try not to be negative" (Taped Interview 2-6-91). So many of them, she said, have been told they are stupid because they didn't use commas correctly or something. Thus, when Julia responded to the students' reading journals, she made
only positive comments, even though she wondered if that sometimes made students take the assignment less seriously. Julia did, however, think it crucial that the students become "more critical." She told me, "I try to get them to ask questions . . . they just take something in and think it's right." This characterization of the students made sense to me in light of their tendency in the interview discussed above to make a blanket distinction between facts (which are "true") and opinions (which are not open to discussion since everyone has a right to his or her own). In addition, at least one conversation that took place between two students--Cheryl and Julie--in the hall before class supports Julia's perception of how her students tend to read, while it also illustrates how the women in the class sometimes bonded together to help each other. In that conversation, Julie asked Cheryl if she had read the articles because she didn't know what to do with the "Guns and Dolls" one since "it's just a bunch of facts." "What am I supposed to do," she asked, "just agree with them?" Cheryl and Erin, then tried to give her advice, with Cheryl advising her to "write whatever comes into your head," and Erin pointing out that "it doesn't have to be smooth and organized" (Fieldnotes 2-6-91). Thus, whereas the small group of women that met in the hall before class often engaged in social talk--about Beth's visit to a tanning booth, about Julie's boyfriend over in the Persian Gulf, about Cheryl's ex-boyfriend who wanted to go out with her again--they also gave each other help and support in terms of understanding assignments. They often discussed how many pages long various assignments were to be, when assignments were due, whether assignments should have been done on the computer, and--when someone
had been absent—they tried to summarize what had gone on in the previous class. Rarely did any of the men become involved in these pre-class conversations, and, unfortunately—despite Julia's emphasis on creating a positive, supportive atmosphere in the classroom—the kind of network that was created among the women meeting in the hall before class never seemed to carry over into the classroom itself. In fact, I perceived the classroom climate during the first four weeks of class as students worked on their first essay to be one of frustration, on both the teacher's and students' parts. This frustration was especially easy to see whenever Julia tried to lead students in a whole-class discussion.

**Whole-Class Discussions**

Standing in front of the class as she led a discussion, Julia often appeared nervous to me, wringing her hands and talking very quickly. Students, on the other hand, inevitably became passive and reticent as Julia spoke, and their silence seemed to result in Julia's talking even faster and longer. Then, by the time one of them did begin to speak, Julia seemed to have become so engaged in her line of thought that she did not pause to let the student continue; she also interrupted students in her ardent desire to offer them immediate support and reinforcement for whatever point they might have been making.

Thus, as Julia spoke, some students—especially Cheryl and Julie—often began whispering to each other or writing notes back and forth. As Julia told me, she often felt it necessary to explain things more than once for basic writers because it could be
difficult to "get them to sit still and listen" (1-24-91). She was aware, however, that she tended to jump in and talk too quickly at times because she became nervous and wanted to fill silences (Journal 1-29-91). As a result, it seemed to me that a recurring pattern was created: When Julia talked at length, students became fidgety and she lost their attention; when Julia saw that students weren't paying attention, she felt it necessary to repeat herself even more.

Frustration on Julia's and the students' parts may also have resulted from the fact that students frequently were either absent or seemed to have "tuned out" of class and therefore did not remember Julia's addressing topics that they actually felt were important. In reading the transcript of one class session, for example, I noticed that Julia's talk about freewriting and using freewriting to discover an essay topic--although it was not intended as a lecture--covered five, single-spaced, typed pages after being transcribed. Within these pages, which were dense with valuable although sometimes repeated information, I was interested to discover what I hadn't remembered myself after the class session ended--that at one point, Julia had talked explicitly about the "structure" of their essays, describing for students how "different topics will dictate different things." She explained: "There's no magic formula here. It's not going to start out with an introduction that states your thesis and then there's the narrative and then there's the analysis, but there's going to be other possibilities that we'll talk about" (Transcript 1-18-91). Significantly, however--along with Tom, Jerry, and Beth--Erin, the person who complained angrily about the course not addressing structure, was one of the four students absent that day.
As whole-class discussions faltered throughout the quarter, there were several indications that classroom gender dynamics may have contributed to the problems. For example, when Julia tried to give students time to talk and to draw them out with questions, often only Cheryl and Erin seemed willing to participate. As Julia pointed out to me one day during the fourth week of class, "of the six students in class yesterday--three men and three women--only the females were prepared to hand in the work that was due. And the women are the only ones likely to offer comments when we talk about what they're reading or doing" (Journal 1-29-91). Describing herself as a "perfectionist," something in Cheryl's comments indicated that she, too, was frustrated by her peers' seeming lack of concern for being "good students": She told me that she just couldn't understand why "some of the people in there, they don't turn in assignments, don't care, and really don't listen, and I think that she explains things really well, and I think she's pretty clear on what she wants, and I don't see how other people can see different" (Taped Interview 2-4-91).

At times, when Cheryl, Erin, and Julie seemed to tire of participating (at one point Cheryl just put her head down on her desk and whispered "I just can't talk anymore"), the silence seemed to make everyone extremely uncomfortable. Julia wrote to me:

I can't remember having such a hard time getting people to discuss things. I'd been thinking that they must not want to talk about "gender roles" or that they don't feel like they have anything to say about such matters . . . . And maybe I need to wait them out when I'm asking questions.

She noted, too, as I had, that students were "pretty much [segregating] themselves by
gender" and mentioned that she might share that observation with them when the
group projects began.

In a letter written to me during the fourth week of class, Julia expressed her
feelings about the situation and tried to analyze them, beginning by telling me, "I
feel extremely frustrated by the way the class is going! I think part of the problem
comes from me, and part of it comes from the students." She faulted herself for not
explaining the assignment as well as she had in past and for possibly confusing "them
early on with so much talk of freewriting as an exploratory device." And, like
Katherine, she wondered about how much and when to enforce deadlines and class
procedures. Unlike Katherine, however, who was working to become more flexible
with her rules and wanted students to begin "policing" themselves, Julia's initial
reaction to problems in the classroom was that she needed to be more strict. In
effect, many of the students were losing credibility in her eyes by not meeting due
date deadlines and by not writing rough drafts. Meanwhile, Julia felt that she lacked
credibility in students' eyes because she kept promising that a course packet with
readings would be coming in soon, but because of delays in checking the copyrights,
the articles were not available on time. With her feeling that her relationship with
the class was an uneasy one, Julia was not inclined to turn over responsibility to the
class for making decisions about procedures. In fact, she was more likely to ask my

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9 I had asked teachers to keep a journal for me only if they felt that they had
time for it, and with all the courses she was teaching Julia, understandably, had little
or no time to keep a journal. Whereas Katherine often wrote in her journal during
class while students worked in groups, Julia's students never worked in groups
without her being actively involved in what was going on.
advice about what to do on a particular day of class than to ask the students.  

Peer Response and Responding to Student and Professional Writing

Two parts of the course that Julia hoped might "liven things up and inspire greater 'productivity'" were the readings and journal responses" (Journal 1-29-91). She also said that she liked "giving them each other's papers and having them respond" because that "makes them challenge ideas and say, yeah, that's right, or I don't agree with this." (Taped Interview 2-6-91). I see these two activities--responding to readings and responding to peers' writing--as the two most significant collaborative activities that students were asked to engage in before the point when they were put into groups for shared-document collaboration. Students participated in only one teacher-organized, in-class peer response session in the course, a session which took place during the (fourth) week of the quarter on the day when the first draft of Essay 1 was due. When Julia arrived that day, she opened the door and passed out responding sheets for what she called "partner's meetings." There were four main questions on the sheet, each of them followed by additional questions which prompted responders to address the larger question in more specific ways. For instance, question number one asked, "How well has your partner shaped his or her narrative? Is the narration centered around an especially important part of the

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10 I felt uncomfortable when Julia turned to me for advice in class, first, because I didn't want to be singled out as being different and, second, because my own bias was toward opening such questions up to students, especially if they were being prepared eventually to work together in a shared-document collaboration.
experience? Does the writer supply enough background information? Does he/she sufficiently portray the outcome of the situation? What additional kinds of information would help you understand the experience? Where might 'further developments' be in order?" Following the series of questions, responders were provided a three-inch space in which to write their comments.

On the day of the peer response session, only Cheryl, Julie, Tom, Beth, and Jerry were present. Since it was not listed on the syllabus or mentioned in the previous class, no one knew ahead of time that the drafts due that day were to be exchanged with someone in the class and commented on. Perhaps because they didn’t know why they were bringing in a draft today, Julie and Beth brought handwritten drafts to class hoping to have time in class to type it, whereas Tom didn’t have a paper at all because he had been absent when the assignment was given. 11 Only Jerry and Cheryl had their drafts completed and on disk, and so Julia, seeming frustrated, suggested that Tom and Beth work on their papers, that Jerry respond to his own draft, and that Cheryl and Julie exchange papers. As Julia read through each question on the sheet and talked about what kinds of things they could write for each question, Cheryl and Julie whispered back and forth to each other, talking about how many pages they had written, among other things. After about ten minutes, Cheryl stopped talking and put her head down on the table. A few minutes

11 In fact, many of the students seemed to assume that they should be given time to complete all their work in class: As Cheryl told Julie, "That's what sucks about this--college. You go to class and then there's so much extra stuff on the outside."
later, Julia asked the students to exchange papers. After everyone worked silently for fifteen minutes, students began asking Julia whether she wanted the papers and the responses and what they should do when they are done. Julia told them to write a second draft, and I was struck by the fact that the students (in this case, just Cheryl and Julie) seemed to think of the responses as something they had done for Julia rather than to help each other; after the written responses had been completed, not a word was spoken in the room until the end of the hour as everyone worked individually on their essays. As a researcher observing this class session, I had difficulty telling what Cheryl and Julie, the only two students who ended up being in a position to collaborate with a peer from the class, were taking away from this activity. The question which arose naturally in my mind—could a peer response session like this one prepare students for the more complex task they would soon face of writing together?—was not an issue that Julia ever talked about with me or the students, whereas Katherine told me numerous times that she saw all aspects of a "collaborative" course as potentially affecting one another and tried to plan early activities that would set the stage for later ones. Julia, however, clearly wanted students to see their peers' comments as a possible resource to draw upon in revising their first drafts, for she responded to a question from Julie about to "get more detail in her essay" by telling her to look at the questions Cheryl had asked her. To find out how one of the students viewed the peer response activity, I decided to ask Cheryl a few questions about the experience. As the following conversation shows, her comments underlined how deep-rooted students' views of the teacher as authority can
Kelly: So do you talk to other people in this class more than you did in high school or not necessarily?

Cheryl: No, I, in classes before we always got in groups and talked about things, traded papers, and got comments on our papers, but, [in this class] I liked, um, getting comments from the teacher, not just the students because when I was in high school I would never get comments from a teacher on what I was doing wrong and that's who really counts. I mean that's who I really needed the comments from, and she [Julia] does that.

Kelly: Well, one time you got comments from Julie, right?

Cheryl: Right.

Kelly: Was that helpful?

Cheryl: Um, it helped but, um--she gave me a lot of ideas and like what to talk about and what was wrong with my paper, but I wasn't really sure if I should take her advice 'cause she coulda been wrong.

Kelly: Did you take any of her advice?

Cheryl: Yeah, after I got the comments back from the teacher, um, she was right, 'cause they were pretty much the same comments, and, that's about it.

Kelly: So did that make you think any differently about getting comments from Julie next time, or not really?

Cheryl: Um, not really, because, I mean next time she could be wrong, you know. I never know.

Cheryl's comments suggest that just one peer response session—even one in which students received excellent advice from their peers—is probably not enough in and of itself to convince first-year students that the ideas of anyone in the class but the teacher really matter.
English 060 students also responded to each other's writing in a second, more indirect way when Julia asked them to respond in their reading journals to the final drafts of each other's first essays (Julia had used Pagemaker to compile the essays in a kind of newsletter called "Gender Issues"). Students wrote their responses, however, in journals that were read only by the teacher, and because they never talked face-to-face about the essays while they were in progress, they never had to communicate their feelings about an essay directly to one of the peers (as they would be expected to do in writing the shared-document assignment), and students never saw the responses their essays generated (When Julie handed her journal in, she told Julia that she felt sorry for her having to read "all this crap," and Julia assured her that she really enjoyed it). Students did, however, get a chance to learn how other students had approached the assignment and what they had to say about some aspect of the course's theme, and some of these responses were articulated in a class discussion which began with Julia asking the class to identify some of the things that "the essays had in common about their claims about men and women" (Fieldnotes 2-4-91).  

This discussion is significant because it revealed some of the ways in which the "Gender" theme might have been influencing classroom dynamics and male and females students' relationships with one another.

As Julia asked her initial question, I saw Jake mumble something under his breath, and Jerry said quietly, "It's all about what men do wrong." No one heard him.

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-or if anyone did, they didn't respond--and the discussion began with Erin pointing out that she and Todd had expressed different opinions about whether men or women are more likely to hold in their feelings. Julie said that she was surprised that Todd thought women are more likely not to express their feelings, prompting Julia, who served as a class secretary responsible for synthesizing comments for the group, to write on the blackboard, "All the responses mentioned emotions and miscommunication." Jerry then said quietly enough for Julia to be unable to hear him, "Isn't this all bull!" (Julia had a hearing impairment that sometimes prevented her from noticing students' asides). Ignoring Jerry, when Julia finished writing, Cheryl immediately raised her hand, only to be asked to hold on a second since Julia wanted to know what Todd was thinking. Todd pointed out that he hadn't said anything about all men, in response to which Jerry sat back, shook his head, pointed at Erin and said, "She says all men don't cry." In response, Erin retorted forcefully, "No, read the sentence," and she and Jerry argued back and forth until Jerry pointed out something that he didn't agree with in Cheryl's essay about male and female attitudes toward sex. When Julia finally wrote on the board, "All men are not the same, All women are not the same. It's hard to make absolute statements," the tension abated a bit. The students, however, continued to struggle to find ways to make generalizations without stereotyping, and to say anything without offending a member of the opposite sex. It was definitely one of the liveliest discussions the students had all quarter, yet only Cheryl, Erin, and Jerry ever became involved, with the expressions on Jerry's face making it clear that he believed, from beginning to
end, that the women were trying to put the men down.

It is important to note, too, that as the class was ending, Julia tried to get Jake involved, which I knew she felt compelled to do sometimes since she considered him one of the better writers and students in the class. Jake, however, was obviously doing anything he could to avoid participating in the discussion. When Julia asked, "Jake, why are you staying out of this?" Jake told her directly, "I ain't saying nothin."

And when she tried again a minute later, he told her, "I didn't have my paper. I left it in my room." From my perspective (and perhaps from Julia's too), Jake was simply making excuses to avoid what he considered too uncomfortable a discussion. From Cheryl and Erica's point of view, however, it may have been just another example of how a guy in this class was not very reliable (it was after class that day that Cheryl commented on how guys always expect girls to do all the work when they are in groups together).

Finally, although it didn't occur to me until I took some time to review all the readings we had done in the class at the end of the quarter, it is possible that Amy's negative attitude about working with guys might have been reinforced by the series of student and professional essays students in the class were required to read and respond to as part of their reading journal. At one point in the course, Julia decided not to wait for a course packet but simply to distribute photocopied articles that dealt with gender issues. We read the Newsweek article called "Dolls and Guns" mentioned earlier, several articles from a book called The American Male: How Violent Is He?, an essay written by a student from one of Julia's previous classes called "Can You Take a
Date Fishing?" and an essay from Society called "The Dirty Play of Little Boys." Each of these essays, all of which were written from feminist perspectives, could easily have been seen as being about "what men do wrong," as Joe put it. One focused on the impudence of men pushing themselves on women at bars, several others on males' violent tendencies, and the student essay described a situation in which "males and females were enemies." Specifically, the student writer described a situation in which the president of a high school's student government was typically female even though the student body was mostly male. When the guys banded together one year to elect a male president and lost, the writer tells us, "a rumor began to float around that all the faculty had thrown the election because the males weren’t responsible enough." Again, it is impossible to know to what extent various parts of these readings reinforced ideas males and female in the basic writing class had about each other, but the possibility that they had an impact undeniably existed.

The Shared-Document Assignment

Regardless of exactly how the readings impacted students, however, they served—in conjunction with several writing assignments—to give students opportunities to explore gender issues individually before they faced the challenge of writing a shared-document essay on the topic of gender. After writing an introductory essay in response to the question, "Anatomy aside, what is the essential/most important difference between men and women?" students’ first major assignment was to respond to the following prompt:
I would like you to articulate an opinion on some aspect of relations between men and women, and I would like you to account for your view by supplying your readers with first-hand evidence that is, evidence from personal experience.

Building upon these tasks, then, the shared-document assignment asked students to conduct a small-scale research project on gender issues in social and academic settings. The project required that students use some basic ethnographic research methodologies that Julia was familiar with from having done studies in folklore. The assignment prompt, which students had received at the beginning of the course with the syllabus, read as follows:

In your second paper, I want you to continue investigating--and challenging--the ways in which assumptions made on the basis of gender influence the way we behave and how we see/make judgements about one another. This time, you will be drawing on material that you gather through various kinds of observation: along with two or three of your classmates, you will be doing research among the men and women around you on campus, studying their behaviors in a specific situation, looking for interesting patterns/differences/similarities. (This is what scholarly types in such fields as anthropology and folklore refer to as "fieldwork.") Once you, along with the other members of your group, have devised at least two methods for collecting information, and once you have gathered plenty of data, the members of your group will collaborate on an informative essay in which you report your findings and offer some (tentative) interpretation of them.

As they worked on this project, just as the business communication students did as part of the unbundled assignment process, the basic writing students were expected to show their teacher work that they had done as a means of getting to the final product. Julia called this work "Process Materials," and these materials included (1) "Brainstorming Notes" produced in early class sessions devoted to formulating "Research Questions" and exploring options and methods for gathering data, (2)
Brainstorming Notes and Freewritings produced as the process of writing the shared-document essay got underway, (3) at least two different research instruments of the groups' devising (e.g., interview questions, questionnaires, observation forms), (4) "Field Notes" in which observation and/or interview information were recorded, and (5) at least two rough drafts of the essay (List taken from Syllabus). Students, however, were not required to turn in these Process Materials (and were not graded on them or given responses to them) until after their final product was completed and turned in. They were also asked to do the equivalent of the business communication students' journal or memo assignment: Julia required them to keep "Group Notes," which were to be each group member's personal record of

- What happens during group meetings,
- What happens as each group member is going about his/her individual tasks and assignments,
- Comments on any work you do on your own and any interaction that takes place between/among people working on the same project. (Syllabus)

The journal, Julia wrote, "should be detailed and candid--only I will see it." She expected that the journals would be very useful for students in writing their third essay for the course, in which they were asked to "evaluate some aspect of your work on the collaborative project. For example your critique might offer a consideration of the collaborative process (one of its unique challenges, benefits, or difficulties, say), an assessment of the paper produced by your group, or an assessment of a"good"/"bad" way to conduct fieldwork" (Syllabus). Because Julia expected that information from
the journals could actually be cut and pasted from the journal to the third essay, she required students to put their journals on the computer, a task which many of the students found arduous. Students were also asked to give a group oral presentation based on the group project during the final exam period.

Unfortunately, based on my reading of the students’ journals, it seems unlikely that they were much help to students as they wrote either the shared-document or the final essay for the course. It is significant, I think, that the description of the journal assignment on paper emphasizes reporting on what happens in the group rather than analyzing the group process in order to improve or better understand it, as the journal or memo assignment did in the business communication course (notice that the first two prompts ask simply “what happens”). Perhaps because of the emphasis on reporting and because of the fact that all Process Materials except for a first draft of the collaborative essay including the journals were not due until the end of the shared-document project (which meant they didn’t get feedback on them from Julia), students’ journals were far less elaborate than those produced in the business communication course. Julie, who received the grade of "B" on her notes as a whole, wrote the following journal entry:

Today when we went to Erin’s we got a lot done. We finished our group interviews on the girls. When we interviewed each other I’m not sure we got the information we needed. Jerry and Tom didn’t feel like doing anything at that time. They said they were going to do them later. I’m not too sure about Jerry. He better not let us down. I’ll be mad! (2-25-91)

This journal stood out from the others in the class because it included some of the
writer's feelings and reactions. Most of the students simply briefly summarized what
tasks the group had accomplished, often in just one sentence as Cheryl, who received
a "B-/C+", did for February 15th, "Meeting 4": "Today our group met and started
typing our student survey. This is really all the time we had for today." I know that
Julia had hoped for more based on how she graded Julie's journal and since she wrote
next to Cheryl's grade, "Good descriptions! I wish you had reacted here to what went
on." However, Julia did not share Katherine's belief that journals were an important
means by which students could actually discover for themselves steps they could take
to improve upon their groups' interpersonal dynamics and writing processes.

As Julia had told me when I asked her about studying her class, she was not
fully aware of what she did to facilitate collaboration since it, for the most part, just
seemed to "work." Julia did, though, mention a few of her strategies to me during
the course of the quarter. For example, she led class discussions of various topics
during the period of time when students were working on their shared-document
assignment, discussions ranging from exploring various composing strategies that are
possible for collaborative writing, to how to design surveys or observation forms for
fieldwork, to how to take information from fieldnotes, surveys, and so forth to put it
into text. All of these discussions focused on writing processes, and unlike Katherine,
she placed little or no emphasis on interpersonal group dynamics.

In general, Julia seemed to rely upon her ability to intervene in groups and
take action to solve their problems as they became apparent to her in class. She told
me that her goal was to intervene in groups regularly at the beginning to help them
get going and them to back off if things seemed to be going well. She would step in at any point, however, if she perceived a problem. As a participant-observer, I felt that our groups were far more closely monitored than were our groups in the business communication course. Julia usually sat at her desk and watched us, getting up and asking if we had a question and asking what we were doing from time to time. When students needed to leave the room for any reason, they always asked her permission as they were probably required to do in high school, whereas people in the business communication course came and went as they needed to. Because she didn’t discourage students from such behavior and because when students didn’t seem to be working, she would suggest tasks for them to do, I got the impression that she wanted to maintain some degree of external control over students during the period of time when they were working on the group projects (see Chapter 5 for details about the role she played Group 1).\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Summary of the Classroom Scene’s Dominant Features}

The following observations summarize some of the most dominant features of the basic writing classroom scene prior to the time when students began work on the shared-document assignment:

\footnote{13 My impression was reinforced one day when we came into class and the long, rectangular tables in the room had been exchanged for five round tables like the ones in the room where the business communication and critical writing courses were taught. When Julia came in, her first reaction was to say to me that she really hated the round tables because they’re not as big as the other ones and because the people at the back could mess around and there would be no way to get back there because of all the tables.}
(1) Compared to more traditional classrooms (i.e., where writing workshops and peer response might not ever take place at all), the basic writing course was an extremely "open" classroom in which students were given frequent opportunities to express themselves freely in talk and in writing. And compared to traditional basic writing courses which often drill students on grammar and ask them to fill in workbook pages, the course—with its challenging assignments and thought-provoking topic—was extremely progressive. However, the basic writing students persisted in thinking of the class as a place where they were given assignments and they would take in information about "how to write an essay correctly." They did not seem to think of it as a place where they might, by their very presence and participation, actually play a role in creating knowledge. (Perhaps as a result of this way of thinking, students were absent frequently, although the same students were rarely absent twice in a row. These frequent absences played, I think, a significant role in Julia's inability to help the eight students to see themselves as a group working together for any common purposes).

(2) Julia herself was a dominant feature of the classroom scene, and in some ways, she gave students mixed messages. In class, she talked enthusiastically about students working together and valuing the ideas of their peers, and to me, she frequently expressed her strong belief that basic writers could do anything that "regular" students can do and more (this belief is fairly standard for Writing Workshop teachers). As leader of the class, however, it was difficult for her to de-centralize authority in such a way that would allow students to see what expertise their peers
had to offer. Perhaps because she was working with an unusually small-sized class, her authority was exaggerated in ways it would not have been in a larger class. For instance, with so few students to participate in discussions, Julia often felt compelled to "take over" for them when discussions did not seem to be going well (in some cases she took over when they did not even seem to want her to).

(3) Despite the fact that the course curriculum was intended to empower students, the basic writing students were nevertheless required to discuss topics set by Julia and had little or no power to determine their own agendas, just as they had no power to determine the topic of the course, whether they were in a computer section, or whether they wanted to take basic writing at all.

(4) Because students had few real opportunities to interact with one another or to respond to each other’s writing, they had little chance to get to know one another or to see how they might benefit from each other’s strengths when the time came for them to write together. Lacking such knowledge, students tended to judge each other based on stereotypical assumptions about men and women. The students who did have opportunities to get to know each other were placed in separate groups for the shared-document project (in one case, this separation was done purposefully and in other cases, was probably just incidental). Ironically, in a class focused on examining and dispelling stereotypes associated with gender, students’ attitudes and actions were often strongly influenced by stereotypical assumptions.

Each of the issues mentioned above, including issues of gender, authority, and students’ perceptions of their role as learners in a writing classroom, remained
prominent as students began work in their assigned groups. Chapter 5 describes how they came into play as Cheryl, Beth, Jake, Todd, and I set about the task of investigating and writing about gender issues in academic settings.
CHAPTER V
GROUP DYNAMICS AND WRITING PROCESSES
OF THE BASIC WRITING GROUP

Just as Julia functioned as a dominant leader of the basic writing classroom as a whole and shared little or no authority with students, there emerged within Group 1 only one dominant leader. This leader, Cheryl, established herself as leader in the group's first meeting and, throughout the group's collaborative writing process, shared power and control over group processes with only one person--Julia, the teacher. At no point was there any indication that leadership in the group might, as it did in the business communication group, float at least momentarily from Cheryl to one of her peers. In fact, whereas it is possible to characterize the business communication group as more dialogic than hierarchical (e.g., Lunsford and Ede), there was clearly a hierarchy of power evident in the basic writing group: The most power rested with Julia at the top, with Cheryl situated beneath her, and the others trying to work within the parameters set up by the two leaders. While Cheryl exerted influence from within the group, Julia used her authority as teacher of the class to step in and direct group members' actions.
Leadership and Power: A "Little Teacher" as Leader

For the first three class sessions which were devoted to the shared-document assignment, Julia had scheduled topics for us to discuss as a whole-class, including selecting a social or academic setting to study, designing questionnaires and class observation sheets, and gathering and interpreting data. After these discussions, which typically lasted 40-45 minutes, we were given the remaining five to ten minutes to meet in our groups, and Julia would tell us what we should spend that time talking about each day. For example, one day she told us to start brainstorming ideas about what specific settings we might focus on, saying, "I'll be around to give you some ideas too... then on Monday I want to help you start deciding what method of gathering information you want to use" (Fieldnotes 2-8-91).

While I could see that these discussions were raising important issues and, in some ways, helped to "unbundle" the assignment--to use Katherine's term--spending that much time as a whole class allowed little time for meeting in groups and thereby getting to know each other and beginning to establish group norms. Often, too, attendance was poor for these class sessions (only rarely did more than four to six of the eight students attend) which were characterized by frequent long silences, partially a product of the fact that Cheryl and Erin were usually the only two students who spoke. In fact, all of these discussions followed an agenda set by Julia, with her doing almost all of the talking: She frequently responded to students' questions--which often seemed unrelated to what she had been talking about--by saying, "I'll get to that in a minute. I want to talk about something else first." (e.g., Fieldnotes 2-6-
Finally, in one class, I heard Julie whisper to Erin, with about 30 minutes left in the class, "Let's just get started. Enough talking." Then, since the process of Julia asking questions and the reticent students struggling to respond continued, an apparently frustrated Erin spoke up with about 10 to 12 minutes left in the class and said simply, "Can we start talkin' in our groups now, 'cause I don't have much time outside of class?" (Fieldnotes 2-11-91).

Even when we broke into our groups, Julia was very much involved in the minute-to-minute activities of the group. She usually announced to the class what our goals for each a particular group meeting should be, and then sat down first with one group and then with the other, asking questions about what we've done so far, making suggestions, offering advice, and delegating tasks if it seemed like someone didn't have anything to do. And even when she was sitting with our group, she was still very much a strong authority figure in the class as a whole: For example, whereas the teachers of the other two classes made it clear to students that they were free to spend in class group time as they liked and to come and go as they pleased, students in this class asked Julia's permission if they needed to leave the room for some reason. Basically, no matter what the situation, these first-year students treated

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1 It seemed to me that because she had seen so many student groups go through this research/writing process in previous classes, she was compelled to warn these students of whatever possible pitfalls she could anticipate, often explaining what groups "last year" did in a particular situation. I had the impression that she felt very strongly about wanting these students to see how exciting the project could be and about their producing final essays which demonstrated that excitement, so strongly that she was often unwilling or unable to relinquish control of the work to the students themselves for fear they would be unsuccessful on their own.
Julia as I remembered being expected to treat teachers in high school, as a strong central authority figure in the classroom.

In general, I would characterize Julia's role in our group as that of a hands-on, on-the-scene managing editor working with authors over whom she had a considerable degree of authority. For instance, during one class session Julia had left the room at the beginning of the hour to check on a problem with getting the Gender Issues magazine together, and while she was gone, Cheryl had suggested to Jake (the only other group member present besides Cheryl and me) that they go to the computer to type in the survey that we had all worked on in the previous class session (Cheryl had said that she would finish it at home). Cheryl began typing, with Jake and I standing behind her giving suggestions. It wasn't long, then, before Julia had returned and came over to "check on us," as she did at least once during each class. The conversation that followed went like this:

Julia: How are you doing? Do you want me to wait until you finish typing before I look at your survey? [Cheryl continues typing and mumbles something unintelligible]. How about your observation form—do you have that done yet?

Jake: I didn't even know about that.

Julia: Yes, that's the one that's required of all the groups. Here, you start working on the observation form.

Jake: Oh, we're going to be observing these classes?

Julia: Yes! Don't you know anything about this project?

Jake: Not until today. [He has a notebook out with, it looked like, a few things jotted down in it].
Julia: [Bending to look at Jake's notebook] Let me see what you've got. (Fieldnotes 2-15-91)

It was easy to see that Julia was frustrated with Jake—she had spent so much time explaining how the project was supposed to work and what the various steps were, and then students were absent or they just didn't seem to catch on. Her reaction, in this particular class session and in others, was to go ahead and assign people in the groups various tasks so that the work would get done. In this case, when Cheryl said that she would just go ahead and do all the forms herself, Julia objected and said that Jake should do the teacher's survey and Cheryl should do the class observation form (Julia never assigned me tasks). When Julia took control in this way, the students always obediently agreed to do what she asked. Such incidents, though, led me to conclude that, at this point anyway, Julia had much more invested in this project's success than the students themselves did.

My conclusion was reinforced in a subsequent class session, in which I noticed that some of our group members seemed to be making a habit of waiting passively for someone—namely Julia or Cheryl—to assign them something to do. Midway through the class, Todd, for example, just sat next to me at a table while I was taking notes and muttered comments like, "I should have brought my homework. There's nothin' to do" and "I can't wait til this is over." (Fieldnotes 2-18-92). At one point, things seemed so bad that Julia took what seemed to be somewhat drastic measures to get the group moving: She became so frustrated with Jake when he was working at the computer that she actually grabbed the mouse out of his hand, sat down, and
started working on one of our group's surveys herself. Meanwhile, Beth and Todd, both of whom had been absent from the previous class, were sitting idly by themselves at two different tables as Cheryl was finishing up another survey. Noticing that they did not appear to be doing any work, Julia turned around and said sharply, "Beth and Todd, you have to know what the group is doing too!" And shortly thereafter, as Jake stopped offering suggestions to Cheryl and Julia who were still typing, his silence prompted Julia to remind him in exasperation, "Well, you have to give some input in this too!" (Transcript 2-18-91).

Not surprisingly, when we talked at the end of the class session, Julia expressed a lot of frustration. She asked if I thought she had acted "like a bitch" and explained that she really did not like to step in and divide up tasks for groups. She told me, "I had hoped they'd come up with that on their own, but I was so frustrated that I just told them" (2-20-91). Finally, in light of her heightening frustration at what appeared to her to be a group "falling apart," Julia even suggested that I might want to choose a different class to study since things were going so badly, so much worse than they ever had before. She kept apologizing to me that this class just wasn't working out as well as her classes had in the past, and I kept assuring her--although I had doubts myself--that something probably could be learned from even a classroom event as disastrous as this shared-document project was apparently turning out to be. In any event, one thing was certain--while Julia and I were becoming frustrated with the way in which the group project was unfolding, our level of frustration was at least matched by that reached by Cheryl, the student group
member who took on leadership responsibilities when Julia was not present.

As student leader of the group, Cheryl seemed to have little or no trust in any of her peers, especially not the males. Not only had she gone through negative experiences in high school with "group work," but the belief she brought to the class that guys were not reliable students or group members in general was solidified by what she saw happening in the first part of the basic writing class. She had told me specifically that she did not want to be grouped with any of the guys in the class--she had already seen Julia reprimand them for not having their work done on time, for absences, and for other problems (it seemed to me that Beth and Erin were as guilty as the males of these same offenses, but, unlike some of the guys, they were not scolded in front of the class). After finding out who she had been assigned to work with, her first question to Julia was, "Is this a group grade or are you going to be grading us individually?" (Fieldnotes 2-6-91). And even after we had completed the research part of the project and Julia was announcing a due date for the first draft of the essay, Cheryl asked, "When you say draft, do you mean as a group?" (Fieldnotes 2-25-91). She was clearly concerned about doing well in the class and didn’t want her grade to depend on other people. (Recall that she was quite angry when she learned who was in her group, spending much of that class session writing notes to Julie, being the first student to leave the room, and slamming the door behind her as she walked out).

By assuming leadership of the group, however, Cheryl was able to increase the degree to which she could keep the project, and therefore her grade, under her
control. She basically behaved as though the assignment were solely her responsibility but that she had a few other people whom she could ask to help with some of the tasks, that is, if Julia didn't step in and make task assignments first. Clearly, too, there were certain kinds of help she wanted and expected from each group member. For instance, her comments at our only out-of-class group meeting suggest that she expected Beth to contribute her ideas and opinions—at one point when a decision needed to be made she told her, "It's not just me, it's up to you too." But when I asked her what if Todd and Jake (both of whom weren't there) didn't agree, Cheryl told me that they would just be glad that we had it done. Then when Beth suggested that we get Jake to type it, Cheryl said, "This is really bitchy, but would he do it?" She pointed out that he never turns anything in, to which Beth replied that we could just turn in a written out version. When Cheryl finally agreed, she said emphatically that we can't just ask him to do it, we need to tell him (Fieldnotes 2-28-91).

As it turned out, Cheryl's approach to leading the group was perfectly acceptable as far as the two males in the group were concerned. When I asked Jake to describe his experience in the group, he said it was "weird—all I did was type... when I came to the Union [where we met outside of class] they just handed me a paper and said type it up. I said all right. I just took it and typed it." And when I

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2 Of course, there is also the possibility that they were not willing to talk to me about any negative feelings they had about Cheryl's approach to leading the group. Since they had successfully avoided conflict so far, they may not have wanted to begin discussing problems now that the project was over.
asked how he felt about that, he told me, "I didn't care. I thought it was easy" (Taped Interview 3-15-91). He said that he didn't care how much input he had "as long as the papers got done and we got a decent grade" (Taped Interview 3-15-91). In fact, he told me that for him, an ideal group would be "all female" since "they're better in English than guys are." Overall, he just wanted to be in a group with "smart" people so that he could "get a better grade" (Taped Interview 3-15-91).

Todd, too, was willing to accept unquestioningly whatever role the female group members asked him to play. Whereas Jake never really distinguished between Cheryl and Beth, referring to the two women as "they," Todd definitely saw Cheryl as the most dominant member of the group. He described her as someone who was "pretty talkative" and "pretty independent" and told me that he admired the way she would state her opinion and not seem to care what anyone else thought. It seemed to him that she "kinda liked the class" whereas he and Jake considered it "a pain in the butt" (Taped Interview 3-15-91). In terms of the group, he said that he saw her as a person "who pretty much came up with ideas and stuff" and who didn't really like to be "helped along with anything" (Taped Interview 3-15-91). When I asked if he were happy with the way she led the group, he replied,

Oh yeah, she didn't bother me any. I mean she wasn't too forceful in her way of doing it. She just asked you to do something. She wasn't like you're gonna do this and you're gonna do that. She just said if you want to you can do this, or then she might think of something else for you to do" (Taped Interview 3-15-91).

In this comment, I see Todd implicitly contrasting Cheryl's leadership style with that
of Julia, who did try rather forcefully to get him to participate fully and who he expected would "yell at him" if he did not do what she wanted. At the same time, however, Todd often treated Cheryl as though she was a student equivalent of Julia, a "little teacher" who had some kind of real authority over him. The following exchange is typical of their interactions:

Cheryl: Okay, I'm going to give copies of questions to my sociology class--people do it all the time. I can give them to my math recitation too. [She turns to Todd who is sitting on her left] Are you going to do anything?

Todd: [stuttering] I'm lost about this.

Cheryl: Well, you could come up with some questions.

Todd: Do you want that for Monday?

Cheryl: [Laughing uncomfortably] You sound like I'm a teacher. [She adopts a mocking tone] Yes, I want to have it on Monday. (Fieldnotes 2-8-91)

As the quarter progressed, interactions between Cheryl and Todd revealed unnatural submissiveness on his part. For example, once Cheryl asked Todd if he knew how many pages long a reading journal entry was supposed to be, and Todd, so used to seeing Cheryl as an authority figure who asked him to do things, responded by saying, "Okay. I'll do it." Cheryl reacted by laughing somewhat self-consciously and saying, "Okay? What a mess this group is!"

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3 Once Cheryl asked the group when Julia was out of the room, "Does she [Julia] care if we just walk out of here? It's about that time and it's not like I'm doing anything." Todd, who was also not doing anything, decided he would go ahead and follow Cheryl out the door, saying, "I'm so tired, I don't care what she says. She can yell at me all she wants" (Fieldnotes 2-20-91).
By the end of the course, however, Cheryl was not laughing about her experience in this group. As she wrote in her final essay for the course entitled "My Opinion of Collaborative Writing,"

Group projects cause problems for me, and this is due to the fact that people do not do their part of contribute to their fair share of the work. One would have to assume that the reason for people doing this, is because they think the work is being done by other members of the group. This idea of doing work for everyone else, gets me very angry.

In this paragraph, what Cheryl seems unable to recognize is that she had sent her fellow group members the message that she preferred to do almost all the work herself. In fact, at one point after the group essay was completed and turned in, she was complaining to Beth about Jake’s not doing his share (even though she and Beth had made sure he had no chance to do more than serve as secretary for the last stage of the project), and in that conversation, she actually told Beth that she could understand and accept the fact that Todd, with only one hand to write with, didn’t do more work (Fieldnotes 3-8-91). And, of course, Todd, who was not particularly enthusiastic about the course or the project to begin with, usually seemed more than happy to be let off the hook for any reason.⁴

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⁴ Todd seemed to have very little confidence in himself, and he really seemed to be impressed by Cheryl. He did ask her once, after Jake had typed the first draft of the paper, to let him know if there was anything he could do to help (Fieldnotes 3-4-91). By then, though, all that the group thought there was left to do was to type and Todd was by far the slowest typist. Cheryl had said during the previous class, when Todd was absent, that Todd had to do something, but no one ever suggested anything and the issue was dropped. When Cheryl did ask his opinion once about how an observation form looked, he said that he thought it looked fine, but told her that he really wasn’t the one to ask.
Interestingly, a later paragraph in Cheryl’s final paper shows that, on some level, she was able to recognize that her way of leading this group was in part responsible for other people’s not doing what she considered to be enough work. She wrote:

As you can see, based on my high school experiences, I do not like doing collaborative writing projects. I end up doing most of the work, because I am afraid it will not get finished. I think I tend to worry too much, but this is the way I am. I like things to get done, and get done right.

Aside from this one instance of self-reflectiveness, however, I saw little evidence that the shared-document process Cheryl experienced in the basic writing class had significantly challenged her to examine critically the attitudes she brought to the class about writing and working in a group. In fact, the assumptions and stereotypes she operated under as leader of the group (e.g., about men and people with disabilities) seemed to have been, to some extent, self-fulfilling. And considering the degree of control that Cheryl and Julia together exerted on the group, it is possible that Jake or Todd would have found it difficult to create a space for themselves in which to make real contributions to a collaborative meaning-making process, even if—like Sana in the business communication group—they had the ambition and desire to do so.

Writing Process and Pattern of Collaboration

Like the business writing group, the basic writing group participated in eleven whole group meetings, and the group also broke up into subgroups only once—to write the first draft of the essay. Unlike the business writing group, however, the
basic writing group never met as a whole group outside of class, and, more remarkably— even in the computer-supported classroom— no two members of the group (or more) ever composed together at the computer. The group consistently used the computer as a mere typewriter, with Jake serving as typist for the group, in part because he felt most comfortable using the machines and in part because Cheryl and Beth did not seem to view him as dependable or capable enough to contribute to the content of the essay (he was not the fastest typist in the group by any means since he typed very slowly, using only two fingers).

The fact that Jake was absent for the first two group meetings definitely hurt his credibility with the group even though he had perfect attendance from the third meeting on. Unlike Mike, who apologized to the members of the business writing group for missing meetings, Jake told Julia why he was gone, but his group never received an explanation or apology for his absence, leaving us to assume that he was just being irresponsible. And unlike Mike who sought to blend right in when he rejoined the business writing group, when Jake returned to the group after an absence he bluntly told the group he had no idea what was going on, as if that was a fact we simply had to find a way to deal with.

In this class, I was the only person present at all eleven meetings, with Todd missing two of them, Cheryl one and Beth one. Cheryl did most of the writing in this group, receiving input from a variety of sources— Julia through her written comments on the first draft, her boyfriend (who helped her write a second draft one weekend), and from Beth and me, who participated in the writing of the first draft.
Often, when the group was given time to work together in class, students used the
time to work individually on writing their journals or on typing their handwritten
journals onto the computer, rather than working together on their shared-document.

**Whole-Class Brainstorming Sessions**

As Julia explained to the students during the first class session after groups
were assigned, the first step in the collaborative project was to collect data on the two
assigned topics—gender issues in social settings and gender issues in academic
settings. To facilitate this process, she led a whole-class brainstorming session
intended to help the groups formulate effective questions to ask about the two
settings (unfortunately, only one member from the other group came to class that
day and Jake was absent from our group). As Julia asked questions like "What
situations do we have access to?" and "Where can we go to collect information?"
Cheryl and Beth dutifully took notes. When called upon to actively participate,
though, the students did not seem to understand what Julia was trying to
accomplish. Cheryl responded to several of Julia’s questions by saying, "I can’t figure
out what you’re asking, exactly" or "I can’t think of anything else," and when asked to
put one of her responses into a question, she thought for a moment and said simply,
"I can’t." Sounding frustrated, Julia told the class, "I don’t want to just give you a
formula. I have lots of ideas myself, but I think you’ll learn more if you come up
with some" (Fieldnotes 2-8-91). It seemed to me that the students simply did not feel
enough personal investment in their teacher-assigned topics to become actively
engaged in a brainstorming session. Clearly, Julia was more excited about the project than were even the few students who came to class that day, and with ten minutes left in class, she told us to spend some time talking in groups. She told us, "I'll be around to give you some ideas too . . . . On Monday I want to help you start deciding on what method of gathering information you want to use."

Thus, like Katherine in the business communication class, Julia had a strong sense of what issues students needed to address to go through a successful writing process, and she wanted to funnel students' energies in what she considered to be appropriate directions. Whereas Katherine did this funneling through a series of individual assignments which helped students make their own decisions about what to write about and what information to include, however, Julia directed students' efforts through leading class discussion and being physically present in student groups to contribute ideas. As a result of this hands-on approach, students had little time left to themselves in their groups. In the group I was a part of, there never developed the sense of "groupness" and camaraderie that was evident from the first few group meetings in the business writing group.

With so little time set aside for them to work autonomously in small groups, students were implicitly sent the message that time spent among themselves in their groups was not particularly important; it was not a time when significant learning could take place. In the ten minutes that the groups were given to work in class during the first class session after groups were assigned, Cheryl simply talked about what she was going to do (i.e, hand out questionnaires to her sociology class) as
though she were doing an individual project. In the second in-class meeting, she looked at her watch and said, "Well, I guess I'll just do this at home," a few minutes later seeming oblivious to the reminder that Julia shouted to the class as the bell rang: "Assign each other some tasks" (Fieldnotes 2-11-91). In fact it was on the eighth day which had included time set aside for work in groups that Cheryl actually asked Julia whether the first draft of the essay was to be written as a group (Fieldnotes 2-25-91). Thus, several weeks into the collaborative writing project, not only did the five of us not feel to me like we were a group, the group leader, Cheryl, was not even sure that the five of us would be writing an essay together, nor did the students have any understanding of what Julia’s rationales might be for having the groups write together.

Creating Data Collection Tools

It was not until the third in-class meeting that the group had more than ten minutes to spend working together, and for the first time, too, all the group members were present. During this class session, and the three sessions that followed it, the group members worked on creating questionnaires to give to students and teachers and on designing observation sheets to use when we observed males and females in classroom settings. In these class sessions, a further sign of the groups’ lack of cohesiveness was apparent: All the group members never sat at one table at the

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5 When we talked later that afternoon, Julia told me, "I had hoped that students would come up that on their own, but I was so frustrated that I just told them" (Fieldnotes 2-20-91).
beginning of any given class session. Unlike the business writing students, the basic writing group never came to see a particular table in the room as "belonging" to them (significantly, Katherine had directed the business writing students to their group tables on the first in-class group meeting day and placed folders on each table containing introductory memos written by each group member, and group members' phone numbers). In fact, without fail, the two men in the basic writing group sat at one table and the two women at another, with the two men usually making their way, eventually, over to the women's table. Thus, as work began on the task of creating observation forms and questionnaires, the group was split into two factions—the women (Cheryl and Beth) and the men (Tom and Jake).^6

The third in-class group meeting was the meeting during which the group sat together as a group and discussed issues related to their project for the longest period of time. At the beginning of class, Julia told us that we had the whole class session to work on our observation sheets and that she would come around to help, at which time Jake and Todd moved over to the table where Cheryl, Beth, and I were sitting. As the meeting began, Todd was characteristically self-deprecating and subservient to Cheryl, but he seemed nevertheless to be trying to contribute to the group's efforts. When he first saw Cheryl, he immediately confessed to her, "I only have two questions because I couldn't think of anything" (Transcript 2-13-91). In assuring him

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^6 Surprisingly, since the course focused on gender issues, no one—including Julia—ever mentioned the tendency for our group to segregate itself so obviously based on sex (when I asked Jake why he always sat at a separate table he simply told me he had no idea).
that was fine, she played the "little teacher" role she so often played when interacting with him:

Cheryl: Oh, that's fine, I've got four, but I have like twenty in between the four, so I'm gonna make it multiple choice.

Todd: I found the same- [he is interrupted]

Cheryl: No, you've got to do like men and women . . . . You can make that multiple choice and say circle men or women or whatever. [Pause] Don't forget to keep a journal about what we talk about in each meeting. [Pause] So, did you do that--write everything down?

Todd: No, but I've got an idea of what we talked about. (Transcript 2-13-91).

At one point, near the end of the meeting, Cheryl tried to summarize the connection between the data we planned to collect using the survey questions being generated and the essay we were to write. The following conversation took place between her and Todd:

Cheryl: That's going to be the focus of the paper, after we get all the information and when we like, look at what the female teachers said, and what the male teachers said.

Todd: So, what's the title of it going to be then?

Cheryl: Um, I'm not sure yet.

Todd: Oh, you don't know, okay. (Transcript 2-13-91)

As a participant-observer, I found Todd's concern about the title at this point in the writing process to be completely unexpected, even inappropriate. It may be, however, that Todd thought Cheryl had a complete picture of how our essay was going to look
in her mind—title and all—since she seemed so confident talking about what its focus would be and so forth. In any case, conversations like this one contributed to my experience of the basic writing group meetings as disjointed, almost surreal at times. Cheryl's raised eyebrows and uneasy laughter in situations such as the one described above suggested to me that she was uncertain, too, about where Todd's comments were coming from.

Whereas Todd's comments rarely seemed useful to the group, Jake, on the other hand, almost always made a significant contribution when he spoke up in the meeting. One of these occasions occurred when the group was discussing exactly what the surveys would look like and who we would ask to fill them out. As Cheryl drew a chart on a piece of paper to help her determine how many male and female teachers each of us had that quarter, Jake pointed out that she had mistakenly counted Julia five times since we each had her as a teacher. He also made suggestions about the visual design and organization of the surveys, asking Cheryl, "Is that the only way you can do that one?" and then suggesting an alternative which Cheryl agreed to use. After this group meeting, however, Cheryl told me that she believed our group was doing alright—so far. She said, "If we can just get that one guy [Jake] to come. And he just sits there when he does come" (Fieldnotes 2-15-91). It seemed to me that Cheryl was never able to value Jake's contributions to the group, or his potential value to the group fully, because she could not get over her bias against guys as group members and the negative impression Jake himself made by missing the first two in-class group meetings.
Whereas transcripts from the February 13th group meeting show that Jake spoke twenty-two times, Beth spoke over twice as often (fifty times). And unlike Jake who spoke only when he had a fairly significant point to make, Beth participated more often but in less substantive ways (e.g., saying "that's good" or "yeah"). Her contributions to the writing process in this meeting were to quietly and hesitantly ask procedural questions and sometimes to meekly offer a suggestion or nodding her agreement. Beth's mode of participation made her seem more a part of the group than Jake did, and I suspect that she had more status than Jake did in Cheryl's eyes in part because of her perfect attendance to that point and in part simply because she was female. She and Cheryl were the only two group members to speak once Julia joined the group (at one point, Cheryl asked her to come and look over our survey questions). But whereas Beth spoke very little, Cheryl did was quite assertive about debating a point with Julia or saying she just did not understand what she was saying. Julia and Cheryl, for example, argued back and forth several times about whether it was better to have fewer questions on the survey with several parts to each question, or to have more questions with just one part per question. Eventually, when Julia suggested a compromise—a mixture of both kinds of questions—Cheryl relented, saying simply "okay" (Transcript 2-13-91). Neither Cheryl nor Julia ever

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At one point, the following exchange took place between Julia and Cheryl:

Julia: Do you know what I mean?
Cheryl: No.
Julia: No you don't know what I mean or no you-[Cheryl interrupts]
Cheryl: Can't think of other ways.
Julia: Well, that gives you something to think about.  (Transcript 2-13-92)
asked what the other members of the group thought about the issue, and only rarely
did Beth, Jake, or Todd assert their views on their own.

Any momentum that the group may have built up by having all its members
at last attending and participating in a group meeting was lost when only Cheryl,
Jake, and I came to class for the fourth in-class group meeting. In this meeting,
Cheryl suggested that we go over to the computer, and as she began typing in survey
questions, Jake stood next to her asking questions from time to time, questions
which Cheryl did not seem to be even acknowledging. When Julia came over to the
two of them and asked whether the group had worked on its class observation forms
yet, Jake told her, "I didn’t even know about that." Not particularly alarmed by this
response, Julia simply helped Cheryl with the computer as she suggested that Jake
start working on the observation form. Jake’s next response, however, not only
undermined whatever credibility he had with Cheryl, it also seemed to anger Julia.
When he told her, "Oh, we’re going to be going to these classes?" Julia almost
shouted at him, "Yes! Don’t you know anything about this project!" Then, as if he
had no idea why his response had elicited such emotion from Julia, Jake said calmly,
"Not until today." (Fieldnotes 2-15-91). This conversation, it seemed to me, marked
the point at which Julia began to play a significant role in shaping the writing process
of the group.

Julia’s first step was to go over our list of survey questions, pencil in hand,
making revisions. And when she heard Cheryl at the end of class saying that she
would just do the observation form herself, Julia stepped in and told her to let Jake at
least do the survey that we were going to give to teachers if Cheryl wanted to do the observation form (which Jake knew nothing about). At the beginning of the next class, then, she asked Jake for the survey so she could make copies for us. When Jake replied, "I haven’t typed it yet," Julia sounded extremely exasperated again, asking him incredulously, "You haven’t typed it?" "You need to find out what’s going on," she told him (Transcript 2-18-91). Still a little distraught about how little anyone but Cheryl seemed to know about the group project, she turned to Beth and Todd and told them, "You need to participate in this too. I’ve asked you what you thought-- [Todd], you and [Beth] also need to know what the group is doing" (Transcript 2-18-91).

Determined to get the group on schedule, Julia almost completely took charge, answering Jake’s questions about the computer, telling the Cheryl, "Okay, why don’t you save that, and we’ll get a copy of it, and suggesting to Beth, "Why don’t you get a start-up disk out of there, out of the drawer?" She also worked with Cheryl and Jake on the content of the teacher survey and observation forms, saying, for example, "Why don’t you put that up there. When you put all this stuff in, put people in a situation, and then talk about how they handle this". Only Todd managed to escape Julia’s notice, and he sat at a table by himself, at one point telling me that he should have stayed home to study for his math test. "There’s nothin’ to do," he told me, "I can’t wait 'til this is over and we can start handing [the surveys] out" (Fieldnotes 2-18-91). Even without his help, though, by the end of the class, Julia was able to take the group’s two surveys and one observation to make copies for us. In this meeting
and the two subsequent ones, the work was completed, but only with great effort on Julia’s part, effort which was put forth at the expense of the students’ autonomy.

**Data Collection**

Once we received copies of the surveys and observation sheet from Julia, the group’s process of collecting data for the shared-document essay began in class. During the group’s sixth in-class meeting--after Todd and Jake had made their move over to table where the women sat--Julia stood before the group giving us advice on the data collection process, advice based on experiences of her students from past courses. When she finished, Cheryl said, "I guess that’s really it. All we have to do is do it" (Fieldnotes 2-20-91). Julia, however, urged us to use the time in class, suggesting that we pool our idea about the gender and the basic writing class as a beginning or at least set a date when the surveys should be in.

When she left, Cheryl began making a list of all the people to whom she planned to give the survey, and Jake suggested that when Julia left the other group, we should go over as a group and give them our survey. His suggestion, in fact, was the first time that any group member suggested that the group actually do something together. Cheryl, however, immediately vetoed the idea, telling him that we couldn't all do it. Jake then simply shrugged his shoulders and gave in as the group members began to talk about one of their favorite topics--who went to math class that day and what grades people were getting in math. After a few minutes, Cheryl began filling in information on her class observation forms as she talked aloud to herself and ignored
the rest of the group. Jake and Beth began writing in their journals while Todd put his head down on the table and said tiredly, "I'll worry about this tomorrow" (Fieldnotes 2-20-91). Eventually, with Julia having left the room to do some photocopying, Cheryl decided that she would just leave class early since she would be collecting data on her own outside of class and she could see nothing else to do in class. Todd and Beth followed her out and finally even Jake decided to put aside his fears of getting in trouble with Julia and leave too, saying "If everyone else is going, I guess I will too" (Fieldnotes 2-20-91). With Cheryl being such an individualistic group leader and Julia so often stepping in to take charge of the group, the group seemed unable or unwilling, when left to their own devices, to find ways to make use of time they had together as a group during class. The group members were therefore completely on their own when it came to distributing surveys and observing classes.

Data Analysis

By the group's eighth in-class meeting, most of the group members had collected some data that they brought to the group although both Todd and Cheryl reported having had problems. Whereas Todd claimed that his roommate had

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8 Jake and Beth spent the class period following this one (their seventh in-class group meeting) working individually on their journals. Both Cheryl and Todd were absent. Only Jake worked at the computer, even though the journals needed to be on disk by the date they were due. About halfway through class, Beth seemed to have run out of things to do, so she simply put her head down on the table for about fifteen minutes.
accidentally thrown away a stack of most of his completed student surveys, Cheryl complained that all of the guys she had given the surveys to hadn’t returned them (Fieldnotes 2-25-91). Todd and Jake were also reluctant to let the three of us women read an off-color remark made by a male student who had filled out the survey.

Faced with a pile information that had been gathered and a first draft due by the end of the week, Cheryl mused aloud, "How to put all this in a draft?" And as Beth agreed that it was going to be tough for all of us to turn in one paper, Todd jokingly advised that we "put them [the surveys and observation sheets] in a blender." No one laughed at Todd’s little joke, though, as Cheryl soberly told the group, "I don’t know where to start" and Beth said she didn’t either (Fieldnotes 2-25-91). Neither of them seemed to remember (or understand the significance of) Julia’s telling the class a few minutes earlier that during the next class session (Wednesday) we would talk about analyzing data and about how to write in groups. Today, she had suggested that the group members simply report to one another what they had found and perhaps "do some brainstorming about things that could become points of analysis" in the papers. Groups could also start getting their notes (or journals) on the computer (Transcript 2-25-91). In retrospect, it is clear that Julia’s agenda and the students’ were at this point out of synch: The group was ready to analyze data and start working toward a first draft, and Julia was waiting until the following class to provide them with guidance in accomplishing these tasks.

Following Julia’s advice to look at the data to see "how people behaved and talked in class and how they answered survey questions," Cheryl began putting the
surveys we had passed out to teacher into two piles, one pile for the male teachers and one for the females. She then turned to the stacks of student surveys and made a chart on a piece of paper which indicated that the males surveyed ranged in age from 18 to 31 years and the females from 18 to 26 years. As she looked at students’ responses to other questions, she began making generalizations. For instance, after looking through all majors students had declared on the surveys, she told the group, "They're not all stereotyped careers. They're all, like, different." She then wrote down, "No stereotypes on majors," with Todd saying "Okay" and writing that generalization down for himself. Similarly, as Cheryl announced, "I'd say no stereotypes in favorite classes for men," Todd, Beth, and Jake all made a note of that point (Transcript 2-25-91). I was often a little taken aback by the reductiveness of her generalizations, but none of the other group members ever questioned them or qualified them in any way.

As Cheryl moved through the survey questions one after another, Julia came over and took a seat at an empty table near us to listen in and help out occasionally. She asserted herself strongly only once—at the end of the meeting when the group was agreeing that Cheryl would call everyone about an out-of-class meeting to write the first draft. Cheryl was asking the group, "Do you want me to finish the female surveys?" and Beth responded that she would do it, only to be told by Cheryl, "It's easy. I have time." At that point, Julia intervened and asked, "Why not split things up?" Her intervention prompted Cheryl to give Todd the teacher surveys and Beth the class observation forms, but when Julia asked what Jake would do, Cheryl
responded, "I don't know. There's only three things." Julia suggested that Jake and Todd could meet and discuss the observation forms together, an arrangement the group agreed to but which never ended up happening. As Julia told me after class that day, she did not usually intervene so much in groups until the writing stage of the project, but she did in this case because she was afraid if she did not Cheryl was going to do all the work (Fieldnotes 2-25-91).

By the last class session before the first draft was due, the group had succeeded in finding a way to analyze much of their data as a group in class and the rest of it individually outside of class. Thus, the students came to class eager for information about exactly how to write this essay. Julia, however, was intent on leading a discussion on analyzing data, perhaps helping students to see some more sophisticated ways of analyzing their data than they had come up with on their own. With Julia and the students at cross purposes, the discussion turned out to be charged with tension. As Julia asked questions about how each group might look for patterns in their data, students whispered and passed notes to each other; the students in the group I observed were trying to set up an out-of-class meeting. Meanwhile, most of Julia's questions were met with complete silence until at last Erin asked a question about how to put this information into an essay. Julia told her frustratedly, "We're going to talk about that. I just want to talk about this right now. Any other ways you can analyze the data?" (Fieldnotes 2-27-91). She then overheard Erin whispering that we were wasting time and that no one in the class understood how to put it all together in a paper. In response, Julia tried to continue with the
discussion, eventually shifting gears to talk about the topic in which students were most interested: how to organize the shared-document essay.

In discussing how the essay's structure, Julia asked the class to look at the assignment again in the syllabus, explaining that the paper would be made up of a beginning, a body, and a conclusion. During the next thirty minutes, students received an extremely detailed description of what each part of the essay might include, but when I glanced at Cheryl's notes, I saw that she had condensed the barrage of information being offered the class into a brief outline:

Thesis
Support of Claim
How data proves this thesis (Fieldnotes 2-27-91)

Once she had written this down, it appeared as though Cheryl felt she had what she needed, for she stopped taking notes and did not seemed to be listening at all.

Frustrated, Cheryl and Beth described the problems they saw in the class session as follows:

Cheryl: I feel like I'm in second grade. She [Julia] explains things over and over. This paper is the first time I felt that way. When I first met her I thought she explained things really well and I liked that" (Interview 2-28-91).

Beth: Except for the five minutes when she told us what should go in the paper, the class was a waste. She was talking about things we've already done. We needed time in class to analyze the data not to listen to her talk about things we've already done.

Cheryl: She gives all these answers and then says "What else?" and I have absolutely nothing else to say.

Beth: She could have just written down the part about the paper. (Interview
Despite Cheryl and Beth’s complaints, however, Julia did cover some significant issues regarding collaborative writing processes. For instance, when Erin suggested that the process begin with the group compromising on a thesis, Julia explained to the class another approach to the thesis could involve "finding a way to represent a couple different viewpoints." It was not necessary, she emphasized, to "wear each other down until one thesis comes out on top . . . . You could find ways to contribute everyone’s ideas to the thesis" (Transcript 2-27-91). Julia also tried to engage students in a discussion of approaches to actually writing the paper; she pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of working all together as a group (the approach that Erin spoke up in favor of), of working in subgroups, and of splitting work up among individuals. She offered suggestions such as, "You can all shout out ideas and make suggestions to each other and have somebody recording everything and somebody putting in all the changes that you make" (Transcript 2-27-91). I had the impression, however, that the members of the group I was in were not really listening to this discussion in which only Julia and Erin participated.10

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9 Beth also expressed anger at the fact that this was a "computer class." She felt that students needed to be given more time in class to write if everything had to be on the computer. She certainly did not see the computers as an aid to her writing process--she saw them only a time-consuming inconvenience.

10 In this class session, Julia told the students to think of the feedback she would give them on their collaborative essays as a safety net to catch them if they felt "nervous" about the idea of writing this essay "by themselves" without other people to "check things with" (Transcript 2-27-91). This comment puzzled me since students only exchanged papers with each other once all quarter: Who did they usually check
The First Draft

As the whole class session described above ended, the group set up the first out-of-class meeting. The group decided to meet in two subgroups because it was the only way comfortably to accommodate everyone's schedule. Beth suggested that we meet at the student Union, and when Cheryl agreed, the decision was made: Beth, Cheryl, and I would meet at nine o'clock on Thursday morning at the Union "food court." I had to leave at eleven, but Jake would be there by then. Todd seemed to be busy at every possible meeting time, so the group just accepted the fact that he would not be participating. Although Jake suggested we meet somewhere besides the Union, which could be very noisy especially in the food court, Cheryl said told us that she thought the Union was best since we all knew where it was. As usual, Jake went along with her preference without any further comment, and as class ended, Cheryl coordinated a dividing up of responsibilities among the individual group members. When she said one of us should type up what we end writing at the Union, Beth offered to do that (no one ever mentioned the possibility of actually working on a computer to write the draft). Todd explained that he would not be a good choice for that task since he "can't type that fast." Cheryl asked him, then, to work on coming up with a thesis, and asked me whether I would rather take the

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things with that they could not consult in this situation? It seemed to me that it was Julia herself who was nervous about students writing a draft of the essay on their own without checking with her every step of the way. Students, I think, were anxious for her to stop talking so they could get started writing; they did not seemed particularly nervous about doing so.
guys' or the girls' survey home to examine since she had both of them at that point. Of his own accord, Jake took the set of teacher surveys that were lying the table.

When I met Beth and Cheryl the next day at the Union, Jake's fear that it would be noisy was realized. A group of about ten people began a rowdy game of cards at the table next to us soon after we began working, but neither Beth nor Cheryl seemed bothered by it: When I suggested moving, they objected to that idea because Jake might not be able to find us. His finding us was important, for one thing, because he had the set of teacher surveys. Cheryl did not make any secret of the fact that she did not trust him, telling us as we organized our papers and prepared to get started that we should have "taken that stuff from [Jake]. He better come" (Fieldnotes 2-28-91).\textsuperscript{11}

At first, both Beth and Cheryl had pencils and paper, and both of them were writing as the three of us talked, until Cheryl asked, "Do you want me to do the writing? Can you read my writing?" (Transcript 2-28-91). When Beth agreed, Cheryl asked if she was going to type it, and when Beth said again that she would, Cheryl told us that she would "type the other papers or whatever we do" (Transcript 2-28-91). With the matter of who was writing and typing decided, we continued to work on the essay, a process which had begun with Cheryl asking us to remind her exactly what a claim was since she had that word written down in her notes. Beth told her it was like a generalization, and I said it was a point we might make about men and

\textsuperscript{11} Cheryl made frequent negative comments about men in this writing session, and criticisms of Jake and other men in effect set them up as scapegoats. This scapegoating may have helped to form a bond between the women in the group.
women in the classroom. In fact, throughout the writing session, Cheryl's brief outline from the class discussion served as the touchstone for our writing process: We went through a process of writing down claims and looking through the data for support (we made a claim that pertained to each question that appeared on the student survey). Cheryl actually opened up her notebook at one point and looked at her notes before saying, "Now we have to back it up--support the claim in the body of the paper. We have to support it. . . . Now we have to come up with comments from the surveys. So I guess we'll just circle, go through 'em and find good comments, I guess."

The first decision the three of us made was a suggestion of Cheryl's: She asked if we thought it was a good idea to write about the teachers since we had received so few surveys back and could not expect to get any more from the two guys. When we all agreed to disregard the teacher surveys, Cheryl talked aloud as she wrote, trying to put a claim on paper. She said, "Okay, so I would say the majority of men are stereotyped, have stereotyped majors, and I did the girls [analyzed the girls' surveys] and it did seem they didn't have them. They were all broad majors" (Transcript 2-28-91). When Beth and I offered a few refinements and additions, Cheryl told us, "Well, this is only a rough draft, we can add that in later. She'll probably tell us that. It's not like we're getting a grade on this really" (Transcript 2-28-91).\footnote{Cheryl reminded us at least three times during this writing session that what we were writing was "just a draft."} Eventually, however, Cheryl solicited our help in trying to find the most
appropriate phrasing for the sentences she was composing aloud, and as the three of us talked, a variety of writing issues arose. We discussed, at one point, whether it was appropriate to go beyond reporting on the data to indicate what we thought about it (specifically, Cheryl asked us, "Do you think we should write down what we think? Like, make a point and then say, but it was weird to find out in our findings that-"). The three of us agreed that it was alright to include our opinions, although Beth argued that we needed to be sure and write "in our opinion" when we were stating that we thought some of our findings were wrong based on our own experiences. She asked us, "Don't you think she'll ask how we know what is correct and what is wrong?" Cheryl did not think so, pointing out that she [Julia] would know that our claim was true of what we observed, but that our past experiences suggested it was not always true (Transcript 2-28-91). It was clear throughout this writing session that Cheryl and Beth considered Julia alone to be the audience for this essay.13

As the three of us worked, Beth often added to the sentences that Cheryl was composing aloud, with the two of them frequently pausing to discuss word-level concerns, and Cheryl sometimes asking our advice on how to write something

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13 Since Julia never talked about audience in class, it was not surprising that the students looked upon the teacher as their audience. At one point when we decided not to include some information about men that we had about women, Cheryl told us that when we gave Julia the rough draft we could explain to her why we did not include that information. It did not seem to occur to her to put that information in the text since anyone reading it might want to know why the information was missing.
correctly. She asked us, for instance, how to spell words, and the three of us made sometimes subtle changes in each other's wording, usually without giving each other any reason for the change (e.g., Cheryl wrote, "It was interesting to find out that we were wrong," and Beth added, "We were wrong in our claim." Cheryl then said emphatically, "We were wrong in THIS claim"). The following exchange is typical of the way the three of us worked together in this writing session:

Cheryl: Okay, women comma have chosen, a broad field of study? How do you spell broad?

Beth: Wouldn't that be "broader range"?

Kelly: I like range.

Cheryl: So do I. Broad range of- Alright, um, these include . . . Is that how you write in a paper? Is that how you'd write that? These include?

Kelly: Yeah.

Cheryl: Okay. Elementary--we'll write the long ones, heh- (Transcript 2-28-91) 14

Cheryl's last comment is especially significant since both Beth and Cheryl were greatly concerned about making the essay long enough, which is why she suggested selecting the major fields with the longest titles to include in the list of examples she was writing (e.g., Elementary Education as opposed to Math). Often a criterion for including a point was whether they could "write enough

14 Very little off-task conversation took place during this writing session. At one point, for just a minute or two, Cheryl and Beth talked about the diamond ring on Cheryl's hand and Cheryl's engagement. Cheryl quickly got us back on track, however, by saying, "Okay, um, how're we gonna start this?" (Transcript 2-28-91)
about that," and as Cheryl said jokingly that we "have to have those big words in
there," Beth responded quite seriously, "It makes it longer." Both of them, however,
seemed pleased with what had been accomplished, and Beth described the meeting in
a journal entry as follows:

This is the day that the group meet [sic] at the Union. Not everyone was able
to meet but some could come later. Our group accomplished a lot. The paper, in my opinion sounds really good, of course we still need to put some
finishing touches into it but it is going real well right now. We completed the
rough draft around 11:00.

As Beth's paragraph indicates, after working for several hours, Cheryl and Beth
considered the draft complete even though neither Jake nor Todd had even seen it.
When I asked them what would happen if one of the men did not agree with
something in the paper, they responded very spiritedly, setting forth a plan to get Jake
to do the typing for them:

Beth: They will [agree with what we've written].
Cheryl: After they finish it, heh, heh.
Beth: We should make one of them type it.
Cheryl: That's a--the only thing is, I mean this is bitch, but-
Kelly: What?
Cheryl: Bitchy. I don't know if they'll do it.
Beth: You don't think they would?
Cheryl: I don't think [Jake] would.
Beth: We wrote the whole thing.
Cheryl: 'Cause he hasn't--you know what--oh, I know, I agree with you, but the thing is, um, he doesn't turn in things--ever.

Kelly: Really?

Cheryl: He's always late. I can't understand why [Todd]--[Todd] can't help it he had class all day and there's no way. He might, you know what I can just see him typin' it. Well, we wrote it, she'll [Julia] see if he didn't get it done, she'll see that.

Beth: We'll ask him. We'll make him-

Cheryl: We'll tell him, no we'll tell him. Just say, well, we finished this so will you type it?

Beth: Yeah, we got it all done-

Cheryl: I'm such a wimp, I swear to God, heh, heh. (Transcript 2-28-91).

Sure enough, the next day in class when I asked Jake how the meeting had gone, he told me that Beth and Cheryl had simply given him the draft and told him to type it.

And when Cheryl walked in the door, she went straight over to Jake to find out how long the paper was when it was printed out (Jake was printing it out as they spoke). Its length was clearly significant to Beth too, for she summarized the class session in her journal by writing, "Today we handed in our first rough draft. It was about three pages in length we need to work on it a lot more. More details must be added. I think this paper will come out to be really good."¹⁵

¹⁵ I learned in this class session that Cheryl and Beth learned after I left the out-of-class meeting that both of their boyfriends lived in the same city, and they had driven down together to see them the day after our meeting. It was clear from their conversation that they were getting to know each other fairly well and that while they were gone they had speculated about whether Jake was going to have the draft typed for the next class session (Fieldnotes 3-1-91).
The Final Draft

On the day students turned in the first draft of the shared-document assignment, Julia made comments on the two groups' drafts during class. As the students waited for her to finish, Cheryl and Beth discussed how they would proceed with the last stages of the writing process (Todd was absent and Jake sat at a separate table by himself, apparently writing in his journal). Not surprisingly, Cheryl offered to do the revised draft over the weekend. When Beth asked her if she was sure she wanted to, Cheryl told her it would be easier just to do it than for the group to get together. She said, "It's just a rough draft. I'll take her [Julia's] suggestions and we can make changes later. I'm not doing anything tonight anyway" (Fieldnotes 3-1-91). The two of them proceeded, then, to chat about food and boyfriends as Cheryl painstakingly applied some makeup as she looked into a compact mirror.

When Julia handed back the draft to Cheryl, Cheryl read through them, summarizing a few of them for Jake and Beth. Eventually, Julia came over to the table where Cheryl and Beth were seated with Jake standing behind them and helped them interpret some of what she had written. After Julia left, Cheryl asked the group who was going to finish the final paper, and Beth volunteered at once even though, as Cheryl pointed out, Todd had not done anything at all. In fact, it turned out that Cheryl's boyfriend ended up working on the essay more than Todd did since he happened to be visiting her the evening when she revised the first draft. She told us that he typed for an hour and a half on the computer and that they "made a lot of changes as [they] went along" (Fieldnotes 3-4-91). The group handed in that draft to
a substitute instructor in class on a day when Julia was absent--after they had struggled the entire class period simply to get the essay printed out.

A few days later, Cheryl picked up the second draft with Julia's comments on it from the latter's mailbox and delivered it to Beth so that she could make some final revisions before giving the text to Jake for typing. Because all this work was done individually and outside of class, I was, unfortunately, unable to observe this final stage of the process. Beth's journal, however, suggests that she ended up needing to do more revision than she expected, for she wrote, "We received our second revision back. I didn't realize how much more work we had to do still. A person really doesn't realize a mistake until it is pointed out to them." Most surprising to me when I read the final draft were sentences which suggested the whole group had reach consensus on a point that I knew to be solely Cheryl's opinion (e.g., "Our group seemed to all agree to the fact that it was mostly women who would answer the questions in class"). Interestingly, too, Jake did not include my name on the cover page as an author of the paper, even though I had in actuality contributed more to the paper's content than he had (when she evaluated the essay, Julia took the liberty of adding on my name, seemingly more unwilling than I was to accept the fact that I was not being acknowledged as a group member).

**Evaluation**

According to Julia, the quality of the final essay was more than satisfactory; in fact, even though she suspected Cheryl had done most of the work, she believed that
the other group members must have played some role since she considered the writing to be superior to anything Cheryl herself had written all quarter. She gave the essay the grade of "B(-)" and wrote the following summary comment:

Cheryl, Beth, Jake, Todd, and Kelly,

You do a very nice job of portraying the trends you observed in conducting your research! I think you needed only to refine and deepen your analysis, drawing connections between your various interpretations of different pieces of evidence.

Having learned that the essay received a grade of "B," neither Todd nor Jake expressed any desire even to read it or see Julia's comments, and both Cheryl and Beth expressed anger at the two men's lack of participation in the writing process. As Beth wrote in an essay which analyzed and evaluated what she called the "group work" experience,

The biggest problem with our group work was that not everyone put enough effort into what was written. This I feel was a major weakness. We did get the paper finished but not everyone had a say in what was written in our paper. After all it is called group work. It is a benefit in which we missed out to have the opinions of everyone in our group written in the paper. One member I don't think even read the paper at all. Another just helped with the production of the paper. That was the typing part of it. There people did not give input on the actual process of the paper. I feel this is wrong. I don't think we even got over this obstacle we just went around it. We had to in order to get the paper done on time.

Interestingly, at no point did the two women acknowledge they might have been in part responsible for the breakdown of the group process. As the two groups in the class evaluated the collaborative project as part of the oral presentation that took the place of a final exam, however, Cheryl did seem truly puzzled about why the group
had been unable to overcome the obstacle of getting everyone to participate. She attributed most of the problem to people's schedules and their unwillingness to make the basic writing class a first priority. I suspect, however, that she may have accounted for the problem best when toward the end of the presentation she laughingly told the class, "As a group member, I tend to be a MY WAY OR NO WAY kind of person." In this group, it certainly had turned out that people were more than willing to do things her way since, for them, it was the path of least resistance.\textsuperscript{16}

The following chapter shows, however, that not all inexperienced student collaborative writers look upon work in groups as something to be avoided or simply endured as did the basic writing students working in the context of Julia's classroom scene. The critical writing students, in fact, generally saw the opportunity to work in groups as a potentially novel and interesting experience. To understand what aspects of their circumstances might account for their more positive attitude toward work in groups, it is necessary to explore the dominant features of critical writing classroom scene.

\textsuperscript{16} In the class presentation, members of the other group suggested to Julia that the project would be more successful if students were able to choose their own topics and if Julia put groups together based on compatibility of personalities and schedules. They pointed out that working collaboratively in college was much more difficult than it was in a high school setting where students already knew each other fairly well and came from more common backgrounds. Julia responded that she had tried putting groups together based on schedules in the past and it had not made a difference. She also felt strongly that the early assignments in the course had prepared them for thinking and writing about the complex topic of gender, even with people they did not know well (Videotape of oral presentation).
CHAPTER VI

THE CRITICAL WRITING CLASS AS A SCENE FOR COLLABORATION

Whereas the sections of basic writing and business communication courses selected for this study were not the first ones to be taught in computer-supported classrooms at Ohio State, at the time of this study, no "Introduction to Critical Writing" course offered in OSU’s English Department had ever been taught in a computer-supported environment. The class I studied was therefore a pilot version of English 302C. While the computer-version of the course was new, however, the traditional English 302 was a required course for all English majors and minors. A five-credit-hour, sophomore-level course, Introduction to Critical Writing was intended to give students a foundation in the basic critical reading and writing skills they would be called upon to use in their upper-division English courses. The course was taught only by regular faculty members, not term Lecturers or graduate students, and 302 teachers became English program advisors for the students in their critical writing classes.

According to Dr. Marlowe, the teacher of the 302C course in which I

1 Whereas Katherine’s students always called Katherine by her first name as she had invited them to, Julia’s students rarely to her by name at all. Students in 302C, in turn, always referred to their teacher as "Dr.," "Professor," or "Mr." Marlowe. As far as I know the topic of how to address him never came up in class. For this study, I have chosen to refer to the three teachers in the same way that their students did.
participated, even the traditional 302 course—without the computer component—is a difficult one to teach because it is "charged with an impossible range of responsibilities." He told me that teachers of the course are responsible for everything from "teaching very basic rhetorical and formal conventions and strategies for writing about interpretive reading," to "imparting some basic information about literary genres," to "introducing students to different critical perspectives", to "advising students about their English majors and minors" (Journal 1-26-91). In addition to the difficulties inherent in having to cover so much ground in one class, many teachers of the class typically become frustrated with the students themselves, according to Dr. Marlowe. He said that many of them, as sophomores, were just not "good enough students" in terms of preparation and internal motivation to do the work of an English major, while many of the juniors or seniors in the classes had chosen English as a major late, perhaps because they couldn’t get into required classes in another major, because their GPA in another major wasn’t high enough, or because they simply "couldn’t get in to a major that had some kind of gateway" (Taped Interview 9-10-91). Finally, 302 students were often majoring or minoring in English to prepare for law school or so they could do work in creative writing. Such students, Dr. Marlowe explained, were going to be asked to "get interested in a lot of things they aren’t interested in" since "majors and minors are there for people who are interested in the discipline of interpretation in literary texts, or in Rhetoric and Composition, or language studies, but not just for folks who want to brush up on their command of grammar for law school" (Taped Interview 9-10-91).
Just as faculty were often frustrated with 302 students, a student in Dr. Marlowe's class, Tanya, told me that most students dreaded taking the critical writing course. She herself considered the title of the course, Introduction to Critical Writing, to be "scary" and the description of the course in the University Handbook "put [her] off." She noted that many of the students in 302 have usually taken 500-level English courses already and took 302 only after having "put it off, put it off, put it off" (Taped Interview 1-31-91). For her, however, the idea of taking 302 in a computer-supported environment made the course seem more appealing than it otherwise would have been, and so she, along with 17 other students, ended up enrolled in Dr. Marlowe's Fall 1991 computer-supported section.

The Teacher

Prior to the Winter 1991 section of 302C, Dr. Marlowe had never before taught in a computer-supported environment, but he was known in the English Department for his uncommonly strong interest (for an English professor) in computers. Before participating in his course, I knew little else about him except that he was an assistant professor specializing in rhetoric who had a reputation for being a kind person who cared greatly about teaching, to the point of preparing extraordinarily detailed lesson plans for every class session. Through our interviews, I learned that he was 38 years old, an avid Star Trek fan, and that he had volunteered to teach the pilot, computer-supported 302 course, in part, because he had played a significant role in writing the grant proposals that made the expansion of the
Computers in Composition and Literature Program beyond first-year writing courses possible. In fact, one of his greatest concerns in teaching the course was to discover ways of using the computer as an integral part of instruction about interpretive reading and writing, rather than as just "glorified typewriters" in the classroom (Taped Interview 1-24-91).

Because of his determination to use the computers in innovative ways, Dr. Marlowe freely admitted that he would be "sticking his neck out" in teaching this class (Taped Interview 1-24-91). Thus, even though he was an experienced teacher of the traditional 302 course, he did not agree to participate in this project with the expectation that he would be doing his very best teaching. He knew that he was in the process "not just [of] adapting a fixed course syllabus to the computer classroom" but of "reevaluating [his] approach to 302C in general" (Journal 1-26-91). Thus, his situation was very different from that of Katherine and Julia, who both felt very comfortable with the syllabi they had created with the computer-supported environment in mind and who were satisfied with the relatively modest role played by the computers in their classrooms.

Indeed, with so much of Dr. Marlowe's attention focused on computer-related aspects of the pilot course, I was struck by the fact that, prior to the course, he seemed to have few concerns about any difficulties that might be associated with the "collaborative" aspect of the course. He told me that he was comfortable with that aspect of the course because he customarily assigned a collaboratively-authored presentation and final essay for his critical writing courses, even when he hadn't been
teaching in a computer-supported "collaborative classroom." In fact, his reasons for using computers in the classroom and his rationales for implementing a collaborative pedagogy actually didn't "have much to do with each other" (Taped Interview 1-24-91). He told me that he asked students to engage frequently in collaborative work--ranging from non-graded in-class writings to a coauthored essay which counted for 30% of the students' grade for the course--in part because it is "a way of having students get together" and talk ideas over and in part because, for in-class writing, work in groups reduces his load when responding to a task (Taped Interview 1-24-91).  

Dr. Marlowe also emphasized, though, his belief that collaborative learning was an approach to teaching and learning that he greatly preferred to a lecture-oriented approach. He told me, "I know this is an extreme position, but I've always been sort of suspicious of prelection, or lecturing, as a mode of learning--even though I had good lectures as an undergraduate" (Taped Interview 1-24-91). Although he said he often enjoyed lectures, he also explained that from a biology lecture, for example, he could only learn about biology, he couldn't turn into a biologist or learn how to do biology. For him, "collaborative learning is a sure road to . . . . turning people into folks who can do what I'm trying to do." It allows students to talk, and think, and write more, he said, explaining that his purpose in 302 was not to "impart information about literary history" (Taped Interview 1-24-91). Despite his strong commitment to collaborative learning, however, Dr. Marlowe felt it necessary to warn

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2 Dr. Marlowe tried to respond to, but not grade, most of students' in-class writing, and he considered it crucial for students to receive his feedback as soon as possible.
me before the quarter began that 302C would not be "a fully collaborative class," by which he meant that students would not be coauthoring essays throughout the course, as he knew students in many of the other courses taught in the collaborative classroom did. He told me that he did not think such an approach to 302C would be in students’ best interests since they would rarely be asked to write in a group for their upper-division English major courses. Thus, he explained, most of the collaborative work in his classes begins with a whole-class discussion in which a problem of some sort is identified. Students are then given a written prompt and asked to respond to it in groups of four "experts" and then report back to the class, an approach similar to Slavin’s cooperative learning as described in Chapter 1 (Taped Interview 1-24-91).

The Students

The students who enrolled in Dr. Marlowe’s Winter 1991 302C course ranged in age from 19 to 21 years old and included thirteen women and five men. At the beginning of the course, all of the students were planning either to major or minor in English, although a few of them changed their minds by the end of the quarter. In terms of race, three of the female students were African-American, the rest of the students Anglo-American, as was Dr. Marlowe. At least four of the students I spoke with frequently earlier on in the course were juniors or seniors, at least one of whom had recently changed her major to English Education. Approximately five to seven of the students had taken their first-year writing course and/or another writing course in
a computer-supported classroom and had chosen the computer section of 302 since they had had positive experiences computer-supported writing instruction in the past. I had hoped to gather more information about the class as a whole, but, unfortunately, I was unable to collect questionnaires about students' experiences with collaboration and computers from all the students in this class as I had from the other two classes studied. I had asked class members to respond to it and return it to me after their shared-document essay was completed since several of the questions pertained to the shared-document writing experience. However, the essay was not due until the middle of exam week when the class was no longer meeting, and as a result, I received questionnaires only from members of my own group and just a few other students. Nevertheless, these questionnaires, combined with interviews I conducted with several students, provide some insight into 302C students' past experiences with and attitudes toward working in groups.

The two students not in my group who turned in surveys indicated that they had had "some" experience with collaborative writing prior to 302C; one of them had taken an Introduction to Fiction course in the collaborative classroom, the other had written collaboratively while working on a school newspaper and producing reports for work. In addition, a student I interviewed early in the course, Tanya, told me that she felt very comfortable in groups because she came from a large family. In fact, while she was taking 302C, she was also taking a class on how to work in and with groups as a qualification for becoming a Resident Advisor in a dormitory. In contrast with the basic writing students' inability or disinclination to look beyond the
problems working in a group could cause them in a writing class they hadn't wanted to take in the first place, Tanya seemed eager to elaborate upon ways in which working in groups was a valuable experience. In a group, she said, you need to know how to disagree with other people, how to explain why you said a certain thing and then to listen to their ideas and be able to criticize them in a positive way. Such skills, she felt sure, would eventually prove valuable in the workplace, where it would be important to be able to work with people with differences in personality, background, and ideas (Taped Interview 1-31-91).

Like Tanya, most students reported having at least some experience working in groups but little or no experience with writing in a group. In fact, the whole idea of writing with other people seemed much more foreign to most of them than it did to members of the business communication class. As one student told me after an in-class collaborative writing assignment, "it was interesting collaborating 'cause I've never done anything like that before" (Taped Interview 2-18-91).

Of the four students who were part of the group I participated in (Ted, Jackie, Eric, and Ronna), only two of them indicated that they had ever had any experience with collaborative writing (see the section below on how groups were formed) The first group member was Ted, an extremely outgoing, somewhat athletic-looking fraternity man who told us he "came from a long line of Greeks." Ted stood out in

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3 Dr. Marlowe did not consult with me about group formation, and the groups in which students wrote shared-documents were not formed until near the end of the quarter. When work on the group assignment began, most students did not even know their fellow group members' names.
class from the very first week because he spoke so often and expressed his views so
vigorously. He listed five different classes in which he had participated in
collaborative writing--three English courses and two history courses--and indicated
that he had "extensive" experience with working in groups in general. Overall, Ted
seemed to have the most comfortable relationship with Dr. Marlowe of any student in
the class--they met frequently in conference to discuss Ted's work, and Ted seemed to
enjoy "debating" with him in class discussions. While Dr. Marlowe told me that he
felt Ted would be a good group member because he always approached tasks with
"good humor," he had some concerns about Ted's skills as a critical reader and writer.
Ted, he told me in an interview about mid-way through the course, "is not a
particularly accomplished writer; although he has cleaned up in terms of error since
the beginning of the course, in terms of other kinds of structural strategies, there's
still a lot of confusion at that level." And when characterizing Ted as a reader, Dr.
Marlowe used the term "problematic" because "he'll misread the literal sense of the
text often." But, he added, Ted is "definitely engaged--he cares about these readings
and is genuinely trying to figure them out" (Taped Interview 2-27-91). Certainly, Ted
and Dr. Marlowe had an excellent student-teacher relationship, and Ted told me
numerous times that he thought Dr. Marlowe was "great."

A second member of the group, Jackie, was an African-American woman who
Dr. Marlowe told me he considered one of the top three writers in the class. She was
clearly committed to studies in English and was considering going on to graduate
school in a few years. I assume she had been as successful in previous classes as she
seemed to be in this one since she told me that she had been recommended by a previous English instructor to interview for a position on the department's Freshman English Policy Committee. She wrote on her questionnaire that she had gained experience in collaborative writing in two previous English classes (in one she wrote an essay with a group; in the other, a class presentation). Dr. Marlowe told me that he considered her the one person in our group he knew he could count on to say to herself, "Well, I've got to do something intelligent here" (Taped Interview 9-10-91).

Unlike Ted and Jackie, a third student, Ronna, reported having had no experience with either collaborative writing or with working in groups in general. And although Ronna, Ted and Jackie were all 21 years old, Ted and Jackie were both juniors and Ronna was a sophomore. From conversations which took place at our group meetings, I learned that she came from a working class background and had been employed in a factory for a year after graduating from high school. Whereas Dr. Marlowe described Ted and Jackie as two of the most "solid" students in the class, he was keenly aware that Ronna was struggling: She often missed appointments to meet with him in his office, and she had once turned in an assignment with a note attached to it that she had written prior to giving it to her brother to look at and help her with which said, "Help! I'm illiterate!" According to Dr. Marlowe, she had serious problems, personally, with her self-esteem and, academically, with following conventions of edited English in her essays (Taped Interview 9-10-91).

For most of the quarter, before we were placed in groups, Ronna usually sat next to a male student, John, who she told me really helped her when he read her
papers. One night as I gave her a ride back to her apartment, she said that she wished we could share papers with other students in class much more often along with getting feedback from the teacher. (Peer response usually took place only at a proposal stage in this class. That is, students read each other's one-page, on-line descriptions of what they planned to write about and what their major arguments might be. There were usually fewer than ten minutes allotted for discussion between students who had read each other's proposals). Ronna felt that John, for example, could point out places in her essay that "sounded funny" and she could understand what he meant, whereas Professor Marlowe used language she didn't understand in responding to her writing, language which she said intimidated her (one example she gave was his using the term "adverbial"). When we met in our group for the first time, Ronna revealed the fact that she was having problems in the class by telling us that Professor Marlowe was making her revise her last essay again before he would give her a grade. It seemed clear to me that she was working from a different foundation academically than both Ted and Jackie, who carried B and B+ averages into the final, group-focused segment of the course.

Eric, the fourth member of the group, mentioned at our group's first meeting that he, like Ronna, was being required to revise his last essay, an indication--along with his numerous absences--that he too was doing poorly in the class. At age 19, he was the youngest member of the group, a sophomore psychology major who told me he enjoyed writing poetry, some of which he had shown to Dr. Marlowe. However, by the time we were mid-way through the course, Eric's relationship with Dr. Marlowe
became as bad as Ted's relationship was good. Dr. Marlowe described him to me as someone he just couldn't fathom, a "guy who couldn't punctuate a sentence and who fancied himself a novelist" (Taped Interview 9-10-91). He said that when Eric showed him his poetry, which Dr. Marlowe described as "the kind of juvenalia [he] would expect from an 8th or 9th grader," he tried to give him encouraging advice but felt that he had only succeeded in alienating this student who seemed to have no internal motivation, who "just [wanted] to mark time," and who was "difficult to convince he had anything to learn" (Taped Interview 9-10-91). Indeed, Eric himself told me that "the whole idea of this class should be thrown out the window." He identified the idea behind the class being to analyze writing to see what authors meant (Interview 2-7-91). Overall, my impression of Eric—who had failed another English course and a physics course the past quarter—was of a somewhat immature 19-year old who was obviously struggling to find a place for himself in the university. His attitude—that he knew everything and that what he didn’t know wasn’t important—seemed to be only a thin cloak for his many doubts and insecurities.

Eric, however, was clearly interested in the computer aspect of the course: He spent much of his time outside of class "just playing" with computers, and, early in the quarter, he found several classmates who sought out his help when they were having computer-related problems. Tanya, for example, told me that she "started hangin' around with [Eric] because, he helped me a lot with the computer." She saw him as someone she could rely for help. She told me, "He's good. You know, he'll just sit there and play. I always ask him, heh, heh, WHAT'S WRONG HERE, heh, like
he built the thing or something" (Taped Interview 1-31-91).

**Researcher's Role**

The fact that I was a graduate student in English both helped and hindered me from slipping comfortably into my role as a student participant-observer in the group with Eric, Ted, Ronna, and Jackie and with the class as a whole. For instance, when working in temporary collaborative learning groups early in the quarter, my sharing with the students some background knowledge about literature allowed me to participate in conversations about various topics which arose in casual conversation (e.g., the topic of gender roles in nineteenth century literature). At the same time, though, my being described as a "graduate student in English" led at least some of the students to assume that I would have read every book they could name and that I was a "grammar expert." When Ted found out I had been assigned to his group, he said to me jokingly, "Feel free to use your PhD in the group" and Eric commented on how strange it was that I was a graduate student and hadn't ever read *The Class Menagerie* (Fieldnotes 2-27-91). Eric also asked me to proofread one of his papers since he knew, at one point, that he had to eliminate more of his errors or risk failing the class. He and Ted were the only members of the group who ever referred to the fact that I was a graduate student and not an "ordinary" member of the group (especially in that I was not receiving a grade).

All in all, the most difficult part of belonging to this group for me was being a part of a social situation in which Eric was constantly playing childish pranks, I
suppose to get attention (i.e., hiding things from people, tapping people on the shoulder and pretending he hadn't done it), and, at the same time, listening to (and being the target of) what I perceived to be Ted's overtly sexist words and actions. He was constantly flirting with Ronna and calling her "sweetheart," teasing Jackie and me, and unselfconsciously referring to all the women in the group as "chicks." (In a private conversation with me he even disparagingly referred to the somewhat effeminate Eric as a "girl"). However, because no signs whatsoever indicated that Ted's words and actions offended or made anyone but me uncomfortable, I decided to endure what sometimes felt to me like a kind of abuse. I did not want to say or do anything to influence dramatically the nature of the developing group dynamic.

Winter 1991 Curriculum

The Winter 1991 section of 302C in which Ted and his fellow group members were enrolled met on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. The goals for this course seemed to me more in number and more complex than those of the other two classes studied. The following course description which appeared on Dr. Marlowe's syllabus outlines the multiple purposes the class sought to serve:

How might writing help us develop, clarify, present, and debate our interpretations of texts (poems, plays, short stories, novels, essays even advertisements)? In English 302C—a section of the course designed to be offered in one of the English Department's computer-enhanced classrooms students will practice critical reading and writing through class discussions of texts, reading journals, in-class writing, frequent short writing assignments, and formal critical essays. We will use the computer facilities not only for our writing but also to explore how computers allow us to manipulate and even interact with electronic texts. In addition, students will plan their English
major or minor programs.

In addition to the Course Description sheet, on the first day of class, students received a day-to-day syllabus and "Overview of Class Procedures" in which Dr. Marlowe highlighted the fact that since much class time was to be spent on discussion and collaborative writing, attendance was essential to the course's success. The day-to-day syllabus reveals how, relying on readings from The Bedford Introduction to Literature (Meyer, ed.) and Text Book: And Introduction to Literary Language (Scholes and Ulmer), Dr. Marlowe designed the course so that each week of the class had a different focus, for instance "Formulas and Fiction," "Form and Meaning in Poetry--The Sonnet," "Texts and Other Texts--Intertextuality," "Texts and Critical Contexts." Students were graded on five essays (essays 1 and 3 were two- to three-page analyses of literary texts and essays 2, 4, and 5 were interpretive essays). Each succeeding essay was given an increasing amount of weight in terms of students' overall grades, with Essay 1 weighted at 10% and Essay 5 (the shared-document assignment) at 30%.

My knowledge of how students experienced the curriculum came primarily from mid-course interviews with three students--Mary, Margie, and Jackie (I did not have access to the course evaluations students filled out at the end of the quarter for any of the classes studied; Dr. Marlowe's evaluations were being used as part of his tenure evaluation process). Of these three students, Mary's sense of the course's purpose seemed most closely aligned with Dr. Marlowe's. She told me that she was learning "better writing skills and how to appreciate different styles of writing about
fiction and poetry." She said,

I'm learning little tips on paragraphs--a lot about writing interpretive papers, about how to watch for wordiness, overstating, and how to get to the point instead of babbling on. I think I'm learning a lot about different ways to approach what I want to say in a paper. Before I might have meant something, but I wasn't getting it across because it was vague.

Margie, on the other hand, told me that she was surprised at how little the course focused on the content of the literature being read, and despite Dr. Marlowe's course description, she did not seem to view the course as primarily a writing course. To illustrate her point, she used the example of a day when a student's essay had been projected onto an overhead screen and said, "I really couldn't tell you what that essay was about. I mean we spent an hour on it, but . . . . he just talks about the mechanics of it, how she used transitions and how her sentences are structured. We really didn't talk about what she said at all." She continued:

I find in a lot of classes if you know how to write well--if you know how to structure the sentences--you can write a paper without saying anything. And it is kind of frustrating--I think we should talk about the literature and the meaning behind what the author was trying to do, rather than trying to make an essay that sounds good.

Interestingly, I often got the feeling that the students in 302C really longed for opportunities to talk to each other about the literature they were reading and that they were frustrated when they weren't given time to do so. Margie expressed what I believe to be a view held by many of the students this way:
On the first day, [Professor Marlowe] talked about understanding views of human experience different from your own and responding critically to those views, and that's something I think we need to work on. It's not enough to be reading these things and writing about them. We need to talk about them, with each other. That's something I would like to know—other people's opinions about what I'm reading.

She told me that she felt as though Dr. Marlowe purposely prevented such interaction from taking place, commenting that "he fixes it so that we're all reading different things . . . I think we'd get a lot more if we all focused on the same thing. I think we could connect more" (Taped Interview 2-18-91).

In general, both Margie and Jackie seemed, at mid-quarter, to be struggling to try and understand the purpose behind the various group activities that were part of the class. I was surprised to learn that they even suspected that Dr. Marlowe was purposely not explaining things to the class: Margie said, with Jackie nodding in agreement, "He tends to be really secretive. He doesn't want to tell us what we're gonna do ahead of time " (Taped Interview 2-18-91). As the two of them talked together, they seemed to be trying to figure out what the purpose of various group activities had been. For example, Margie said,

Like the tip sheets we wrote. It was interesting collaborating 'cause I've never done that before. I'm still not sure why we're doing that. I think he should explain that. But it's hard—it's difficult writing with other people that you don't know very well because everybody thinks differently. I do like that it's interesting collaborating with other people—i think that we should learn how to collaborate, 'cause we'll have to do that when we graduate and go out in the real world. You have to learn how to interact and share ideas and conglomerate things. (Taped Interview 2-18-91)

Overall, reflections like this one indicated to me that midway through the class
students in 302C were, for the most part, engaged by the course, willing and even eager to work in groups with their peers, but generally dissatisfied and frustrated with the degree to which Dr. Marlowe was providing them with clear, understandable explanations for why they were doing what they were doing and how various activities contributed to an overarching goal for the class. Interestingly, both Margie and Jackie expressed to me their thanks for my asking to talk with them since, they said, having a chance just to talk out their responses to what was going on really helped ease the frustration they were experiencing.

Role of Computers

Whereas Dr. Marlowe may, at times, have neglected to explain why he was asking students to collaborate on in-class writing assignments, he rarely failed to explain fully what use the computers in the classroom were being put to and why. In contrast to the basic writing and business writing classes in which the computers were treated mostly as simply sophisticated writing tools, the computers were clearly a priority with Dr. Marlowe. His 302C students were required to use the computer to compose all of their assignments, as were the students in the basic writing and business communication classes; unlike the other teachers, however, Dr. Marlowe did not feel comfortable with the idea of spending a complete class period simply going over the fundamentals of how to use the computers. Instead, as he wrote in a journal entry, he sought to "link computer instruction seamlessly to work on critical reading and writing. From day one, everything [the class] did on the computer was
to have some significant role in our work on critical reading and writing" (1-25-91).

And, instead of taking students through an hour of computer instruction as both Katherine and Julia did, Dr. Marlowe envisioned the expert computer users in the class teaching the novices how to use the machines in the context of collaborative, in-class writing assignments. The class, too, was to be a "paperless" classroom: Students were required to turn in assignments on disk; Dr. Marlowe responded to their texts by typing in comments as footnotes to students' texts; he also used a numerical "comment code" system primarily to identify common format, grammatical, and punctuation errors (i.e., "01" meant Fragment). Eventually, all students' graded texts were made available in a file saved on the system's hard disk.

So determined was Dr. Marlowe to maintain this paperless cycle that he (often grudgingly) endured the time-consuming, sometimes 20-30 minute-long, process of turning in assignments on-line. But just as it took an unexpectedly long time for students to turn in assignments, other computer-related procedures that were supposed to have been routine were not. For instance, the on-line instructions Dr.

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4 It is hard to say how many students realized that anyone with a student ID who entered the 343 lab had access to their graded writing. Dr. Marlowe had decided not to use the complicated password system that would have allowed him to limit access to the student texts. This issue of "privacy," however, never once arose in any context as far as I know.

5 The note at the top of Dr. Marlowe's Comment Code file explains the purpose of the codes as follows: "Using the following codes in my comments on your papers helps me respond to your work in a timely--but thorough fashion. Most of the coded comments address conventions of grammar and punctuation; others assume familiarity with the contents of several handouts I have given you: "Grading Standards," "Some Notes About Interpretive Arguments," and "Format Guidelines."
Marlowe provided for in-class assignments were designed to create an environment in
which students could work autonomously--much as Katherine’s Course Packet did in
the business communication class. However, when attempting to transfer a file with
the instructions on it from the network to their own disks, at least a third of the class
members typically encountered problems, and, as class time slipped away, Dr.
Marlowe, again and again, stepped in to help. In the following journal entry, Dr.
Marlowe expressed his frustration with the situation:

> With two weeks of 302C completed, I find myself more uneasy than I have
been about any course I can remember. At times during the last two weeks
though not all the time--I have felt completely out of control of the pace and
development of the work in the course: our difficulties with word-processing
and the computer network seemed to occupy all our attention. I had not
anticipated the degree to which the computer environment would compete for
our attention, and I was not prepared to focus so much attention on the
computers . . . . Well, because the [computer] system did not work as I
expected, we spent most of our time solving problems with the computers
rather than using the computers to solve the problems at the heart of the
course. That flustered me a good deal. I plan my courses carefully--some
would say (have said)--too carefully, and the problems we were having in the
first two weeks seemed to ripple throughout the course: everything seemed
displaced, threatened.

Despite his frustration, though, Dr. Marlowe did not give up on the computers. He
believed, too, that if the equipment necessary to project text from a computer
monitor onto an overhead screen had arrived as promised, the course could have run
much more smoothly. In response to the problems he was experiencing, Dr. Marlowe
did, however, revise his syllabus to cut out some of the reading and to try and
establish a pattern of working with the computers for half the class and without them
for the other half. He even set aside a few classes when the computers were not used
Students’ Perspectives on the Computers

Initially, most students in the class seemed extremely enthusiastic about the computers, but several of them told me that, like Dr. Marlowe, they soon began to perceive a major "time" problem in the 302C class, a problem that was linked to the computers. Students I interviewed also believed, however, that time was always a problem with any class that met in two-hour time blocks and that the problem should not be attributed directly and solely to the computers. As one student, Margie, told me, "Professors [who teach two-hour classes] think, 'Oh, I have all this time,' and they go off on these tangents and you end up with less time than if you met everyday" (Taped Interview 2-18-91). Thus, students' reactions to the course usually reflected a combination of their feelings about the teacher and their attitude toward computers. The following exchange between Margie, Jackie, and me on the subject of time provides insight into how students felt about time, the teacher, and the technology:

Margie: It seems like we are goin’ awfully slow in this class, just pokin’ along."

Jackie: It does feel slow. Is it because of the computers? I mean I can tell he’s havin’ problems with the computers and I don’t know if that’s the reason but that’s not fair to us. That’s not fair, ’cause he has to figure out how to use’em first and then tell us and by the time he does we’re all done and it’s time to go. (laughter)

Margie: I don’t know how I feel. It just seems like he thinks we’re really stupid. The pace we go at, it feels like we’re goin’ so slow. We’re not doing
very much reading, not getting very much real discussion time. It's more, procedure, than--I mean we talk a lot but it just doesn't seem like we talk about anything. It was really mean of me to say that.

Kelly: Well, I want to know what you are experiencing. Do you think the computers are interfering with what's going on, or helping?

Margie: I don't know if it's necessarily getting in the way, but it seems like we spend an awful lot of time talking about how to do things, and we really aren't getting into depth on anything.

Jackie: It's easy to get distracted in that class. He's always explaining things, and, I don't know-

Margie: He explains things in a round about way, like he's tryin'--well one day I noticed instead of "remembering" he said "to hold in our minds"--I mean it's, this (isn't terrible) but it just seems like he has a funny way with words, maybe that's what I'm tryin' to say. He likes words so much that he wants to use as many as he can! (laughter) (Taped interview 2-18-91)

Like Margie and Jackie, Tanya, too, had her own theories about what everyone seemed to agree was a "time problem" in the class. Having taken her first-year composition class in a computer-assisted classroom, Tanya qualified as what Dr. Marlowe called an "expert" computer-user in this class, and from her point of view, Dr. Marlowe set up tasks in such a way that students were forced to rely on him, rather than on each other, for help--even though he frequently reminded the class that experts should be helping the novices. Tanya emphasized that time should be taken in 302C for a computer skill to be learned before it is applied. Whereas Mr. Marlowe purposely did not hold in-class training on how to use computer functions in order to save time--there was a session held outside of class that students were expected to attend--Tanya believed that "mixing" computer instruction with course content-related tasks actually took more time. She explained it to me this way:
Everything would have gone a lot faster if he would've just said this how to do this, this is how you do this, this is how you do this. Because then you could have taken little notes . . . . [Then when] you are goin' through and doin' whatever and, you know, you run out of time, you don't have to sit there and wait for him to tell you what to do. (Taped Interview 1-31-91)

During the course of our interview, Tanya offered some other interesting insights into possible sources of the computer-related problems that both she and her teacher saw "rippling through the course." Since she was currently taking a course to prepare her for being a Resident Advisor (RA) in the dorm, a course in which students worked in collaborative groups every class all quarter, I asked her how she might compare the roles that teachers played in the two settings. She told me that her teacher in the RA class was "sort of like a watcher" who "really doesn't interfere." She gives an assignment and then "usually just sits back and lets you handle it unless you ask a question." Seeming to genuinely like Professor Marlowe and obviously hesitant to criticize him, she commented that "He might try to help a little too much sometimes, which isn't bad but . . . I can't think of a time when he didn't help. I mean there's a time when he confused me, but not when he just didn't help." In her opinion, people who know the computer fairly well aren't shy about raising their hands to call him over, but people who are unsure of themselves will wait and wait until he comes and ask if there is a problem. She felt certain, though, that the solution to this problem was not to go around asking if people needed help. Rather, she had this very specific advice for her teacher:
He shouldn't go around so much because [one time, for example,] he asked Eric [if there was a problem] but he was in between us so it was like he asked us both and I was like "no," and then he looked at me and he asked me again and I was like no. I mean, I think he should, instead of going around individually, he could well, no, he could do that--go around and say "is there a problem, is there a problem, is there a problem?" Everyone says "okay," fine. Then he can go and do whatever, go and sit down, or, work on something, whatever else he has to do instead of walking around in a circle and continuously asking if everything is okay. Because then it leaves it up to THEM to get more courage so that if there is a problem they can go to him, instead of just sitting there and waiting for him to come around and say, "Is there a problem?" You establish that from the beginning, I think. Because you get used to it faster and you know what's expected of you. (Taped Interview 1-31-91)

So, while in theory Mr. Marlowe was trying to make students independent--to create the flavor of an independent study lab--in practice, this student experienced his willingness to help, as least where the computers are concerned, as a teaching style which encouraged passivity and dependence. And while Mr. Marlowe sought through his extensive instructions to make students independent of him, for students like Margie and Jackie, the instructions seemed simply to eat up time, to contribute to their feeling that he found them to be "stupid," or to allow him the pleasure of using lots of (big) words.

A final computer-related aspect of the course which placed a strain on the relationship between Dr. Marlowe and many of his students was the "paperless" feature of the class. Several students, all of them women, told me that they especially disliked the fact that they had to go to the computer lab if they wanted to work on their assignments, read Dr. Marlowe's responses, or find out a grade (there was rarely time available to do these things during class). Since few, if any, of the students
owned their own computers as Dr. Marlowe did, they had to make special trips to campus--often in the evenings--whereas in a traditional class they could have taken a graded essay home to read the teacher's comments and reflect upon their grade at their leisure. I observed that several students, like most of the basic writers, hand-wrote their essays first and then came to the lab simply to type them up. As Jackie said, "He wants us to come in and work on the computer, but I don't have time, or I don't want to do that--I just go ahead and print [the assignment], take it home, and the only thing I use the computer for is to type it out" (Taped Interview 2-18-92). Margie also told me that she usually ended up typing her papers at home. She said, "The last paper I wrote in the lab, but the previous one I did a rough draft, printed it out, went home, wrote more on my typewriter, went to the lab and typed it in" (Taped Interview 2-18-92). Thus, because many students found coming to the labs inconvenient, they were not taking full advantage of ways in which the computer could make writing and revising processes more efficient.

Some students also told me that they disliked the Comment Code system which Dr. Marlowe had designed specifically for responding to student writing on-line instead of on paper. Jackie, for example, said she found the system "real impersonal" because

you're not sittin' down with your paper in front of him and he goes over this part, or says I think you should change this or whatever. You always have to go to the computer to see what he has to say. And in order for you to talk back to him I don't know what you have to do.
She was just one of several students who expressed discomfort with the fact that the class was set up so that most interactions between students and teacher took place "through the computer"—that is unless students took the initiative to meet with Dr. Marlowe on their own in his office as Ted, for instance, often did. As one student, Mary, said, "I think it's weird that we don't print out our papers. I thought that was part of the point of using the computers" (Taped Interview 2-21-91). Unlike Ted, given the impersonal nature of her in-class interactions with Professor Marlowe, she couldn't imagine feeling comfortable talking directly with him outside of class. She said,

He just kind of intimidates me and I'm even thinking of getting another English advisor because I'm afraid if I go to him, he'll act like I'm stupid or something. He's a really smart man, but sometimes he just needs to recognize that when a student gives an opinion, it's not something that's wrong. It's just somebody's different opinion. And [he should] give them another opinion in a way that you don't feel like he just shot them down. That's the way--I mean that's my biggest criticism of him, that and the fact that he doesn't let us print papers. (Taped Interview 2-21-91)

**Classroom Climate**

It was in part because of how the computers were used that students felt cut off from direct contact with Dr. Marlowe, but I learned that they also felt that their interactions with each other were often truncated. When I asked Jackie some questions about her relationship with Dr. Marlowe and other students in an attempt to gauge her sense of the overall classroom climate, she told me "It's just you and him. The assignments come from him, through to me, and I spit 'em back to him
[laughter]. Just me and him" (Taped Interview 2-18-92). And as for the other students in the class, she said, "We don't really know each other that well. He reads our papers, but we don't get to see each other's papers" (Taped Interview 2-18-92).

In fact, students did sometimes read each other's drafts or proposals; time was also allotted for collaborative learning activities designed for students to interact with each other and make meaning of their reading and writing together in peer groups. However, through participating in and observing these activities, I found that they often did not lead to learning experiences in which students were able to connect with each other and experience the social construction of knowledge. The following stories of two collaborative situations that occurred in English 302C--one that I would define as relatively "unsuccessful" and one as "successful"--are based on a combination of my fieldnotes, transcripts of tape recordings, student texts, and my memory as a participant-observer.\(^6\) I have selected these two examples to provide a sense of the overall classroom climate in which students worked during the class periods before permanent writing groups were formed and the shared-document task assigned.

The first of the two activities I will describe here, an activity which I will describe in the mode of VanMaanen's "impressionist tale," took place during the sixth week of class. Dr. Marlowe set up the task in such a way that it had all the trademarks of what Slavin called a cooperative learning activity: Students were asked to sit in groups, to see themselves as "experts," and to take on responsibility for

\(^6\) The students I was able to speak with and observe during these activities shared my evaluations of them. Almost certainly, though, other student had different evaluations.
teaching and learning from each other. Significantly, the activity took place at a point in the course when I had begun to feel comfortable interacting with students in the class. It is important to note that the "tale" below, one I constructed based on my experience, almost never represents Dr. Marlowe's point of view. For instance, had the tale incorporated more of his perspective, I may have emphasized ways in which the problems which occurred in this particular collaborative situation could have been attributed to Dr. Marlowe's sense that in limited class time he had to cover both a wide range of conventional material about genre, for example, that English majors are expected to know and, at the same time, give students the opportunity to experience a collaborative process of making "new" knowledge that would teach them, in effect, to think like English majors. Because I do not give attention to such concerns in telling the tale, I want to emphasize before telling it that--like Katherine and Julia--Dr. Marlowe had a reputation for being a very good teacher and that problems which arose in his class and the other classes could--and probably have--happened to most teachers, including myself. In fact, I think we can learn from the stories of unsuccessful classroom situations only to the extent that we can identify with them. Thus, my purpose in constructing a tale of what I perceived to be a failed collaborative situation in Dr. Marlowe's class is not to criticize Dr. Marlowe's teaching. Rather, it is to illustrate the kinds of difficulties anyone faces when implementing a collaborative pedagogy and to show how these difficulties may shape students' experiences in a writing class.
On the day when what I perceived to be an unsuccessful collaborative experience occurred, I was given an assignment along with the rest of the class. We were to read eight sonnets listed on the syllabus and prepare to join a group of three "experts" who would be responsible for meeting briefly at the beginning of class to compose a brief paraphrase of one of the sonnets, the group would open a whole-class discussion with one group member reading the paraphrase, and then each group member in turn would present a brief overview of some aspect of the poem about which they were to present themselves as "expert": either metaphor, meter and rhyme, or stanzaic and thematic structure.

After a brief demonstration of how we might use the computer to aid in our process of reading a poem, Dr. Marlowe asked us to get together in our team of "experts." At that point, I remembered that the evening before I had quickly read through John Donne’s "Death Be Not Proud" and jotted down a few notes. I wasn’t sure who else was to be on my team of experts, but as Professor Marlowe directed us to sit in groups at various round tables which were scattered around the room, I found myself grouped with Mary, a woman with whom I had never worked before, and Scott, a man with whom I had been grouped once before. I was glad that we would have a chance to talk the poem over in our group before presenting our ideas to the class, and Scott clearly was too since the moment we sat down he told us, "Poetry's not my thing. I'm a poly sci major and had to take a certain number of English classes to graduate. Figuring out these rhyme schemes is really hard for me," he continued, "but it was the only choice left when the sign up sheet came around to
me." Then, for a few minutes, both Mary and Scott proceeded to complain about various aspects of the class, with Mary in particular venting her feelings about how she felt shut down by the teacher whenever she asked a question. Their voices kept getting louder and louder until I told them that maybe they shouldn’t talk so loudly, to which Scott responded, "It doesn’t matter. He doesn’t like me anyway." With that, we turned to the poem. I was somewhat surprised at the intensity of their feelings, but Mary turned to the task at hand as though nothing significant had happened, and we began discussing the poem. Almost at once, though, we were interrupted by Dr. Marlowe asking the class as a whole if we were confused about what a paraphrase was because one student had asked him about it. Everyone seemed to understand, and the room continued to buzz with the sounds of students’ voices.

As Mary and Scott talked, I heard Dr. Marlowe commenting to the group beside us that it sounds from their discussion like they have a paper brewing. He told them, "That’s the kind of thing we’re really after in this--how do you deal with other readers?" Immediately, then, he moved to the center of the room to interrupt the groups, and when people protested, he said, "I know, I know, it sounds productive, but we’ll take--you can have 30 seconds to finish that thought." After a brief pause, he continued talking himself, explaining the purpose of writing a paraphrase, after which he turned to our group and asked one of us to begin by reading our paraphrase of "Death Be Not Proud." After Mary spontaneously composed one since we hadn’t reached the point of writing one down, Scott reluctantly
volunteered to read the poem aloud. When Scott finished—after being stopped from
time to time by Dr. Marlowe’s offering some instruction on how properly to read a
poem aloud—Dr. Marlowe had a question for us: He asked whether anyone had
noticed a problem with the poem—was there something we had not expected? "This
is fairly picky," he admitted, "but there is a problem with it that I didn’t alert you to
before because I had been using my familiar edition of this anthology. Then when I
turned to your edition, I discovered a problem." He paused, waited, and then asked,
"Anybody? How about some of you experts?" Well, if I had ever felt like an expert on
this poem to begin with, I certainly didn’t then as I read nervously, hoping that the
problem would become obvious to one of us. I really felt—as Scott and Mary must
have too—that my competence was being tested against the teacher’s, making it
impossible to feel in any sense of the word "expert."

After a few painful minutes, someone from another group raised her hand to
make a suggestion, and was told, "No, that’s not it." A few other students, including
Mary, made some other incorrect guesses, and then finally Dr. Marlowe told us—"After
the word 'delivery'! The editors of your text omitted a period that belongs in Donne’s
poem. And I didn’t discover that by comparing it with earlier versions, but by saying,
'You can’t read that way. There’s no way the English can make sense.' AND," he
continued, "I was appalled to discover that out of six sonnets chosen for this class,
that happened twice. Anybody know where else it happened, where there’s another
typographical error in the damn book?" After a pause, this question was put directly
to the student "experts" responsible for the particular poem with the error in it, and
again Dr. Marlowe ended up pointing it out and describing how he had discovered it.

Next, Dr. Marlowe directed our attention back to "Death Be Not Proud," and each of us was asked to report on our area of expertise. Mary talked about metaphor, and then Scott was asked to identify the rhyme scheme. Each of us, I felt sure, would have really benefited from talking our ideas over in the small group first, and I saw Scott’s face turn red as he made mistake after mistake going through the rhyme scheme with Dr. Marlowe jumping in occasionally to help by asking questions. This process went on seemingly forever until finally it was my turn to talk about theme. Dr. Marlowe nodded as I made my points and then commented on how fun it is to paraphrase the poem by adopting a tone consistent with the argument made in it. He then read a humorous paraphrase of "Death Be Not Proud" that he had written in preparation for the day’s class which began, "Hey Death, you’re not so hot, and you’ve got nothin’ on me--" As he read it, students laughed appreciatively, and when he finished, he directed our attention to the next sonnet and the next group of experts, with one student expert after another being asked to report to the class until the bell rang and the activity was over.

On the surface, this activity certainly looked "collaborative," and it had clearly been designed to allow students to take on responsibility for teaching and learning from each other. Yet in this collaborative situation, students were never actually given the opportunity to make meaning together. As one of them told me in a subsequent interview: "There’s three people sharing a sonnet, but those people don’t really share ideas before they present them. I don’t see that as a kind of
collaboration" (Taped Interview 2-18-92). Why, then, if the problem was so clear to the students was Dr. Marlowe not able to recognize students' need to share ideas and then to step back and let it happen? One reasonable explanation, I think, lies in the fact that any collaborative activity requires both students and teachers to take on a role in the classroom that goes against the grain of habits formed during years of teaching and being taught by traditional models of education. Therefore, no matter how deeply a teacher believes—as Dr. Marlowe did—that the best learning takes place collaboratively, it can be difficult to make collaboration "work" in an academic setting where habits associated with the Freirian "banking" model of education have been reinforced in both teachers and students by years of traditional instruction. One such habit, of course, is that of the teacher's being so well-prepared for class that no student will have read or thought about a text as carefully as the teacher has.

Certainly, in the tale above, Dr. Marlowe had done his homework, and having become "expert" on all six of the assigned sonnets, he seemed to find it impossible to step back and see what students could do with them. For while I often found Dr. Marlowe to be an entertaining and instructive speaker, his description of how he discovered the error in the text and his composition of the clever paraphrase of "Death Be Not Proud" ended up—in the context of a discussion where students were to play the role of experts—emphasizing his expertise not that of the students. And as the teacher, he had the authority to control who talked when and for how long. As a result, he ended up holding the floor most often, and even when student "experts" were given time, it was most often to answer questions that spoke to his concerns about the text,
not to issues of their own. Finally, when students asked for more time to talk to each other, they were denied it: The only open channels of communication in the class were those between individual students and the teacher, not those between students.

Despite these problems, however, instances of what I would consider successful collaboration did occur in the 302C class. Ironically, one the most interesting examples of a collaborative situation which afforded students an opportunity to experience what might be described as a social constructivist model of learning took place in the context of an activity that was far less obviously a collaborative situation than the "experts" activity was. In fact, this activity never required students to meet in a group or even to talk to one another. It did, however, deal with the same six sonnets that were the basis for the "experts" activity. It worked like this: Initially, each student was assigned one of the six sonnets and was asked to take a seat in front of a computer monitor. Then Dr. Marlowe directed each of us to compose what he called a "sonnet protocol." These protocols were, in many ways, simply computer versions of the "response statements" that David Bleich has his students write; consider, as an example, the first few lines of one student's text:

Death Be Not Proud

Death be not proud, though some have call thee Mighty and dreadful
death, almost sounding like a person, should not be proud to scare people

for thou art not so
it isn't true, not everyone is scared to die

For those whom thou think'st though dost overthrow die not,
who is it that death is trying to scare, it isn’t working

**poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.**
maybe the author isn’t thinking about death in a literal sense but the death of
an idea, thought, etc.

Notice that the student has typed in the first line of the sonnet using boldface type;
then in regular type, she has written down her own brief, free-flowing, personal
response to and/or interpretation of that line of the sonnet. And she has done the
same for each subsequent line of the poem. In this situation, I want to argue,
although students were working independently and exploring their personal responses
to a poem, they were interacting with the words of John Donne’s text to compose
their response, and in that sense, they were collaborating. In effect, anything a
student might have written down in this situation is a construction of meaning that
resulted from an interaction between her own language and Donne’s language.
Often, I think, students omit this obvious step in an interpretive process because they
are waiting to hear THE meaning of a text from their teacher or perhaps from a
published critic. In this situation, they did not, for the assignment was set up so that
they could not.

The next step in the assignment, then, was for students to read a set of
reader’s protocols for a sonnet of particular interest to them, and to take those
readings into account in writing a 2- to 3-page interpretive essay on the selected
sonnet. In addition to examining how various elements of the sonnet contribute to
the overall meanings and effects of the poem, Dr. Marlowe asked that students
specifically consider the readings documented by the readers’ protocols, considering
the following kinds of questions: Where do you agree or disagree with the readers? About what? Why? Thus, with this part of the assignment, Dr. Marlowe was offering students an opportunity to collaborate, just as he did with the "experts" activity. In this case, however, it seemed to me that students were afforded a more legitimate opportunity not only to construct knowledge together, but also to attain a metawareness of how a social process of making meaning might work. Consider how one student, Margie, began her essay:

Often in grammar and high school we are told, "Poetry is art--a personal experience." Each are told that a poem will have special meaning for him or her, and then all are told what the poem REALLY means. One the one hand, students are told to take the poem personally, and on the other, they are objectively told what the poem means. When readers come up with original interpretations of the poem, that deviate from what is widely accepted, they are told they have "misread" the poem. It is no wonder that college students groan and show pained expressions when told by their professors, "Today we are going to read POETRY!"

But what if students are NOT told what a poem means? What if they are given the freedom to read poetry without being told that what they interpret in neither right nor wrong? This paper will examine three such readings of Edna St. Vincent Millay's "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed." These "protocols," unrestricted interpretive readings, reveal that poetry can indeed be a unique and personal experience.

And, a few pages later, after Margie had examined different readers’ readings, her essay concludes:

Looking at the evidence, it is clear that what our teachers in grammar school were telling us was the truth--reading poetry can be a personal experience. So then, why isn't poetry always read that way? Why are other interpretations needed at all? Though it is important that we enjoy poetry, that it is a personal experience for us, at the same time we must remember that part of understanding literature is understanding different points of view. What good is learning about yourself if you can't understand anyone else? So this is an
important first step—a private experience with a poem, the first flow of ideas uninhibited. But then the reader needs to step back, and look at what others have to say, or a whole other sonnet might be missed.

Based on this essay, it is possible to assume that, perhaps for the first time, Margie had come to see critical reading and writing as experiences which are truncated whenever the social nature of interpretation is ignored. Certainly the title of her essay emphasizes her awareness that reading and writing can and should be seen as collaborative, social acts: She called her essay "Edna St. Vincent Millay’s 'What Lips My Lips Have Kissed: What Sonnet Have My Eyes Missed.'" This title is also important because the humor in it suggests that the students who wrote it had somehow been empowered to feel "expert" in this particular collaborative situation. That is, to write such a title required her to feel nearly as confident in her expertise as Dr. Marlowe did when he performed his humorous rendition of "Death Be Not Proud."

What factors, then, contributed to the success of the "sonnet protocol" collaborative situation? It is safe, I think, to assume that many of the 302C students had been accustomed to dealing with other readers’ interpretations only in the form of published critical texts. However, in students’ eyes, the authority vested in the teacher may be second only to that vested in published scholarly articles, and therefore inexperienced student writers tend to approach published texts passively, looking in them for "answers" or "truth" rather than for a spark to stimulate their own thinking. But because the sonnet protocol assignment asked students to work with readings of their peers, they seemed to have felt enough authority to engage actively with the ideas of other readers. And because Dr. Marlowe’s work took place behind
the scenes, in designing and introducing the assignment, his authoritative presence could not intrude as it did so forcefully in the experts activity. Indeed, in setting up this activity as creatively as he did, Dr. Marlowe was able to make his own teaching--in the traditional sense of the word anyway--unnecessary.

From the stories of these two very different collaborative situations it is clear that in the critical writing class--and probably in any class--making effective collaborative learning possible requires much more than simply asking students to work in groups. In fact, working in groups does not always lead to collaborative learning. In the sonnet protocol exercise, by allowing students to begin responding to a literary text with their own sometimes idiosyncratic interpretations, Dr. Marlowe allowed students room to see the material through their own eyes, rather than through a teacher’s eyes--even though, as the teacher, he represented a discourse community of literary scholars which these students as English majors presumably sought to join. The "experts" activity, on the other hand, emphasized a more traditional model of education in which, in the words of Mary Belenky and her collaborators, students are expected to become independent thinkers "through executing the teacher’s projects in the teacher’s own terms" (224).

As a participant-observer, it was my sense that the classroom climate created by the "experts" activity, more so than that established by the "sonnet protocol" activity, was predominant in the critical writing course during the weeks leading up to the shared-document writing assignment. Most often, as with the "experts" activity, Dr. Marlowe set up interesting, engaging collaborative assignments but then imposed
time constraints on students that prevented them from interacting fully with their peers as they would be expected to do when they worked on the final essay for the course. Recognizing this problem himself, Dr. Marlowe wrote to me in a journal, "the seemingly mundane consideration of time has become a major pedagogical concern for me this quarter as I learn about the pace at which I can proceed with the complicated mix of learning tasks in this computer-enhanced version of the course" (1-25-91).

The Shared-Document Assignment

For Dr. Marlowe, the issues of interpretation which confronted students in writing their essays based on the sonnet protocols were fundamental to critical writing; they were also the very issues that he expected students would find it necessary to confront again as they began to discuss in groups their readings of Tennessee William's "The Glass Menagerie" (the text upon which the shared-document essays were to be based). Students' experiencing interpretation as a social act, Dr. Marlowe explained, is key to the course. It is possible, he pointed out, to "do analyses, explications, and descriptions of works without having much sense of the conversation involved in the social dimension. But [students] can't do what I would consider critical writing until they come to terms with whether anything goes or what goes or why it goes" (Taped Interview 2-27-91). And, he continued, "I can see from [the sonnet protocol essays] that there's a real potential for them to learn [through collaborative work] about that meeting ground of meaning making [that lies
somewhere between 'anything goes' and 'there is only one correct meaning'!]. But there's also a potential for big fights" (Taped Interview 2-27-91).

Although the possibility of "big fights" was certainly on Dr. Marlowe's mind before the shared-document writing processes began, he chose--like Julia and unlike Katherine--to focus on the intellectual, academic aspects of the group situation, assuming that any problems which arose with interpersonal group dynamics would be worked out somehow within the groups. For example, when he first introduced the shared-document assignment to the class, he mentioned group dynamics issues only briefly before turning to discuss the intellectual benefits the project offered them as critical writing students:

While I know from experience that this group project CAN BE one of the most interesting and, I think, rewarding projects in a course, I also know from experience that it CAN BE one of the worst--that is, one of the most trying, one of the most troubling, one of the most irritating. But all of that has to do with whether people are willing to work together, whether people are willing to meet deadlines, to get together, to be flexible about scheduling time. Um, THAT I don't think I need to preach about, but I do want to say a little about the opportunities, in terms of learning about interpretive writing, critical writing, that are in the project and what some of the pitfalls might be in term of interpretation. But in terms of working together, I'll leave that to you all. (Transcript of class session 3-4-91).

Having thus resolved to leave students completely to their own devices when it came to managing group dynamics, Dr. Marlowe told us that there would be two and a half class periods set aside for us to work as we saw fit on the first stage of the shared-document assignment--putting together a creative presentation which would help the class to consider "The Glass Menagerie" from one of four possible critical perspectives,
either gender, class, language, or intertextuality. After the presentations, we had about a week to put together an essay. Dr. Marlowe encouraged groups to meet at least for a few minutes together at the beginning of each work session but told us that we were not required to work in the classroom if we chose not to.

How Groups Were Formed

Student groups assigned to focus on one of the four perspectives were formed by Dr. Marlowe based on a sign-up sheet upon which was passed around the room so that each student could indicate his or her first, second, and third choice in light of the four possibilities. I was assigned to the "class" group (my second choice), along with Ted and Jackie, each of whom indicated that "class" was their first choice, and Eric, for whom "class" was a second choice. Ronna was assigned to our group a day late, having been absent on the day everyone else signed up. Although Dr. Marlowe told me that his greatest concern in forming groups was honoring students' preferences, he said that he also made a point of not having "the three superstars in the class in the same group" (he considered Jackie one of these "superstars"). In fact, it would have been difficult for him to take into account the wide range of factors that Katherine, for instance, did in forming groups since Dr. Marlowe put them together in class, on-the-spot, in less than five minutes. He could do it so quickly because he was not trying to imagine how different people would work together and what combinations might be most successful, as both Katherine and Julia did to differing degrees. As he told me, he felt that students are "gonna be more open to it
if they've made their own choice," although he did want to have groups with no more than five and no fewer than three people in them. Aside from students' preferences and writing abilities, he said that he considered just two additional factors: As much as possible, he tried to make groups that were as diverse as possible in terms of gender and race (these concerns were minimized by the fact that the majority of students in the class were white females).

**Prompt for the Assignment**

Once groups were formed, Dr. Marlowe asked class members to read "The Glass Menagerie" so that we could begin working as a group to generate ideas for the presentation. We were also advised to read a file he had created and left for us to access through the computer network called "302C Collaboration." In this file, Dr. Marlowe provided students with some of the same kinds of information that appeared in Katherine's 304C course packet. The rather lengthy text begins with a rationale for the shared-document assignment in which Dr. Marlowe sought to "debunk the notion that creative learning and writing only occur in a scholar's study and in singularly-authored texts" (Taped Interview 2-27-91). The second part of the text is a description of the assignment itself, explaining how the work students did on the presentation was to feed into the co-authored essay. After the description of the assignment, there is what Dr. Marlowe jokingly referred to as his "pep talk about collaboration"--a section in which, as he explained, he was trying to say to students,
Look, turn differences of opinion into resources not conflicts, because you can write a paper or give an opinion that HIGHLIGHTS those differences of opinion, makes them the focus, or the interesting parts, of the presentation. You don't have to try for consensus all the time. If you've got an argument, think about it critically. (Taped interview 2-27-91)

Significantly, in thus specifically addressing issues of consensus and dissensus, Dr. Marlowe aligns himself with theorists such as John Trimbur and Greg Meyers who seek a critical practice of collaborative learning, as opposed to one which focuses so much on consensus that it runs the risk of becoming an educational practice which "stifles individual voice and creativity, suppresses differences, and enforces conformity" ("Consensus and Difference," 602).

The final section of the "302C Collaboration" document included brief summaries of what Dr. Marlowe meant by each of the four critical perspectives—gender, language, intertextuality, and class. He explained to me that he tried to sketch out the critical perspectives for students using as little jargon as possible. For example, instead of trying to introduce students to Marxism, under the "Gender and Class" section, he focused on the general idea of considering the "representation of groups of people in a text and the ways in which social constraints and privileges that affect the entire group also affect individuals within those groups as well as interactions among people within and across the groups." For class, then, he wrote, "you might look at how group status affects interactions among characters (for instance how Amanda's sense of her "station" in life affects her dealings with her children)." However, the instructions warn, "you should not simply document the representation of groups in the play; you should evaluate how the author's
representation of gender or class affects the meanings and significance of the work."
For Dr. Marlowe, the shared-document assignment was an opportunity both to experience critical reading and writing as social act in a very explicit way and to begin overcoming any resistance they might have to "using a way of thinking about the world as a way of thinking about why people tell stories." This resistance, he explained, "just shuts them out from most of what's interesting about literary criticism, and leaves them, really, in this mechanical task of explication" (Taped Interview 2-27-92).

Not surprisingly, the students' first concern about the group presentation and essay had nothing to do with issues of interpretation or the assignment itself—the first question raised was that of how they would be evaluated. Dr. Marlowe explained that "other things being equal, the group will simply, every member of the group will get the same grade for the project." Factors which might make other things unequal, he went on the explain, included absences from class or "if the group gets fed up with somebody who isn't pulling his or her own weight and says to me, look, so-and-so hasn't done a thing" (Transcript of 3-4-91 Class Session). Unlike in the business writing and basic writing classes, students were not asked to keep logs which detailed what happened in group meetings or to write self-reflexive journals or memos which analyzed group dynamics and writing processes. Nor were students required to turn in drafts of their essay prior to the date when the final product was due; instead, Dr. Marlowe set aside some extra office hours when groups could meet with him—if they chose to do so—to discuss their essays.
In addition to their concerns about evaluation, students had numerous questions about the class presentations, questions which led Dr. Marlowe to reiterate and elaborate upon the examples he had already provided in the "302C Collaboration" document (which I suspect few students had read, perhaps in part because it was online). He told us that oral part of the assignment could take the form of "an exercise on the computer, a presentation that focuses on a particular aspect of your argument, a dramatization of something" or almost anything else as long as it was not simply a reading of our paper. It needed to take advantage of the face-to-face contact of the class" (Transcript of 3-4-91 Class Session). And when it came to the essay, Dr. Marlowe encouraged us to be inventive there too: He told us to feel free to adopt one of his sample questions, tailor a sample question to our own interests, or come up with our own question if we preferred.

As a participant-observer, I felt that students were invigorated by the potential to be creative in this assignment. They seemed to enjoy the chance to work together without the kinds of restrictions placed on them and their time that they had to work within during previous time spent working in groups. Although Dr. Marlowe did "circulate during class," sitting down with one group after another as Julia had done, most of the work for the presentation and the essay took place outside of class, especially since the essay was not due until the middle of final exam week; thus, he ended up having relatively little input into the work of most groups.

In addition to in-class group meetings, the 302C groups found it necessary to meet three to five times outside of class, and, surprisingly, I heard few complaints
about the time it was necessary to put in on this project. Indeed, if the quality of the oral presentations reflected the extent of students' engagement in the project, they were most certainly engaged: The day presentations were made was, in my judgement, the highpoint of the course for most participants in the class. Afterwards, Dr. Marlowe told me that he really wished every class could be like the presentation day, but that if it were, he was afraid that students would not be prepared for the kind of individual, conventional work that would be expected of them in upper-level English classes. In fact, to differing degrees, I found all the presentations wonderfully inventive and insightful, in part because they gave students an opportunity to parody some aspects of the 302C class, something they may only have felt empowered to do in the relative safety of their group.

The "Intertextuality" group, for instance, set up a simulation of a game show (similar to "Jeopardy") that was designed to teach the class about how a text such as "The Glass Menagerie" incorporated other references to other texts in ways that might affect our interpretations of the play's meaning and significance. As the show began, we were introduced to three "experts" who competed against each other to identify various allusions to other texts that the Master of Ceremonies had identified in "The Glass Menagerie." When a winner emerged, the prizes she received were humorously appropriate for the 302C course: a carrying case with 3 double-side disks, one with all the information ever gathered on intertextuality, one with

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7 In the language presentation, students also made a pun on the word "experts," calling participants in their skit "eggsperts."
MacWrite II, and one with the original Marlowe template for writing critical essays. The winner also received a year's subscription to "MacBest," an intradepartmental quarterly magazine which featured student writing produced in computer-supported composition and literature classrooms.

Most important, though, after all the presentations were complete, Dr. Marlowe openly and sincerely complimented students on their work, saying several times that he thought all the presentations were excellent and that he learned a lot about the play by listening to them. To underline this point, he gave several specific examples of nuances he had not thought of before that really added to his understanding of the play. Part of the success of the presentations, I am certain, came from fact that Dr. Marlowe had finally stepped aside, given students sufficient time to interact with one another, and afforded them the free rein to be creative: Under those conditions, students were able, finally, to be true experts in the Introduction to Critical Writing Class.

Summary of the Classroom Scene's Dominant Features

Considering the details of the 302C class elaborated above, it is possible, from my perspective as a participant-observer, to make several generalizations about what I considered to be the dominant features of the critical writing class as a scene for collaboration.

(1) Students, like faculty who typically teach 302, had conflicting notions of what the purpose of the class was—some perceived of it as a literature class more than
a writing class and therefore felt resentful when they weren't given sufficient time to discuss the "content" of the poetry, short stories, or plays upon which their critical essays were based. There was often a sense of confusion among students about why we were doing one activity or another and about how class time was being spent, I think because of a basic misunderstanding between students and the teacher as to what the course was all about.

(2) Because the course attempted to cover a great deal of material (in some ways being both a writing and a literature course), because so much time was spent attending to computer-related issues, and because Dr. Marlowe tended to talk longer than students believed was necessary when giving responses to questions or when offering explanations, virtually every classroom event was either rushed for time or cut short because of time, adding to general feelings of frustration on the part of both teacher and students.

(3) In an attempt to set up a paperless classroom, much of the communication that took place between Dr. Marlowe and students occurred through the computer. And, since Dr. Marlowe had easier access to a computer and greater facility with using the machines than students did, the paperless classroom actually exaggerated the differences in power that typically exist by default between teacher and students. In fact, few students, in their frustration, had a chance to get to know their teacher in any kind of personal way—and thereby to see him as the kind, helpful person he was generally considered to be by graduate students and his colleagues (Ted was a notable exception here, and I am certain there were others; I simply didn't
come in contact with them). Intimidated by Dr. Marlowe, several of the students were unwilling to actively seek his help outside of class when they might have really needed it, even though students respected his knowledge and considered him to be an extremely intelligent man. Some felt that he displayed his intelligence at their expense.

(4) Often group activities in class that were intended as opportunities for students to learn from each other as peer "experts" and to experience the making of meaning as a social act were cut short, usually because time was running short, frequently because Dr. Marlowe was inclined to take over the role of "expert" himself when students were struggling.

(5) Students were generally inexperienced with writing in groups, but most seemed to be open-minded about trying it, despite some uncertainty about why a writer would want to collaborate. The excitement generated by the class presentations, however, suggested that they relished the opportunity the work in groups at the end of the course gave them to be creative, to truly be acknowledged as experts, and to take center stage in the class. It seemed to me that a great deal of energy was pent up in these students all quarter long as they were, again and again, given opportunities to interact with each other under conditions in which they were frequently interrupted and placed under restrictive time constraints.

(6) Dr. Marlowe's philosophy as manager of a collaborative class downplayed the importance of the social aspects of the classroom. That is, students were responsible for monitoring and dealing with their own group dynamics without the
teacher's playing a role in helping to establish any particular kind of social atmosphere (i.e., the climate of trust discussed by Anne Gere and other theorists). Groups were formed with the assumption that it made the most sense for people with similar intellectual, or academic interests, to work together. Thus, affective concerns were not taken into consideration when forming groups (i.e., students were not asked whether there were people that for whatever reason--social or academic--they especially wanted to work with or not to work with). Unlike in the other two classes studied, students were not encouraged or required to reflect upon the interpersonal dynamics of the classroom or their groups.

(7) Dr. Marlowe valued collaborative work for theoretical and intellectual reasons rather than for social ones. Specifically, he saw the group process as valuable largely because it provided a forum for students to negotiate among differing interpretations of a literary text and to present those interpretations creatively to the class (i.e., to socially construct knowledge together). There was, it seemed, room for such creativity at the end of the course because the fundamental conventions of critical writing had already been the focus of the first eight weeks of the course. (The shared-document assignments in the business writing and basic writing classes, by contrast, came earlier in the course, and they gave students an opportunity to help each other learn, or accommodate to, some conventions of writing for business and for the academy--i.e., to engage in social learning but not necessarily a social construction of knowledge). As the blind men and the elephant analogy that Katherine liked so much to use suggests, in theoretical terms, she--and, I think, Julia
too--seemed to hold notions of collaborative learning that might be considered objectivist or realist, whereas Dr. Marlowe seemed to be working from a more purely social constructionist epistemology.

(8) True to his view of knowledge as socially constructed rather than singular and "real," Dr. Marlowe attempted to create a classroom environment in which students did not feel compelled to reach a consensus about meaning when they worked in groups. Unlike Katherine, he explicitly urged groups to acknowledge and incorporate dissenting points of view in their shared-document essays rather than taking a stance with which the majority of group members could agree because it was most "accurate".

The following chapter illustrates the extent to which Dr. Marlowe's vision of the ideal collaborative experience was realized as I trace the writing and group processes of a 302C group.
CHAPTER VII

GROUP DYNAMICS AND WRITING PROCESSES

OF THE CRITICAL WRITING GROUP

As Dr. Marlowe had predicted when he grouped Jackie, Ted, Ronna, and Eric together for the shared-document project in English 302C, Jackie and Ted began to assert influence over the group from the very first meeting and, to differing degrees, continued to function as group leaders throughout the course of the project. From the initial meeting, it was clear to me that both Jackie and Ted had strong potential to emerge as leaders of the group—Jackie because her comments about the play indicated that her abilities as a critical reader and writer were more developed than those of the other group members and Ted because of the sheer force of his personality, his seemingly irrepressible will to exert influence over other people. In fact, Jackie and Ted had in common an obvious confidence in their own abilities; both of them seemed to relish the chance that the group project—especially the class presentation—offered them to be creative and to have some fun.

Leadership and Power

Through the questionnaires that each group member filled out for me at the end of the course, I learned that Jackie, Eric, and Ronna all had perceived Jackie and
Ted as having engaged in activities associated with leadership. As Ronna wrote, "Jackie] did a lot of the organizing. [Ted] also gave some instructions."

Interestingly, only Ted singled himself out as the primary leader of the group: He listed Jackie, Ronna, and himself as all having performed leadership functions, and then wrote Mostly Me!. He was also the only group member to indicate that when he made comments group members always responded; everyone else indicated that group members usually, but not always, responded. Despite Ted's perception of himself as the group's primary leader, however, it seemed to me that he began to exert a particularly strong influence over the group about midway through the project, with Jackie having more influence over the group in the early stages of the process.

The leadership dynamics in this group are especially interestingly because of the significant differences between these two group leaders in terms not only of leadership style but of gender, race, socioeconomic status, and approaches to academic work. Whereas Ted was a 21-year-old white, male, fraternity man from California whose parents were paying his way through college, Jackie, a 21-year-old African-American woman, was paying her own way through college by working two jobs, which meant that between classes and work she had commitments every weekday from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Thus, Jackie's attitude toward the group project was a combination of excitement about and interest in the project itself and what appeared to be a strong resolve to keep the group moving forward and focused rather than getting distracted and off-task. Despite her busy schedule, she was the
first person to tell the group, "We've got to decide on when to meet outside of class," and to get us moving she asked, "We have to have a draft written by Monday? Is that what he said? That's the eighteenth" (Transcript of 3-6-91 class). Jackie also was the first group member to get out a print-out she had made of the sample questions Dr. Marlowe had given us and to say, "Maybe we should think of the theme first." When no one responded right away, she took on a pseudo-teacher voice as Cheryl had done in the basic writing group, asking, "What do you guys think is the theme?"

It wasn't long, however, before group members began to follow Jackie's lead when she initiated a topic for the group to focus on, as she often did. She had an aura of quiet self-confidence about her; for example, when we were discussing whether we could possibly memorize our parts in the class presentation, both Ronna and Eric made it clear that they were afraid they wouldn't be able to do so since they were uneasy about getting up in front of the group to begin with. When Eric said, "Well that [memorizing our lines] is going to be difficult," Jackie responded in characteristic fashion—positively, confidently, yet modestly—and said, "I mean, well, I could DO it. I might not memorize it word for word, but I'd memorize it enough for him to come in. And then we'll just have it [the script] sitting there if I forget something. I have faith in myself, I think." (Transcript of 3-8-91 group meeting). Jackie, it seemed, was able to inspire all of us to feel more confident, not only through her own self-confidence but also through a little gentle coaching; for example, she would smile and say to Eric, whose lines always seemed to come across very flat, "You have to be real hyper, you know?" (Her approach was a sharp contrast..."
to the sarcastic feedback Ronna gave to the struggling Eric, "Oh, such enthusiasm here!"). In the same way, when Eric—as he typically did—came up with excuse after excuse for why he couldn’t do something, Jackie simply patiently offered him alternatives rather than making fun of him as Ronna tended to or simply ignoring what he had to say as Ted often did. Consider this conversation:

Jackie: Here's my answer [to the question we were focusing our presentation on—we had all agreed to respond to it individually and bring our answers to the group meeting.]

Eric: I get frustrated when I write something like that. Because I'll be sitting and something else will come to mind.

Jackie: You just write it all down.

Eric: I would need like four notebooks to keep all my ideas straight, because they just jump, jump, jump, jump.

Jackie: Get a tape recorder.

Eric: I think I'd run out of tape. [Jackie, Ronna, Eric and I all begin talking about tape recorders]. (Transcript of 3-8-91 out-of-class group meeting)

In general, Jackie seemed consistently able to be patient with her sometimes resistant group members, perhaps because of the confidence she had in herself. Her group members repaid her patience and her positive attitude toward them by asking her opinion and looking to her for leadership when the group needed to make decisions.

As Jackie worked in the first few group meetings to set the group in motion in terms of deciding when to meet and what approach to take to writing the essay (no one seemed to understand at first that we needed to begin by putting together a presentation), Ted, on the other hand, seemed determined to exercise his influence
upon the group by establishing a less serious mood. He sought, it seemed at first, to
distract us from taking the direct, serious approach to the assignment toward which
Jackie's questions were leading. For instance, as we sat down at one of the round
tables for our first meeting, Ted began singing into my taperecorder and then leaned
back in his chair saying, "Alright, whata ya say we designate one person to do all the
work and the rest of us just cruise." Ronna, not missing a beat, immediately
responded with, "How about you? You do all the work." She seemed to feel
confident bantering with Ted in the earliest group meetings, yet I noticed that she
consistently aligned herself with Jackie by continuing to talk about the play even
when Ted was making comments like, "I'm gonna cut class," "Come on guys, lighten
up," and "I'm really not into this, let's go get a pizza and some beer and think about
it" (Transcript of 3-6-91 class). Ted, in fact, did not find willing followers in the
group as long as he seemed to be intent on leading us down a path of irresponsibility.
Jackie simply ignored his comments and continued talking with Ronna and me about
what the theme of "The Glass Menagerie" might be. I got the impression that Jackie
would have gone ahead and talked about it to herself if no one else had been willing
to listen.

In that first meeting and in others thereafter, however, Ted did eventually
decide to join the discussion, perhaps because no one was paying any attention to
what he was saying about cutting class, getting a pizza, and so forth. As he began to
participate, the tone of the discussion changed noticeably: Whereas Jackie, Ronna,
and I had been building off each other's ideas, trying to discover what might be a
reasonable way of expressing "the theme" of the play, when Ted joined the
correction, the tone of the discussion almost immediately became confrontational
(Eric basically remained silent most of the class period). His first comment was,
"Lookin' for a theme--is that what we're doin'? We're startin' with the hardest thing
first?" Then, when the group continued discussing thematic issues, he interrupted
Ronna to ask her abruptly, "How'd you get that?", a question which set off a debate
among himself, Ronna, and Jackie about what attitudes the woman in the play had
about men. By the end of this debate and several others that came after it, I was
beginning to feel frustrated by the force with which Ted was presenting his
interpretations to the group, especially since I knew that Dr. Marlowe didn't consider
him a particularly good critical reader. Nevertheless, by the end of the first group
meeting, we had decided to act out portions of the play for our class presentation and
Ted had volunteered himself to be what he called the "stage manager," in effect
designating himself leader, in his own mind anyway, of the presentation part of the
group project.

In subsequent meetings, however, it was became clear that although Ted took
it upon himself to play a strong leadership role in the group when he was present, he
couldn't necessarily be relied upon to make the group and its work a high priority.
He once missed an entire in-class group meeting because, as he told us, he had been
up for three nights straight with no sleep trying to complete papers that he had
waited until the last minute to write for his other classes. (On this day, Dr. Marlowe
actually called him and Eric at home from class to find out why they were absent.
Eric was home and eventually came to class, but Dr. Marlowe never reached Ted. In fact, like Tina and Mike in the business communication class, Ted spent much of his time with activities related to his fraternity, of which he had been elected president for the following year. Fraternity functions, however, were not something that Jackie, Ronna, and Eric—all of whom were working their ways through college to differing extents—considered legitimate excuses for missing group meetings. In fact, it seemed unlikely from conversations that took place between Ronna and Jackie that either one of them was willing to entrust their success in English 302C to a male fraternity member: On the day that Ted and Eric were both absent from class, Ronna commented that she was going to "string them up by their toes," and in the context of a discussion about traditional marriage vows (unrelated to English class), they both expressed strong views about the extent to which women could rely upon any man:

Jackie: A lot of men are just not—you couldn't look up to them and obey them because they aren't capable of, really—I mean men aren't raised in the same way. They aren't raised to take care of you. They can barely take care of themselves, let alone take care of you.

Ronna: I can't imagine anyone marrying my brother.

Jackie: Me neither. Or ending up being the mother of anyone. (Transcript of 3-11-91 class).

In addition, on several other occasions, Jackie and Ronna made disparaging comments about Ted's suggestion that our group meet in his fraternity house. One of these times, for instance, Ronna said, "I'm sure we're going to meet in the stupid Beta house, there's no way. We couldn't concentrate in a fraternity house. It's got
to be really noisy." "Plus," Jackie added, "they can have parties" (Transcript of 3-8-91 class).

Because of Jackie and Ronna's sense that as a man, as a fraternity member, and as a student who was frequently seen sleeping in class, Ted could be reliable only to a point, I often had the feeling that when Ted first began exerting his influence forcefully in the group, people went along with him not because they could not stand up for themselves (although it would have been very difficult to challenge Ted directly), but because Jackie, at least, was satisfied that the direction in which Ted was taking the group was ultimately going to be to the benefit of the group.

Interestingly, however, the point at which Ted's leadership role in the group was explicitly acknowledged by Jackie was also the point at which Ted's manner of leadership was beginning to feel oppressive to me. We were practicing our play the evening before our in-class performance, and Ted had missed our last practice. At first he just nonchalantly asked us what he had missed, apologizing for his absence only after realizing that Professor Marlowe had not been pleased and could possibly lower his participation grade. Perhaps because he realized that his missing the meeting had not gone unnoticed by the teacher, he suddenly became extremely focused on getting the play ready for production, with himself playing a major role in it. He asked us, "Why don't I do the introduction . . . I'll come up with a three minute speech, and then you'll [Jackie] come in and--the first scene is what?" From that point on, he was in charge, constantly giving each of us orders and advice, to the point of actually telling us what we should say and how we should interpret
various characters' words and actions in the play. At one point, he actually said to Eric, "Sit there. Shut up a minute. I want to get this done. I don't want to be here forever." (Transcript of 3-12-91 group meeting). And, as the following exchange illustrates, he gave directions--in this case to me--very authoritatively but sometimes almost incoherently and did not especially welcome anyone questioning his ideas:

Ted: [To me playing the role of Laura] You're going to be--do your little dizzy thing if you want to. Pretend this is the unicorn and when you're saying your lines go like this, you know. It's fun to get out of touch with reality, but the thing is, you have to hit upon class--make sure when you give your answers, try to incorporate the class you want to be in, the class that you feel this group is trying to portray, which is the class that lives in a bunch of warty apartments. Okay, the enslaved population, the lower middle class. Alright? Your answers are as repressed, you're depressed, you're repressed. You're coming off you would say, you know, my mother wants me to be in a better class, she wants me to be a different person, she always trying to push me to do different things, but I'm like this object, this glass menagerie. One of the pieces, that's what I'm like. She holds me tight, she crushes me, she pushes me out in the open and I break. I wish she would just leave me alone so I can be like the glass menagerie, and just sit there. You know, something like that. You want to be part of this repressed group.¹

Kelly: You mean I don't want to.

Ted: No, you do.

Kelly: I want to be repressed?

Ted: Yes, you want to come off as someone who will be part of this group for the rest of your life. You don't want to say you want to be a repressive but- [other group members try here to help Ted clarify the point he is trying to make] (Transcript of 3-13-91 Group meeting)

¹ At this point in the transcript, I was interested to see that the person transcribing the tape of this group meeting for me had the same reaction to Ted's behavior as I did. She wrote in parenthesis, "He should have done a one man show. I think he wanted to."
In this situation and others, I felt as though Ted was putting words in my mouth--in all of our mouths--without thinking very carefully himself about what he was advising us to say through his impromptu monologues. But when Ted--who must have felt some of the tension I was feeling when I resisted him a little bit--said to the group, "If I'm dominating and you guys feel I'm wrong, tell me," Jackie supported him in his authoritative approach to leading the group by answering, "No" almost as if she were surprised by the question. Her response, in fact, surprised me--as it must have the person who transcribed the tape of this group meeting since she wrote in parenthesis, "Get a life, [Jackie], he's definitely dominating! Jackie's acceptance, though, was all the encouragement Ted needed to continue directing us as he had been, and he said, "Okay, good, I've directed an awful lot of plays." With that exchange, it seemed to me that Jackie had "officially" given Ted license to take charge of the group at least for the presentation part of the group project.

Unfortunately, I had no opportunity to talk to Jackie about why she had not objected to his dominating behavior; I can only assume that she was not as offended by it as I was and/or that she recognized that deferring to him was the most expedient way to accomplish the group's goals.

Whatever her reasons might have been for stepping aside so that Ted could direct the presentation, when we finished the presentation and began working on the essay, Jackie began once again to assert herself as the obvious leader of the group (see writing process section below for details). Seemingly unable to contribute seriously to the group whenever he was not completely in charge, Ted at one point began
wheeling his chair around the room, making comments like, "I'm going to break that tape recorder, I'm getting frustrated," and "I want my evaluation back [that is, the questionnaire he had filled out for me]. I don't like the conflicts that are developing." One of his comments, though, got to the heart of what I thought really seemed to be frustrating him: He asked, "Who put [Jackie] in charge?" Diffusing the situation, Jackie responded by verbally disowning the leadership role that in actuality was hers: "I'm not in charge," she said, "I'm just the typist" (Transcript 3-18-92). Her strategy seemed to be to allow Ted to "save face": If he could think of Jackie in a stereotypically female support role (typist), he would not have to confront the fact that he was no longer "in charge." By that point, it seemed to me that Jackie simply could not have afforded to defer to Ted as leader any longer since the quality of our work on both the presentation and the essay suffered to the extent that we allowed Ted's ideas and impromptu interpretations to go unexamined and unchallenged. For to follow Ted's lead, it was necessary for three women and one rather shy man (whom Ted disparagingly called a "girl" behind his back) to remain quiet and submissive so that we could hear the voice of a man who seemed, perhaps in part by

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2 Unfortunately, because this group project took place at the end of the course and in a very short period of time, it was impossible for me to interview group members to learn more about their perspectives on leadership in the group. Also, unlike in the other classes, students were not assigned to keep logs or write journals reflecting upon their work in groups. Therefore, I have no way of knowing the extent to which my interpretation of the leadership dynamics in this group and my responses to Ted and Jackie as leaders were representative in any way of other group members' experiences. I do know that several members of the audience rolled their eyes at parts of Ted's introduction to the play that I considered patronizing (Fieldnotes 3-14-91).
virtue of his gender, race, and socioeconomic status, to feel more entitled than the rest of us to be heard. Ultimately, our following Ted’s leadership meant giving up the opportunity to engage in the kind of debate and social construction of interpretation that Dr. Marlowe had hoped would be an integral part of the group experience.

Writing Processes and Pattern of Collaboration

The shifting leadership of the critical writing was clearly influenced by group members’ perhaps unconscious assumptions based on differences between group members in terms of race, class, and gender. Despite incidents in which individual group members had what seemed to me good reasons to feel oppressed, though, all members of the critical writing group made contributions to the group writing process; no one simply opted out of the group as, for instance, the males in the basic writing class had done. The high level of participation in the group is especially notable since the critical writing group differed from both of the other two groups in that only a small part of the group’s writing process occurred in class.

Overall, the group held ten whole-group meetings, with six of them taking place outside of class. All but three of these meetings, however, were spent writing and practicing the oral presentation. For the remaining three meetings, which were devoted to drafting the shared-document essay, the group met in a computer lab on campus. In terms of attendance at group meetings, Ronna, Ted, Jackie and I all attended nine of the ten group meetings (both Jackie and I had to be out of town for the last meeting during final exam week). Surprisingly, only Eric, who was absent so
frequently from class in the first part of the quarter that Dr. Marlowe told me he had basically "checked out of the class," attended every meeting. Whereas the shared-document writing process spanned a time period of over a month in both the business writing and critical writing classes, the critical writing group had only a week and a half between the class presentation day and the day the collaborative essay was due. The group produced the document in that short period of time without receiving feedback from Dr. Marlowe or other class members.

Outlining the Essay

The foundation of the critical writing group's shared-document was built on Jackie’s individual efforts during the time the group was putting together the oral presentation. It was she who had selected the parts of the play that we would use for our presentation and, based on the presentation, wrote an outline which became the basis for the first draft of the essay.

With some input from Ronna and me, Jackie wrote the outline during the class session when Dr. Marlowe had made phone calls to the absent Ted and Eric (since it was impossible to practice our group presentation without everyone present). She seemed to assume that we would all consider writing an outline to be the natural way to begin the paper, for she asked Ronna and me, "Do you guys want to write the outline for the paper?" as if all essays began with outlines. She also seemed to assume that if we wrote the outline, the two men would take over from there and write a first draft (the outline, she said, would "Give them something to use").
Neither Ronna nor I questioned either of these assumptions.

Just as Cheryl had in the basic writing group, Jackie wanted to begin with a thesis (as in the basic writing class, students in this class were instructed to begin writing with a thesis already formulated), and she began the process of writing one by rereading the question we had selected from Dr. Marlowe's list of options to address in both the presentation and the essay. The question, which alternately seemed to guide and to confuse the group during the writing process, read as follows:

**Gender and Class**

Each of these perspectives requires us to consider the representation of groups of people in a text and the ways in which social constraints and privileges that affect the entire group also affect individuals within those groups as well as interactions among people within and across the groups. You might try to determine how different characters adapt to their group status (for instance, how Amanda and Laura view themselves and each other as women). Or you might look at how group status affects interactions among characters (for instance, how Amanda's sense of her "station" in life affects her dealings with her children). Of course you should not simply document the representation of groups in the play; you should evaluate how the author's representation of gender or class affects the meaning and significance of the work.

Sample Questions:

1. In his initial stage directions, Williams refers to the Wingfield's building as "one of those vast hivelike conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in over-crowded urban centers of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automism" (1462). Yet several characters in *The Glass Menagerie* are striving to change their lot in life. How, then, does Williams's comments on the "enslaved" lower middle-class relate to the characters and plot of this play?

In part because Dr. Marlowe had grouped the categories of gender and class together
in his instructions, members of the critical writing group often found themselves doing analyses of the text based on gender, not realizing that we were the "class" group. The question we selected to address (Question 1) also posed a problem for the group because the students found the crucial part of the question which they referred to as "the quote" nearly incomprehensible (Ronna complained that "it just rambles!" and during one meeting, Ted finally became frustrated, turned to me and asked, "What does that say, Kelly? What does that mean?" His question launched a discussion of the quote in which Ted, Jackie, Eric, and I all worked together to

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3 Even during the very last group meeting as we were completing the essay, amazingly, this conversation took place:

Ted: Amanda, Amanda's significant to the story because it shows what society has done to her gender.

Jackie: Now we're talking about gender.

Ted: That's our thing, we're in gender.

Jackie: No, in class.

Eric: We're in class.

Ted: Gender and class.

Jackie: No, just class.

Ted: We're gender and class, folks.

Jackie: No we're not, Ted.

Ted: Gender and class.

Eric: Yeah, in the instructions there were four groups-- class, gender, language and intertextuality. There is another group on gender.
construct a meaning for it). Despite the group's confusion over the quote's meaning, though, Ted began the class presentation by reading it, and Jackie told Ronna as she began the outline, "We should probably put that quote in there" (Transcript 3-11-91).

Thus, the first section of Jackie's outline read as follows:

Outline for Final Paper

I. Introduction
   A. Quote
      1. William's comment on the enslaved lower middle class relates to:
         - Amanda—how she enslaves herself by living a life outside her means and wanting her children to be a part of upper-class.
         - Tom—enslaved by factory job needed to support family.
         - Laura—enslaved physically and also by the smothering pressure from her mother.
         - Jim—also enslaved past and stuck in factory job he wants out of.
   B. Thesis—Each character in the "Glass Menagerie" is enslaved by the patriarchal class-structure environment in which they were raised.

When this introduction was complete, Ronna looked incredulously at Jackie and exclaimed, "This is an outline! You're going too much into it. I mean, you've already got a paragraph written up for the introduction—it's just an outline." Not to be deterred from her task, Jackie simply continued writing and asked Ronna, "What do you think we should talk about in the first paragraph?" Ronna then followed Jackie's

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4 When Ted read the quote at the beginning of our class presentation, it was easy to tell from the way he read it that he did not have a meaning in mind for some of the words and phrases he was uttering. When he warned the audience "Now this part is really complicated," he sounded extremely condescending, so it was significant to me that he finally owned up to the fact that he was just as confused as the rest of the group.
lead and continued working by suggesting that we "go from character to character," and Jackie agreed "that would be the easiest way to do it--most logical" (Transcript 3-11-91).

Shortly after the introduction was complete, our work was interrupted by Dr. Marlowe, who asked us what we were working on. It was as we talked that he learned about Ted and Erin's absence and made phone calls to them at home. When Ted was not home, Jackie started to have second thoughts about depending upon the two men to write the essay: She said, "[Ted] wasn't home? Oh my God. I don't know if we can trust him with our paper." For a time, then, work on the outline ceased as the three of us got off-task, talking about a movie that was on TV the night before and the fact that we were wasting two hours. As Jackie eventually resumed work on the outline, Ronna again joined her by making suggestions for whatever line Jackie was working (Ronna also made a point of saying that she just had no respect for Ted, although the two of them did not waste much time talking about him or complaining about his absence).

As the two of them worked on the outline, Eric arrived looking as if he had not slept all night. When he sat down with us, this conversation took place:

5 The next time that the entire group was together, Ronna responded to one of Eric's comments by saying, "You're the one who strolled in at like--oh God, I'd be so humiliated if my professor had to call me to get me out of bed. I'd be really embarrassed!" It was at this point that Ted learned his presence in class had been missed Dr. Marlowe, and he lamented, "Oh, shit, he's going to chew me out in class. He probably went over to the computer and pulled up my grade and went boom, boom." Eric, who always seemed to have an answer for everything assured him, "He can't do anything about it. It wasn't a mandatory show-up." Needless to say, Ted was not comforted by Eric's reply, knowing full well that he had a far better
Ronna: What happened to you?

Eric: I got fried doing my papers last night. What are we doing, writing something down? [Ted’s] not here either?

Jackie: We couldn’t get ahold of him so we’re writing down an outline. How would you feel about switching parts [in the presentation] with Ted?

Eric: Umm. Making an outline for?

Jackie: For you to write the paper.

Eric: Okay, I need a few minutes.

After Jackie persisted in questioning Eric until he responded to her question about switching parts with Ted in the presentation (which never ended up happening since Ted didn’t want to switch), she went on to update him on what we were doing: "Right now, we’re talking about Amanda. For her--what we’re going to do for the paper is to do each character separately." And once Eric replied by saying in his typical know-it-all tone of voice, "Yeah, we’d almost have to," we continued work on the outline. Again, Jackie composed aloud, asking us questions and sometimes incorporating into the outline words or phrases we suggested. Ignoring numerous potential distractions, she persisted keeping the group focused on writing the outline until it was complete--it was four pages long with a full paragraph for a conclusion.

With the class session ending and the outline complete, the group decided to meet the next evening to practice the presentation, and Eric was have the first draft relationship with Dr. Marlowe than Eric did, and he did not want anything to compromise it.
written for the next group meeting after that one (Ronna urged everyone to call Ted two or three times about the next evening’s meeting). Since we all knew that Eric had rewritten several essays for Dr. Marlowe to improve upon failing grades, it surprised me that Jackie was so willing to trust Eric with writing the first draft. However, before class ended, she did express some doubts as she handed him the outline:

Jackie: [To Eric] Okay, can we trust you with this?

Eric: Yeah. What am I going to do?

Ronna: Are you going to work on the paper?

Eric: Yeah, Thursday I have a test and then I have two others and I’ll be here until-

Jackie: Are you going to have time to do it?

Eric: Well-

Jackie: Because I can do it. (Transcript 3-11-91).

Since Eric insisted that he would have time, Jackie did not ask him again, and as class ended, it was assumed that he would be responsible for writing the draft.

The First Draft

As all the group members met the next evening to practice the presentation, the issue of the first draft came up once more, and Jackie and Ronna became a little concerned when Eric told them that he had not even looked at the outline yet. The two women, therefore, worked together to try to get a commitment from him as to
when he would actually produce the draft.

It was Jackie who had asked him whether it was written, and then when he said "no," Ronna reminded him that we had a lot of work to do on it yet. Eric responded to that comment by pointing out that Jackie "basically wrote a book for an outline," as if that meant he had very little to do to turn it into a first draft. Unwilling to let Eric off the hook so easily, both Ronna and Jackie responded quickly: Jackie told him, "Well, I mean, do you know why I did that? Because I knew that you wouldn’t . . . ." Then, interrupting Jackie, Ronna pointed out that it was not going to do us any good to have a book written that’s "not, like, all the way written." She warned him that it was not enough just to add a few words to the outline. Still hedging, Eric told her, "Yeah, I know, I know how to do it--I need time to do it."

The remainder of their conversation on this topic developed as follows:

Ronna: Well, if you don’t have time, we’ll get someone else.

Jackie: I can do it.

Eric: After Thursday at 10:30 in the morning, okay? I’ll have all the time in the world then.

Ronna: I could have had it typed up for today.

Eric: Oh well.

Jackie: I wonder if you could just, like, get it to somebody before Monday, do you know what I’m saying?

Eric: Yes, I can get it to you on Thursday at 12:00 if I wanted to. I just need, I just need, you know, about an hour and a half where I don’t have ten billion things to do. Also, some of us do work occasionally.

Jackie: Oh, honey, tell me about it. I’m working full time.
Eric: Well, whose fault is that? It's not my fault.
(Transcript 3-12-91)

In this conversation, Jackie and Ronna persistently and directly sought to verify that Eric was indeed going to be responsible enough to follow through and write the first draft. Significantly, however, even when they seemed to doubt his credibility, neither one of them was went so far as to take over control of the task herself as Cheryl so often did in the basic writing group (like Cheryl, Jackie was clearly willing to do the work). Ignoring what the group had come to consider Eric's somewhat immature "smart" remarks--e.g., "Whose fault is that?"--Jackie and Ronna went ahead and let Eric make the choice about whether to continue to be responsible for writing the first draft. And once that choice was made, Jackie let him know in no uncertain terms that his excuses for not completing his work were lame and inappropriate since everyone in the group was extremely busy (recall that Cheryl readily accepted Todd's excuses for not being able to work). However, had Jackie and Ronna known at that point what they discovered the next day in the class--that the essay was worth 30% of their grade--I suspect they would have exerted even more pressure on him than they did; perhaps one of them would have even insisted on writing the draft herself.

The subject of how much the collaborative essay was weighted came up casually as the grouped members talked together waiting for a presentation to begin, but Jackie and Ronna's response to their new piece of information was anything but casual:
Erin: It's like 30% of our grade.

Ronna: This is?

Jackie: I didn't know that.

Ronna: Whoaaa!

Eric: That's what it says for Essay #5.

Ronna: I never looked at how much they were worth.

Jackie: We are definitely going to edit that paper. You've got to have-

Ronna: You'd better have it written by Saturday.

Eric: Oh, no problem.

Ronna: I want it Saturday night [discussion about where the percentages were listed in the syllabus followed]. (Transcript 3-13-91)

After they all realized that the quality of the product would actually have a significant impact on their grades, Jackie, Ronna, and Ted had a noticeably different, more serious attitude toward the project (Jackie's average for her other essays at that point was a B+, one of the highest averages in the class, so she certainly had the most to lose if the group was unsuccessful). Even though Jackie and Ronna had been persistent before, after the presentations were completed, the group held its most intense discussion yet as we urgently tried decide upon a time and place for the next meeting should be held.

During this discussion, Ted told Eric in no uncertain terms, "I don't want you holding the paper until next Monday or Tuesday" (Transcript 3-13-91). Before the end of class, then, it was decided that we would meet at noon in the Union computer
lab, Ted felt strongly that it was the best place to meet, having vetoed Eric's suggestion that we could meet in the computer lab in his dorm (probably because it would have been a long walk for him to the dorm). Since he had suggested we meet at the Union, Ted offered to arrive early and save us a place. And at Jackie's urging, Eric agreed that he would write the draft on the computer and bring the text with him to the meeting on disk. The group also made arrangements with Dr. Marlowe to have him open up the classroom (room 343) so that we could work there on Monday (Dr. Marlowe had told us to ask him to make such arrangements if we needed a place to work since Monday was the beginning of final exam week when few labs on campus were open). Thus, the group was in the position of waiting three days without beginning work on the draft, three days of uncertainty about whether Eric would indeed produce the first draft of the essay.

It was only five minutes after I took a seat outside the Union computer lab on Sunday at 11:45 that Ted arrived. His first comment was to say that he doubted that Eric would have the draft typed up since "he has a half-assed attitude about the class--I know it and Professor [Marlowe] knows it" (Fieldnotes 3-16-91). As he spoke, we entered the lab together, and he sat down and booted up a computer. He went to say that our presentation had been terrific, the best in the class, and that he had talked to Dr. Marlowe about it too and he thought it was great too. As I listened and watched,

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6 Although I thought all the presentations were excellent, I would not have said ours was the best. Ted, of course, had orchestrated the whole thing, so he was really proud of how well it had turned out. He also seemed to want me to know that he was on really good terms with Dr. Marlowe; he clearly did not like it when anyone criticized him or the class (even though Ted was the only member of our group who
Ronna arrived and Ted pulled up onto the monitor Dr. Marlowe's instructions/sample questions for the essay. He began highlighting what he thought were significant parts of the question until it was 12:00, and Ronna exclaimed, "That little poop--he's not here?" Wasting no time, she headed right for the phone to call Eric; when she spoke with him she learned that he, unbelievably, had not realized we were having two meetings, so he was expecting the group to meet only on Monday. Frustrated, Ronna asked Ted and I when she returned, "Why would we meet one time when so much of our grade depends on this?" (Fieldnotes 3-16-91). Ignoring her, Ted was highlighting part of the instructions and typing in "THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE TO DO." Having never seen Jackie's outline, he asked Ronna if we had to do one of the sample questions." She told him that we did not but reminded him that our paper was "almost done."

Although "almost done" was a bit of an overstatement, when Eric arrived, he did have several pages of text on disk. As he was pulling the document up onto the screen, Jackie arrived; she sat down and immediately began reading. After she had read a bit, Ted asked her what she thought, and she pointed out a misspelled word, which Ronna reminded her we could catch it later. At Eric's suggestion, then, Ted went ahead and printed out hard copies of the draft so everyone could more easily read it, and Ronna suggested that Eric finish typing the draft while the group looked at what was there so far. When it was printed, while everyone else just read, Jackie read with a pen in hand, making revisions as she went along. At one point, she was known actually to fall asleep during class).
asked to see a copy of the question, and as Jackie reviewed the question, Ronna unabashedly pointed out to the group that the "first sentence doesn't make the slightest bit of sense." Finally, Jackie gave her overall assessment of the situation we were in: To the group, she said simply, "This is going to be a long weekend." Privately, to Ronna, she added, "He really messed this up. I should have done it myself." With these comments, we set to work on the second draft.

Writing a Second Draft: The First Whole-Group Composing Session

The second draft of the essay was begun during the remainder of the Sunday afternoon meeting (which lasted four hours) and completed in a two-hour meeting the next day. As we composed the second draft, every member of the group except for me served as typist at one point or another. Overall, everyone seemed equally comfortable using the computer, probably a result of the numerous in-class assignments we had done in class on the computer. Students also used "little tricks" that Dr. Marlowe had taught them for using the computer such as bolding a section that needed further revision so that later on it could be found and returned to easily. And even though students had been encouraged to develop a "paperless" writing process, group members frequently suggested printing out what we had written so that everyone could have a copy to read and revise.

Most of the time during the first meeting, Jackie, Ronna, and I composed together face-to-face at the computer (working on the sections of the essay dealing with the characters of Amanda and Laura), while Ted worked individually on the "Jim"
and "Tom" sections. Interestingly, the group members did not seem to have made conscious decision to split up the work in that way; it seemed to just happen as a result of Ted's going off to sit by himself. In asking Jackie whether Ted should be over at the computer working too, Ronna was the only person to comment on the division of labor that had developed. Jackie did not seemed concerned with what Ted was doing and never responded to Ronna's comment as the three of us began composing aloud. Eric, meanwhile, tried rather unsuccessfully to establish himself as a sort of technology expert in the group (recall that he had played that role successfully earlier in the course with his partner Tanya). His efforts were most obviously not appreciated by Ronna, who easily became irritated with the condescending tone of voice he used when giving his advice. She did not seem to

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7 At one point, Jackie wondered aloud why we had not thought of having each group member write the section of the essay pertaining to the character he or she had represented in the play. It seems to me that one reason that approach was not considered was that at the time when Jackie made the outline and gave Eric responsibility for writing the first draft, the group was not taking the essay assignment seriously. Since she and Ronna had done her part, Jackie assumed that someone else should finish the essay. The quality of the essay was not an issue for her at that point (Fieldnotes 3-16-91).

8 During one of the three of four open conflicts the two of them became engaged in, Ronna asked him in irritation, "What are you, some kind of expert?" Usually, when the two of them argued, Ted ended up making a comment like, "Kids, kids, that's enough." Eric typically responded to him by temporarily dropping out of the group process; it was sometimes as long as an hour before he said another word (during one meeting he started giving advice to another student working in the lab as our group continued working without him). I suspect that conflict may have developed between Ronna and Eric because they were the two group members who were struggling the most with the class. Perhaps they perceived of themselves as unable to "keep up" with more successful students like Ted and Jackie, so they sometimes used one another as scapegoats.
recognize, as I assume to be the case, that he simply wanted our attention (the seemingly more self-confident Ted and Jackie never seemed bothered by Eric's remarks). As a result, there were long stretches of time after one of Ronna and Eric's seemingly needless arguments when Eric participated relatively little in the writing of the second draft. When Ronna entreated him to help the group, he told her peevishly that there was no use in participating when everything he said was "chopped out" (Transcript 3-16-91). (He was probably correct in thinking that the others did not invest in his ideas the same kind of authority that was given ideas suggested by Jackie, Ted, or even and Ronna and me. In general, though, it seemed to me that everyone was willing to include him even when he seemed to be purposely trying to be difficult to get along with).

During one of Eric's "absences" from the group, he began talking with an English major who was working at the computer beside us; the student commented to him that we were "deliberating" too much as we wrote, and as a result, he was producing five pages to our one. In fact, in one typical conversation during which Ronna, Jackie, and I composed just one sentence (which eventually appeared in the final draft), I counted approximately 72 different turns being taken, with Jackie speaking 28 times, Ronna 20 times, and myself 24 times. The discussion began, as our discussions had during the outline stage of the project, with Jackie soliciting advice from Ronna and I as she composed aloud (she was trying to generate examples to support her general thesis that each of the characters in the play was in some way "enslaved"). She began by saying, "To escape the situation she-" and in the 72nd
turn, she read aloud the following sentence: "To escape the reality of this existence, Amanda lives in the past where she was raised with southern values; such as entertaining gentleman callers, having servants wait on her, and expecting to marry a rich man." (The punctuation here reflects that which appeared in the final draft; Jackie’s draft may or may not have included the errors which appear above). The relatively equal number of turns we took in writing this sentence reflects the egalitarian nature of our collaboration. Only rarely did one of us interrupt the other or become frustrated and impatient with the slow-moving process. Also, no one ever spoke in imperatives; transitions between parts of the writing task were usually initiated by Jackie asking a question (i.e., "Do you guys think that is good enough for Laura?").

When Ted and Erin joined the three of us, however, a different dynamic developed. Interactions among group members became more contentious, in part because Ted seemed to have little patience with the long process of spinning out sentences through trying possibility after possibility. Midway through the meeting, Jackie and Ronna were considering using the word "coquette" to describe the character Amanda, and they were jokingly talking about referring to her as "the witty coquette." Perhaps taking their joking seriously or, more likely, simply eager to

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9 As the four-hour session drew to a close, Jackie did at one point explode and say, "God, this is driving me crazy." And a few minutes later, she told us, "When we come back [tomorrow], we'll try to think of a way to say this. We'll go on for right now, alright."

10 During a more serious part of the conversation about whether to use "coquette" in the essay, Jackie said, 'I like 'coquette.' He [Dr. Marlowe] would like it.
attract the group's attention, Eric objected strongly by saying, "That's really reaching. I don't like that at all. Don't use that word." Then, as they agreed not to use it and began brainstorming alternatives, Ted impatiently interrupted them to say, "Just divide it into two sentences. You're trying to say too much in one sentence." And as Eric, Jackie, and I continued to try out other alternatives, Ted reached over in frustration, took the mouse away from Jackie, and said, "She's oppressed at home by her mother--period. Here, let me do it" (Transcript 3-16-91). In fact, Ted was just as likely to give up the keyboard position to another group member in a moment of frustration as he was to take it over. This incident, in fact, typified the way in which Ted often took what appeared to be emotionally-charged actions which influenced the group's pattern of collaboration. Jackie's calm, deliberate, more patient approach gave the group stability; I always had the impression that she was going to write the paper whether we helped her or not, but she was also willing to discuss ideas with anyone who showed an interest.

The Second Whole-Group Composing Session: Writing an Introduction

The group's first concern as the second whole-group composing session began was to develop the essay's introduction. The body of the essay had been drafted and it included four paragraphs, each of which explained how one of the four characters

Let's see how we can do it" (Transcript 3-16-91). Perhaps because Dr. Marlowe was perceived as a person who enjoyed using "big words," she assumed he would reward students for making sophisticated-sounding word choices in their assignments. In fact, his "Comment Codes" sheet urged students to choose the simplest, most accurate word they could.
was "enslaved." Having pointed out at the last meeting that our introduction was only two sentences long with one of them being the quote, Ted brought to his meeting a series of introductory sentences that he thought should be added:

It is important to realize several things about Tennessee Williams play. One, that the characters are enslaved in the lower middle class. Second, the characters each adopt to the class in their own manner. And thirdly, awareness of this lower middle class, and how it affects the significance of the work is important.

As Ted erased the thesis sentence that Jackie had written and began typing these sentences right after the quote Jackie asked him, "Are you going to use my information too?" (At that point, her thesis statement was "Williams’ comment on the "enslaved middle-class" can be related to each of the characters in the glass menagerie and their individual attitudes concerning their living conditions"). Amid the confusion of several people talking at once, however, Ted did not answer her; he just began typing.

As Ted typed, Eric pointed out a misspelling, and Ronna and Jackie suggested that he use "First of all," "Second," and so forth rather than "One," "Second," and "Thirdly." Other word-level revisions were suggested until Ted was finished. At that point, Jackie suggested that we needed to add something more specific about each character’s awareness of being lower middle class affecting the significance of the work. Presumably, she wanted to prepare the reader for the character-by-character progression by which the essay was organized and, in doing so, restore the main of idea of the deleted sentence that she had considered to be the essay’s thesis.
statement.

Her comment led the entire group to develop Ted's last sentence further. After much discussion, the following sentence was written and somewhat awkwardly appended to the final sentence of Ted's introduction (the bold section was added to take into account the part Jackie thought was important):

And third, an awareness of this lower middle-class and how it effects the significance of the work is important, as in Williams' comment on the "enslaved lower middle-class" which can be related to each of the four characters in the "Glass Menagerie."

It seems to me that the writing style of the essay suffered here as the group tried to incorporate the ideas that both Ted and Jackie considered important. It suffered, too, because Ted rather than Jackie was at the keyboard during this final revision process: Dr. Marlowe's comments on the group members' individual essays reveal that he considered Jackie's writing style by far more smooth and most readable than that Ted, Ronna, or Eric. In terms of substance, however, the introduction resulting from the group effort was, I think, more complete and well-developed than were the ones that either Ted or Jackie themselves might have written.

Revising the Body of the Essay

Having revised the introduction, the group proceeded read, discuss, and revise each of the subsequent paragraphs. As we revised the section focusing on the character Laura, Ted continually stressed that we needed to use what he considered to
be key terms from "the quote" at every opportunity. Forms of the word "enslave," for instance, appear eight times in the final draft of the four-page essay. It seemed to me that Ted sometimes valued using a key word more than he did developing an argument with the appropriate textual evidence to support it (Jackie and I were the only ones to suggest using a quote from the text to support a point, which we ended up doing only twice in the final draft). Interestingly, the topics Ted chose for his individual essays in 302C reflect this emphasis on a writer's expressing a theme through a consistent pattern of word choices. He wrote an essay on meanings of the words "rising" and "converging" in Flannery O'Connor's "Everything that Rises Must Converge," and he wrote an essay which discussed how changes in word choice allowed Robert Frost to write a second version of his sonnet "In White" which focused more directly on the theme of "a dark, evil power as a controlling aspect of nature (the second sonnet was Frost's "Design"). Clearly Ted's awareness of the importance of how repetition of key words can help develop an argument of theme gave shape to one of the roles he played in the group's writing process.\footnote{Because the key words Ted wanted use came from "the quote," it became crucial at this point in the writing process that the group understand better than they had previously exactly what the quote seemed to be saying. It was at this point that Ted began to get frustrated and implored me to help him understand what the quote meant. He asked, "What does that say, Kelly? What does that mean?"}

The group worked slowly and painstakingly through the sections on Amanda, which had been written primarily by Jackie, Ronna, and me. As we did so, Eric took the most active role he had yet in the writing process, pointing out problems and raising questions about what we had written. He asked, "Do you think that's
necessarily true that she [Amanda] separates herself [from her lower middle-class existence]?” and advised Ted, who was still at the keyboard, that “you’re going to have to make some reference to the quote” (Transcript 3-17-91). In face of numerous suggestions and questions, Jackie remained open to making changes and tried to identify the points about which the group had reached consensus. At one point, she commented patiently, “We’d have to change the whole paragraph around then. Well, we all agree that she lives in the past as a way of escape. So we can put that in a sentence ...” Because we discussed each idea and suggestion that was raised, after nearly an hour had gone by, we were still working on the "Amanda paragraph," the first paragraph in the body of the essay.

With the writing process going so slowly, Eric asked if we could go on to the next paragraph, and began making comments like "Why don't we just write the book over! We can't go on forever and ever--there are probably books and books just on Tom and Amanda" (Transcript 3-17-91). Meanwhile, Ted began to get extremely impatient, a little slap-happy, and unable to focus on the task. He got up to get a drink, and Jackie took his place at the keyboard. When he returned, we were still revising the paragraph on Amanda, and he interrupted Jackie in mid-sentence to say, “No, Stop. Take this part all the way down to here ... and then copy that and put it up there and put Laura at the end so you can go straight into Laura. Do that, and let's go on!” Doing as he said, Jackie, too, was relieved to move on, saying, "Thank God. Now that we have spent an hour." Eric's response was "Hey, an hour on two paragraphs, let's get that right."
As Jackie replied by announcing that now we would "go through Laura," Ted seemed unable to work anymore. He shouted, "Study break!", told us "My brain is mush," and began making the following kind of comment about me:

Okay, write this down. I’m going to analyze Kelly. Kelly doesn’t do anything. That’s why she’s in our group. Totally not useful. We have the hardest thing and Kelly doesn’t do a damn thing but sit there, unless you prod her. Her favorite saying is, ‘I really can’t do anything for the group, Mr. Marlowe says.’ [I kick him]. Then she kicks me and ruins my clothes. She probably thinks this essay sucks and we’re all going to fail it, but she doesn’t care because she doesn’t get a grade. (Transcript 3-18-91)

At one point, when Ted was pulling at Jackie’s shirt as she was trying to write, Jackie said sharply, "Stop it, Ted." He just seemed to get more and more ridiculous; as we talked about whether Laura’s unicorn was a type of horse, he began laughing hysterically and saying over and over, "A horse is a horse, of course, of course" as he slid around the room on his moveable chair. As the rest of the group struggled to explain the significance of Laura’s unicorn breaking and losing its horn (a key incident in the play), he impatiently interjected this comment:

The glass ornament loses its uniqueness, symbolizing that Laura might be more like other people. Right. Just leave it like that. He [Dr. Marlowe] knows what we’re talking about. He’s not going to analyze it like we are. (Transcript 3-18-91)

While Ted’s comment did not completely stop the group’s work on the sentence, it probably did discourage us from discussing and expanding the ideas there as much as might we might have otherwise. (And not surprisingly, Dr. Marlowe could imagine ways in which we might have developed this idea further: In the final draft, he
footnoted the sentence in question in the final draft and wrote, "This claim needs more support. How does Williams draw attention to class in this scene?". As much as possible, the group continued working without paying any attention to Ted, who at one point made a semi-serious comment and then complained, "Now you're ignoring me." Interestingly, the more Ted became an outsider to the group, the more involved Eric became. At no point did the two of them ever work together as the women in the group had.

As the group continued revising, a wide range of writing issues were discussed, including concerns about word choice, punctuation, and spelling. At times, the group used the thesaurus on the computer as an aid in brainstorming alternatives (i.e., once they began with the word "represents," rejected that in favor of "signifies," and then agreed unanimously to use "symbolizes" when it appeared before them on the computer's "Word Finder"). And when the issue came up of whether it was more appropriate to use the personal pronoun "we" in the essay or to use "one" or "the reader," Jackie suggested that the group take a vote to decide ("the reader" prevailed even though Jackie herself considered it too formal). The group members also discussed whether to use a colon or a comma to lead into a quote, and, in fact, each of them had been marked down in previous essays for failing smoothly and correctly to incorporate quotes into their texts. Interestingly, it was Eric who most often pointed out punctuation problems and spoke as if he was very knowledgeable about grammar and punctuation—even though Dr. Marlowe consistently but fruitlessly urged Eric to meet with his to discuss the significant mechanical problems in his
individual essays. In general, however, the group’s attention to such matters was not surprising since errors in punctuation and word choice were listed on Dr. Marlowe’s "Comment Codes." The group members knew that they would certainly be marked down for errors listed on the "Comment Codes" when Dr. Marlowe graded the final draft.

When, at last, the group moved on to revise the "Tom" and "Jim" sections, Ted momentarily became more seriously involved in the writing process. The following exchange is an example of a time when Ted, Jackie, and Ronna successfully worked together to compose a transition which Dr. Marlowe identified as "Good!" when he commented on the final draft:

Ted: [Reads the original sentence he had written]. Tom is the only one who expressed his enslavement to the family. He want to escape-

Jackie: How about the only one who realizes?

Ted: He wants to-

Eric: [Gets up and leaves the room] I’ll be back.

Jackie: Or is aware of-

Ronna: He doesn’t really express, he acknowledges it.

Jackie: I know, he acknowledges it, he’s aware of it. Okay, we’ll say acknowledges it. Tom is the only one who acknowledges his enslavement in the Wingfield family. Acknowledges.

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12 For example, Jackie asked the group whether it was okay to start a sentence with "But," and Eric told her, "Yeah, it depends on how you word the rest of the sentence, but it’s inverted word structure--because you could say, you know, I want to do this but blah, blah, blah. But you can start with the "But."
Ted: Why don’t we use the spell check?

Jackie: I know what I’m doing. We don’t need a spell check--I AM the spell check.

Ted: Woo! [Everyone laughs].

As the group continued to revise the section, though, Ted was less willing to accept the need for revisions. For instance, when Jackie read the next sentence, Ted said, "I think it’s fine." Ronna, then, made a point of reminding him that he had written it. And when Ted said, "We all wrote it," Ronna replied firmly, "Not that sentence we didn’t." Clearly, the group members were aware, for the most part, of who had written what, and it was probably difficult for all of them to have something they had written changed. However, whereas Jackie seemed to welcome such feedback, it was during the time when we worked on Ted’s section, that Ted had exploded with his "Who put Jackie in charge?" question. After he asked the question, he did not participate in any more of the revision that they group did that day. He did, however, resume his practice of trying to distract the rest of the group as we worked.

Writing a Conclusion

As the second whole-group writing session drew to a close, Jackie offered to the group the conclusion she had written at home (since Ted had brought an introduction), saying, "Okay, here’s a great conclusion." Instead of immediately looking at what she had written, though, the group seemed to need a break. As a result, the next ten minutes or so were spent in off-task conversation, until Ted
brought the group back on-task by reading aloud what Jackie had written. One of the points she made raised the issue of what kinds of information belonged in a conclusion, and group members expressed their views on the topic as follows:

Ronna: We never mentioned guilt in the paper, so I don’t think we should bring it up now.

Ted: Why? It’s a new idea—you bring in a new idea in the conclusion.

Ronna: No you don’t.

Ted: Yes you do.

Ronna: I always get in big trouble for that.

Ted: I always do that. [Pause] Why can’t we bring up something that, a new idea that was brought about by-

Jackie: We’re wrapping everything up.

Ted: You wrap everything up and then bring about a possibly new idea that you can conclude from the facts given in the essay.

Jackie: What kind of idea? The guilt?

Ted: I don’t know. I’m just saying that. . . .

Ronna: Okay, how’s this? Because of his obligation to his mother and sister, he will never settle down.

Eric: Sounds good. Comma, sister, comma.

Ted: Comma, comma, comma.

Thus, the issue of what belongs in a conclusion was never completely resolved since Ronna was able to come up with a sentence which constituted a compromise: It said basically the same thing as the original sentence; it just did not use the "new" word
"guilt."

The meeting concluded with the group developing Jackie's conclusion a bit further and facing one more decision for the day: Should we proofread the essay right then and turn it in (Eric and Ted's preference) or meet the following day after setting the essay aside for an evening (Ronna's preference). Since both Jackie and I would be out of town by the next day, we did not take part in the group's decision, but the two men agreed to go along with Ronna's plan and meet the next day (as she told the group, "It's a lot easier when you don't think about it for awhile and then come back to it"). Also, the group finally took Eric up on his suggestion that the group work in the computer lab in his dormitory building. As Eric gave everyone directions, Ted told him and Ronna to be sure and spend some time reading it. "Just go away, read it and come back," he told them as he left the room.

Although I did not attend the final editing session, I spoke briefly with Ted about it on the phone since he was the only group member I was able to contact. He told me that they had met for less than an hour and that Eric had spent most of the time playing games on a computer next to the one the group was using. He said, "Yeah, it was just me and two girls--what's-her-name wasn't there" (he was referring to Jackie). He also asked me if I had heard about the laser printer having been stolen from the lab in which we were working for our last whole-group meeting, explaining that the police had probably called everyone except me and him since "Dr. Marlowe knew we wouldn't have done it." Because I was a little shocked at the lack of respect he was showing for his group members, I did not ask him any specific questions
about what revisions had been made. Ted told me that he had gone to Dr. Marlowe's office himself and handed in the final draft.

**Evaluation**

In reading the graded final draft, I saw that Ted, Ronna, and/or Eric had decided to add a "new idea" to the conclusion after all, probably after they had already spell-checked the document since "environment" was spelled wrong (the only other two spelling errors in the final drafts were ones that could not have been caught by a spell checker (e.g., "keep" instead of "kept"). The sentences that were added read as follows (including Dr. Marlowe's coded responses):

Williams brings out the tragedy of this play in the diverse selection of attitudes, beliefs, and actions that reflect how each person feels. They each believe that they should be part of something bigger and better. But it is, as Williams show through the play, these factors create the lower-middle class and enslave the characters in the environment [13] which they have created [03].

Dr. Marlowe inserted footnote number eleven after these sentences, and the note said,

You might say more about "the tragedy of this play." That phrase suggests an interpretive claim about the theme of the play, a claim that you never articulate explicitly. Is you [sic] position that Williams shows us how the characters create their own prison--or help create it? If so, how might you give greater emphasis to that thesis throughout your argument?

Thus, the "new idea" in fact turned out to be a provocative enough one that Dr. Marlowe imagined that the entire essay might well have been centered around it as a thesis. He gave the essay the grade of "C+" and wrote in a summary comment:
You present a thoughtful analysis of the motif of enslavement in The Class Menagerie as it is played out in the lives of the four main characters. The several places where I ask you to reconsider your interpretation suggest that you need to provide your readers with more evidence from the text to establish support for--and refine--your argument. Also, I would like you to think about ways that you might sharpen your thesis (see note 11). Finally, this essay needed to be more carefully proofread; some key "moves" in your argument end up garbled.

Your presentation to the class worked well. The "interviewer" dramatized a critical reader's questions, and the scenes you presented emphasized the fact that economic and social entrapment was a source of tension among the characters as well as a source of individual disappointment.

Although I was unable to contact any of the group members after I learned what grade we had received, I learned from a conversation during one of the writing sessions that Jackie expected to get an "A." In fact, with both the essay and the presentation, the group's expectations when it came time to be evaluated seemed to be based primarily on how much time and effort had been put into the project. As Ted told me, if this had been an individual essay, he could have "sat down in one evening and wrote [sic] the paper and the next day typed it up" (Transcript 3-18-91). It was, I think, difficult for the group to have many other standards other than effort by which to measure the quality of their work since they did not have the opportunity to read other group's essays and did not choose to get feedback from Dr. Marlowe.

Since evaluation and peer and teacher response were handled differently in each of the three collaborative classes studied in this project, a portion of the following chapter considers what implications that the different approaches used in

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13 Ted told me that he would have preferred to write the essay individually, whereas all the other group members said that they were glad to have had a chance to write it together (Transcript 3-18-91).
the critical writing, basic writing, and business writing classes might have for researchers and teachers interested in collaborative writing. The chapter considers together the three groups' shared-document writing processes and interpersonal dynamics. Through examining together the stories of the three classes and groups, it is possible to identify ways in which the collaborative writing experiences of Jackie, Ted, Ronna, Eric and the others inform theories and generalizations about undergraduate, school-sponsored collaborative writing.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: OVERVIEW OF GROUP AND WRITING PROCESSES

When we embarked on this research, we thought that after four years of study we would be able to describe the procedures and principles that enabled the teachers we observed to teach writing effectively. The more we studied our data, however, the less we were able to disentangle procedures from the classrooms in which they were used or principles from the teachers who acted on them. What we saw most clearly, in fact, were the unique ways these teachers and their students shaped and reshaped the work that went on among them.

Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson
Through Teachers' Eyes: Portraits of Writing Teachers at Work

As Perl and Wilson suggest, the process of dissecting classroom interactions to isolate factors that might have led to effective (or ineffective) writing and writing instruction means leaving behind many intangible features of classroom events. Often, these features are difficult to capture even in naturalistic narratives more detailed than the ones which appear in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, identifying factors that may have influenced students' writing experiences is a necessary step if current theories and practices of collaborative writing are to be enriched by naturalistic research. In this chapter, I explore commonalities and differences in the writing processes and group dynamics of the student groups in the business communication, critical writing, and basic writing classes. Based on
observed patterns, I speculate about pedagogical implications of the findings.

**Group Processes**

To analyze and compare the interpersonal dynamics of the three groups studied, it is useful to characterize them in terms of what Lunsford and Ede identify as varying "modes of collaboration." In Lunsford and Ede’s terminology, the basic writing and critical writing groups studied might be described as primarily **hierarchical** in nature. That is, the group of basic writing students were working toward goals that had been set exclusively by someone who had authority over them—the teacher—who assembled one writing group for the purpose of studying gender issues in academic settings and the other one to research gender issues in social settings. As students worked toward these teacher-assigned ends, they were closely supervised so that they would be able to take the steps necessary to reach these ends in the most efficient way possible. Likewise, the group’s emergent student leader, Cheryl, was also concerned with completing the assigned research project and essay in the most efficient way possible, which to her meant taking on all or most of the work herself.

The critical writing group operated in a somewhat less hierarchical mode but in one that nevertheless turned out to be more hierarchical than dialogic. The teacher, Dr. Marlowe, gave students considerably more freedom to envision the shape of their collaborative presentation and essay than Julia gave to the basic writing students. The critical writing students, for instance, had the opportunity to choose
their own purpose, or focus, for their collaborative project, which in the case of the group studied turned out to be examining "The Glass Menagerie" with a focus on issues of socioeconomic class. And although the "302C Collaboration" document was available to students on-line and Dr. Marlowe was available to students during his office hours, student groups were basically left to their own devices to determine what specific steps to take in working toward their goal of completing the assignment. By taking a nondirective role in students' work on the shared-document essay, Dr. Marlowe departed from his usual pattern of intervening frequently in students' collaborative work, a departure which may to some extent be related to the fact that most of the work for this project took place outside of class. However, even though the highest authority in the class, the teacher, gave students considerable freedom to interpret this assignment creatively, the writing process of the critical writing group was eventually dominated by Ted, the student group member who began to exert strong influence over the rest of us mid-way through the project, when productivity and efficiency became extremely important. Just as students in the basic writing group played whatever roles Julia and Cheryl placed them in, no matter how delimited, students in the critical writing group eventually did whatever Ted asked of us, presumably in the interest of reaching the group’s goals in what seemed to be the most efficient way possible.

Unlike the critical writing and basic writing groups, the business writing group used a mode of collaboration that resembled Lunsford and Ede's dialogic mode. While the teacher, Katherine, unbundled the student groups' writing processes into
discrete steps that groups were required to follow for the first shared-document assignment, students had much freedom within the confines of these steps. Groups chose their own topics to write about, students had a say in the way groups were assigned, and, through whole-class peer response sessions, students had the opportunity to help set up and make explicit the criteria upon which the final written products would be evaluated. Perhaps most important, however, students were encouraged through self-reflexive journals and memos constantly to assess their roles in their group's process and to make adjustments in the roles they played according to what they perceived to be the needs of the group. The teacher herself also made a conscious effort in the context of the whole-class group to share the power and authority invested in her position as teacher with students. That is, whenever possible, she sought to make her voice just one among the many that were heard during class discussions. And just as leadership functions "floated" among Katherine and various students during whole class discussions, with power being, for the most part, decentralized in the classroom, no dominant leader emerged in the group in which I participated. More than in either of the other two groups, each individual group member contributed to the group according to his or her strength, and the group seemed to value the opportunity to hear and consider carefully every person's opinion when a decision needed to be made.

Considering several possible standards for assessing a group's success (e.g., grades, group members' expressed enjoyment of and satisfaction with the writing process, teacher's sense of the extent to which the group met objectives for learning),
the business writing group, which relied upon a relatively dialogic mode of collaboration, seemed the most successful of the three groups. A pertinent question, then, is whether the group was successful primarily because it used a dialogic mode of collaboration. That is, would the basic writing and critical writing groups have been more successful if their mode of collaboration had been more dialogic? While a study such as this one cannot establish links between potential causes and effects, it is nevertheless instructive to examine in more detail what influence various factors may have had on the business writing group's successful dialogic mode of collaboration and on the other two groups' unsuccessful hierarchical mode. My examination of these factors yields several important guiding principles regarding group processes for teachers to consider in creating collaborative classrooms and assignments.

**Pedagogical Principles for Facilitating Group Processes**

1. **STRUCTURE ASSIGNMENTS TO ENCOURAGE DIALOGIC COLLABORATION.**

   Influenced by Lunsford and Ede’s work, I first assumed that the degree to which the teacher sets a highly structured task would be directly related to whether a group’s collaboration tended to be more hierarchical or more dialogic. Their study of workplace collaborations showed that hierarchical collaborations are "carefully, and often rigidly structured, driven by highly specific goals, and carried out by people playing clearly defined and delimited roles." The group's goals are "most often designated by someone outside of and hierarchically superior to the immediate
collaborative group or by a senior member or leader of the group" (133). However, the data from this classroom study suggests that some degree or kinds of structures (e.g., Katherine's "unbundling") do not necessarily predispose groups to work in a hierarchical mode of collaboration. In fact, certain kinds of structured assignments may even encourage students to work in a dialogic mode. For instance, the business communication students' unbundled writing process was quite structured--students were assigned a series of individual assignments that they were required to turn in on specific dates, and they were required to turn in a first draft of the shared-document assignment to present the draft to the class for peer response. However, the individual assignments were designed carefully to insure that all members of the groups had a chance to participate as equally as possible in the process of topic selection and in generating the first draft of the document. And getting peer response from the whole class made it less likely that the ideas of one dominant group member would go unchallenged throughout the writing process (see the section of this chapter on the groups' writing processes). Thus, if a teacher considers dialogic collaboration the ideal mode for classroom collaborative work--as I would guess that teachers who are more interested in process than product, in the "production rather than the recovery of knowledge" might--then time spent building a structure for students to work within may be well spent (Lunsford and Ede 133).

Indeed, in this study, the two groups working with assignments that were not broken up into steps but which were designed to engage all of the students in the group process ended up working in hierarchical modes, with the students at the
bottom of the hierarchy (i.e., Eric in the critical writing class and Todd and Jake in
the basic writing class) playing an extremely limited role in their groups' decision-
making processes. Recall, too, that unlike Katherine, neither Julia nor Dr. Marlowe
sought to influence the modes of collaboration used by student groups through
asking students to analyze and reflect upon their group dynamics while they were
actually engaged in their collaborative projects.\footnote{Julia's students did some retrospective analysis in writing their third essay for
the course, and they were supposed to have been reflecting on group dynamics in
their journals; however, since students never handed in the journals, they put only
minimal effort into them. Katherine, I think, felt more that the other two teachers
that she needed to help students experience at least one workable mode of
collaboration during the first shared-document assignment since they would working
in their writing groups all quarter long. For Julia and Dr. Marlowe, the stakes were
lower. Even if groups did not get along and find a workable mode of collaboration,
the group project was only one essay and the groups were only temporary (students
worked in them only for the duration of the shared-document assignment).

Perhaps when steps are not taken to open up other possibilities for students,
they are inclined to adopt a hierarchical mode by default. Moreover, the fact that
almost all of the groups Lunsford and Ede observed in the workplace operated
hierarchically suggests that, in general, people in this culture who are working
together in groups because they have been required to do so by some authority figure
(e.g., a boss or teacher) may tend to operate hierarchically, whereas two friends, such
as Lunsford and Ede, who have chosen freely to write together may be more likely to
work dialogically.\footnote{Of course, other factors such as the writers' genders, the length of time they
will be working together, and the organizational culture in which the writers are
working may also influence the degree to which a writing team works hierarchically
or dialogically.}
2. OFFER STUDENTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEER AND SELF-EVALUATION AND FOR CHOOSING THEIR OWN TOPICS AND GOALS FOR COLLABORATIVE WORK.

Just as Lunsford and Ede found hierarchical modes of collaboration to be predominant in the workplace settings they studied, a hierarchical model of collaboration has traditionally been the norm for classroom situations: teachers, as leaders of classes (or groups) of students are invested with great authority, and they typically use their authority to set goals for students, to organize students to carry out those goals, and to evaluate them on how well they have succeeded in carrying them out. Although all of the teachers in this study sought—with differing degrees of success—to share their authority and power with students—all three teachers continued to reserve almost completely for themselves the power and responsibility of evaluation. The business writing students, for instance, had some indirect avenues open to them through which they could influence Katherine’s evaluation of them. Individuals could raise their grades on the shared-document assignment through writing insightful journals and memos and, potentially, could affect other group’s grades through making comments in whole-class responding sessions which might influence the way in which Katherine viewed a particular document. However, like students in the other two classes, they had no official voice in determining the grade they received for writing assignments.3

3 Julia and Dr. Marjowe both included "participation" and "process" grades in their evaluation of students' work in groups. However, students had no official input into their teachers' determinations of how much or how "well" students participated
My analyses of three groups working in such conditions suggest that as long as teachers retain completely for themselves the power to determine grades, grades will be one of the most significant factors determining not only how power is constituted within a student group but also how student group members relate to the teacher. With the teacher as sole evaluator, the students I studied found it difficult to focus on creating a group dynamic most conducive to learning. The focus for some students, instead, remained the same as it is for many students in individually-oriented classrooms—that of performing in order to impress the teacher.

Interviews with the basic writing students in the group I observed reveal that they almost invariably accounted for the role they played in the group by explaining how playing a particular role would affect them in terms of grades. Desire to get what she considered a good grade (A or B) was part of what motivated Cheryl to dominate the group: She feared that she could not rely on her peers, especially the men, to set goals as high as she did. Todd and Jake, on the other hand, were satisfied letting her do all the work since they trusted that she would insure that the group received a grade of at least a B. Furthermore, because so few of the basic writing students claimed to like "English" or writing, because they had not become engaged with the course topic of "Gender Issues," because they had no say in selecting their groups or topics for the shared-document assignment, and because few of them would ever have elected to take the course at all if given a choice, they had little motivation to work outside of class where they could work autonomously, away in group processes.
from the constant supervision and intervention of their teacher (whose feedback on
their drafts they interpreted as "corrections" rather than suggestions or prompts to
push their thinking further). Thus, Julia continued to play the "managing editor" role
throughout the project, with Cheryl assuming that role in Julia's absence.

In the critical writing group, students were clearly more engaged and
intrinsically interested in the task they had been assigned than were the basic writing
students. Except perhaps for Eric, the students in the critical writing group were less
obviously working just to get an acceptable grade and to complete the course.
Although 302C was a required and even a dreaded course, the students in it had all
chosen to be English majors or minors, and the group members I worked with had
all signed up for the topic of "class" as either their first or second choice. Most of
these students seemed to appreciate the freedom to work without frequent
supervision from their teacher. No one ever complained about having to meet
outside of class, and some of them even expressed fears that we would not get
through our whole presentation if Dr. Marlowe began talking at length as he had done
earlier in the course (Fieldnotes 3-17-91). Only Ted acted as though he wanted to
make a point of continuing to interact with Dr. Marlowe when we weren't required
to, for it seemed to me that part of his strategy as a student was to stay in close
contact with the teacher--both for the help he could get on his writing and for the
rapport that contact established between him and his instructors. However, when he
suggested that the group meet Dr. Marlowe to discuss the essay, Jackie, Ronna, and
Eric all resisted. It was my impression that they valued the opportunity to work in a
group without the teacher’s intervention and that Jackie in particular had faith that the group could do good work without his help, as she herself had done all quarter long.

Because Ted felt so strongly about keeping in contact with the teacher, he continued to meet with Dr. Marlowe on his own. However, some evidence suggests that, with all the authority for evaluation resting in the teacher’s hand, Ted actually felt more motivated to cultivate his relationship with the teacher than to build a relationship with his peers that was built on mutual respect. Consider, for example, how he was over thirty minutes late for our first out-of-class meeting and was absent from our first in-class meeting. Only when he found out that Dr. Marlowe had not been pleased, had actually called him at home, and had expressed a desire to "wring his neck" did Ted seem to recognize that he needed to change his attitude. He expressed to the group a fear that his participation grade would suffer since Dr. Marlowe had not been pleased, and it was, perhaps not coincidentally, at that point that he began energetically asserting himself as a dominant leader in the group.

Like Ted in the critical writing group, Sana in the business communication group seemed to be especially conscious of the importance of developing a positive relationship with the teacher. In fact she stood out to both Katherine and me after only two days of class as a student with a "good attitude," as did Ted in the critical writing class. And when we began working in groups, she was usually the person to suggest that we show Katherine our work or invite Katherine to sit down at our table and talk with us. However, whereas Ted seemed unconcerned about how his peers
perceived him, however, Sana was sensitive to being subjected to teasing by her friends for "brownnosing" by asking questions and answering questions in class. Thus, although it was her fear that the group was not meeting often enough and being thorough enough to produce a product that would receive a good grade that prompted her to take on a leadership role in the group, she was also greatly concerned about how her group members would respond, whether they would consider her too "pushy" or, as she like to say, a "picky woman." More successfully than Ted, I think, she was able to value equally her interactions with peers and with the teacher. I attribute her success not only to her own heightened sensitivity to how others might be perceiving her actions, but also to the classroom climate that Katherine was able to establish. As Sana herself pointed out, she felt unusually comfortable participating actively in the class. It may be that she felt this way because Katherine had been able partially to decentralize authority in the classroom. Students were not encouraged to feel as though they had gained "points" by answering one of her questions, for she frequently redirected questions and responses back to the class for further examination and discussion rather than evaluating each response herself. And when students worked in groups, Katherine made it clear that she did not necessarily expect students to consult her frequently, although she was willing to help whenever someone needed her. Again, there were no "points" to be gained by appearing to participate actively during in-class group writing sessions since students were rewarded for their participation in the group projects through writing insightful, self-reflective journals. Katherine was aware that she could not necessarily
judge student participation from her position as an outsider to the groups; as a result, students were not motivated simply to look like they were contributing to their groups for her benefit when, in actuality, they were not making contributions that were valued by their peers.

In view of the important role that grades played all three of the group processes, decisions about evaluation are clearly among the most important ones that instructors face when setting up collaborative classroom scenes. Interestingly, none of the teachers in this study chose to adopt systems of evaluation like those advocated in the work of business communication researchers such as Jone Rymer, Elizabeth Malone, and Dennis Barbour (Dr. Marlowe and Julia were unlikely to have been familiar with the literature). All three of these teacher/researchers argue that self and peer-grading are necessary components of an ethical evaluation of shared-document work that maximizes students' motivation-level. The collaborative writing course described in Rabkin and Smith's Teaching Writing That Works: A Practical Approach to Practical English goes even farther than Barbour, Malone, or Rymer do in advocating significantly new ways of conceiving of evaluation. In the Practical English course, students are trained to take full responsibility for virtually all grading through a series of "normalizing exercises" in which groups grade one another. My research suggests that until teachers are willing to seriously consider and experiment with alternatives to traditional grading systems, they have not completely committed themselves to addressing the most key issues involved in developing a fully collaborative classroom.
3. IN SETTING UP GROUPS, CONSIDER AS WIDE A VARIETY OF DATA REGARDING STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE, AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO EXAMINE IN WRITING ANY ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO INFLUENCE THEIR GROUP PROCESSES.

The teachers of the business writing, basic writing, and critical writing classes emphasized different criteria in forming groups and gave students differing degrees of choice in the matter. The business writing students had the most input (they could actually list names of people with whom they did and did not want to be grouped). The critical writing students had the opportunity to work with other students interested in the same topic that they were, but they had no say when it came to the people with whom they would be working. The basic writing students, on the other hand, had no input at all regarding the formation of groups. Significantly, even though students in the business writing class had a relatively great opportunity to influence the formation of groups, Katherine still considered a wider variety of data in setting up groups than did the other two teachers. Focusing on a combination of academic and social concerns, she not only considered who the best writers were but also who would be likely to get along with whom, based on information she had from reading students' introductory memos, from reading their responses to her questionnaire, and from observing them in class. Although Katherine was not necessarily correct in all her judgments (e.g., Tina did not turn out to be as "troublesome" as she had feared), the business writing group clearly was the most successful of the three groups in terms of group process. Thus, time spent gathering
and analyzing a wide variety of data, considering both social and academic issues, and giving students some degree of input may increase the chances for a student group's success.

Another factor which may have contributed to business writing group's success is the fact that the students were required thoroughly to analyze their group's dynamics and writing processes, and they received feedback from Katherine regarding their ideas about improving those processes. Of course, it is also important to remember that the business writing students were older and had more experience with working in groups, factors which no doubt also contributed to their abilities both to prevent and to solve problems with interpersonal dynamics. Nevertheless, this study suggests that if students engage in serious, thoughtful analysis of their groups, they will be more likely to recognize and act upon the options available to them for improving problematic interpersonal dynamics and writing processes.

(3) IN SETTING UP GROUPS, LOOK BEYOND OBVIOUS FACTORS SUCH AS RACE AND SEX TO GAUGE THE EXTENT TO WHICH A GROUP IS DIVERSE OR THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ITS MEMBERS WILL BE COMPATIBLE.

Despite significant differences in how groups were formed in the three classes, it is notable that the groups studied were typical of other groups in the three classes in that they were made up roughly of half male and half female members (only Julia claimed to have purposely included both men and women in the groups). Also, in the business writing and critical writing courses, students who represented racial minority groups ended up in separate groups, which meant that groups in those
classes were as diverse as possible in terms of both race and sex (recall that all the basic writing students were Anglo-American). Since collaborative work is often looked upon as an opportunity for students to learn from people different from themselves, it is not surprising to find that many teachers—consciously or unconsciously—create groups that include students of different sexes and races. It is easy to categorize students in terms of these two kinds of differences since they are more salient than, say, differences of social class, personality type, sexual orientation, or gender (I am considering gender differences as socially constructed, as opposed to differences in sex, which are biological).

Students in both the basic writing group and the critical writing group explicitly linked conflicts within their group to male-female differences. And while it is difficult to know for sure whether Ted in the critical writing group was uncomfortable with Jackie’s leadership in part because she was an African-American woman, it is certainly possible that he was. In fact, only the business writing group was able to establish a group dynamic that did not in some way impede their work—smooth interpersonal relationships even seemed to contribute to the group’s success. However, this group was—on the surface at least—an extremely diverse group: The group included two men and three women, and one of the women, Sana, was obviously different from the other group members in terms of race, cultural background, and religion. Significantly, despite this group’s diversity in terms of salient differences, group member’s responses to the BEM Sex Role Inventory reveal that they were actually remarkably similar to one another in terms of gender-
orientation. These similarities may account for their adopting a dialogic mode of
collaboration, just as differences in the other two groups may have led them to
organize themselves more hierarchically.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the BEM inventory consists of a list of sixty
personality characteristics, one third of which are often stereotypically associated with
masculinity, one third with femininity, and one third might be considered "neutral"
traits. To analyze the ways in which students described themselves on the BEM
inventory, I began by listing all the personality characteristics on the inventory next
to which students wrote a "7" or a "6". (A "7" next to the descriptor "self-reliant," for
example, indicated that the person filling out the inventory felt that it was "Almost or
Almost Always True" that he or she was self-reliant. A "6" next to the descriptor "Acts
as a leader," indicated it was "Usually True" that he or she acted as a leader). I
originally decided to generate these lists because a cursory look at the students'
inventory sheets suggested that the students who had emerged as dominating leaders
of the groups were the same students who had given themselves a noticeably high
number of sixes or sevens for the sixty different personality characteristics listed on
the BEM inventory. To what extent might it have been possible, I wondered, to have
predicted who would emerge as leaders of these groups based on the personality traits
they attributed to themselves on a brief inventory like the BEM? Of the twelve
students with whom I was associated in the three classes, the two students who

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4 For example, "self-reliant" is categorized as a masculine personality
characteristic, "yielding" as a feminine one, and "happy" as a neutral one.
emerged as strong leaders in groups that worked in hierarchical modes of collaboration—namely, Ted in the critical writing class and Cheryl in the basic writing class—were in fact the same students who gave themselves by far the highest number of sixes and sevens on the inventory. Ted gave himself a total of 45 sixes and sevens and Cheryl 43, with Mike’s total of 27 being a distant third highest total.

Furthermore, if the totals for Cheryl and Ted are broken down into what the BEM inventory categorizes as masculine, feminine, and, neutral personality characteristics, their breakdowns are remarkably similar: Ted identified himself as usually or almost always having 18 of the masculine personality characteristics, 13 of the feminine ones, and 12 of the neutral ones; Cheryl’s totals include 18 of the masculine characteristics, 15 of the feminine ones, and 10 of the neutral ones (i.e., in terms of what the BEM classifies as "masculine" traits, both Cheryl and Ted indicated that they almost or almost always considered themselves to be forceful, to have leadership abilities, to have a strong personality, to make decisions easily, to be competitive, athletic, and ambitious. In terms of the BEM’s "feminine" traits, they both considered themselves always or almost always able to love children and to be affectionate, gentle, and compassionate. The only "neutral" trait they shared was that of being sincere).

The inventory responses from students in the business writing group, which worked in a dialogic mode, fall into a markedly different pattern than those of the other two, more hierarchical, groups. Based solely on the inventory responses, the group was more balanced, with no one student standing out as having dominant
personalities to the extent that Cheryl or Ted did in their groups (Mike's total number of sixes and sevens was 27, Brian's was 22, Tina's was 16, and Sana's was 15). Interestingly, too, whereas Ted and Cheryl attributed to themselves a predominance of what the BEM categorized as "masculine" qualities, which include qualities traditionally associated with an authoritarian style of leadership (e.g., aggressiveness, competitiveness, and forcefulness), members of the business writing group saw themselves more often possessing what the BEM categorizes as "feminine" or "neutral" characteristics. For example, Mike, the student who gave himself 27 sixes and sevens, gave himself a seven for only one so-called "masculine" trait—that of being athletic. His other sevens appeared next to two "neutral" traits, "likeable" and "friendly," and one "feminine" trait, "loves children." And although Tina and Brian considered themselves to have leadership abilities, they did not seem to feel as though dominance, forcefulness, etc. were necessarily personality traits possessed by leaders (the only "masculine" traits they both gave themselves sixes and sevens for other than leadership ability were "independent" and "ambitious," although Brian distinguished himself as having a few more "masculine" personality characteristics than the others by also giving himself sixes for "willing to take risks," "willing to take a stand," "aggressive," "acts like a leader," and "individualistic"). Brian and Tina both saw in themselves what the BEM categorizes as being the "feminine" qualities of being helpful, understanding, tactful, truthful, and gentle. In fact, the two personality characteristics that all four group members saw themselves having in common were being adaptable and loving children.
It is almost certainly no coincidence that, of the three groups studied, only the
group that was put together based in large part on the criterion of compatibility
turned out to include people who saw themselves as having very similar kinds of
personality characteristics. And the fact that the members of that business writing
group, with a preponderance of what the BEM characterizes as feminine personality
characteristics among them, were the only students to engage in a dialogic
collaborative mode provides support for Lunsford and Ede's suggestion that dialogic
collaboration may be more characteristic of a feminine mode. Most important to
note, though, is that the fact that this group's similarities in terms of gender seemed
to be more significant than their differences in terms of sex, race, culture, and
religion. (Recall, for instance, how Sana did not make a point of letting her group
members know how irrelevant it was for a woman from her culture to write a letter
assuming that couples have choices to make about wedding and honeymoon plans).

Thus, based on this research, I want to suggest that teachers who take
responsibility for forming collaborative groups--and especially those who are
concerned about creating relatively diverse groups so that students may learn from
each other's differences--should take care that their notions of what constitutes
"difference" are sufficiently complex. Recognizing and labeling significant differences
among students may be more difficult than collaborative learning theorists,
researchers, and teachers have heretofore assumed it to be. Furthermore, teachers'
and students' efforts to identify similarities among group members may be just as
important as their being attuned to differences. In the absence of such effort,
students like Todd and Jake ended up with little or no power in the basic writing group, and Ted came to dominate members of the critical writing group. To some extent, such guidance was provided the students in the business writing class, and as a result, someone like Sana—a nonnative speaker of English who felt uncomfortable acting as a leader in most situations—was able to assert power in her group in ways that Todd, Jake and ultimately even Jackie in the other classes did not.

Writing Processes

As Janis Forman and Patricia Katsky remind us, group processes are only one dimension of shared-document work; group processes and writing processes together "give a full map of the territory students must traverse to accomplish their writing goals" (23). To date, like the work on the group processes, research on collaborative writing processes has rarely focused on undergraduate students in academic settings. Some research, like that of Janis Forman, focuses on graduate students in MBA programs. Other researchers such as Lunsford and Ede or Locker focus on writers in business or professional settings. The sections below highlight ways in which undergraduate writers in academic settings experienced problems in many ways similar to those described in the existing research on graduate students and nonacademic collaborative writing teams. In offering a series of guiding principles for teachers with regard to writing processes, I also identify ways in which this study raises issues that may be specific to the courses and student populations studied.
Pedagogical Principles for Guiding Writing Processes

1. **ASK STUDENTS TO DESCRIBE THEIR GROUP'S PATTERN OF COLLABORATION BOTH DURING AND AFTER THE SHARED-DOCUMENT WRITING EXPERIENCE AND TO IDENTIFY SUCCESSFUL AND PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF THEIR GROUP’S WRITING PROCESSES.**

It is impossible to match the patterns of collaboration used by the three groups studied with patterns described by Lunsford and Ede as a result of their survey research or Janda as a result of her ethnographic study of four writing groups. In the critical writing group, for example, different patterns were used at different points in the writing process depending on who led the group. It may also be, as Locker suggests, that survey research and the few naturalistic studies which have been conducted may not have revealed all the processes that groups may use (59).

When Cheryl led the basic writing group and when Ted led the critical writing group, Janda's "leader pattern" of collaboration was used. Janda observed that in this pattern, "one member determined topics the group would discuss, made final decisions after the group discussed, assigned writing tasks or did writing herself (294-5). When Jackie led the critical writing group and Sana, Tina, or Brian led the business writing group, however, the groups used collaborative patterns with features of Janda's "mediator pattern" and "self-directed pattern." Janda observed that in the former pattern, "one member fielded ideas from the group and facilitated discussion and composition as the group produced text." In the latter pattern, "group members submitted to community-held, often implicit, conception of the group’s priorities and
values" (294-5).

Categorizing patterns of collaboration in this way seems more useful for students than for researchers. If students are able to do the classifying themselves during and after their collaborative writing experiences, such categorization becomes a useful analytical tool for group members to use during their shared-document work to identify problematic aspects of a writing process and to make adjustments. The business communication students conducted this kind of analysis in their journals, thereby making it possible for Sana to recognize her need to assert leadership and for the whole group to recognize how unsuccessful meeting in subgroups was proving to be. Although Julia discussed various options for writing together in class, the hypothetical discussion did not seem to make students any more conscious of their writing process than they otherwise would have been. In fact, in both the basic writing and critical writing classes, decisions about task distribution were most often made based on who happened to be absent or present at a particular group meeting. Only the business communication group made a point of using what the group identified as one of its member's special talent—Mike's descriptive writing ability. Significantly, even when Mike was absent, sections of the letter were set aside for him to complete when he next attended a meeting.

2. REQUIRE ALL GROUP MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN GENERATING A WRITTEN OUTLINE OR OVERALL PLAN FOR THEIR SHARED-DOCUMENT EARLY IN THE WRITING PROCESS SO THAT THEY SHARE A COMMON VISION OF THEIR WRITING TASK.
Based on studies of MBA students, Forman and Katsky suggest that collaborative writing teams should begin their writing process by working as a whole-group to generate an outline that structures the argument of the shared-document to be produced (33). In fact, one of the first steps for each of the groups studied was to generate a working outline that would provide a blueprint for organizing the essay. In many ways, the extent to which groups' final documents were successful was related to how this key stage of the writing process was handled.

The business communication group generated an outline which included the "reader benefits" each group member had generated as part of an individual assignment in the order they were to appear in the letter. By being absent from the meeting in which the original outline was drawn up, Mike had very little sense of how the letter organized as a whole. In his case, this absence did not seem to hurt the final product since he played such a specialized role in the writing process. However, it was because she was able to think about the direct mail letter in terms of the reader benefit outline that Sana was able to respond to her classmates' responses and recognize a need to reorganize the letter so that it moved from intrinsic to extrinsic benefits. Making this reorganization was a crucial step in group's producing an "A" quality document.

In the critical writing group, writing an outline was also a significant part of the group's composing process. In the case of this group, however, a key member of the group--Ted--was absent along with Eric on the day when the outline for the critical essay was written. Ted's individual essays show that his overarching critical
arguments tended to be more creative and insightful than those of any other member of the group. Jackie, who wrote the thesis statement upon which the outline was based, tended to make less imaginative but more well-supported claims. Together, the two of them—with the help of other group members—could undoubtedly have charted a better course for the essay than either one could without the other. Since the task of writing the thesis and outline was led by Jackie without Ted’s input, however, it seemed to me that Ted ended up being somewhat confined by Jackie’s modest thesis throughout the writing process and frustrated that it did not seem to address all aspects of the prompt to which the group was responding. In the end, the essay suffered because Jackie’s thesis was not sufficiently ambitious and Ted’s more thought-provoking claim appeared as a "new idea" in the conclusion and therefore was not supported in the body of the text which gave evidence for Jackie’s thesis. Had they both worked together in outline stage of the writing process and shared a common vision of the task, the two of them may have been able to share leadership of the group rather than having that role shift back and forth between the two of them.

The basic writing group never produced an outline per se, but Cheryl used the list of survey questions as an outline, with each paragraph of the essay reporting findings with regard to a different survey question. Once more, group members who might have participated in devising a more sophisticated approach were absent from the writing session in which the survey was first conceived of as an outline for the
essay (i.e., Jake and Todd).⁵

These findings lend support to Forman and Katsky's recommendation that business writing groups' begin their shared-document writing processes by composing an outline or plan for the document, including, if appropriate, an overall argument. They also, to some extent, challenge the lore in the field of composition which assumes that outlines are less useful than, say, freewriting or brainstorming at the invention stage of a writing process. Of course, I am not suggesting that all groups should generate formal outlines--group members simply need to engage in a process of planning and articulation of shared goals. Both group members and teachers should be aware of how crucial it is for all students to participate in this formative stage of the process. Teachers may be wise to consider "counting" such participation when it comes to the final evaluation. Another alternative is to ask students to present clearly articulated plans for their shared-document to the class or to another group for peer response at an early stage of their writing processes.

3. GIVE STUDENTS OPPORTUNITIES TO RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON THEIR COLLABORATIVE TEXTS-IN-PROGRESS FROM BOTH PEERS AND THE TEACHER.

Once the three groups moved beyond the outline stage and generated a first draft of their shared-document essays, each of the groups experienced a similar inability to evaluate the quality of their work-in-progress effectively. Just as individual

⁵ Julia considered Jake in particular to one of the strongest writers in the class; she believed that he had the potential to contribute significantly to his group.
authors are often too "close" to their work to assess how well it might meet an audience’s expectations, these groups of four or five students could not distance themselves from their work; in general, the groups had somewhat inflated notions of the quality of their first drafts.⁶

In the basic writing group, it was Julia’s written comments which signaled to the group that they had more revisions to make than they first supposed. And for the business writing group, the comments of their peers in the whole-class session motivated them to significantly revise the document between the first and final drafts. Only in the critical writing class did students not receive feedback from either the teacher or peers. While Ted believed that our group’s presentation was excellent—perhaps even the best in the class—Dr. Marlowe’s comments on all the group’s presentations reveal that he considered ours good, but not excellent. Feedback at that early stage of the process may have resulted in a stronger final product for the group. Thus, based on the experiences of these three groups, it seemed to be just as important for groups to receive written and/or oral response from other individuals or groups as a part of their writing process.

⁶ Similarly, Forman and Katsky found that the MBA students they studied had difficulty assessing the quality of their products.

4. GIVE STUDENTS PRACTICE COMPOSING FACE-TO-FACE BEFORE THEY ARE FACED WITH THE CHALLENGE OF COMPLETING A COMPLEX, LONG-TERM SHARED-DOCUMENT ASSIGNMENT.

Each of the three groups studied spent at least one hour in which several
group members composed together face-to-face; that is, they were physically present in the same room and interacting directly with one another as they wrote (Rogers and Horton 120). Horton and Rogers argue that such face-to-face composing sessions afford students important opportunities to

(1) understand their rhetorical situation, (2) examine language choice, (3) consider the ethical dimensions of their decisions, and (4) reappraise their group decisions in greater depth than could be achieved if an aspect of the writing were divided among group members and completed individually. 124

To some extent, these findings may reflect the types of assignments with which the students Horton and Rogers studied were working. Students were dealing with "cases"—that is, real-world rhetorical situations in which students were asked to deal with a politically sensitive issue. Not surprisingly, then, they observed students analyzing their rhetorical situations and considering ethical issues. My research suggests that the remaining two benefits of collaborative composing (examining language choice and appraising group decisions) are the ones most likely to be observed as students grapple with a variety of kinds of assignments. I also observed students in all three groups talking explicitly about their writing processes; such discussions could be valuable if students are able to add options to their repertoire of writing strategies as a result of hearing their peers' voice preferences for particular writing strategies (e.g., printing out copies of a text to revise rather than doing so on screen).

Most often, male members of the groups opted out of these face-to-face sessions and instead composed a portion of the text individually (Brian in the
business communication group is the only exception). Furthermore, during these face-to-face writing sessions, there was usually a person who was, in a sense, the primary author. In the business communication group, that person was Tina, in the basic writing group it was Cheryl, and in the critical writing group it was Jackie. Although when she played this role Jackie downplayed its importance by calling herself the "typist," as the person at the keyboard she in fact exercised the most power to influence what ideas made their way into the text.  

It may be a good idea for teachers to give inexperienced collaborators an opportunity to experience the time-consuming, sometimes frustrating, sometimes exciting process of face-to-face composing at least once before they become involved in a complex group project. A short in-class writing exercise in which students have an opportunity to play both the typist and nontypist roles would give them an opportunity to think about how they felt playing each role. Perhaps with this kind of preparation, a student like Cheryl might have considered sharing the role of "primary writer" with other students. In fact, it may have been because of the numerous small group collaborative writings that Dr. Marlowe assigned at the beginning of the 302C course, that everyone in the group at some point served as typist. Overall, with some experience to draw upon, group members would be better prepared to discuss with each other at what point, if at all, in their writing process it would be beneficial to

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7 Interestingly, Lunsford and Ede find that when they compose together, the person at the keyboard has less influence than the person talking does over what words and ideas become part of their text. This difference between these student groups and Lunsford and Ede's writing processes highlights an issue that might usefully be addressed in future research (conversation with Andrea Lunsford, 8-9-91).
compose face-to-face.

5. CAREFULLY ASSESS STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD COMPUTERS AND CONSIDER WAYS IN WHICH THE TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE IN A SPECIFIC CLASS CAN REALISTICALLY BE EXPECTED TO BENEFIT COLLABORATIVE WORK. HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD USING THE MACHINES BEFORE THEY ARE EXPECTED TO USE THEM FOR SHARED-DOCUMENT PROJECTS.

Because it is impossible to know how shared-document work in the three classes would have been different without the computers, it is difficult to assess the significance of the role that computers played in the groups’ writing processes. In none of the three classes did students receive specific instruction about how they might use the computers to facilitate their collaborative writing. In fact, the computers were not equipped with any special features designed specifically to facilitate collaborative work (e.g., split-screen capability or network software which would allow students to write together without working face-to-face). Thus, students used the computers for group writing in basically the same ways they used them for individual composing; the attitudes they had about the machines when they were writing individual documents also carried over to their shared-document work.

For the critical writing and business communication groups, the computers were a convenience and an enjoyable novelty, as they were for only one member of the basic writing group, Jake. In the critical writing group, Eric tried to assert himself as a kind of technology expert. Perhaps because no one seemed willing to
follow his leadership when he played that role, he sometimes used the machines in ways which distracted the group from its task and drew attention to himself (for example, at one point he set up the spell-checker so that it would make a noise like a baby crying every time a word was spelled wrong). It may be that because everyone in the group was reasonably computer literate, no one felt a strong need to depend on a single group member for leadership when it came to using the technology. In any case, they did not seem convinced that he actually knew anything useful that they did not know, and until the final group meeting, he was even unable to persuade group members to meet at the computer lab in his dorm.

Unlike either of the other two groups, the critical writing group used computer-related revision strategies they had learned in class in their collaborative work. For instance, they used the Word-Finder and a strategy Dr. Marlowe had shown them which involved bolding parts of the essay need revision at a later time. And like the business communication group, the critical writing group frequently printed hard copies of text to enable group members more easily to revise and edit individually. Both groups chose to meet in computer labs whenever possible, and all group members seemed to feel extremely comfortable working in that setting. For them, the lab environment was indeed the kind of relaxed, social gathering place described in much of the literature on computers and composition (Janet Eldred, for example, describes computer classrooms as "communal writing places [which] alter the romantic image of the isolated writer by making both writers and their texts accessible and public" (210).
For the basic writing group, the computer lab and classroom did not seem especially accessible. Cheryl and Beth in particular did not consider the computers to be the useful, convenient aids to composition that the more computer literate business and critical writing students considered them to be. In fact, Cheryl considered Julia's requirement that the group's essay be available on disk as just one more obstacle she had to overcome in seeing the shared-document task through to completion. Meanwhile, the computer provided Todd with an easy excuse not to participate fully in the writing process: No one seemed to think it was right to expect him to type anything since he had only one hand to use (recall that Todd himself was more than happy to have less work to do). As for Jake, who really enjoyed using the computer, he was relegated to the role of typist. Because the group--led by Cheryl--did not compose face-to-face on-line, Jake never had a chance to play what I have called the "primary author" role as he might have been expected to play by virtue of his being the only potential "technology advocate" in the group (e.g., Forman, "Leadership").

In fact, the literature on basic writing and computers indicates that the machines do sometimes detract from the quality of basic writing students' writing experiences rather than enhance them. Lisa Gerrard has pointed out that "busy schedules may limit their visits to the lab, interfere with their writing and revising on campus, and prevent them from finding time to explore fully the computer's capabilities" (105). Of course, students in the other two classes also had busy schedules and difficulties meeting in campus in the computer labs. As inexperienced
students who were struggling to adapt to college life in general, however, the basic writing students were less well-equipped and to handle such difficulties.

The striking differences between how the computers were perceived by the first-year basic writing students and the more experienced students merit careful consideration. These differences underline how important it is for teachers not to assume—as Hawisher and Selfe warn in their article on the "Rhetoric of Technology"—that these machines will somehow automatically contribute to creating a social environment that lends itself well to collaborative work. Indeed, computers are only one element of a classroom environment. How they are perceived by students in that environment depends a great deal upon the overall nature of the classroom scene.

**Implications for Teaching and Further Research**

Based on the data collected through participant-observation of the critical writing, basic writing, and business communication courses, I have speculated in the sections above about some of this study's specific pedagogical implications. The following broad guidelines grow out of my experiences in studying the three classes:

1. **Classroom Scene:** If an instructor seeks to do more than simply include a shared-document assignment in an otherwise traditional, teacher-centered course, it is essential for him or her to take advantage of the power and authority invested in the position of teacher to create a "collaborative" environment. To do so involves helping students build trust in one another, de-centering power in the classroom, and setting up guides for students that make it possible for them to learn without being
taught directly, "banking concept of education"-style. As this study shows, however, understanding the philosophies behind such a emancipatory classroom environment is only the first step. Acting on them consistently enough so that students recognize that they are being offered legitimate opportunities to engage in social learning is the greater challenge. It is also important for teachers to help students understand exactly why it is they are being asked to work collaboratively.

(2) **Group Dynamics:** Since fewer students played active roles in the writing processes of the more hierarchically structured groups, teachers might consider taking steps to help students create the most dialogic, egalitarian groups possible. A first step might involve allowing students at least some input into group formation decisions and other classroom management decisions that will affect the work of the groups; such input gives students a feeling of responsibility for what they are able to accomplish in the group; they can't simply blame problems which occur on the "hand" they were dealt. Most important, students must be asked to analyze their group processes with attention to how issues of difference may be influencing group processes. Tools such as the BEM inventory or the Meyer-Briggs Personality Indicator could give students a starting place for their analyses. Efforts put forth by students to improve group processes should be recognized in whatever evaluation scheme is used. Teachers should, whenever possible, give students a role to play in the evaluation process.

(3) **Writing Processes:** Students should be guided in analyzing their groups' pattern of collaboration as well as their group's interpersonal dynamics. In
addition, group members need to be held accountable in some way (i.e., graded) for their participation in the earliest stages of a project, especially the stage when the group considers the overall plan for their shared-document (e.g., possibly through sketching an outline). It is also important for students to have some experience in face-to-face composing and the opportunity to develop confidence in their ability to use computers before they begin a significant computer-supported, shared-document assignment. Finally, providing opportunities for groups to receive feedback on shared-documents from other groups, and perhaps the teacher, will not only help create a community of co-learners in the classroom, it will also give students much-needed aid in evaluating the quality of their texts-in-progress.

Interestingly, these guidelines—generated after careful, intensive observation of three extremely different kinds of "collaborative" classrooms—are not extraordinarily different from the sort of advice teachers could find already available in the existing literature on collaborative writing pedagogy. Despite the availability of sound pedagogical guidelines, however, stories from both students and teachers of disastrous experiences with collaborative assignments seem to persist. And even when collaborative assignments do not result in outright disaster, the research reported here suggests that students’ experiences with shared-document or other group-oriented work in our classes may in fact be less "collaborative" and less empowering than we assume or hope them to be.

In light of these realities, it seems appropriate to conclude this study first with a call for closer attention to the existing research. The literature reviewed in Chapter
l provides, I think, much of the basic information necessary for an experienced, self-reflective teacher who solicits and listens thoughtfully to students' feedback to create and facilitate a reasonably successful collaborative writing assignment and/or course. Katherine Gate’s business communication course is a case in point. Having been dissatisfied with her first experience teaching shared-document assignments, Katherine worked with interested colleagues to re-design the course with careful attention to the available literature, making some adjustments, but seeking nevertheless to create the cooperative community of co-learners that the computer-supported, collaborative classroom is so often purported to be.

In general, the other two teachers, Julia and Dr. Marlowe, were less responsive to the literature on collaboration when designing and implementing their courses. Why, it is reasonable to ask, would experienced, committed teachers like Julia and Dr. Marlowe not likewise take advantage of the composition community’s collective store of knowledge about implementing collaborative pedagogies when designing and teaching their courses? Answering this question calls for considering both the circumstances under which they were teaching collaborative assignments and the nature of the courses in which they were teaching them.

The circumstances under which each of the courses studied was being taught varied greatly. First of all, Katherine was a graduate student who taught one class and who was unusually willing to invest time in improving her teaching. Thus, she took the time to collect all the published work on teaching collaborative writing that was readily available to her, to read this material, and to work with supportive
colleagues to devise a course that took its content into account. Her familiarity with the literature may also reflect the fact that most of the pedagogically-oriented literature that does exist focuses Katherine’s primary field of interest--business communication (or it targets an audience of primary and secondary-level teachers, e.g., the 1988 NCTE publication Focus on Collaborative Learning). Because collaborative writing is now known to be a relatively common practice in business and professions, Katherine felt comfortable with focusing her time and energy on creating a course in which students wrote not one but three shared-document assignments. Students in the class had great motivation for learning to work together since they knew from the beginning that they would be with their groups all quarter. They, too, recognized that collaborative work was common in business and professional settings.

Dr. Marlowe’s situation was quite different from that of Katherine. Without the motivation of pedagogic parallelism available to teachers of business communication, he did not feel justified in placing significant emphasis on shared-document work in the critical writing since, ostensibly anyway, individual writing is the norm in English studies. Nor was he completely willing to abdicate what he saw

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8 There is a need, then, for teachers of basic writing and advanced literature and composition courses who have developed collaborative courses which take into account special concerns related to their student populations and/or content areas to disseminate their expertise. For example, courses for basic writing students should take into account the fact that as inexperienced college students who are placed into a "remedial" course, many basic writing students may lack the confidence and experience with group writing necessary to take as much initiative in collaborative projects as more experienced students can be expected to take.
as his responsibility as a professor to share his knowledge of a content area directly with students; indeed, departmental expectations for how English 302 should be taught were strongly informed by a "coverage" model of education. Clearly, a goal of covering as much material in a 10-week course as possible is at odds with the very nature of collaborative tasks, which always take more time than individual ones do. Time, in fact, became Dr. Marlowe’s worst enemy as he sought both to cover the required material and allow students to engage in experiential, collaborative learning. The experimental computer aspect of the course, too, turned out to be more time-consuming than expected. Finally, it was even difficult for Dr. Marlowe to devote much of his own already scarce time to familiarizing himself with existing literature on collaboration when he viewed collaborative work as only a small part of what he was doing in his classes. (Nor was collaboration an area in which he published, and in Winter 1991, his own publishing agenda was extremely important since he was being considered for tenure). He quite simply had other priorities in that particular section of English 302. In teaching the experimental 302C section, his main focus was on determining innovative ways to use the computer in critical reading and writing, not, as he told me, on setting up a "fully collaborative classroom."

Julia, meanwhile, as a Lecturer teaching four courses while trying to complete a dissertation unrelated to her work in the classroom, told me from the beginning that she felt she could not make taking the time to familiarize herself with research on collaboration a priority. She simply did the best she could based primarily on what her past experiences in the classroom had taught her. Unfortunately, her past
experiences did not include working with a class of only eight students who had been placed in a computer section without their knowledge. Nor was she used to working with students who were not or had not been part of the Academic Support Program, in which many of the students already knew one another and felt comfortable working together. These factors, combined with some challenges that seem to have been unique to the basic writing students, made Julia's job especially difficult. The basic writing students, for instance, were all new to college and were much less adept than the older, more experienced students when it came to juggling the demands that school, their social lives, and, in some cases, their jobs placed on them.

From observing the struggles of the basic writing students and from seeing Dr. Marlowe and his students battle constantly against the clock, it seems clear that models for collaborative work which are specific to particular kinds of courses and populations of students are needed to supplement existing research. Although this study has highlighted some pedagogical principles that my research suggests apply equally well to students in different kinds of classes, there are clearly limits to the extent to which the research, for example, on the collaborative work of MBA students which served Katherine Gates well in designing her business communication course applies to teachers of basic writing or literature-based writing courses such as 302C. In addition, as teachers in a variety of courses continue experimenting with collaboration, it will be necessary for them to come to terms with the ways in which "coverage" models of teaching and collaborative models are inherently at odds. Examinations of the ways in which time is used in education must be also pursued if
collaborative pedagogies are to be enduring, viable options for teachers such as Dr. Marlowe who are torn between pressure to present material in the most expedient way possible and belief that people learn best when they are given the time to "do."

Even when conditions for collaborative work may not be ideal, however, I want to suggest that time spent considering carefully the issues that come to the fore in designing a collaborative course is well spent—even for teachers who doubt the practical value of students developing group writing skills when writing is still looked upon by many a fundamentally solitary act. The process of considering the kind of classroom scenes we are creating through our words, actions, and assignments requires teachers to place themselves, in effect, under a microscope. As teachers of collaborative courses invariably attest, that can be an uncomfortable, but enlightening, place to be.
Figure 1. Collaborative Classroom (Denney Hall, Room 343)
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